

Hasina: Govt torture

FROM PAGE 12
government constructed innumerable roads and bridges during its five-year rule and ruled the country with competence and sincerity.

"We had worked for the people and ensured peace and security of public life and two square meals a day. We turned the country into one with food-surplus and left a strong economic base."

Hasina said for the welfare of the Bastuhara (homeless people) her government had taken a lot of projects, including the popular Asrayan projects, housing project and Ghore Fera scheme.

"We had taken an initiative to ensure home for every homeless and provided homes to 33,000 families under the Asrayan project, which was taken to provide homes for 50,000 families," she said.

But the present government, she said, from the outset is saying that there is no money in the country to create an excuse for selling out gas. "You will have to understand what type of conspiracy is going on against you."

She alleged that the present government is dropping one project after another to create the scope for misappropriating money. They will again start these projects taking "bribes".

The Awami League president said prices of all things increased "for corruption and misrule" of this government.

This government has raised prices of petrol, kerosene, gas and

AL may discuss

FROM PAGE 12
February 15 deadline to reply to the show cause notices include joint secretary Mozaffar Hossain Paltu, members of the central steering committee Monayeem Sarkar, Siddiqui Rouf Khan, Nurul Fazal Bulbul, Prof. Fazlul Huq and Nurul Majid Humayun.

Party insiders said these top leaders would likely be excluded from the central committee.

Their possible replacements are deputy leader of the opposition Abdul Hamid, chief whip of opposition Abdus Shahid, former state minister Syed Abul Hossain, Zafarullah Chowdhury, former parliament member Latif Siddiqui and Saber Hossain Chowdhury.

Contempt petition

FROM PAGE 12
ments earlier.

Barrister M Amirul Islam made his submission before the court. He submitted to the court that Sheikh Hasina did not made such comments and at that time the court wanted to know whether she issued any rejoinder against the published reports.

Amirul Islam answered in the affirmative and the court directed him to submit such rejoinder before the court. As it was not available with Amirul Islam, he prayed for time. Upon his prayer, the court fixed the next date of hearing on February 11 and directed him to submit the same on the day.

'Little' Jonny

FROM PAGE 12
guardians obtained appropriate legal documents proving that he is not the boy they were looking for.

On April 28 1999, the Dhaka Kotwali police arrested a young man named Jonny in possession of a knife, sources said.

During interrogation, the youth told the police that his name was Jonny, aged 25, son of Abdur Rab, hailing from Bakra village under Jhikargachha thana in Jessore.

On May 4 the same year, the police pressed charges against Jonny, who later got bail from the court and has since gone into hiding.

Since he is absconding, the Chief Metropolitan Magistrate's (CMM) Court, Dhaka recently issued a warrant against Jonny.

Accordingly, Jhikargachha police last week went to arrest Abdur Rahim Jonny, a student of grade IV at a local kindergarten.

But the local influential persons and the school authorities thwarted the police move.

Since the name and address given in the warrant matched with Abdur Rahim Jonny's, he must be arrested, police argued.

The school principal countered the argument and said that Jonny, now nine, was only six years old at the time.

The principal told the police that Jonny was present at the school in Jessore, not in Dhaka, as shown in the school's attendance register.

The police, however, refused to accept these arguments.

Ganges water

FROM PAGE 1
for water data monitoring, including measurement and recording of water level at the Hardinge bridge point, were "in order".

The next meeting of the joint committee will be held in West Bengal at the end of this month.

The committee comprising experts from Bangladesh and India will monitor the water discharge at Farakka.

Embezzlement

FROM PAGE 1
the FIR that the money was embezzled by the principal accused Lutfor Rahman by forged means.

On March 12, 14, 18 and 23 last year he deposited embezzled money in his savings account and also in the savings accounts of two other accused at different dates.

The DGM has further stated that as an employee of the clearing section Lutfor Rahman was assigned to encash cheques through clearing house of Khulna branch of Bangladesh Bank.

These cheques belonging to clients of different branches of Agrani Bank were sent to the corporate branch for clearing through 'Debit Advice'. But accused Lutfor Rahman did not deposit the money to the branches after clearance of the cheques, the FIR said.

Police yesterday arrested Manik Khan, one of the three accused and an employee of Rupali Sea Foods Ltd, Khulna. Others are absconding.

Ershad Shikdar

FROM PAGE 12
acquitted. Twenty six prosecution witnesses were examined as learnt from the 37-page judgement.

The prosecution story in brief is that Insaf, Kamal and Khaleque were called by Ershad Shikdar to Skid Ghat from KDA New Market area on May 27, 1998. The accused took the three to the Ice Factory at Skid Ghat where Ershad himself hacked all the three to death.

