

People will bring the govt down if it continues repression: Hasina

UNB, Dhaka

Opposition leader Sheikh Hasina yesterday asked the government to stop torture and repression on the people, or else, she said it would fall through a mass upsurge.

"How long will people tolerate torture and repression? The government will make a mistake if it thinks it will be able to rule with a two-thirds majority," she said.

The Awami League chief cautioned that in the past many strong governments fell in the face of resistance by the people, adding that the present government would also fall if it did not exercise restraint.

She made the remarks while addressing the leaders and workers of Tejgaon Thana Awami League at the party's Dhanmondi office.

The AL leaders and workers came to meet the party chief along with the recently released Awami League general secretary Shafiqul Islam Shafi of ward 37.

The ex-PM observed that the people now want to get rid of this "misrule and torture" by the BNP-Jamaat regime and want to live in peace and security. She asked her party leaders and workers to stand beside the people and strengthen the party at grassroots level.

She said the present government could give the nation nothing but torture, killing, repression and price spirals during its 11-month rule.

The leader of the opposition asked her workers to keep a list of those who are now torturing the people through toll collection and hoodlumism.

She also asked for listing corrupt officials of the police administration who she said are also torturing innocent people of the country.

"Power is not perpetual," warned the immediate-past prime minister.

Hasina renewed her claim that the government does not even allow the opposition to speak inside parliament. The speaker, she said, switched off her mike five times while she was speaking at the JS about the "misdeeds" of the present government.

"There are 73 ministers or persons of equivalent rank in this government, and if I speak for one minute about each minister, it takes 73 minutes," she said.

5 die in Tel Aviv

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out by Israel.

Neither claimed yesterday's attack on behalf of his group.

Israeli government spokesman Avi Pazner told AFP, "We are definitely facing a major drive by all Palestinian terrorist organisations," and added, "We will do whatever it takes to stop this new wave."

Hours earlier Israeli police chief Shlomo Aharonishki had warned, "The past weeks have given a false impression of calm, while terrorism has not dropped its guard and there have been constant attempts to strike."

Pazner blamed Yasser Arafat's Palestinian Authority for the upsurge, accusing him of "doing nothing to stop terrorist attacks and continuing to encourage and incite violence in Israel".

The Palestinian leadership for its part condemned the suicide bombing and asked all Palestinian groups to also denounce it, but stopped short of

calling for a halt to such strikes.

The last time Tel Aviv was hit by a kamikaze attack was on July 17, when twin bombings carried out by Islamic Jihad in a crowded neighbourhood near the old bus station killed five people.

Wednesday's Islamic Jihad attack which killed an Israeli policeman as well as the suicide bomber in the northern Israeli town of Umm El-Fahm was the first to succeed inside Israel since a Hamas bomber killed nine people in a bus in the north on August 4.

Islamic Jihad said the bomber had been spotted by police as he was heading for his target, which was not identified.

Police said he was apparently intending to board a bus going deeper into Israel.

Israeli army said it had captured a four-man Jihad cell in the village of Itar, near Tulikarem on the northern boundary between Israel and the West Bank, and arrested a suicide bomber planning an attack out of Nablus.

No headway

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asked Unocal to explain its claim that the Magurchara compensation issue has been 'resolved' through a supplementary agreement for blocks 13 and 14 in late-1998.

The American oil company claimed that the supplementary agreement adequately explain the whole issue.

As Petrobangla officials asked Unocal to show where it was written in the document, Unocal officials told them to go through the document, according to sources.

Petrobangla and Unocal officials met at the Petrobangla office in the city yesterday on a request from the latter late last month. The meeting started at around 11.30am and continued for about an hour.

Five years after the Magurchara explosion, Petrobangla on July 2 claimed a compensation of US\$ 685 million from Unocal for damaging the gas structure having a reserve of over 245 billion cubic feet of gas.

However, Unocal brushed aside the Petrobangla claim. In a July 3 letter, it said there was no scope for discussion on the issue that has been 'resolved' through signing of a supplementary agreement in 1998.

Petrobangla made the compensation claim on the basis of a report by a probe committee consisting of government officials and experts and an expert from Occidental. The report was also

given to Unocal.

Unocal took over the assets and liabilities of Occidental, which was the operator of the gas field during the blowout, in Bangladesh after the disaster.

