

### Govt tried to block transmission of Hasina's address, alleges AL

UNB, Dhaka

Awami League has alleged that the authorities tried to block transmission of opposition leader Sheikh Hasina's speech on cybernetic channels also through lock system and hacking into website on Saturday.

"Having barred transmission of the speech through private TV channels by creating pressure, the government also attempted to hack into the websites through which Awami League yesterday finally released the speech of the opposition leader," said Hasina's political secretary Saber Hossain Chowdhury.

The ex-prime minister had scripted her speech as "address to the nation" for a critical appraisal of the 100-day political programme of Prime Minister Khaleda Zia's government.

Exchanging views with a group of journalists yesterday, Saber criticised the 'culture of obstruction' and said it is not a good sign for democracy.

Even after all this, he said, over 100,000 people in only 12 hours till noon yesterday browsed the websites and of them 40 per cent were from home while rest 60 per cent from abroad.

He alleged that the present government in last three months had created obstruction to holding meetings and rallies of AL, barred people from going to airport to receive Hasina and also restricted Hasina herself from taking a short

### Mayor's frail war

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During the dry season, the DCC requires about 20,000 litres of adulticide. However, the supplier stopped delivery after the DCC defaulted in Tk 10 crore payments, leaving the corporation coffers empty during the peak 'mosquito season'. The mayor somehow managed Tk 2 crore and talked the supplier into making fresh delivery.

The newly procured 3000 litres of adulticide are grossly inadequate and would exhaust before covering the VIP, VVIP and priority areas such as fairs, important meeting venues and diplomatic zones, sources said.

DCC officials said the corporation's larvae killing programme now continues with 30,000 litres of insecticide bought last year. But adulticide spraying by fogger machines, important to beef up larvae killing, was inoperative for nearly two months.

Meanwhile, the city is abuzz with mosquitoes after dusk, and at times, even during daytime. In many areas like Mirpur, Mohammadpur, Dhanmondi, Azimpur, Lalbagh, Postogola, Khilgaon, Moghbazar and Tejgaon, the situation is already gone beyond any conceivable limit.

The rundown city areas are the worst affected ones and vendors report spiking sales of mosquito repellents.

### DMCH burn unit

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'humanitarian ground' to get admission through the DMCH Emergency instead of the outpatient department (OPD).

At least 100 'selected patients' are on the waiting list now for admission. Most of them have serious burn injuries and need 'reconstructive operation' involving multiple surgeries.

Thanks to the Acid Survivors Foundation (ASF) for whose assistance and support females with acid burn injuries are admitted to the burn unit without any delay.

But many of them often have to wait for days or weeks with severe pain from deep burns before actual treatment begins.

"It is very unfortunate that despite performing at least two operations a day we have to keep

cut to Biswa Ijtema through Dhaka Cantonment.

Besides not allowing them to telecast the speech of the opposition leader, even those channels were barred from even showing it in the news, Saber told reporters.

The ex-deputy minister in the Hasina government questioned: "With all these examples insight will the opposition be allowed to talk in parliament?"

The main opposition party stayed out of the first session of the new parliament and the Awami League Parliamentary Party would sit today to decide what to do about the second session beginning January 31.

"Saturday's attitude made us skeptical whether the electronic media would be allowed to telecast opposition views in future," he said, adding that from now on they would monitor time allocation for the opposition on the electronic media.

To a question, the spokesman for the ex-PM said the Awami League president delivered the speech as she thought that there should have to be opinion of the opposition about government's announced programme.

Asked whether the prime minister deferred her "address to the nation" to watch what the opposition leader said, Saber said: "If so, then it proves that Begum Zia demonstrated her lack of confidence about the success of her own announced programme."

However, users are complaining that 'coils' used to repel mosquitoes are no more effective. Ahad Miah of Katashur Bazar showed a burning 'coil' in his shop and pointed at mosquitoes sucking on his leg. He said either the mosquitoes have grown immune to the smoke of the coil or the quality of the chemicals has degraded.

