

Attacks on minorities HC asks govt to submit a report by January 15

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A Division Bench of the High court yesterday issued a rule nisi on the government to investigate in to the incidents of attacks on religious minorities as reported by Ain-O-Salish Kendra (ASK) and to submit a report on the matter by January 15.

It also issued a show cause notice on the government asking it why it would not be instructed to punish the persons responsible for attacking religious minorities in different areas of the country.

The bench comprising Justice MA Matin and Justice Marziul Huq issued the rule on a writ petition filed by ASK. Dr. Kamal Hossain, Dr M Zahir, Advocate Tabarak Hossain and Advocate Abu Obaedur Rahman moved the four-point petition on behalf of ASK. Attorney General AF Hasan Arif represented the government.

SEE PAGE 11 COL 8

AL slams govt decision, holds rally today

UNB, Dhaka

Awami League General Secretary Zillur Rahman has strongly protested the Cabinet decision of scrapping the Security Act for the family members of the father of the nation, calling it a "blueprint" of taking the life of Sheikh Hasina and Sheikh Rehana.

"The BNP-Jamaat alliance, which captured power through an election of blueprint, is poised to implement the blueprint of killing the daughters of the father of the nation," he said in a statement yesterday.

Through this, the alliance is pushing the country towards a confrontation, Zillur said, also protesting the decision of withdrawing the security facilities for former prime minister Sheikh Hasina.

He said that following the initiative of holding trial of the self-confessed killers of Bangabandhu, the killers and an identified quarter

SEE PAGE 11 COL 6

City corporation polls soon, Bhuiyan tells JS

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Election to city corporations will take place immediately. Local Government and Rural Development Minister Abdul Mannan Bhuiyan informed the Jatiya Sangsad yesterday.

"The election would take place once the legal complexities are over", he said while replying to a question from Shahidul Islam of ruling BNP during the question-answer session.

SEE PAGE 11 COL 8

INSIDE TODAY

Article 4

The 1996 Ganges Water Treaty: Its strengths and weaknesses
Harun Ur Rashid

Culture 16

Creating ripple in country's fashion world

	Sun Rises	Sun Sets
Nov 28		5-11 pm
Nov 29	6-23 am	

Prayer Timings

Nov 28		
	Azan	Jamaat
Fajr	4-59	5-05
Zohr	12-45	1-15
Asr	3-45	4-00
Maghrib	5-14	5-20
Esha	7-30	8-00

Source: Islamic Foundation

ACI Iftar

Sehri, Iftar timing

Ramadan	Nov	Sehri	Iftar
12	28	-	5-14
13	29	4-59	5-14
14	30	4-59	5-14

Cabinet approves bill to scrap spl security for Hasina, Rehana

ZAYADUL AHSAN

The government has approved a bill seeking repeal of the special law providing lifelong state security to former prime minister Sheikh Hasina and her sister Sheikh Rehana, the two surviving daughters of Father of the Nation Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman.

The bill seeking to scrap the Father of the Nation's Family Members Security Act, 2001 is likely to be placed in the parliament today.

A weekly meeting of the cabinet with Prime Minister Khaleda Zia in the chair yesterday approved the bill. The Awami League has termed this move as a manifestation of the "vindictive" and "autocratic" attitude of the government.

It has decided to stage demonstrations and rallies in the city in protest at the move to repeal the law.

Law Minister Barrister Moudud Ahmed told The Daily Star, "The law is ultra vires the Constitution. That is why we are moving a bill to repeal it."

"Besides the Awami League had the law enacted with a political motivation to influence the voters and thereby win the October 1 general election."

SEE PAGE 11 COL 7

However, he said, Hasina would "have security coverage as per existing law".

The seventh Jatiya Sangsad approved the law titled "The Father of the Nation's Family Members Security Act 2001" on June 20 this year after the High Court upheld a trial court verdict for death penalty on 12 former army officers in the Bangabandhu Murder Case. However, eight of the accused are still at large. The Awami League had said that these eight former army officers were plotting to assassinate the daughters of Bangabandhu, thus necessitating the act.

Under this law, the state recognises Sheikh Hasina and Sheikh Rehana as very important persons (VIPs) and provides security as per section 2/D of the Special Security Forces (SSF) Ordinance 1986.

The 1986 SSF Ordinance recognises as VIP a person who is a head of a foreign country or has been announced a VIP in the government gazette. Under this law, separate accommodations were arranged for safety of Hasina and Rehana. On July 2 this year, the AL cabinet allocated the Ganobhaban as Hasina's residence. On July 11, the government allocated an abandoned plot at

US troops mass near last Taliban bastion

AFP, Bonn

Afghan delegates made an optimistic start to talks on forming a new government to replace the ousted Taliban regime here yesterday, as US troops massed within striking distance of the militia's last stronghold in Afghanistan.

"I have come to Bonn with high expectations," Yunus Qanooni, head of the Northern Alliance delegation, said in his opening address. "Our people have behind them a golden era of resistance against oppression. But we are in a new era now."