The supplementary agreement was signed with Occidental eight months after the original contract was terminated on January 11, 1998 for failing to fulfil minimum work commitment.

The agreement has given five per cent additional share to Petrobangla as an incentive for letting the oil company work in those blocks even after its failure to fulfil the minimum work commitment and not as a compensation for damaging the Magurchara gas structure, sources said.

After the PSC was terminated, Occidental lobbied hard and the process for a supplementary agreement began. During the process, Petrobangla proposed several clauses like compensation for the burnt gas at Magurchara or inclusion of BAPEX as a partner of Occidental. But these were rejected by Occidental and a deadlock followed.

Finally, Occidental's high officials 'verbally' promised to political high-ups that all compensations for the blowout would be paid. But the fact remains that there is no clause about compensation, sources said.

Rape of AL leader 3 BNP activists sued, 2 arrested in Khulna

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Khulna

Two separate cases were recorded with the Khulna Thana yesterday accusing three BNP activists of assaulting and raping local Awami League leader Nasima Khatoun.

The cases were filed by the victim herself, who named Ferdous, Azad and Bipu as accused in the first information report (FIR) of the cases.

Two of the FIR-named accused, Ferdous, 32, and Azad, 34, have been arrested while prime accused Bipu is still at large.

Nasima Khatoun, a ward-level AL leader, was allegedly beaten and subsequently gang-raped by the three accused inside her shanty on Tuesday night. An injured Nasima was admitted to the Khulna General Hospital but later sent to the Khulna Medical College Hospital (KMCH) under threat allegedly from the officer-in-charge (OC) of the Khulna Thana who reportedly ordered doctors not to attend her.

Earlier on September 2, the OC had refused to record an assault case by Nasima after the same three BNP activists allegedly molested her on that day. Nasima then filed the case at the Chief Metropolitan Magistrate's Court, Khulna, on September 4, following which the CMM ordered the OC to investigate the case. But the OC reportedly did not comply with the CMM's order, terming the accusation concocted and the complainant a 'whore'.

Meanwhile, Nasima's condition did not improve due to lack of proper medical care for her at the KMCH. Also, two unknown persons on Wednesday night threatened her with dire consequences if she filed any case in connection with the assault and rape.

According to a source at Khulna Thana, Nasima is one of the prosecution witnesses of the Triple Murder Case in which Ershad Shikder is the principal accused.

UP polls

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their respective districts.

However, polls to 190 more union parishads would be held later due to non-completion of their tenures, various legal tangles and problems relating to area demarcation.

The last election to union parishad across the country was held from December 1 to 31 in 1997. At that time, the government had introduced for the first time separate wards for exclusively electing three women members in each unions with the objective of empowering women at the grassroots level.

Following last week's government decision of reintroducing upazila system in the country shortly, holding of election to union parishads has become all the more necessary, sources pointed out.

The EC at a meeting yesterday discussed updating of voters' list and preparations for the election to union parishads as well as city corporation polls in Sylhet and Barisal.

The meeting decided to send a proposal to the LGRD Ministry for introducing provisions for submission of nomination papers for all local government polls on more than one day.

At present, all candidates have to submit nomination papers on a single day, causing serious problems for polls officials to handle the situation.

The EC also decided that legal action would be taken against any one found enlisting his or her name more than once as voter.

Chaired by Chief Election Commissioner MA Syed, the meeting was attended by election commissioners Shafiqur Rahman, MM Munser Ali and AK Mohammad Ali and top officials concerned.

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English debate

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lum for students. "Debate should be practised in the classroom though traditionally it never happens."

"Debate teaches a person to offer his own opinion to others in a decent way," said Mahfuz Anam, editor of The Daily Star. "Ultimately, it works as a means of communication."

The art of debate helps to enhance the democratic values of a person and makes him rational, self-confident and honest, observed other speakers.

They also underscored the necessity of English debate competitions.

"We should try to prepare our debaters to achieve the international standards," said Shameem Jahan Ahsan, moderator of the Vigarunnisa Noon Debating Club.

Additional Deputy Commissioner of Dhaka Md. Ilias Hossain Mohammed, members of managing committee Mohammed Sadeque and Khondoker Mushtaque, and Assistance Head Mistress Ashfia Sultana were present among others on the occasion.