"The DCC spray men did not visit our locality," said Ahad, adding that his children now do their homework sitting inside mosquito nets.

DCC sources said due to severe financial crisis, the corporation could not conduct the usual cleaning programme during the on-going peak mosquito season. Every year, the DCC spends about Tk 30 lakh for cleaning ponds, lakes, low-lying areas and other places classified as potential mosquito breeding areas.

But the current financial crisis of the DCC has forced its health department to curtail programmes by one third. According to the chief health officer, only one of the 25 mosquito breeding grounds -- Mahanagar Jheel has been cleaned so far. About Tk 16 lakh has been spent this year for the cleaning programme under the mosquito eradication drive.

our patients on the waiting list for operation," said Dr Samanta Lal Sen, Chief of the burn unit.

Within six months, 517 surgeries have been performed at the burn unit's temporary operation theatre at Ward 35B.

But there is good news also. Since July 2001, work on construction of a separate burn unit building is going on under an eight crore taka project of the health ministry. The modern 50-bed Burn and Plastic Surgery unit is expected to be completed by June this year.

"We will have at least four well-equipped operation theatres at the new burn unit which will also provide facilities for training of young doctors. So facilities for proper treatment of burn injuries will increase," Dr Sen said.

### Wake-up call

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on a par, and empowering the BB to supervise the NCBs, among other things.

Other measures that the cabinet committee had to consider are setting up a public expenditure review commission, passing a freedom of information act, abolishing the official secrecy act, separating the audit and accounting wings, and setting up an independent comptroller and auditor general's office.

The donors have also demanded an end to suppliers' credit as this leads to heavy loan repayment burden with implications on the balance of payment.

### More changes

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Secretariat Saiful Islam have been given a one-year contract each with effect from January 26 and January 31 respectively.

The government has also given appointments to some senior bureaucrats in different ministries. Badre Alam, who was recently promoted as additional secretary, has been appointed at the Ministry of Agriculture. Another newly promoted additional secretary Abdur Rashid Khan has been attached to the Ministry of Establishment.

Earlier on Saturday, the government transferred secretary of the Bangladesh Handloom Board Mohammad Faruq Shikdar as Director of BSCIC while deputy secretary of the Civil Aviation and Tourism Ministry Kamrul Islam has been made OSD and transferred to the Ministry of Establishment.

Director of Department of Narcotics Control AKM Shamsuddin has been instructed to join as additional divisional commissioner of Sylhet Division by today (Jan 28) on administrative grounds.

The government has appointed deputy secretary of Ministry of Agriculture Dipendra Chandra Pal as director of BSCIC by canceling his previous appointment on December 29 as the director of National Book Centre.

### Simi's mother

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alleged that Khilgaon police had obstructed them from staging the demonstration. Police did not allow the demonstrators to use loud speakers.

At one stage, Simi's mother Zarina Begum went inside the police station and wanted to know why the culprits could not be arrested.

Bashar has been arrested on orders from the home minister but the other culprits are moving freely in the area, some residents of Bhuipapara alleged. But Khilgaon police are saying the youths are hiding since Bashar's arrest.

Simi's family members also alleged that the youths are threatening those protesting Simi's death and demanding arrest of the culprits.

Aslam, a friend of Simi and a freelance photographer, was man-handled by some accomplices of the culprits at Purana Paltan recently for protesting her death.

Few days ago, some leaflets were distributed in Khilgaon and adjoining areas vilifying Simi and her family members, the residents said.

### Rice prices

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held at the Relief and Disaster Management Ministry on January 20 decided to finalise projects both under the FFW and TR by February 28.

Besides, import tax and supplementary duty on rice has been increased to 44 per cent from 14 per cent, Food Minister explained adding that this might too have had some effect on the price.

