

War veterans

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are of three categories. Freedom fighters who lost both legs or hands and move in wheel chair get Tk 6500 per month. Those who lost one leg or arm get Tk 2670 and others Tk 2004.

"These are meagre amounts", Mofazzal Hossain, supervisor of the centre and a freedom fighter from Barisal said. "I get Tk 3200 a year for education of my children. This amount is too inadequate", said Hossain, father of six.

Modasser Hossain Motho, Bir Pratik, Shamsur Ali Mondol, Abu Sufian, Kayamuddin Mirtha and Sukkur Ali -- all confined to wheel chairs--are 'permanent residents' of the centre.

The war heroes said, the country is going to celebrate 30 anniversary of its independence but many of the freedom fighters lack accommodation and proper treatment facilities. Their children lack

education and job facilities, they said.

Construction of a multipurpose building for shops, offices and apartments on the centre's land could help solve many of the problems including the accommodation problem of wounded freedom fighters who come to the city for treatment, they said.

They however said the mobile phones they received from the Trust help them maintain contact because they are physical disabled. The Trust arranged mobile phones for 27 war heroes confined to wheelchairs at the centre.

They said the 30th anniversary of Victory Day will bring nothing new for the country and the war heroes. But they are hopeful of a "renaissance" that will arouse the true spirit of the Independence War among the people, which will lead the country towards development.

Justice Sobhan to head AL HR convention body

STAFF CORRESPONDENT
Justice KM Sobhan will head a steering committee for organising the Awami League-sponsored 'national convention on crimes against humanity', scheduled to be held in the city next month.

He decided to make Justice Sobhan chairman of the committee was taken at yesterday's AL Central Working Committee (ALCWC) meeting, 20 days after party chief Sheikh Hasina announced her plan to hold the planned convention.

However, names of other members of the committee have not yet been finalised, AL sources said.

The convention aimed at projecting the government's alleged indifference to post-polls incidents of repression on the minority community and attacks on AL leaders and workers is scheduled to be held from January 17 to 19.

Initially, AL wanted to woo other progressive political parties to be co-sponsors of the convention to give it an all-party character. But the initiative hit snags when the mainstream left parties declined to be "directly involved" in the AL-sponsored convention.

3 killed

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ing rice from Rangpur hit rod-laden Bogra-bound truck. The truck carrying iron rods skidded off the Dhaka-Bogra highway, witnesses said. Two people were killed on the spot. Eight critically injured were admitted to the hospital.

Another report adds: Belkuchi police yesterday recovered the body of a 45-year-old unidentified man from Bera Barua char area.

The body was sent to hospital morgue for autopsy.

A case was filed.

Hit list of 120 staff

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voluntary retirement, or may be given forced retirement upon completion of 25 years' of service.

Those who are yet to complete 25 years in service may be sacked through filing of departmental cases on charges of corruption, irregularities and violation of government service rules.

Sources said the government has also decided to give forced retirement to those officials and employees who are highly biased towards Awami League and had 'directly worked against the BNP and acted like party workers during the last five years.'

"We do not want political activists in government service. We want all civil servants to neutrally discharge their duty irrespective of the party in power," said an influential minister. "Our government is eager to free the administration from the politically motivated people."

Sources alleged that the move to

give forced retirement has created a deep sense of resentment and panic among the officials and employees who fear being victimised by their adversaries.

They said some over-zealous pro-BNP officials and employees are out to create anarchy in the administration and are trying to victimise innocent civil servants.

Sources alleged these officials and employees are taking advantage of the government's sentiment and are trying to get various advantages through their actions.

The officials and employees, who have been included in the forced retirement list, are now pleading the BNP leaders to get their names dropped from the hit list.

Meanwhile, official sources said the government has instructed all ministries to complete departmental inquiries into alleged corruption and irregularities of officials and employees within a month.

BTTB monopoly

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Sources said there is confusion about "legitimacy" of the deal as it was supposed to be signed with the Telecommunication Regulatory Commission (TRC) but WorldTel signed it with MPT.

Implementation of the project could meet the demand for fixed telephones in the city to a great extent and end the monopoly of state-run BTTB.

The demand for fixed telephone is quite high and is expected to grow, according to a World Bank study. The waiting time for a BTTB phone could be up to 13 years, it said.

The gap between demand and access to lines is constant at 300,000 since 1992, according to a study by telecom consultant Coopers & Lybrand.