The inaugural ceremony was chaired by Rowena Hossain, acting principal of the school. The programme was followed by a briefing session for the participants.

US envoy says CHT situation conducive to dev activities

BSS, Rangamati

US ambassador in Dhaka Mary Ann Peters yesterday said she would do everything possible to convey to the donor countries and agencies the message of resuming their development activities in the Chittagong Hill Tracts (CHT) as peace and discipline has returned to the region and conducive atmosphere now prevails there.

Mary Ann Peters, who was here on a brief visit, made the observation during a meeting with the chairman of Rangamati Hill District Council (RHDC) Manik Lal Dewan at the latter's office.

The US envoy said peace, conducive atmosphere and congenial law and order situation are preconditions for taking up development activities in the CHT.

Peters expressed her satisfaction at the prevailing situation in CHT,

which she said was conducive to resuming development activities, a press release of RHDC quoted her as saying.

The development activities in the entire area remained stalled for quite some time. The chairman of RHDC in the meeting sought the US envoy's cooperation in conveying the message to other donor countries and agencies about resuming development activities in CHT.

The ambassador, who was accompanied by Leonard A. Hill, counsellor for political and economic affairs, had meetings at the Chittagong Hill Tracts regional council office and Deputy Commissioner's office where she exchanged views with officials about the situation prevailing in the area.

Before their departure for Dhaka, the visiting dignitaries enjoyed a cultural function in Tribal Cultural Institute Auditorium.

AL divisional

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backdrop of the party's debacle in the last general election.

According to sources in the AL, over four and a half lakh party leaders and workers have been implicated in false cases since the BNP-led four-party alliance took over. Many of its (AL) grassroots level leaders cannot simply live in their houses, fearing political persecution allegedly by the ruling alliance.

In such a situation, AL policy planners hope that the seven divisional conferences would revitalise the party and boost the morale of thousands of party leaders and workers at thana and district levels.

The first such conference would take place on September 30. Leader of the Opposition in the Jatiya Sangsad and AL President Sheikh Hasina would inaugurate it in the divisional city of Sylhet. It would be followed by the second divisional conference in Chittagong on October 20.

Schedules for five other divisional conferences are likely to be finalised shortly, party sources said.

The last regular council of the party was held on May 6-7 in 1997. It had nominated Sheikh Hasina and Zillur

Rahman as party president and general secretary respectively for a three-year term. Unprepared to hold a due central council while in power, the AL rather held a special council on June 23 in 2000 to extend the tenure of that committee by two more years.

On June 11 this year, the AL once again extended the central committee's tenure by six months mores after fixing the December 22-23 schedule for holding the next central council.

A close aide to Sheikh Hasina told The Daily Star that following the seven divisional conferences, she would go for a whirlwind tour of the country prior to the December council.

As per plans, delegates from all district and thana committees of the party in the seven organisational divisions would attend the conferences.

Party sources said that Sheikh Hasina would inaugurate each of the day-long conferences and then listen to the participants before giving policy directions to the party rank and file.

Preparations for the two conferences in Sylhet and Chittagong divisions are going on with the party central leaders and those in the two divisions working out details.

Yunus tells BEA confce

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The government should concentrate more on curbing corruption, extortion, smuggling and other crimes and creating a congenial atmosphere for the growth of entrepreneurship in the country.

Yunus thought that the number of people living below poverty level in the country could be reduced at least by 50 per cent by the year 2015 if the government takes up open policies in many more fields and allow people to utilise their capabilities properly.

The Grameen Bank chief also urged the conscious section of the society to come forward and engage in business activities for bringing transparency in the sector and ensuring welfare of the consumers.

He noted that information technology (IT) has rich prospects in the country. But the sector is yet to ply its desired role mainly due to the government's 'restrictive policies.'

About Chittagong port, Yunus said it has become a major hindrance to economic development

of the country.

Dr Hossain Zillur Rahman gave Prof Abu Mahmud Memorial Lecture at the session on 'Poverty and Disparity.'

A number of papers were presented at the session. The papers were on economic growth and income inequality in Bangladesh by Dr Mohammad Sirajul Haque, women and poverty by Ferdous Ara Kabir, poverty alleviation effort in Bangladesh: involvement of selected banks and NGOs, and poverty alleviation and employment generation for rural poor by M AMajid.