The minister also suspected that some well-off farmers might have hoarded rice in the beginning of the Aman-harvest season.

"But, I guess they (hoarders) would have to offload their stock soon and release the rice to the market for cash. They require the cash for fresh investments on boro," Tariq said.

Considering these factors, the government has decided to wait for two more weeks before going for any sort of market intervention.

But other sources in the food ministry pointed at government's poor performance in its aman procurement drive. They noted that government's failure to intensify the drive forced poor growers to sell their produce to wealthy farmers.

The aman procurement drive launched on December 7 is due to be completed by February 28. But till late last week government could buy only under 50,000 MT of rice and paddy against a target of 2.5 lakh MT, sources said.

### Gunned down

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legs and was released from the hospital after first aid. Shot in the chest, Dilip was admitted to the same hospital.

The body of Samu was sent to the Dhaka Medical College Hospital for autopsy.

The miscreants also beat up a next-door shopkeeper who witnessed the incident. They also asked him not to disclose their names.

Recently, Samu set up a payphone and fax shop as a front for drug trading, another source said.

He might have been killed following a row over the control of drug peddling in the area.

The third of five brothers and four sisters, Samu went to Brunei for job and returned home few years back failing to do better.

The sources said Samu's elder brother was murdered at the same place the same way in 1982. His another brother Julu is also accused in the ward commissioner Shahabuddin murder case, the sources added.

The duty officer of Mohammadpur Police Station said no case was filed till last night.

The police further said they did not arrest anyone in connection with the incident but sent a squad to arrest the culprits.



A procession was brought out in Chittagong city as part of anti-polythene campaign yesterday.

### Committee on gas use

FROM PAGE 12 organisations, it was not possible for the committee to hold frequent meetings, said a source, explaining the need for additional time.

The other committee -- Gas Assessment Committee -- headed by BUET Vice-chancellor Dr. Nuruddin Ahmed is assessing the country's gas reserves, using Petrobangla's previous scientific studies, the USGS-Petrobangla, 2001 Gas Resource Study and the recent Norwegian-Bangladesh (Hydrocarbon Cell of energy ministry) study.

As three members of the Gas Usage Committee are also included in the Gas Assessment Committee, smooth exchange of information is taking place between the two.

Petrobangla's assessment of recoverable gas reserve is around 11 trillion cubic feet (TCF) plus four TCF previously consumed in the last 30 years. The Norwegian-Bangladesh study made public early this month puts the recoverable gas reserve figure at 16 TCF (plus four TCF previously consumed).

The USGS-Petrobangla study is not relevant in assessing current gas reserves as it focused only on what can be found, if explored, experts said.

The Committee on Gas Usage is looking into the following issues:

a. How the government should deal with Unocal's Bibiyana gas field, which has a proven reserve of 2.4 TCF. With the argument that Bangladesh's gas market was not expanding and thereby the Bibiyana gas field can not be developed soon, Unocal has submitted a proposal to the government to export its gas through a pipeline to New Delhi.

b. What is the long-term energy security scenario of Bangladesh? When will the existing gas reserve exhaust?

c. What were the objectives of the Second Round Block Bidding under which four production sharing contracts (PSCs) were signed?

d. What is the gas sector cash flow situation?

e. What are the ways of reducing dependency on the international oil companies (IOCs) in developing the country's gas sector?

f. What are the prospects in cross-border energy trade-off between India, Nepal and Bhutan?

### Khulna incident: 2 cops held

FROM PAGE 12

Six Powerful hand bombs were exploded and several shots fired before Tapan was whisked into a microbus in presence of court GRO Sub-inspector Pronab Das and four other policemen. Police remained absolutely silent and inactive when the terrorist was lifted from the court premises by his cadres, the lawyers said.

They further said that GRO Pronab Das was seen offering light refreshment to Tapan just a few minutes before the 'high drama' was staged.

