

Bangladesh Development Forum meet ends

Donors tie law and order, reforms to assistance

STAR REPORT

The three-day Bangladesh Development Forum meeting in Paris concluded yesterday with a call for improving law and order and governance and curbing corruption.

The donors saw it as a 'life and death' question for the nation.

"If the government fails to respond to the people's genuine call for change, in both the current state of law and order and governance, Bangladesh will be doomed to remain a poor nation for a long, long time," said Mieko Nishimizu, World Bank Vice President, South Asia Region, in her wrap-up address.

The donors also accentuated on 'implementing decisive reforms faster' and linked future assistance with 'significant progress in implementing reforms'.

Finance and Planning Minister M Saifur Rahman said the main focus was on governance and law and order. But he put the blame on the immediate past government saying, "we inherited the law and order situation."

He said, "We cannot change it overnight. It will take time to change

things. We are taking steps and now things are not like what it was during the past rule."

Saifur was addressing the country's newsmen from Paris through a video conference on the outcome of the BDF meet.

However, he said, "Time has come to change the scene without putting the blame on the past." He also claimed that law and order situation is only limited to a few incidents ever since the new government took office.

But a World Bank release said the donors were of the view that "violence against women and children is still very high."

"The persisting law and order problems disproportionately affect the vulnerable, especially the poor and women and children," the release said about the sentiment of the donors.

When asked at the video conference whether there was any discussion on the alleged repression on the minority in the country after the October 1 general election, Saifur said, "There was no discussion on the minority repression."

Saifur briefly touched different issues discussed at the meeting, particu-

SEE PAGE 11 COL 4

1

Girders of city's 8 footbridges to be removed

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Girders of the eight under-construction footbridges in the city will be removed within a week.

The government's decision came in the wake of the collapse of a huge footbridge girder at the Science Laboratory intersection, which crushed two persons to death on Thursday afternoon.

State Minister for LGRD and Cooperatives Ziaul Huq Zia yesterday directed the Dhaka City Corporation (DCC) to remove all girders faultily positioned on the footbridges.

However, no girder was removed from any footbridge till filing of this report at 9.00 last night. Nor did the DCC remove the huge concrete pieces from the Science Laboratory intersection.

"We informed the DCC but none is yet to come to remove the con-

SEE PAGE 11 COL 1



PHOTO: ANISUR RAHMAN

Overhead death... two incidents of footbridge collapse within four months of each other have sent a wave of panic among city commuters. A four-pronged under-construction footbridge at Moghazar intersection is nothing but a reminder of lurking danger.

Kibria blasts Saifur for blaming AL for all ills at Paris meet

UNB, Dhaka

Former finance minister Shah A M Kibria has thanked the World Bank and donor countries for focusing at the Bangladesh Development Forum meeting on law and order which, he said, overshadows all other problems facing the country.

"When the donors were talking in Paris about the frightening law and order situation in the country and the finance minister was promising better performance, multiple murders, including killing of police and Ansar personnel, were taking place in Dhaka," he said in a statement yesterday.

The recent attack on Chittagong Labour Court, reportedly forcing the judge to take shelter in toilet, is "just symbolic" of the "near anarchy" prevailing in the country, he noted.

SEE PAGE 11 COL 1

Mohiuddin Alamgir held at ZIA

UNB, Dhaka

Former state minister for planning Dr Mohiuddin Khan Alamgir was "apparently" arrested last night from Zia International Airport on his return from abroad.

Dr Khan left the country immediately after the October 1 general election in which his party was defeated.

Sources said plainclothes police detained him after his arrival by a Singapore Airlines flight at around 10.30 pm.

Police, however, would not specifically say whether he was arrested or not.

Dr Alamgir is the first former minister of the immediate past Awami League government to be arrested.

Announcement
Today's The Daily Star contains a special page on Chittagong.

INSIDE TODAY

Article 4

Should Myanmar remain our distant neighbour?

Column: Accord and Discord

M Anwarul Haq

Culture 16

Theatre: A thoughtful jubilee

	Sun Rises	Sun Sets
Mar 16		6-08 pm
Mar 17	6-06 am	

Prayer Timings

Mar 16

	Azan	Jamaat
Fajr	5-15	5-50
Zohr	12-45	1-15
Asr	4-45	5-00
Magrib	6-10	6-15
Esha	7-30	8-00

Source: Islamic Foundation

BTTB seeks govt nod to go after defaulting MPs

Nearly Tk 8cr in outstanding bills

MUSTAK HOSSAIN

The Bangladesh Telegraph and Telephone Board (BTTB) has sought approval from the Ministry of Post and Telecommunications (MPT) for legal action against members of the last seven parliaments, who defaulted on telephone bills amounting to about Tk 8 crore.

"The BTTB has written to the telecommunications ministry seeking permission for legal action against the defaulting MPs of different political parties," a BTTB high official told The Daily Star on condition of anonymity.

The MPs did not pay the outstanding bills, although each draws Tk 4,000 a month in telephone bills from the government, said sources.

More to the point, the MPs kept the bills outstanding despite a decision by the parliament secretariat that if an MP pays half his or her outstanding bill, the secretariat

will pay the rest.

Following submission of the letter by the BTTB to the ministry about a month ago, the ministry in its reply advised the BTTB to take legal action as per law, the official said.

"Since some former defaulting MPs are presently holding portfolios with the status of minister, the BTTB again sought advice as to whether the board would file cases against those MPs," the official added.

As customary, the BTTB also allocated new telephones to the newly elected MPs, with many re-elected to the new parliament and many defeated in the election. Some former MPs died leaving the telephone bills outstanding.