BTTB now charges Tk 18,400 as installation fee for a fixed telephone, which is one of the highest in the world.

WorldTel had earlier said that it would initially provide 50,000 fixed

telephone lines and access to mobile phones in Dhaka and adjacent areas next year at a competitive price, using BTTB infrastructure. The project also envisages providing "high-speed Internet access".

Under the deal, the company would give the government 10 million dollars as license fee, 2.5 per cent of the gross revenue and 10 per cent equity free of charge.

WorldTel would invest 300 million dollars in the project, to be implemented on a build-own-operate (BOO) basis, the sources said.

WorldTel earlier signed a deal with an Indian company, Mahanagar Telephone Nigam Limited (MTNL), for implementation of the project and maintenance of the proposed network.

The source said the government plans to allow telephone services in the private sector in Chittagong, Sylhet and Khulna cities.



A three-member delegation of the Acid Survivors Foundation comprising Adv Sigma Huda, Kazi Fazlur Rahman and Jean Morrison called on Prime Minister Khaleda Zia at the PM Office yesterday.

Polar Ice Cream

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He was receiving treatment at his Bohodderhat residence yesterday but was too weak to speak because of torture.

Shahjahan was abducted from Bohodderhat crossing, some 300 yards off his residence, while he was returning from office at about 11.30 pm on November 26.

On the following day, the kidnappers demanded Tk. 20 lakh ransom from his family over telephone.

He was allegedly kidnapped by a gang of terrorists led by Pappu and Javed belonging to Bangladesh Chhatra League as he reportedly refused to pay them toll.

Police arrested four persons including Pappu's father and a cousin of Javed in this connection.

Through gestures, the victim gave to understand that after kidnapping, he was blindfolded and taken in a microbus to a two-storied building in an unknown place. He said he saw firearms and other lethal weapons in the room he was kept. He was severely tortured and also beaten by iron rods.

He informed that the kidnappers left him after a three-hour journey by microbus.

High officials of Chittagong Metropolitan Police visited the victim yesterday morning and tried to talk to him.

Police suspected that two sons of a terminated staff of the ice-cream company might be involved in the incident.

The victim's brother declined to say whether he paid the ransom.

BNP leader murder Two arrested in Bagerhat

UNB, Bagerhat
Police yesterday arrested two persons, including a Jubo League leader, in connection with the killing of district BNP vice-president M A Awal.

Of the arrested two, Khalil Mollah is a member of the outlawed Purba Banglar Communist Party while Selim Azad, a Jubo League leader. They were held from Fakirhat and Sreeghat areas respectively.

Awal, also a former upazila chairman, was shot dead by gunmen while he was reading a newspaper in front of a drug store on the Masjid Road at Bagerhat Wednesday afternoon.

District BNP yesterday announced a weeklong programme in the district demanding arrest and punishment to the killers.

Violence: Raozan, Fatikchhari

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Talking to this correspondent, the SP said Fatikchhari and Raozan police have already been ordered to conduct regular raids with the help of BDR for arresting the terrorists and recovering illegal arms.

"But I don't understand why the local police are going very slow in this regard," he said. "I will continue my efforts to keep the situation under control."

Some sources say the 'chain of command' in police in Chittagong, north zone, has broken, resulting in deterioration of law and order in Raozan and Fatikchhari. But police denied this.

In most of the areas in the two upazilas, people are afraid of coming out of their houses after evening due to rise in incidents of mugging, dacoity and killing.

At least 50 people including four goldsmiths were abducted from Raozan and Fatikchhari in the past two months and later freed on huge amounts as ransom, sources mentioned.

The victims did not dare to file cases against their abductors and many such cases of abduction, rape and mugging remain unreported.

A businessman was abducted last week from Gohira while he was returning from an 'Iftar' party there. He was freed after two days on payment of ransom to a local terrorist group.

An armed gang hijacked a motorbike from a youth just in front of his house Friday evening at Dabua village in Raozan upazila. Several hundred villagers chased the gang, forcing it to leave behind the motorbike, police and local sources said.

The gang equipped with sawn-off rifle, LG and gun came from Fakirtila and Hingala areas near Dabua village. Police are yet to nab the gang members although they are roaming freely.