At midnight, the bodies were cut into pieces and packed in three large baskets and then dumped into Bhairab river as told by Noor-e-Alam in his judicial confession. Handling worker Ayub Ali is the complainant of the case.

Insaf, Kamal and Khaleque were brutally murdered for not supporting Ershad's drug and women traffickings, Noor-e-Alam said.

Ershad and nine other accused were produced in the Judges Court amid unprecedented tight security.

He was not allowed to talk to his relatives including sons. Two platoons of police and two platoons of Armed police battalion were deployed at all key points from jail gate to Judge's Court.

Ershad Shikdar has already been given death sentences in seven murder cases.

Border talks

FROM PAGE 12
joined by a 14-member Bangladesh delegation led by Joint Secretary (political) of the Ministry of Home Affairs Janibul Haq, while Meera Shankar, joint secretary (north) of the Ministry of External Affairs led a 13-member Indian delegation.

At the meeting, the JBWG was divided into two components -- JBWG-I and JBWG-II -- to provide greater opportunity to address different aspects of border issues.

The Indian and Bangladesh sides pledged at the end of the meeting that "further detailed discussions would lead to a resolution of pending issues".

According to JBWGN TOR, other outstanding border disputes like intrusion and firing by border guards will not come under the purview of the talks. Nor will the outstanding issues related to maritime border demarcation, trespassing and construction of barbed wire fencing by the Indian side be addressed.

3 rivers

FROM PAGE 1
connection, the BUS will hold a rally at Trimohini village under Khilgaon thana today.

Voluntary organisation 'The Hunger Project' and 'Save Buriganga Movement' have supported their movement.

A similar rally was organised in March last year and about 10,000 people from 37 villages joined it.

Leaders of the BUS yesterday exchanged views with newsmen at Nasirabad High School in the area. Later, they brought out a procession of the villagers to press home their demand.

Villagers told this correspondent that they are facing a crisis of drinking water as they have to depend only on a few tube-wells for it.

President of BUS Suruj Mia said fertility of soil in the villages have greatly decreased due to use of highly polluted water of these rivers for production of crop.

"Once 20 to 25 maunds of paddy were produced per bigha and now only 12 to 15 maunds are produced," he said.

Asked about open pit latrines along river banks, the BUS leaders said they are providing interest-free loans for setting up sanitary latrines. "As literacy rate is low in the area, it takes time to motivate people to do this,"

They also called upon the government to solve the unemployment problem in the area.



Visiting delegation of the Communist Party of China placed a wreath at the National Memorial in Savar yesterday to pay tribute to the martyrs in the Liberation War.

Israel asks US for advanced warning in case Iraq attacked

AP, Jerusalem

Israel has asked for advance notice from the United States in case Washington attacks Iraq as part of its war on terrorism, Defence Minister Binyamin Ben-Eliezer said yesterday.

Ben-Eliezer said he told U.S. Secretary of State Colin Powell in a meeting in Washington on Tuesday that Israel needs time to prepare for a possible retaliatory attack by Iraq on the Jewish state.

The defense minister said he did not know whether there were U.S. States has not said if Iraq will be a target in the war on terrorism. In his State of the Union address last week, U.S. President George W. Bush designated Iraq, Iran and North Korea an "axis of evil."

The United States has accused Iraq of supporting terrorism and trying to rebuild its banned weapons programmes.

Ben-Eliezer said he did not give Powell his opinion on whether Iraq

should be attacked. Israel has in the past advocated tough U.S. action against Iraq and Iran.

"In the case of Iraq, it's important that we get an alert beforehand in order to prepare," he told Israel Radio. "We are taking into consideration that if Iraq will be attacked, we are likely to be one of its first targets."

During the Gulf War in 1991, Iraq fired 39 Scud missiles at Israel, causing great damage, mainly in the Tel Aviv area, and killing two people. Expecting the Scuds might be equipped with chemical or biological warheads, Israel distributed gas masks to citizens at the time. In the end, Iraq fired only conventional warheads.

Following the Sept. 11 attacks on the United States and the U.S. anti-terrorism campaign in Afghanistan, Israelis have crowded gas mask distribution centers to get their equipment checked. But the Israeli army has not yet ordered the population to take special precautions.

Israeli Prime Minister Ariel Sharon is expected to discuss the Iraqi issue in a meeting with U.S. President George Bush in Washington today.

AFP from Riyadh adds: Saudi Arabia is opposed to any US military strike on Iraq as part of a future phase in Washington's war on terror, an official Saudi source said yesterday.