As representatives of rival factions jostling for power in post-Taliban Afghanistan met in a luxury hilltop chateau outside Bonn, hundreds more US Marines were expected at an airfield near Kandahar, the Taliban regime's last bastion.

SEE PAGE 11 COL 1



JS tidbits

NAZMUL ASHRAF

State Minister for Youth and Sports Fazlur Rahman Patal yesterday ridiculed the past Awami League government for naming different institutions after Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman and other slain family members of the Father of the Nation.

"During their regime, the Awami Leaguers used to carry signboards under their armpits, nails in the pockets of their Mujib coats and hammers in their hands. And they would put those signboards on big buildings wherever they would found them," the BNP lawmaker, who once was an Awami League activist, said to the delight of his treasury bench colleagues in Jatiya Sangsad.

In an attempt to amuse the fellow treasury benchers, the state minister said, "I have to cross the Sheikh Hasina Youth Training Centre, Sultana Kamal Women Sports Complex and the Bangabandhu National Stadium on my way to office everyday."

SEE PAGE 11 COL 4

Arrest of Shahriar Kabir Police seek to move against stay on remand

COURT CORRESPONDENT

The Deputy Commissioner (Detective) of Dhaka Metropolitan Police yesterday submitted a prayer to the Dhaka District Magistrate's Court seeking permission to file a revision case to the higher court for cancellation of the stay order on remand of writer and columnist Shahriar Kabir.

The court however did not pass any order on the issue. Metropolitan Public Prosecutor (PP) Abdullah Mahmud Hasan on Monday filed a criminal revision with the Metropolitan Sessions Judge's Court, Dhaka seeking cancellation of the stay order, passed by the Chief Metropolitan Magistrate's Court on Sunday. But he withdrew the revision petition as he has no right to file any case on behalf of the state.

The District Magistrate's Court, Dhaka on Sunday night gave one month's detention to Kabir under

SEE PAGE 11 COL 4

Int'l telephone call rates drastically cut

TAR reduced to crush illegal call-termination

INAM AHMED

In a bold step to crash the grey market of illegal call-termination, the finance ministry yesterday drastically cut the total accounting rate (TAR) and tariff on telephone calls.

The TAR has been reduced to 0.20 special drawing right (SDR) from an earlier 0.50 SDR. The TAR is the amount that is shared equally by the Bangladesh Telegraph and Telephone Board (BTTB) and foreign telecom firms through which calls are routed.

On the other hand, calls to the United States during peak hours has been slashed to Tk 40 from the previous Tk 60 a minute while the off-peak hours rate for 8:00pm to 8:00am will be another 25 per cent off.

Rates to Europe have been reduced from Tk 50 a minute to Tk 30 with off-peak hours discount of 25 per cent. For the SAARC region, the rate has been refixed from Tk 30 a minute to Tk 20 with off-peak discounts.

The rates will be effective from December 1, sources said.

The finance ministry took the decision yesterday following a Ministry of Post and Telecommunications

proposal that the TAR be cut to stop illegal calls by some unscrupulous Internet service providers (ISPs) using very small aperture (VSAT).

The 0.20 SDR TAR will be decided on demand from operators. For outgoing calls, it will be the highest rates. But for incoming calls, it may be fixed higher through negotiation.

According to ministry sources, the rate cut is expected to increase calls drastically, bringing incremental revenue for the BTTB. But for this, the existing two exchanges at Moghbazar and Mohakhali may not be sufficient. Steps will be taken soon to immediately procure more exchanges to cope up with the call flow.

Along with rate cuts, the BTTB will gear up its steps to catch illegal operators and the first crackdown will be on those operators who have been openly advertising such call-termination facilities.

However, the call-terminators are now using cell phones to do business and as such mobile telephony is under the ministry, the ministry will identify mobile companies and owners of sets to stop such activities.

"We expect that the move will stop call-termination,"

SEE PAGE 11 COL 2

Dust, fume make city's air more polluted than ever

MORSHED ALI KHAN AND
SHAMEEM MAHMUD

For many, winter may bring harvest, festivities and happiness but ten million inhabitants of Dhaka city are set to face the worst kind of air pollution with dust and toxic fumes generated by thousands of faulty vehicles and industries.

Particulate matters, dust and toxic fumes hang around in the air for long hours in the absence of rain, exposing millions, particularly children, whose breathing rate is naturally higher than adults.

Different toxic wastes emitted by an estimated 1,20,000 two-stroke three-wheelers, emission from thousands of faulty vehicles and toxic fumes from over 1,500 brick fields around the city will make life "unbearable" for people of the metropolis.

With tonnes of loose soil at construction sites and several hundred kilometres of dug-up city roads, the city is already wearing an

extremely dusty look. At busy intersections visibility is reduced as the traffic starts increasing. The Dhaka City Corporation (DCC) is unable to contain the dust with sprinklers because there is a severe crisis of water supply in the city.