The BTTB was able to realise a small amount from some MPs of the seventh parliament when a speculation

SEE PAGE 11 COL 4



PHOTO: STAR

DELIGHTFUL DOLLY: BJMC's Dolly Akhter during her national record breaking breast stroke at the 7th Bangladesh Games yesterday. She took her gold medal tally to eight with two in yesterday's events.

Govt violated court order after arrest of Nasim

STAR REPORT

The government not only violated law but also defied court order following the arrest of Awami League chief Sheikh Hasina's special assistant Bahauddin Nasim.

Various sources said that after taking Nasim on police remand, he was sent to Dhaka cantonment and was 'severely tortured'. As torture marks were visible, the government violated court order by not producing him before it on expiry of his remand and directly sent him to jail.

Nasim was arrested on February 28. On the next day, he was taken on a five-day remand from the Chief Metropolitan Magistrate's Court. In its remand order, the CMM's Court also directed police to produce Nasim before it on expiry of the remand.

But police violated the court order and kept Nasim for two days more and directly sent him to Dhaka Central Jail.

Sources said that though Nasim was placed on police remand, he

SEE PAGE 11 COL 1

Govt conspiring to bring treason charge against me: Hasina

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Opposition Leader Sheikh Hasina yesterday alleged that the government was conspiring to bring treason charge against her.

"First they (ruling alliance) tried to implicate me in corruption cases. Today I read in newspapers that a case has been filed against me for murders in 1983. It is a deep-rooted conspiracy," Hasina said.

The Awami League president was speaking at a function at the party central office to celebrate victory of the pro-AL panel in the recently held election to Dhaka Bar Association.

An assistant public prosecutor filed a case against Sheikh Hasina

SEE PAGE 11 COL 7

on Thursday, accusing her of involvement in the killing of two students of Dhaka University -- Joinal and Zafar -- in police firing on a procession in February 1983. The processions was brought out and police opened fire on it as per Hasina's plan, the complainant in the case said.

Recollecting the turbulent days during the movement against Ershad's autocratic regime, Sheikh Hasina said BNP was dislodged from power and Ershad promulgated martial law. "Instead of waging movement against martial law they (BNP men) were busy managing houses and cars for themselves."

The victims were taking tea and watching TV at the shop on return from a marriage ceremony.

The dead were identified as Muhammad Yunus, 20, son of Abu Bakr Siddik, Jahirul Alam, 20, son of Maulana Lutfur Rahman, Muhammad Siraj, 32, son of Ohidur Rahman, Nurul Alam, 16, son of Nurul Islam, Nizam Uddin, 14, son of Kedua Mia, Ekram Hossain Roni, 8, son of Abul Bashar and Kaji Rafiqul Islam, 40.

All the dead hailed from Dakkhin Satar village.

The injured persons were admitted to Chhagaria Upazila Health Complex and Feni Sadar Hospital.

The killer truck was seized, but its driver managed to escape.

At least seven people were killed and ten others injured in a road accident at Radanagar Bazar in Chhagaria Upazila of the district yesterday.

Police and witnesses said the accident took place at about 3 pm when a truck ploughed through a tea shop at the bazar, killing six members of a bridal party on the spot. Another succumbed to his injuries on was to hospital.

The victims were taking tea and watching TV at the shop on return from a marriage ceremony.

The dead were identified as Muhammad Yunus, 20, son of Abu Bakr Siddik, Jahirul Alam, 20, son of Maulana Lutfur Rahman, Muhammad Siraj, 32, son of Ohidur Rahman, Nurul Alam, 16, son of Nurul Islam, Nizam Uddin, 14, son of Kedua Mia, Ekram Hossain Roni, 8, son of Abul Bashar and Kaji Rafiqul Islam, 40.

All the dead hailed from Dakkhin Satar village.

The injured persons were admitted to Chhagaria Upazila Health Complex and Feni Sadar Hospital.

The killer truck was seized, but its driver managed to escape.

Ayodhya sealed off : 18000 detained across India

Peaceful ceremony under compromise deal

AP, Ayodhya

Police detained more than 18,000 Hindu nationalists throughout India yesterday to prevent violence tied to a Hindu ceremony.

In Gujarat state, Hindus held prayers to coincide with the ceremony in Ayodhya before battling Muslims coming out of mosques after Friday prayers. The mobs threw stones and set fire to shops, and police beat protesters and fired tear gas.

The violence broke out in Ahmadabad, Gujarat's largest city, and police imposed a curfew. One Hindu died and seven other people were injured.

In the ancient temple city of Ayodhya, the government and Hindus who had planned to hold a ceremony on disputed land near the site of a destroyed mosque reached a compromise.

Under the deal, police escorted a priest and two

temple pillars -- carried on marigold-decked bicycle rickshaws -- through the northern town as 1,000 chanting supporters crowded its narrow lanes.

Ramchandra Das, who heads a trust set up to a Hindu temple on ruins of the Babri mosque that a Hindu mob destroyed in 1992, delivered the pillars to a representative of the prime minister. He did so about a kilometre away from an area where the Supreme Court had banned religious activity.

The consecrated pillars were meant to be the first in the temple that Hindu nationalists want to erect where the 16th century mosque stood.

The ceremony was rowdy but peaceful, with white-clad Brahmin priests chanting mantras as onlookers tossed saffron powder at them.

Earlier, thousands of police and paramilitary troops, mostly Hindus, had sealed off Ayodhya to stop Hindu nationalists from holding the ceremony on government land around the disputed site.