According to some sources, a large number of terrorists are taking

'training' in the hilly areas of Fakirtila, Golachipa, Brindaban, Panchpukuria and Hingala of Raozan. They have also established links with activists of Pahari Chhatra Parishad staying in the villages of the Chittagong Hill Tracts (CHT) and jointly realise illegal toll from land owners and farmers in Brindaban, Panchpukuria and Yasinnagar areas in Raozan. If anybody refuses to pay illegal toll, he is taken to the hilly areas of CHT.

The terrorist groups change their 'colour' with political changeover to continue their criminal activities in Raozan and Fatikchhari. Last week, two leaders of such groups were killed in a gunfight between them at Fatikchhari.

A group of terrorists led by one Azizul Huq at Hingala allegedly imposed toll on every family there and those who refused to pay had to flee their homes.

White paper committee

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Till date, he added, the committee has gathered "primary documents" on alleged irregularities involving the ministries of telecommunications, energy, industries, shipping, education, public works, food, civil aviation and livestock.

In cases, the ministries concerned are also finding it difficult to substantiate some of the "highly politicised allegations" of corruption because there are no documentary evidences to prove those, pointed out a secretary asking not to be named.

The delay in preparation of the 'white paper' is also being caused by the committee itself as it prefers not to accept any allegation of corruption without adequate documentary evidences. "Because, the government is supposed to initiate cases on the basis of the planned white paper," the official explained.

Nonetheless, the committee expects to get "inputs" from the Bureau of Anti-Corruption and the Enam Committee, both working on allegations of corruption and irregularities during the AL rule, sources said.

Meanwhile, the Prime Minister's Office (PMO) is monitoring the progress in preparation of the 'white paper' and is asking the committee to speed up its work.

Despite the fact that fighting corruption is one of its top priority election pledges, the coalition government formed the 'white paper' committee on November 6, 18 days after the prime minister spelled out her 100 days' commitments and nearly a month after she took over.

Furthermore, the committee has

Foreign missions

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crat, is tipped to replace Ahmed Tariq Karim in Washington.

Meanwhile, most of the ambassadors and political appointees of the previous government and those sent on contract have relinquished their positions or sought a few weeks time to complete their farewell calls before returning to the country.

Manzurul Alam, a senior diplomat posted to Sweden on extension, is also coming back.

Earlier, Nur Hossain, ambassador to Brazil, returned to the headquarters on completion of his tenure.

Hawkers rule

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DCC staff get money from hawkers for allowing them to run their business uninterrupted. DCC's Estate Department officials, however, denied the allegation.

About a year back, DCC and police had launched a joint drive to evict hawkers from free the city roads and pavements. The drive considerably eased movement of vehicles and pedestrians in many areas.

After playing cat and mouse with police for several months, hawkers started reoccupying the footpaths and roads slowly, and with the advent of Ramadan, they fully reoccupied those.

From early morning till late night, hawkers continue their trade in a wide variety of merchandise. Hawkers in Gulistan area said this time their customers were buying not only clothes and other things for the Eid but also winter clothes.

Traders at different shopping centres said the situation has also affected them. A number of shop owners at the New Market said this time the number of their customers has declined due to the hawkers.

Meanwhile, hawkers alleged that with the Eid nearing, extortion has increased. Each of them has to pay Tk 30 to 200 a day to the 'line-man', representatives of organised gangs of extortionists, depending on the location.

When asked, DCC Estate Department officials said that they had planned to launch a drive to evict hawkers this month but they could not do it due to 'non-availability of police.'

Kandahar surrender

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bloodbath" in Kandahar as tribal forces closed in.

Other talks were also happening "at a tribal level with Pashtuns, and within a regional context" with exiled Afghans in neighbouring Pakistan, he said.

Karzai, who returned from exile in October to stir up unrest among the Pashtun tribes, has been negotiating with the Taliban for weeks while leading local militia forces in a steady advance on Kandahar.

It is not known if Karzai is connected to commander Mullah Naqibullah, the former military commander of Kandahar who peacefully surrendered the city to the Taliban in 1994. Both men come from the Durrani Pashtun tribe, while Omar is from the Ghilzai.

Kandahar was under sustained US air strikes Thursday as US Marines based at a desert airstrip to the south moved out on their first offensive operation to cut off the Taliban's escape and supply lines.

"We have stepped into a new phase of the campaign, and that is participating in offensive actions," Major Jim Parrington of the 15th Marine Expeditionary Unit said.

"The marines were excited," Parrington said. "Every single one of them was very focused on what they were going to do."