Doctors say, this environmental pollution will cost city population dearly. Combination of toxic smokes emitted from vehicles laced with dust can cause severe health problems, they say.

With the beginning of dry season, city hospitals and drug stores are reporting outbreak of asthma attacks triggered by dust and pollution. Doctors say the pollution can cause headache, sneezing, coughing, nausea, fatigue, skin rashes, irritation of nose, throat and eye, rise in blood pressure and heart diseases.

According to a recent survey conducted by the Department of Environment (DoE), lead content in the city's air has reduced signifi-

cantly since 1998 due to a ban on import of leaded petrol. In that year, the DoE survey found 250 nanogram of lead in one cubic meter of space, which is around 70 nanogram this year.

A survey by the Atomic Energy Commission in 1998 had found 463 nanogram of lead in one cubic meter of space. Officials said the commission's latest survey showed the level at 100 nanogram.

The latest finding on lead content is much below the acceptable limit recommended by the World Health Organisation.

But the DoE survey found an alarmingly high rate of dust and particulate matters in the city's air. The air is also highly polluted with high content of nitrogen oxide.

According to Dr. Rashedul Hasan of the Asthma Centre at the National Chest Diseases Hospital, the high percentages of carbon, c o a l , l e a d

SEE PAGE 11 COL 2

Life far from normal at Araihaazar Probe team visits spot five days after formation

FROM OUR CORRESPONDENT,
Narayanganj

The situation in and around Narandi village in Araihaazar thana is yet to return to normalcy five days after the villagers-police clash in which three villagers were killed in police firing and over 200 people including 40 policemen were injured.

The clashes ensued from a dacoity at a house at Narandi on the night of Wednesday last. Villagers clashed with police because of what they said involvement of police in the dacoity.

The villagers said they are still afraid of harassment by police.

Talking to this correspondent yesterday, many villagers expressed their disappointment as high police officials said without investigation

that the policemen were innocent. They said three persons were killed by police but they (Araihaazar thana police) did not record it as a murder case and instead took it as a

case of "unnatural death". Symptoms of ferocity of the clashes are still there. The tempo used by police is still left in a road

SEE PAGE 11 COL 7

BSMMUH stand-off SKSP for prompt implementation of govt decision

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Leaders of Sarkari Karmachari Samannaya Parishad (SKSP) yesterday urged the government to take effective measures to immediately implement its decision to retain the previous status of the Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujib Medical University Hospital (BSMMUH).

At a press conference held at the Jatiya Press Club, the SKSP leaders expressed their resolve to resist any conspiracy to foil the government move. They also hailed the government decision to shift the medical university to another place.

Mohammad Abdul Mannan and M. Saleh Uddin Selim, president and general secretary of SKSP respectively, and Abul Kasem, president of Class Four Employees Union of the PG Hospital, were among those who

SEE PAGE 11 COL 4



A concrete slab, supported by iron clamps and precariously balanced on an under-construction footbridge at the crossing near the Science Laboratory, may come down crashing on the busy Mirpur Road traffic any moment and cause heavy casualty. (See editorial comment on page 4)

Biman unhappy over termination order for KLM contract

SHEHAB AHMED

The Ministry of Civil Aviation and Tourism and the management of Bangladesh Biman are at loggerheads over the ministry's order to terminate a contract with the KLM Royal Dutch Airlines for maintenance of Biman's DC-10-30 aircraft engines.

The ministry's directive to the Biman authorities to terminate the agreement signed with the KLM's engineering and maintenance division earlier this year also threatened to sour relations between Bangladesh and the Netherlands on the issue.

Biman also faces a long legal tangle after the KLM threatened to take it to the court in London as per the agreement. Biman's legal advisor has also briefed the management about that the problems the national airlines would face if it went ahead with the termination.

The ministry has directed the Biman management to terminate

the contract serving three months' notice saying that it should invoke relevant sections of the agreement that provide for such action.

The Biman management told the ministry about the problems that would surface in case the contract was terminated.

It said Biman would not only be sued by the KLM for compensation but the national airlines would run the risk of facing problems in operating its six DC-10-30 aircraft. Biman sources said, at present the KLM has lent Biman two engines free of charge while it is overhauling one engine of a Biman aircraft. If the agreement was terminated, the KLM would ask Biman to return its two engines and refuse to return the Biman's engine as a retaliatory measure.

Biman has not been able to get back one of its engines from Air France, which had earlier maintained them for failing to pay its dues.

SEE PAGE 11 COL 8

Clarification

Col. (ret'd.) Oli Ahmed, MP, yesterday categorically denied to have been involved in any way in the incident in Chandanaish as reported in a news item carried by The Daily Star yesterday headlined, "Fear of arrest, backlash sends 4000 youths into hiding".

The BNP lawmaker said that he had always fought against the use of armed cadres in politics and that he had never resorted to violence throughout his political career.

Oli Ahmed urged the local law-enforcement agencies to take tough measures against the armed hoodlums who have unleashed a reign of terror in Chandanaish.