

Death of 5 partymen at Paltan: CPB still awaits justice

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Even a year after the death of five party men in a powerful bomb explosion, the Communist Party of Bangladesh (CPB) seeks justice. "A year passed by, but we didn't get justice," CPB General Secretary Mujahidul Islam Selim lamented while recalling the January 20 bomb explosion.

This day last year, four people were killed and 50 others injured in a powerful bomb explosion at a CPB rally at Paltan Maidan in the city. One of the injured died later.

The same day, two more were killed and several others injured in another bomb explosion on the

'Help formulate IT policy'

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Commerce Minister Amir Khasru Mahmood Chowdhury yesterday urged the entrepreneurs to come forward with suggestions to help the government formulate a comprehensive national policy on Information Technology (IT).

The government will formulate the IT policy shortly, the minister said at a roundtable on "Recent challenge of IT and our tasks ahead" at the IDB auditorium in the city yesterday.

He also assured that the government would help develop the vital sector in line with the global changes.

"But initiatives must come from the private entrepreneurs and the government will support them," said the minister.

He informed the roundtable that the task force to formulate the policy, headed by the prime minister, would sit within this month to review the proposals received so far in this regard.

Jointly organised by the e-biz, an IT-related monthly magazine, and Bangladesh Computer Samity (BCS), the discussion identified main obstacles to developing the IT sector and made suggestions to overcome them.

Zia was the architect

FROM PAGE 1

Shamsul Islam, the discussion was also addressed by Health and Family Welfare Minister Dr Khandakar Mosharrar Hossain, Prof Emazuddin Ahmed, Prof Yusuf Haider, Prof Majed and former foreign secretary Tobarak Hossain.

They recalled the declaration of the armed struggle against the occupation forces in 1971 by Ziaur Rahman and his courageous role in the liberation war as a valiant freedom fighter.

The speakers lauded the foreign policy pursued by late president Ziaur Rahman that brightened the image of Bangladesh in the international arena.

Earlier, hundreds of people thronged the mazar of president Ziaur Rahman to pay homage yesterday.

People from all walks of life, including leaders and workers of Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP) and its front organisations and other professional organisations, were seen waiting in queue with wreaths to place at the mazar of Ziaur Rahman, founder of BNP, who was assassinated in 1981 at Chittagong

Palestinian radio, TV

FROM PAGE 1

Israeli operation would have affected its transmissions.

Jibril Rajoub, Palestinian Preventive Security chief in the West Bank, said the Israeli move showed that Prime Minister Ariel Sharon "lacks any political horizon and war is his only option."

"This stupid Israeli government wants to destroy the symbol of Palestinian sovereignty. But Voice of Palestine radio is not only a building to be destroyed, it is inside the hearts of every Palestinian," Rajoub told Reuters.

Israel has accused the Voice of Palestine, which broadcasts the official positions of the Palestinian Authority, of transmitting inciteful material during the Palestinian uprising which erupted in September 2000.

Palestinians deny the charge and say Israel is trying to silence its media.

Series of Reprisals

Israel on Friday launched reprisals for the Palestinian attack at a Jewish bat mitzva, or coming-of-age party, in the northern Israeli city of Hadera on Thursday.

Six people were killed, most of them Russian-speaking immigrants, in the first major attack in Israel since Arafat declared a ceasefire a month ago under intense international pressure to end a wave of suicide bombings by militants.

The military response began with an air strike on a Palestinian security compound in the West Bank city of Tulkarm and a tightened military grip around Yasser Arafat's presidential offices in Ramallah. One Palestinian was killed in the

Organisation to conduct research on ZIA launched

UNB, Dhaka

A group of civil servants, teachers and other professionals yesterday formed an organisation to carryout research on the life of late President Ziaur Rahman.

The research organisation titled "International Institute of Zia Studies (IIZS)" was formally launched at a press conference addressed by its Chairman Ferdous Hasan, associate professor of the Political Science Department of Dhaka University.

Prof Ferdous said the organisation will conduct research on the life and works of late President Ziaur Rahman, whom he termed as architect of modern Bangladesh.

Dr Shajahan Kabir, Dr Syed Nasar Ahmed Rumi, Dr Ezaul Bashar Siddiqui, ANM Bazlur Rahman Musle Uddin, Prof Yarul Kabir, Parveen Agas, Dr Fazlul Kabir and Ahmed Musa, Dr Mustain Billah and Advocate Abdus Salam Mamun have been included in the 13-member board of directors of IIZS.