According to eye witnesses and 'Mohoras' of the court, the eight others accused in the Rob murder case were sent back to jail custody at least half an hour before Tapan escaped. Tapan, accused in the same case, was kept in an open space, which enabled the armed cadres to snatch him.

The eight others brought to court in the case were Rangul Biswas, Rafiqul Islam Hitar, Humayun Kabir, Kana Babu, Shawkat Hossain Bitu, Motalab Hossain, Abdul Aziz Moin and Khrua Sayeed.

A senior lawyer of the judges' court said that as per rule, the GRO did not seek extra forces to ensure security in the court. Snatching of Tapan was pre-planned in connivance with all the police personnel in question, he claimed.

Meanwhile, the entire Rahimnagar union of Rupsha upazila has been brought under 'police control' for the time being on receipt of an information that Tapan and his cadres are hiding there in disguise.

According to the OC of Rupsha thana, the BPCP cadres along with Tapan reached 'Rupsha Kismet Khulna outpost' Saturday late

### Ban on polybags in Ctg from Feb 21

BSS, Ctg

Environment and Forest Minister Shahjahan Siraj yesterday urged the people to extend their help in enforcing a complete ban on poly bags across the country from March 1.

"We urge the Chittagong people to help impose the official decision permanently banning the use and distribution of thin polythene shopping bags here from February 21," he told a public rally at Laldighi Maidan here prior to leading a colourful street march that paraded different avenues of the port city.

Hundreds of students, officials and employees of government, semi-government and non-government organisations, health workers, environmental and cultural activists and people from all walks of life took part in the march carrying banners, trestons and placards with messages against polythene.

Department of Environment and Chittagong district administration jointly organised the rally and the march with assistance from Chittagong Chamber, Chittagong University and different socio-cultural organisations.

Director General of the Department of Environment Hedayetul Islam Chowdhury presided over the rally. State Minister for Environment and Forest Jafurul Islam Chowdhury, Mayor of Chittagong ABM Mohiuddin Chowdhury, Vice Chancellor of Chittagong University Prof Mohammad Fazlee Hossain, Shajahan Chowdhury MP, acting Divisional Commissioner Golam Kibria, President of Chittagong Chamber of Commerce and Industry (CCCC) Farid Ahmed Chowdhury, BNP leader Dastagir Chowdhury, Jatya Party leader Jahangir Chowdhury, Jamaat-ud-Din's Islamic leader Afsar Uddin Chowdhury and representative of the Association of Development Agencies in Bangladesh (ADAB) Monwara Begum, among others, took part in the discussion.

The environment minister said the government was committed to protecting environment at any cost.

afternoon. When ASI Sanwar Ali of Rupsha thana challenged them, they exploded five bombs and fired shots and moved towards Rahimnagar. "I thought they came to loot arms from the police camp," the ASI said.

A four member committee headed by the DC (North) has been formed to probe the incident. Other members are AC Fazul Huq, Inspector Shurawardy and Inspector Iddris Hossain of DB.

The Khulna District Bar Association at an emergency meeting Saturday afternoon expressed grave concern over Saturday's incident and demanded adequate security measures in and around all courts in Khulna. The meeting also demanded an impartial investigation into the incident, saying it has put a big question mark on the credibility and sincerity of police.

It is really a matter of great surprise that police personnel treat notorious terrorists with soft drink on court premises and offer them mobile phone to talk to their cadres, the lawyers said at the meeting. "Our life is not at all secure due to corrupt practices of a section of police personnel", the meeting was told.

APBN personnel were deployed in and around the District Judges' Court and the CMM's Court yesterday. Suspicious people are being checked and movement in court areas has been restricted.

On February 1, 2000, a Jubo League activist, Liton, was gunned down by outlaws in police custody in front of the District Judges' Court. Liton, accused in a murder case, was brought to the court from jail hajrat for hearing of the case.

### Duty-free access to jute goods

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"It should definitely be increased," Dawood said at the press briefing after the official talks at the commerce ministry in the evening.