Hossain Zillur Rahman observed that Bangladesh has achieved some sort of success in managing crisis. He emphasised strengthening the local governments and focussing on local agenda.

"It is true that absolute poverty has reduced in the country, but that is not much significant" he said. There should be some alternative methods to use the social power, he added.

Climate change: PM

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with the LDC Expert Group on Climate Change.

Presided over by Environment and Forest Minister Shajahan Siraj, the inaugural function was also addressed by UNDP resident representative Jorgen Lissner, LDC Expert Group representative and Director General of the Meteorological Department of Mali Mama Konate and Environment and Forest secretary Sabih Uddin Ahmed.

Ministers, political leaders and a large number of environmentalists attended the session.

Addressing the session, the prime minister pointed at the impact of global warming saying that for some countries it might be mere 'lifestyle threatening,' but for others it is 'life threatening.'

She said the least developed countries (LDCs) would face the worst effects because of their dependence on agriculture and natural resources-based economy.

Referring to the international summit on global climate to be held in New Delhi next month, she said the LDCs require more interactions and dialogue within themselves for working out a common strategy before negotiating with larger groups. She assured Bangladesh's total cooperation in these efforts.

Khaleda Zia said Bangladesh, as

the most densely populated, deltaic and low-lying country, is extremely vulnerable to climate change. She referred to the IPCC report that has warned that half a metre rise in sea-level will inundate 11 per cent of the country's territory, and the Sunderbans, the world's largest mangrove forest, would be at stake.

The prime minister said her intention of mentioning this is not her scare, but to sensitise all.

Referring to erratic behaviour of climate in different parts of the world, she said the breakdown of the balance of nature was a matter of concern.

She expressed her hope that the deliberations of the workshop would help contribute to capacity building for meeting the challenge of facing climatic changes.

Khaleda Zia said Bangladesh, with its limited resources, was trying hard to meet the challenges posed by the climatic change. In this regard, she mentioned the signing of the Kyoto Protocol.

She also mentioned the environment-friendly initiatives of her government that include building of power plants based on natural gas and conversion of motorised vehicles into CNG system.

VP meets PM All out ADB support for development assured

UNB, Dhaka

The Asian Development Bank has lauded present government's development efforts in various sectors and assured all-out support for socio-economic progress of Bangladesh.

Visiting Vice President of ADB Myoung Ho Shin gave the assurance when he made a courtesy call on Prime Minister Khaleda Zia at her office yesterday afternoon.

Appreciating the donor agency's support for the country's development, the Prime Minister sought more assistance in education, ICT, power and energy sectors.

She appreciated the Bank's contribution as a development partner to agriculture, education, health, power and infrastructural development of the country.

Other matters of bilateral cooperation also came up for discussion during the meeting.

Prime minister's principal secretary Dr Kamal Siddiqui was present.

Mugger gun down

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The injured was rushed to the Dhaka Medical College Hospital (DMCH) where the on-duty doctors declared him dead. The body was sent to the hospital morgue for autopsy.

A case was filed with the Kafur Police Station in this regard.

This is the second such incident within a week in the Kafur area. Police had gunned down an alleged mugger, lauzuddin, 25, while they tried to snatch away valuables from a rickshaw passengers and threw crackers at the policemen at Sher-e-Bangla Nagar in the city on Friday night.

Police rescue

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Islam, Atiqul Islam, Amina Khatun, Mahmuda Akther Shathi and Fazlul Haq, for their alleged involvement with abduction of the minor boys.

Police said that the mastermind of the abduction incident Mohammad Arif and his father Mohammad Ali Daroga are absconding.

Sources said that Arif had made a proposal to the parents of the boys regarding their sister Moly and they refused him. Being rejected Arif got furious and planned the abduction in a form of revenge.

Later, Arif along with his accomplices abducted the two from Sher-e-Bangla Road area and took them to the said Gazipur.

Father of the victim informed Hazaribagh police station after the incident and a case was filed in this regard on the following day. Police investigation found that the boys were taken to a place at Gazipur.

Being informed the OC along with his team went to raided a house at Uzlia, Sripur in Gazipur and rescued the boys. Police said that they are working hard to arrest Arif who is said to be the main man in the abduction case.