"What we're doing is we're conducting operations in conjunction with the other coalition forces as they're putting pressure on Kandahar."

Omar, a seminary student and recluse who fought the Soviets during the 1979-89 occupation and went on to found the hardcore Islamic Taliban movement in 1994, had previously ordered his soldiers to fight to the death.

He is understood to have been bunkered down in Kandahar throughout the US bombing campaign, which has seen daily strikes on the city since October 7 in retaliation for the Taliban's alliance with bin Laden.

The Saudi-born extremist and his small army of fanatical Arab loyalists blamed for the September 11 terrorist attacks in the United States were meanwhile believed to be holed up in the elaborate Tora Bora cave complex in eastern Afghanistan.

Attack on AL procession Complaint case against six policemen

COURT CORRESPONDENT
A complaint case against six police personnel, including Deputy Commissioner of Dhaka Metropolitan Police (East), was filed with the Chief Metropolitan Magistrate's Court, Dhaka, yesterday.

The accused are Nur Mohammad, Deputy Police Commissioner, Akbar Hossain, Assistant Commissioner, DMP, Mohiuddin Ahmed, officer-in-charge (OC) of Motiheel thana, sub-inspectors Faizur Rahman, Awarangozeb and Mohammad Jahangir Alam of the same thana.

Advocate S M Nazrul Islam, complainant of the case, alleged that the accused beat up Awami League leaders and activists in front of the party's central office at BB Avenue during Sunday's hartal when they brought out a procession protesting the repeal of the law providing life-long state security to Hasina and her sister, Rehana.

The magistrate Mohammad Emdadul Hoq ordered judicial inquiry into the matter.

Admin changes

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establishment ministry.

The government yesterday extended the service of Education Secretary Shahidul Alam by a year. He was due to go on leave prior to retirement on December 12, but the government gave him one year's contractual appointment.

The newly appointed Principal Information Officer (PIO) of the Ministry of Information, Syed Sujauddin Ahmed, has been transferred to the National Institute of Mass Communication (NIMCO) as its director general.

The government is yet to choose a PIO. However, sources said the government is planning to appoint a pro-BNP journalist in the post.

In-charge of Chief Conservator of Forest Department Nuruzzaman has been made officer-on-special duty (OSD) and was transferred to the establishment ministry.

Joint Secretary of the Public Service Commission (PSC) Secretariat AFM Abdul Haq Chowdhury has been transferred to the Ministry of Disaster Management and Relief. Joint Secretary AK Shamsuddin, who was an OSD in the establishment ministry, has been transferred to the PSC Secretariat.

Member of the Tax Appellate Commission Abdul Malek has been made joint secretary of Roads and Highways Division.

Another OSD joint secretary, Mohammad Shamsul Haq, has been transferred to the Ministry of Food.

Official sources said the government would soon bring more changes in the administration as it feels many officials were wrongly transferred by the previous government.

Sources said the government immediately after assuming power transferred a large number of officials, including senior most secretaries, as suggested by a group of young 'pro-BNP' officials and party men popularly known as 'Kachi Kanchar Ashore' (group of kids).

An assistant press secretary (APS) of the prime minister report-

edly played a key role in the transfers and reshuffle in the administration. Officials at the secretariat and the Prime Minister's Office alleged that a good number of competent and honest officials became victims as they were not in the good book of the APS.

They said the officials, even the secretaries, who did not keep in touch with the APS after the BNP assumed power, were transferred to less important ministries. Some were also made OSD.

Newsmen

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Bindu Prasad Chakrabarti, of ETV. Ahad Haider of Prothom Alo, Shah-e-Alam Tuku of BSS, Azadul Haque of Runner and Abdur Rob Mollah of Jannabumi were wounded in the attack. Among them Babul Sardar's condition remains critical.

Supporters of Jatiyatabadi Chhatra Dal (JCD) manhandled Mohammad Moniruzzaman, correspondent of Danik Jangoran in Nalchity on October 20, following publication of an article they didn't like.

Amnesty international in its latest report has demanded the immediate and unconditional release of Shahrier Kabir is a former journalist.

Reporters Sans Frontiers (Reporters without Borders) and Bangladesh Center for Development, Journalism and Communication (BCDJC) protested such 'violence' perpetrated by BNP activities against media personalities.