"The kingdom does not favour a US military operation against Iraq," the source said, quoted by the Arab newspaper Al-Hayat.

Washington "has not broached with Saudi officials the possibility of carrying out a strike against Iraq," he said.

The use of Saudi Arabia's Prince Sultan Air Base and other military facilities is seen as essential for the success of any US campaign against neighbouring Iraq.

Another source quoted by Al-Hayat recalled Riyadh's position that any change to the Iraqi regime must come from within the country itself.

Shariar: Pro-liberation forces

FROM PAGE 1
Condemning the killing of the rickshawpuller in the violence triggered during the reception accorded to him at the port city, he said the bomb thrown by terrorists from a microbus was intended for the car he was to travel by but instead it killed the rickshawpuller.

Earlier, few days before his Chittagong tour, a number of organisations were formed to campaign against the holding of the reception for the writer-columnist, declaring him persona non grata at the port city.

Sources said the organisations were formed by some local people led by the president of Inqilab Readers Forum Abu Jafar Mohammad Anas, the son of a local Jamaat leader Mawla Shamsuddin.

Inqilab, from the very first day of its publication, has been publishing baseless, fabricated and motivated reports against the liberation heroes and intellectuals of the country," Shahrar added.

He termed Inqilab as the mouthpiece of the local agents of Pakistan who were defeated in the Liberation War of 1971 saying that their aim is to establish a 'Talibani state' in Bangladesh.

Shariar said that although the seditious charges brought against him have not yet been proved in a court of law, two newspapers have

already identified him as anti-state even after his release on bail.

In reply to a question he said he was keeping in touch with his lawyers and would file a case against Inqilab in this regard.

Asked if he was facing any embargo to complete his film on the repression on minorities, he answered in the negative. He said he was yet to find a producer for the film but would definitely complete it.

Among others, Professor Kabir Chowdhury, journalist Abed Khan, Ferdousi Priyobhashini and Shamim Akhtar attended the press conference.

Prof Kabir Chowdhury said, "It is very easy to identify the bomb-throwing culprits as they were among the very few people who agitated against Shahrar. But the government has instead been trying to implicate Shahrar Kabir in the murder along with some leaders of the organisations that accorded him the reception."

Abed Khan severely criticised the bid to obstruct Shahrar from entering Chittagong saying that in a democratic country everyone has the right to move freely as guaranteed by the constitution but the government had failed to ensure that. He said the present government had adopted the culture of attacking people and filing false cases against them.

"But people with open mind and

love for free thinking cannot be suppressed," Abed Khan said.

Khan also said that the present BNP-Jamaat government was ruling the country the way the Jamaat-Muslim League government did in 1971. It won't be too long before Jamaat starts attacking BNP, Abed added.

He also termed the claim of a section of people that the bomb was hurled from the press club as absurd, calling it an attempt to incriminate journalists.

"A minor section of the government is also trying to put journalists in the dock, and we must be alert about it," he said in an indirect reference to Jamaat leaders.

Teachers concerned

Bangladesh College University Teachers Association has expressed grave concern at the government decision to suspend five scholarship projects in science and technology, says a press release.

In a statement yesterday, association president Prof. DM Akhtaruzzaman and general secretary Prof. M.A. Bari said the decision is unjustified and suicidal at this time of globalisation when the nation needs more skilled personnel.

They demanded immediate withdrawal of the decision for the greater interest of the nation.

English version of textbooks

FROM PAGE 1
tions that require them. Most of the English medium schools in private sector use books printed outside the country.

"Printing of English version books of the NCTB is not financially viable as there is only a few thousand students taking lesson in English version of the books supplied by the NCTB," one source in the NCTB said.

He said the NCTB could supply books directly to the schools if they asked for English version of the books.

Meanwhile, sources in the printing industry observed that the government's decision to bring about changes in board textbooks significantly contributed to the delay in printing and distribution of textbooks for the current academic year.

The decision not only delayed the printing and distribution but also dragged down the quality of text contents and printing, which is a pre-requisite for maintaining standard of education.

There had been enormous opportunities to avoid the delay, as the Ministry of Education and the NCTB had perceived last year that the tender for awarding of jobs for printing of textbooks should be done by keeping enough time in

hand.

At a workshop in May last year, officials of different government agencies decided to form a committee comprising experts from the printing industry before awarding the job for printing of textbooks for the year 2002 keeping seven months in hand to avoid delay in printing and distribution.