Krishak League leader dead

BSS, Dhaka

Valiant freedom fighter and eminent peasant leader Sheikh Abdus Samad died at his village home in Munshiganj district on Friday night at the age of 80.

Sheikh Abdus Samad left behind his wife, two sons, four daughters and a host of relatives and admirers to mourn his death.

An ardent follower of Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, Sheikh Abdus Samad was a senior leader of Awami League and the president of Munshiganj District Krishak League.

Opposition leader and AL president Sheikh Hasina expressed deep shock at the death of Sheikh Samad.

Attack on Gazipur AL leader

UNB, Gazipur

A local Awami League leader was critically injured in an attack near the DC office here yesterday.

A gang of terrorists hit AL leader Amanat Hossain Khan with sharp weapons while he was returning home in a rickshaw at noon.

Khan, former district unit president of pro-Awami League Chhatra League, was taken to Sadar hospital from where he was moved to Pangu Hospital in Dhaka as his condition deteriorated.

Indo-Pak

FROM PAGE 1

course of action on the basis of these responses," PTI quoted the hardline minister as saying at a peace seminar in New Delhi today.

India's government says a key test of Islamabad's sincerity would be action against 20 men in Pakistan wanted by New Delhi for attacks on India. The list includes Kashmiri and Sikh rebels as well as men with alleged links to the Bombay underworld.

23 criminals

FROM PAGE 1

They possess lethal weapons and firearms including AK-47 and are reportedly sheltered by political parties.

The sources claimed that some of the listed criminals have crossed the border. Some others are moving freely in the city as they enjoy blessings of the government and the police administration, they claimed.

Listing of the criminals and announcement of awards for their arrest is nothing new. This was done in the past also but most of them went scot-free due to their alleged close links with influential political leaders and ministers, the sources said.

White paper

FROM PAGE 1

The United Nations Development Fund (UNDF) and the Asian Development Bank will participate in the conference and are likely to prepare a needs assessment for Afghanistan.

Foreign ministry sources in Dhaka said a 15 billion US dollar rehabilitation plan -- five billion dollars to be raised in 30 months-- is likely to be drawn up at the conference for development of Afghanistan in phases. Kabul's new leaders will "present their vision to create a viable economy after decades of devastation."

There is a strong feeling in political and diplomatic circles that Bangladesh must extend its helping hand to Afghanistan as people of the two countries have long cultural and historical ties.

"Our position has always been to be close allies of the Afghan people" said Foreign Secretary Shamsher Mabin Chowdhury.

As an expression of solidarity, Dhaka sent its Ambassador in Uzbekistan and its Deputy High Commissioner in Pakistan to the installation ceremony of the interim government in Afghanistan, braving the odds of travel at a difficult time.

Only 24 countries sent representatives to the installation ceremony. Bangladesh businessmen and NGOs intend to participate in the reconstruction of Afghanistan.



Awami League leader and former minister Amir Hossain Amu (left) and former minister Anwar Hossain Manju coming out of the High Court after they were granted anticipatory bail by the Court yesterday.

Experts suggest formulating nat'l policy for development of IT sector

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Information and Communication Technology (ICT) experts have suggested formulating a national IT policy, appointing highly qualified professionals at government level and providing adequate budgetary allocation for the development of IT sector in the country.

Besides, efforts should be made to market the products of ICT industries at home and abroad and create 'an investment-friendly environment' in the country for sustainable growth of this sector,

said the experts on the third day of the convention titled 'Tech Transfer 2002', a gathering of Non Resident Bangladeshis (NRBs) working in ICT sector.

Six sessions on different aspects of ICT in Bangladesh were held in the city yesterday.

The session titled 'ICT Marketing and Promotion' was chaired by HN Karim, president of Bangladesh Association of Software and Information Services (BASIS). Vice Chairman of Export Promotion

Tk 3000cr misappropriated

FROM PAGE 1

"The government continued to raise the number of ministers while poor people were under acute economic hardship and businessmen could not operate their businesses due to extortion and hooliganism," she alleged.

Referring to the Prime Minister's promise to curb terrorist acts in the country, Hasina said, "How the people give nomination (in the last parliamentary polls) in exchange of bribe can wage a war against terrorism and corruption?"

"The government that declared a war against terrorism could not even protect a temple."