Commerce Minister Amir Khasru Mahmud described the talks as "very fruitful" towards reducing the existing trade gap between the two countries.

"We have asked the Pakistan side to take concrete steps for increasing the trade volume and reduce the huge trade imbalance between the two countries," he said.

Earlier in the morning, the Pakistani minister on his arrival at the Zia International Airport told BSS that he was not happy with the trade gap.

"Imbalance is not a good sign. I would like to see the gap closing and trade figures increasing in favour of Bangladesh," he said.

In 2000-2001 fiscal, Bangladesh imported goods from Pakistan worth 90.53 million dollars against export of worth only 30.2 million, commerce ministry officials said.

The Pakistani minister told the press briefing that both sides agreed to adopt policies to increase economic activities between the two countries, re-addressing the trade and investment issues.

He said the Pakistan government will develop mechanism to import more items from Bangladesh including jute, tea and pharmaceuticals products.

Dawood, however, said there were "several implications" of giving duty-free access to some particular Bangladeshi items since both the countries are member of WTO and SAPTA but hastened to add that Islamabad would "think more on the issue to take a positive decision on Bangladesh's proposal."

The Pakistani minister also regretted the limited trade exchange between the SAARC countries, as the trade among the region is only five per cent compared to 90 per cent among the European Union nations.

He said differences among the South Asian countries should be resolved through discussions.

Commerce Secretary Shohel Ahmed assisted the commerce minister while Pakistani high Commissioner to Bangladesh Iqbal Ahmed Khan the visiting minister.

Dawood is leading a 29-member delegation comprising high officials and business leaders of his country.

The Pakistani minister will call on the President Prof. A. Q. M. Badruddoza Chowdhury and Prime

### Shahriar fears attack

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Shahriar said, adding that apart from being followed, his phones are tapped and his e-mail accounts hacked.

He said that he is the victim of the Home Minister's vengeance, as the minister's statement on post-election repression on the minorities would be proved false if his documentary 'Cry for Amity' were released.

He wondered how reports of "the branded fundamentalist daily Inqilab" could be the source for intelligence agencies to bring sedition charges against him. "The Home Ministry condemned reports of all other newspapers, but quoted Inqilab in favour of the charge brought against me," he said, adding that freedom fighters would always be traitors in the eyes of Inqilab as they created an independent Bangladesh breaking Pakistan.

Shahriar Kabir, who is also the acting president of Nirmul Committee, told newsmen that he incurred the wrath of the BNP-led four-party government as its power-sharing partner Jamaat was very angry with him following his documentary 'Cry for Peace'. The film, he said, unveiled war criminals Matur Rahman Nizami, Maulana Mannan and Delwar Hossain Saidee.

In his three-page speech, Shahriar told journalists that he was, in fact, arrested on his arrival on December 22 from Kolkata where he interviewed some people who were forced to leave their motherland Bangladesh after the October 1 election. He said his planned documentary on minority repression was aimed at exposing the character of the fundamentalist forces and enabling the establishment of a democratic society to ensure communal harmony.

He said he had been making documentaries for the last eight years, but had neither been ever charged with sedition nor were his footages seized.

Shahriar Kabir also described the way he was halted at ZIA, taken to the SB Office and how the government brought sedition charges against him. About his sufferings in the Dhaka Central Jail and the tortures meted out to him during interrogation, he said it was simply the violation of a citizen's human

rights. "Even petty thieves were allowed to meet their relatives during the Eid, but I was not allowed to meet my wife and son although they waited at the jail gate for hours on the Eid day."

Shahriar Kabir said that the government instead of arresting those responsible for minority repression has been arresting and harassing those who are protesting the human rights violation and demanding communal harmony.

He said charges should rather be brought against the BNP-led government as it damaged the image of the country to the international community by resorting to repression on the minorities.