Multiplicity of objectives in the book printing process had disrupted the printing and distribution of textbooks in time, the then Education Secretary Dr. Saadat Hussain disclosed at the workshop. The workshop was organised in the face of widespread media criticism over the NCTB's failure to print and distribute secondary level textbooks for academic year 2001.

Pustaka, a Beximco concern, was awarded the job for printing and distribution of 2.51 crore secondary level books by November 2000 but it failed to deliver till March 2001.

The past Awami League government also awarded the job for printing primary level books to two other Beximco concerns-Free press and Shuktaraby ignoring 750 experienced printers of the country citing that the Beximco concerns were the lowest bidders.

However, it was later revealed that the Beximco concerns had no experience of printing such a huge

volume of textbooks.

The Daily Star ran a story on October 19 last year where apprehension was expressed that the country was facing another textbook crisis due to the delay in awarding the printing jobs.

The delay in awarding the job for printing of textbooks, usually at the fourth quarter of every year, is one of the main reasons behind the textbook crisis, one source in the printing industry said.

"It is true that students need textbook right at the start of the academic year," said one NCTB official, who asked not to be named.

He said put down the delay in printing and distribution of textbooks for the current academic year on the government's sudden decision to revise contents of textbooks despite the fact that they did not have enough time in hand to bring about changes in a total of 18 books. As a result, board textbooks are yet to reach students.

Last week, founder of a primary school at the southwestern district of Pirojpur sued 11 high officials of the NCTB including its chairman for 'graft and misappropriation of government fund' allocated for printing of textbooks.

He filed the case after failing to get free textbooks for the students of his school at Munia, Pirojpur.

No security of people's life, property now, says Nasim

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Former home minister Mohammad Nasim yesterday said the BNP-led government had failed to provide security to people's life and property in its first 100-day programme.

Also a central leader of the Awami League, Nasim blamed the government for fuelling terrorism and destroying democratic norms in the country.

"Not only the lives and properties, but the democratic values as well will be threatened in the days to come, if the rule of the present government persists."

Nasim was briefing newsmen on the present law and order situation and Prime Minister Khaleda Zia's over-the-air speech on her government's 100-day programme.

The government does not even allow the opposition political parties to raise their voice against its misdeeds, Nasim alleged.

"This government has banned democratic practices like torch-procession, street agitation and other democratic programmes, thus trying to suppress the people."

He said the government in the name of judicial inquiry has shelved the sensational murder cases and bomb blasts, including the much-talked-about Udichi killing and Ramnablast.

"The government has made a design to protect the main accused, who are now in the ruling coalition," he said.

Murder, arson, rape, looting and repression on the opposition activ-

ists are on the alarming rise and the government is doing nothing to curb such crimes, he said.

Pointing to a report published in yesterday's newspapers on the killing of four outlawed men in Jessore, the ex-home minister claimed that during his tenure he had compelled terrorists to surrender before the law.

"Peace was restored in the south-western part of the country during our tenure as a result of combing operations."

He accused the government of giving forced retirement to genuine and skilled police officers from their services and replaced them with relatively less skilled ones.

About 23 top terrorists as listed by the present government, Nasim said that most of them were arrested during the period of the previous AL government. But the caretaker and the coalition governments have released them from custody, he added.

Instead of curbing terrorism, the government is implicating hundreds of opposition leaders and activists in false cases only for political vengeance, the former minister said.

About developments in the telecommunications ministry, Nasim, who was also the AL's telecommunications minister, said that in her speech the prime minister misleadingly credited the present government with AL's achievements.

Law & order

FROM PAGE 1
In the city, 40 people were murdered last month.

In its 100-day programme, the government also identified 23 top terrorists as most wanted criminals in the city and announced reward for nabbing them. But none of them could be arrested as yet.

On the first weekly question-time in the current session of the parliament, the prime minister replied to five starred questions and several supplementary questions on law and order, economic emancipation, social development, good governance, irregularity in plot allotment in the city by the immediate past government, priority issues before her government and measures taken by it to increase revenue collection.

Madrassah student stabbed to death by classmate in Chittagong

BSS, Ctg

A student of Jiri Islamia Madrassah in Patiya upazila of the district was allegedly killed by his classmate yesterday morning, police and hospital sources said.

Police said Hafez Abdur Rahim, 14, son of Mohammad Abul Kalam of Banskhalhi upazila of the district, was stabbed by his classmate Anwar Hossain Babu following a scuffle over personal matters in the madrassah dormitory.

Seriously injured Rahim was sent to the Chittagong Medical College Hospital (CMCH) where the attending doctors declared him dead.

Teachers of the Madrassah caught the alleged killer, Anwar Hossain Babu, and later handed over him to police.