Hasina said all citizens have the right to practise their respective religions. People of all castes and creed took part in the War of Liberation at the call of Father of the Nation Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman. Hasina said her party followed the ideology of equal rights for all irrespective of religious beliefs.

She quoted a verse from the Holy Quran and said Islam guarantees freedom to people of all religions to perform their religious rites. Those who damaged the deity at Shanidev Temple neglected the teachings of Islam and interfered in religious freedom.

She alleged that minority community people were tortured, their homesteads damaged and women violated after the October 1 polls.

"Since the October 1 polls, repression continues on the minority community people as well as on Awami League leaders, workers and supporters. Those who came to power want to eliminate Awami League from this country."

On the recent by-polls in five parliamentary constituencies, the

Bureau Abu Saleh attended the session as special guest.

While presenting the key-paper at the session, Khadem Yusuf, a Bangladeshi ICT professional working in California said the ICT experts in Bangladesh lack project management ability. He emphasised on establishing contact between the ICT experts working at home and abroad.

A representative of Bangladesh Computer Samity (BCS) Moinal Islam, Technical Advisor of Export Diversification Project of World Bank David Holbourne, and Chief Executive Officer of bdjobs.com, a job website, AKM Fahim Mashroor also addressed the session.

While presenting a paper on 'Market Challenges of E-Commerce in Bangladesh: the case of online job market', Fahim Mashroor depicted a gloomy picture of investment in e-commerce here.

Giving a rough estimate of e-commerce ventures in the country during the last two years, he said 10 to 15 projects with an investment of Tk. 2 crore to 3 crore were initiated

during the period. Of them only three to four projects were financially sustainable, he added.

Fahim Mashroor said the government sector lacks the policy of adopting e-governance that could result in viable e-commerce ventures.

During the session, the speakers urged the government to follow the examples of some developing countries where highly qualified IT professionals have been appointed at important government posts increasing the budgetary allocations for the sector.

A number of IT experts criticised the government for giving little attention to the development of the ICT sector.

David Holbourne said many donor countries are now ready to provide financial assistance for preparing sustainable projects in this sector in Bangladesh.

Talking about the ICT policy in Bangladesh, the BASIS President said "A draft of the policy is expected to be prepared by February 12".

Shahriar

FROM PAGE 1

Shahriar is a noted personality and whether there is any possibility of his going into hiding. The AG admitted that he is a noted person and he is unlikely to go into hiding or to destroy evidences.

On the basis of the arguments, the court issued the interim bail order.

As a result of the bail order, there is no legal bar on Shahriar's release from jail, unless any new case is filed against him.

Barrister Amir was assisted by Barrister Tania Amir, Monjil Moshed, Shirin Sharmin and others. Barrister Shawkat Ali Khan also accompanied them.

Shahriar was arrested on November 22 at Zia International Airport without any charge, along with four video cassettes. On November 23, he was charged under Section 54 of the Special Powers Act without specific allegations and given one month's detention on November 25. When the detention period was about to be over, he was again given three months' detention. The government filed a seditious case against him on December 8.

PBCP cadets

FROM PAGE 1

Kalam, 30, came under attacks, when he went to Rakhalgachi Bazaar to see the PBCP procession. Injured, he was admitted to a hospital.

Officers-in-charge of Bagerhat Sadar Police Station and Fakirhat Police Station said, "We have heard about the procession. What can we do if a procession is brought out at midnight?"

Some villagers of Baliadanga and Pijanga villages said that these PBCP armed cadres were found working in favour of a BNP leader during the October 1 general election. They have since been moving at large terrorising, and grabbing tolls at gunpoint from the affluent.

Dhaka may send troops

FROM PAGE 1

About the sending of Bangladesh troops, a top official said, "When there is money in the Trust Fund, we can move our soldiers to Kabul".

Dhaka had agreed to a British request by Prime Minister Tony Blair during his recent visit to send troops to Afghanistan, under the aegis of the United Kingdom, but said it would monitor developments of the UN Trust Fund.

The ISAF for Kabul and its surroundings was created through a UN Security Council Resolution on December 20.

While normal peace keeping is under Article VI of the UN Charter, the stabilisation force in Afghanistan has been created under Article VII of the Charter.

Chapter VII calls for Enforcement Action involving high risk exposure and action while Chapter VI deals with routine peace keeping work and is considered a normal 'blue helmet' peace keeping operation.