In his speech, National Professor Kabir Chowdhury said that besides harassment, police repeatedly put pressure on Shahriar in various ways to disclose the names of his associates in order to bring the same charge against them.

Barrister Shawkat Ali Khan, Wahidul haq and, Nirmul Committee leaders Daulat Ara Mannan, Kazi Mukul and Shahim Akhter also attended the press conference.

### AL, BCL men

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ing on the court premises before the commencement of hearing. Awami League candidate for Chandaia constituency in the October 1 general election Afsaruddin Ahmad, Chittagong (south) district AL General Secretary Moslemuddin Ahmad and Chandaiaish thana AL President Nazrul Islam Chowdhury addressed the rally, among others.

### Ganges water

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shorly. However, a review decision is a matter of policy and does not fall under the framework of the current work of the joint committee. There is a provision in the treaty to ask for a review of the water accord after a period of five years, which ended in last December.

Sources indicated that water at both the Farakka point and the Harding point in the current season flows at the level as stated in the treaty.

A scientific committee formed earlier by the two countries to look into the water shortage during the first lean season is yet to submit the report of its findings.

### No intervention in police

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the afternoon, Khaleda Zia accused the past Awami League regime of inducing massive corruption, terrorism, nepotism and mismanagement when the members of the force could not perform their duties properly.

She asked them to work with sincerity and honesty as friends of the people and directed them to bring the identified criminals to book.

She assured that the lawbreakers would not be provided any shelter whoever they may be.

The prime minister reminded that they are paid from taxpayers' money and in return should do their duty of maintaining peace. She hoped that they would be able to fulfil the aspiration of the people.

Home Minister Altaf Hossain Chowdhury, State Minister for Home Affairs Luffuzzaman Babar, Political Secretaries Haris K Chowdhury and Mossadek Ali, Home Secretary Dr Sadat Hossain and Inspector General of Police Modabbir Hossain Chowdhury were also present at the meeting.

The prime minister asked the policemen to earn people's confidence by restoring peace and security in society. "Assistance of the police and the civil administration is needed most for success of a democratic government," she pointed out.

She assured that demands for appropriate food during pre-service training, risk allowance, modern training, due promotion and upgrading would be sympathetically looked into.

She mentioned that the new government within its short period decided to expand the force by taking 5,000 more policemen, provide more dresses, ensure risk allowances and other facilities. She asked the traffic policemen to restore discipline on the roads and ensure cleanliness of the cities and towns. Home Minister Altaf Hossain Chowdhury detailed the government plan for modernisation of the force.

### Cold wave

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region with a mild cold snap belying the forecast.

The rain would return and bring the temperature down with a fresh spell of mild cold wave, a senior meteorologist said.

The turmoil in the weather pattern, which had betrayed the meteorological forecast, took place due to arrival of the sub-continental high pressure and westerly jet winds in the upper atmosphere and easterly winds with moistures from the bay below.

The same situation likely to prevail again would trigger rains and bring the cold spell back, he added.

Srimangal in the northeast recorded the lowest minimum temperature of 7.5 degrees Celsius on Saturday.

### PM: Tannery Village

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leather trade houses from home and abroad are taking part in the fair.

Finance Minister M Saifur Rahman, Industries Minister M K Anwar, Commerce Minister Amir Khosru Mahmud Chowdhury, State Minister for Commerce Barkatulla Bulu, FBCCI President Yusuff Abdullah Harun and BLSLLF Chairman M A Sattar Bhuiyan also spoke on the occasion.

Mentioning steps already taken and being taken for development of the potential export sector, the prime minister called upon local entrepreneurs to bring diversity in production leather goods to successfully face the global challenge of trade market.

She said decision had already been taken to build "Tannery Village" at any appropriate place outside Dhaka shifting tanneries from Hazaribagh, given public health and future of the nation.

"New designs and products will have to be developed according to the demand of buyers. Quality of goods will have to be upgraded to