A case was filed with Patiya thana in this connection.

Pilgrims

FROM PAGE 1
agents. Sources at the AB said it will need 18 more flights to carry rest of the hajjis to Jeddah.

The government, meanwhile, froze all movable and non-movable assets of the private operator for its failure to operate the Hajj flights. It has also seized the passport of Shahjalal Majumder, chairman of the Air Bangladesh.

The government will probe the entire episode and see whether there was any collusion between the AB and the CAAB in the ambitious plan to privately ferry the hajis.

Submarine cable

FROM PAGE 12
needs no local agent and is free from political pressure as the members jointly implement and operate the entire cable. "This is a natural cost saving element in a consortium cable," the source explained.

Bangladesh 'wasted an opportunity' in the early 1990s while Myanmar, Sri Lanka, India and Pakistan joined the \$1.3 billion SEA-ME-WE 3 submarine cable consortium. Since then, it remains the 'only sea-accessing country in this region' with no access to undersea broadband network, the source mentioned.

Meanwhile, the proponents of SEA-ME-WE 3 have planned another consortium of transoceanic cable network. On January 14 this year, the BTBT received an official intimation about this proposed network named SEA-ME-WE 4, sources said.

It would connect South East Asia, Middle East and West Europe. The planned landing points of this cable are Tuas (Singapore), Satun (Malaysia), Chittagong (Bangladesh), Colombo (Sri Lanka), Mumbai (India), Karachi (Pakistan), Fujairah (UAE), Muscat (Oman), Jeddah (Saudi Arabia), Alexandria through Suez (Egypt), Palermo (Italy) and Marseilles (France).

Each of the 12 proposed members would invest

\$60 million to execute the \$720 million SEA-ME-WE 4 project. Individual investment would be reduced to \$48 million as three more partners would join the consortium.

The telecom carriers of the Middle East are fast propelling this 1.28 terabit per second SEA-ME-WE 4 submarine cable project. Currently the 740,000 Arab Internet users share a combined bandwidth of just 777 megabit per second.

Each member of the SEA-ME-WE 4 would get between 85 and 107 gigabits per second, depending on the final number of consortium members, the sources said.

East end of SEA-ME-WE 4 lands at Singapore and the west end at Marseilles of France. Transpacific connectivity from Singapore and transatlantic connectivity from Marseilles is guaranteed in this cable.

This multi-government submarine cable consortium would carry commercial traffic by December next year. Its actual rollout is expected to be faster as the proposed consortium members except Bangladesh is equipped with cable landing station.

The sources suggested that the BTBT should consider the financial, technical and operational aspects of SEA-ME-WE 4 before signing the BSCN contract with TyCom or Alcatel.

Growth quadrangle

FROM PAGE 12
Research in India Prof. Charan D. Wadva, Vice-Governor of Yunnan province in China Shao Qiwei, Director General of Myanmar Border Trade Department Nay Winn and CPD Executive Director Dr. Debapriya Bhattacharya.

As these four nations are members of the World Trade Organisation (WTO), the markets of these nations can be more open to each other, the leader of the Chinese delegation and vice-governor of Yunnan province, Shao Qiwei, said.

"We should actively explore methods and ways of conducting further cooperation in making the regional economic activities more efficient," he suggested.

"Under the leadership of the Chinese central government and given the new historic opportunities, Yunnan is willing to make every effort to promote regional economic cooperation," he assured.

Pointing to the strategic importance of Yunnan, he said, "Located on the southwest frontier of China, it is complementary to India, Myanmar and Bangladesh in resources and economic development."

Yunnan took the first initiative for regional economic cooperation among Bangladesh, China, India and Myanmar, he recalled.

The home minister of Assam said the time has come to turn the disad-

vantage facing the region into an economic boost.

Assam could be the bridge between the nations in South Asia and the economic booming states in China, if the historic silk-route was revived, he pointed out.

He also felt the necessity of a 'course of action' for opening borders of the four nations to increase economic activities and reap the benefits of the regional cooperation.

Prof. Charan D. Wadva called upon the nations for working together to face the new economic challenges in the 21st century.

"Both regional and sub-regional cooperation should ultimately bring benefits to the people of this area," he said.

Nay Winn from Myanmar said the current global economic slowdown posed new challenges to the nations in particular and the world in general.

It is required of regional and neighbouring countries to fast-track the economic and trade cooperation to overcome the new challenges, he said.

Prof. Rehman Sobhan said the conference would bring some positive results, giving an institutional shape of the initiative to a new economic forum taken a few years back.