Bangladesh is now the largest UN peacekeeper in the world.

The ISAF, popularly known as Afghanistan Stabilisation Force, was formed by the Security Council on receipt of an offer in writing from British Foreign Secretary Jack Straw dated December 19 that UK was willing to organise and lead the force.

Initially, it was decided that expenses of the stabilisation force would be borne by the participants. It was also decided that a Trust Fund would be established to seek financial participation of the member states.

The force is envisaged to assist the interim government in maintaining peace in and around Kabul and it is operate initially for six months.

Bushra murder

FROM PAGE 1

name of another accused, Ms Runu Kader, wife of M A Kader, the main accused in the case, was dropped from the charge sheet by three investigation officers.

Accused M A Kader, Kaniz Fatema Hena, Sheikh Shawkat Ahmed Ruhul and Sufia Begum were produced in the court during the hearing.

Another accused Sheikh Kabir Ahmed has been absconding since the incident.

Special PP Arfan Uddin Khan appeared for the state while Advocate Mahbub Ahmed, Shamim Ansan and Moselemuddin for the accused.

Rushdania Bushra Islam alias Phool, 18, a college student and daughter of a retired police officer, was raped and murdered at her Hazipara residence in the city's Rampura area on the night of July 1, 2000.

Rejoinders and our reply

FROM PAGE 1

DHV Consultants said that due to having an impressive proven record for successfully completing the World Bank-financed RRMP I and RRMP II, the World Bank recommended and the Government approved the appointment of Mahtab Uddin Ahmed as project advisor to NHB Road Project of the RRMP II.

The only relationship between Mahtab Uddin and DHV is that the DHV happens to be the lead consultant for the project. The World Bank, that besides other things, scrutinised the activities of the consultants and in no mission report have they mentioned about the misuse or lack of transparency in the utilisation of the consultant's resources, DHV said.

About the secret payment of 72 per cent of the fees while only 13 percent of physical works being accomplished, DHV said, "It is an irrelevant analysis of the consultant's performance and the completion of agreed assignments."

The consultant's tasks involve design, preparation of bid document, bid evaluation, institutional development and training, supervision of works and monitoring. Except for the supervision component, the remaining assignment has no reflection in the physical works.

The government and with concurrence of the World Bank have entrusted the consultants with additional design and supervision works for project components worth more than US\$ 40 million. The consultants are accomplishing some of these works by pre-financing from their own resources for the sake of the project.

Our reply: The World Bank is yet to approve the addendum-3 (extension of consultant's service) of the contract for the consultant firm DHV mainly because of "overspending, which amounted to 72 per cent of the whole consultation fees in man month for the local consultants".

Less than 13 per cent of the work done so far does not justify 72 per cent of payment in man month for the local consultation. The matter would receive 'serious scrutiny' of the WB during the oncoming review mission.

According to more than four top government officials, Retired Chief Engineer of the Roads and Highways Department Mahtab Uddin Ahmed did take part in various negotiations with the government on behalf of the firms.

Asked over the phone what authority he had attended a meeting chaired by the Secretary of

the Ministry of Communications Syed Rezaul Hayat and joined by Executive Director of DUTP Omar Hadi, Project Director of Mahakhali Flyover Shahabuddin and Chief Engineer of RH&D, Fazlul Haque in end-September, Ahmed replied that he was there "as an expert on World Bank affairs since he had served with the bank for a long time".

Ahmed declined to reply, when asked who had invited him there for the meeting. According to the officials present at the meeting, Ahmed represented the company and 'strongly lobbied' for the Chinese company, which had submitted the second-lowest bid for the Flyover Project.

Following recommendations from the communications ministry, the establishment ministry sent a proposal to the Prime Minister's Office on December 31, seeking approval for appointment of Mahtab Uddin Ahmed as the executive director of DUTP. This was done despite the fact that Ahmed is still on DHV payroll as an advisor. The Daily Star stands by its report.

Importer of gun cases to submit documents to customs today

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Ctg

The importer of the 'mysterious boxes' seized at Chittagong Port on Thursday will submit the related documents to the customs here today.

The owner of the importing firm Messers Vision Trade International was produced before an investigation cell comprising DB, DSB, DGFI and NSI officials yesterday.

The importer AKM Asif has been asked to submit his documents against the import of the 76 boxes containing gun-cases for 117 firearms at the department concerned of Chittagong Customs House today. The boxes were seized at jetty No. 13 of the port on Thursday evening.