Legal action has been taken against the arrested persons in this regard.

Cell for HPSP

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Cancelled were contracts with the team leader Walul Islam and three other consultants who coordinated the activities of the HPSP.

Yesterday was the last day for the consultants in office at Paribagh in the city, and the team leader left office on September 12.

The decision of closure has angered many of the 19 development partners financing the HPSP since the launch of the programme in 1998.

Under the development credit agreement, the PCC was supposed to function until June 2003, ensuring coordination among 28 line directors of the health and family planning directorates.

Last month, the health ministry under pressure from the Planning Commission informed the development partners that it no longer required services of the PCC.

The development partners include European Union, Sweden, Japan, the Netherlands, World Health Organisation (WHO), Unicef, UNFPA and the World Bank - all funding different components of the HPSP.

"It is not clear why the government has decided to abolish the PCC...its absence will be felt a few months later," said an official in the health ministry requesting anonymity.

Also, the government is planning to abolish the management change unit (MCU), another component of the HPSP.

Sources in the ministry said Mezbah Uddin Ahmed, a key member of the MCU, was called back to the ministry and a few more posts will soon be vacated in phases.

The sources apprehend that the government will no longer pursue any reform programme planned in the HPSP, which may affect fund disbursement during the current fiscal year and aid commitment by the development partners for the health, nutrition and population sector programme (HNPS) to be launched in July 2003.

SEC fines Doel

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Talking to The Daily Star, the SEC officials said that when a company announces dividend, the price of the share of the company goes up as investors buy the shares taking it for granted that they will earn the declared dividends.

"But if the company fails to pay the dividends or defaults on the payment against the debentures in the stipulated period, the confidence of investors in the company is shattered, which stifles development of the capital market," explained an SEC official.

As the directors of the companies are responsible for the affairs of the company, the SEC decided on penalising the directors instead of the company, he reasoned.

The official said that two companies defaulted on payment of Tk 7.19 crore against debenture claims, including interest and principal amount. The outstanding amount of Bangladesh Luggage Industries is Tk 6.08 crore and that of Bangladesh Zipper Industries is Tk 2.06 crore.

Of the Tk 6.08 crore default amount of Bangladesh Luggage Industries, claims from institutional investors amount to Tk 4.02 crore

and general shareholders' claims amount to Tk 2.06 crore.

Institutional investors stake a claim to Tk 70.62 lakh from Bangladesh Zipper Industries and general shareholders Tk 40.03 lakh.

Bangladesh Dyeing and Finishing Industries had declared ten per cent dividends in 2000, but the SEC received complaints from investors that the company defaulted on payment of Tk 51.62 lakh in dividends. The company's total dividend is Tk 72 lakh.

Bangladesh Zipper Industries announced five per cent dividend in 2001 but defaulted on payment of Tk 18.30 lakh out of Tk 29 lakh.

The Bangladesh Chemical Industries declared ten per cent dividend in 2001 but failed to pay Tk 50.88 lakh out of Tk 66.93 lakh.

The SEC engaged SF Ahmed & Co in the audit on Bangladesh Luggage Industries, Ahmed & Ahmed Co on Bangladesh Chemical Industries, Rahman Rahman Huq Co on Bangladesh Zipper and Aconabin & Co on Bangladesh Dyeing.

Auditors have been asked to submit the complete report in 45 days.

Schoolgirl rescued from abductors

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A schoolgirl was rescued from abductors in the city's Hazaribagh area yesterday.

A gang of four abducted the girl, a student of class X, on her way to school at Basila in the Hazaribagh area at 10.00am.

Hearing screams, locals chased down one of the abductors named Mukul, when the gang was heading for Mirpur with the girl in a trowler, said witnesses.

Road accident kills 2 in Sitakunda

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Ctg

Two persons were killed in a road accident on Dhaka-Chittagong highway at Sitakunda yesterday.

The dead were identified as Zakir Hossain, a marketing agent of Square Group, and Ataur Rahman Bhuiyan, an official of Sitakunda Health Complex.

Sources said, the two died on the spot when a Dhaka bound bus from Chittagong hit their motorbike at Fakirhit in the morning.

The body of Zakir was sent to his village home at Syedpur in Douliathn upazila of Bhola district after a namaj-e-janaza in the city.