In a written statement, the organisations urged the Prime Minister Khaleda Zia to use her good office to bring an end to such violence. They also demanded the culprits be put behind bars be prosecuted.

Several organisations in the country have called on the government to release writer and columnist Shahrier Kabir.

The offices of a national daily and a regional one came under attack on October 20 by miscreants whereby two reporters was threatened with death and another was attacked.

Hasina on hartal

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students in the name of student politics. The then president Ziaur Rahman had linked student body with the mainstream political party, she alleged.

"But we want to see student bodies to do politics on issues relating to their educational life and not to become lackeys of political parties," the AL chief said.

Yesterday's ALCWC meeting was the last one before Hasina goes abroad. She would be off to Florida, US, tomorrow and celebrate the ensuing Eid-ul-Fitr with her son, daughter and grand daughters living there.

The meeting decided that during her absence for about a month, senior presidium member Abdus Samad Azad would be acting president of AL.

Hasina also gave her views on gas export issue and obtaining bails by some accused in the Jail Killing Case.

"If court grants bail, we have nothing to say about it, but we feel concerned about establishing rule of law in the country when these people get released," Hasina said referring to bail for two of the accused in the case.

Meanwhile, the former prime minister welcomed the High Court injunction on the government against gas export and said this saved AL from undue blame by BNP on the issue.

"Since coming to power, BNP has been accusing AL of trying to export gas (while in power) through pipeline by signing PSCs (Production Sharing Contracts). But the accusation has now proved false,"

Hasina said.

The ALCWC took note of 'unabated repression' on members of the minority community and also on AL leaders and workers and reviewed the prevailing situation in the country.

In a resolution, the meeting protested Finance Minister Saifur Rahman's recent remarks relating to 'repression' on the minority. It alleged that during his recent visit to New Delhi, Saifur put the blame on AL while hiding the government's 'crimes'.

Hasina alleged that police stations across the country declined to accept cases which the 'victims of repression' wanted to file.

JCD leader

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was gunned down at the DOHS.

Four armed youths coming in a yellow taxicab went to the spot and fired at least 12 bullets, killing the JCD leader on the spot, some sources said.

Police recovered the body and sent it to Dhaka Medical College Hospital (DMCH) morgue for autopsy.

Some other sources said the JCD leader was killed following a dispute with some local youths over his trade in garments cut pieces in the area.

He hailed from Balakot, Chatkhil in Noakhali.

The duty officer at Kafrul thana said last night their men went to the spot and to the hospital, but none was arrested and no case was filed as yet.

Lankan opposition

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begin a new era where we do away with confrontational politics."

Dissanayake said he had to consult secretaries of all political parties on Friday to decide what action to take over several polling booths affected by violence and rigging.

The election, conducted on a system of proportional representation, requires all ballots to be counted before the final party positions are announced.

Out of about 4.18 million ballots counted so far, the UNP had received 49.21 per cent, while the ruling People's Alliance was trailing with 37.79 per cent. A Marxist party was a distant third with 8.47 per cent.

Officials said computer projections predicted the UNP would have between 113 to 118 seats in the assembly -- sufficient for the party to form a government on its own.

State-run television abruptly stopped its anti-opposition editorial line and announced that Wickremesinghe's UNP was set for a "magnificent victory".

The blood-soaked election campaign was fought over the poor state of the economy and the long-running war against the Tamil Tigers.

Analysts called the apparent opposition victory a vote to revive the country's moribund peace process and end decades of ethnic bloodshed which has claimed more

than 60,000 lives.

The UNP campaigned to open talks with the Tigers by reviving a Norwegian-sponsored peace process while President Chandrika Kumaratunga's government advocated a more hawkish approach to the rebels.

The ruling party lost in both Kumaratunga's home constituency of Gampaha and Prime Minister Ratnasiri Wickremanyake's Horana district, although Wickremanyake could still return to parliament under the proportional representation system.

Kumaratunga appealed for calm as relatives buried 10 members of the minority Muslim community gunned down Wednesday, allegedly by PA supporters, in the central district of Kandy.

At least 60 people were killed during the five-week campaign period which saw bloody clashes between political parties.

Kumaratunga, who remains head of state and commander-in-chief of the armed forces at least until December 2005, could now be forced to work with a hostile parliament.

Notice
The Daily Star has decided not to publish AL President Sheikh Hasina's article on her reasons behind calling hartal as we have already covered the matter extensively through our front-page report yesterday.