Amu, Manju

FROM PAGE 12

Jatya Party, for three months. A criminal case was filed against him with Rajapur police of Jhalakathi district following a confrontation during the October 1 election, where he was also a candidate but failed to return.

Barrister Rafiqul Haq appeared for him.

Mismanagement

FROM PAGE 1

For each property sold in the city, DCC gets one per cent tax on the entire amount of sale.

Similarly, the incomes from and markets trade licences go to Sonali Bank to pay off Tk 30 crore, which it had over drafted earlier.

The Chief Accounts Officer of DCC has stopped attending office after some gunmen attacked him near his house recently. He came under attack when disgruntled DCC contractors learnt that bills of about 10 per cent of the contractors had discretely been cleared. The lucky contractors are none other than those having close links with the Mayor. The remaining 90 per cent of contractors are now regularly crowding the Mayor's office for realising Tk 90 crore in outstanding bills, sources said.

The Mayor's sudden decision to appoint 1,000 cleaners under 'master roll' last year has left a monthly burden of Tk 26 lakh in pay. Officials and some Ward Commissioners said it was an unnecessary move by the Mayor to strengthen DCC's 5,000-man team of cleaners. Some of them termed it a 'political move'.

Fuel cost of the DCC rose to Tk 90 lakh from about Tk 40 lakh last year while the fleet of its vehicles remained almost the same. One

source alleged that incidents of biggest pilferage take place in the Engineering Section (Mechanical and Civil) of the DCC.

Officials and Ward Commissioners at the Nagar Bhaban said there has never been any planned approach to improving DCC services. Most of the development works done in the city spending hundreds of crores of taka were of inferior quality and lacked vision. Inferior constructions became a permanent burden to DCC because those constantly required expensive repair. One of many reasons for financial crisis of DCC is lack of initiative to conduct general assessment for re-fixing holding tax. Defying laws (DCC Ordinance) which make it mandatory to conduct general assessment every five years, Mayor Mohammad Hanif has not done any assessment. The last assessment was done in 1989.

When contacted, Chief Executive Officer (CEO) of DCC AZM Shafiqul Islam declined to comment on the matter without 'permission from the Mayor'.

The Mayor, who was present in the office, could not be contacted despite repeated efforts.

The Chief Accounts Officer was also not available for comment on the issue as he stopped attending office after the attack on him.

Girls still victims

FROM PAGE 1

firmly under male control, makes her humble to her husband and work hard for her in-laws and helps prevent premarital sex.

"Many societies prize virginity before marriage and this can manifest in a number of practices designed to protect a girl from unauthorised sexual activity," an NGO worker said while talking to this correspondent.

Adolescent girls think that the ideal age for marriage should be between 18 and 20. This age is suitable for finding an eligible bridegroom. Marriage in this age also prevents premarital sex and removes anxiety of parents.

In many countries, early marriage is prohibited by law but is widely overlooked because of customs and religious practices. This is common where marriage takes place according to customary rites and remain unregistered.

"Use of law is in no way sufficient to prevent early marriage," said a lawyer. "In keeping with the spirit of the Convention on Rights of Child, an increasing number of laws have fixed the minimum age (for girls) at 18 years."

This is also the standard set by the 1990 African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of Child. This minimum age has also been suggested by the Convention on Elimination of all forms of Discrimination Against Women

(CEDAW) and the UN Special Rapporteur on Violence Against Women.

Advocate Salma Ali, Executive Director of Bangladesh Women Lawyers Association (BNWLA) said, "The biggest problem in detecting early marriage is lack of birth certificate and proper marriage registration. In most cases, as we have seen, parents show the age of girls above 18.

"Unfortunately we have seen a very few cases against early marriage due to the reasons I mentioned earlier", she said.

The impact of early marriage is wide ranging. This denies childhood and adolescence, psychological and emotional wellbeing, reproductive health and educational opportunities, and curtails personal freedom and opportunity to develop a sense of individuality, they said.

These create a profound psychological and emotional impact on young girls.

To prevent early marriage, government must review laws on marriage and enforce existing laws on registration of birth and marriage.

Without a birth certificate, a child has no defence against age-related abuses, said a lawyer. "In a country where the law on minimum age for marriage is ignored, lack of birth registration reinforces early marriage," he said.