



Prime Minister Khaleda Zia offers prayers at an iftar party for journalists at the Prodhonmontri Bhaban yesterday.

Hasina

FROM PAGE 12
The president, Hasina told the news briefing at the meeting room of the chamber of the deputy leader of the opposition at the Sangsad Bhaban.

"There cannot be two types of law in a country. The government cannot refer some cases for speedy trial, leaving other of similar merit for the normal courts. This is discrimination," Hasina said.

The leader of the opposition was also critical of the Speaker for not disposing of several disapproval notices submitted by the AL legislators before allowing the bill to be tabled yesterday.

The chair allowed opposition lawmakers only two minutes to speak when they raised objection against the bill, which was not enough, she said.

Senior parliamentarian Suranjit Sengupta aided Hasina in the briefing.

Under the new law, the government would enjoy complete freedom to "pick and choose" case to be referred to the special tribunals, Sengupta said.

"Such arbitrary power would simply ruin the justice delivery system," he observed. "Some people would get justice quickly while others have to wait. Such discrimination goes against the spirit of the articles 7, 26 and 27 of our constitution."

Sengupta cited some examples of quick dispensation of justice by normal courts - Shihab, Bappi, Nikunja Bihari murder cases - and concluded that government should eschew the bill.

Deputy Leader of the Opposition in Parliament Abdul Hamid, Opposition Chief Whip Abdus Shahid and some other senior AL leaders were also present at the briefing.

Dipjal

FROM PAGE 12
Mirpur residence of Dipjal, DCC commissioner of ward - 9, and recovered seven firearms, but the actor managed to escape arrest.

Dipjal is one of the 27 listed ward commissioners having criminal records.

The actor, his wife, two sons and a daughter were stooped at the airport for about an hour and the immigration officials allowed them to go on getting 'green signal'. But two others with them - Habibur Rahman and Delwara Hossain were stooped, sources said.

Airport police said last night the two were being interrogated by immigration personnel and they were yet to be handed over to them.

DMCH nurses

FROM PAGE 12
The officer-in-charge of Ramna police station met at the emergency to resolve the matter. The director assured the striking nurses of proper investigation into the incident, and told them that the incident would be taken up officially with the Mohammadpur police station.

The incident occurred at about 3:30pm, after a team of police constables led by Sub Inspector Mohammad Ali of Mohammadpur police station brought an unidentified youth, who had been badly beaten up during a joint-force raid in Mohammadpur, to the emergency medical officer.

But as the patient, Abdur Rajjak, lay on the floor the police looked for a trolley to take him to the ward inside, but could find none after about ten minutes of search. One of the angry constables, Abul Hossain, then met Ruhul Amin, a member of the nursing staff, and asked him to bring a trolley but he declined saying there was no trolley available nearby.

The angry constable grabbed the nurse and beat him up, injuring him badly. As the nurse screamed, his colleagues gathered to learn what was going on, but the policemen left the scene picking up Rajjak from the emergency.

Soon after, on-duty nurses locked all entrances to the emergency and refused to attend any patient. All chairs inside the emergency were placed on the tables as a mark of protest.

The doctors at the emergency, however, said they were attending a limited number of patients, especially those suffering from burn and cut injuries, but patients were seen requesting the doctors to attend them. The hospital management will hold a meeting with the nursing staff today. The nurses have demanded punishment of the police constable.

Programme

FROM PAGE 12
An NCOGEP meeting held at its temporary office at Purana Palta yesterday decided on the programmes.

The press release said it was assumed from the recent speeches of the prime minister, the finance minister and the state minister for petroleum and mineral resources that the government would soon go for gas export.

The committee asked countrymen to come forward and foil 'any evil design' to export the gas resource.

It will hold an opinion exchange programme with the leaders of women organisations at Shaheed Asad Auditorium at 3:00pm on November 20.

With NCOGEP President Sheikh Muhammad Shahidullah in the chair, the meeting was addressed by Monjurul Ahsan Khan, Dr. Golam Mohiuddin, Saiful Haq, Anu Muhammad, Bazul Rashid Firoj, Ruhin Hossain Prince, Rustam Ali Khokon, Moshrefa Mishu, Jonayed Saki, Nazrul Islam, Abdus Salam, Habibur Rahman Shawkat and Abdul Jabbar.

Eve-teasers

FROM PAGE 12
By the sensitive part of his body and the throat, choking him. They hit him with brick bats.

Jahangir's wife Mamotaz and two daughters Daina and Moina who followed him cried out for help. Local people came in and rescued him in a critical condition. But ill-fated Jahangir died on way while being taken to Chittagong Medical College Hospital.

The local people caught one of the killers - Md Bokhtiar, 17. The rest four escaped.

Police and army jointly raided the area the same night and arrested another killer - Md Hossain.

The victim's wife filed a case against the five killers. But the three others, identified as Jony, 17, Rifar, 17 and Sirajuddin, 16, could not be arrested till filing of this report, police said.

Moyna later told this correspondent that the five boys had been teasing her on her way to school for about one and a half years.

Mosquitoes

FROM PAGE 12
in and around the city mosques only, sources said.

Entomologist Manjur A Chowdhury said it is quite unusual now to find such a strong presence of mosquitoes in November, which is not the peak season for culicis mosquito. If the DCC does not take proper initiatives, December and January would see an influx of mosquitoes.

Besides, he said, the DCC should have taken a culicis control initiative in mid-October. The corporation this year allocated about Tk 20 crore for mosquito control programme and the fund should be used properly, he pointed out.

According to sources, the DCC plans to appoint a permanent entomologist for its mosquito control programme. It is delaying the advertisement purchase to get an expert view on insecticide use once the entomologist is appointed.

Abdus Sobhan a fogger machine operator, working in Ward No. 45 yesterday said he has been asked by the commissioner to spray insecticide in and around mosques.

When asked about the mosquito control drive, Chief Health Officer of the DCC Dr Ashraf Uddin declined to comment.

Secret agents

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information used to be redirected to Pakistan, they claimed.

The documents recovered from them include maps of airforce bases in Pune in Maharashtra and Bhuj in Gujarat, taped conversation between Mustafa and alleged Inter Services Intelligence (ISI) agents in Dhaka.

District Police Superintendent of Murshidabad KD Virendra said, "We have proof that these agents have a number of contacts in Dhaka. If Bangladesh wants, we can supply them with information."

Meantime, a recent meeting in New Delhi attended among others by Indian Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee, Deputy Prime Minister Lal Krishna Advani and Defence Minister George Fernandez decided that from now on, New Delhi would keep Dhaka informed about 'anti-Indian activities' in Bangladesh. Delhi has also prepared a report regarding this.

However, the meeting decided not to go public with the information at this stage.

Shazneen case

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Latifur Rahman told the court that accused Hasan was given a contract for extension and renovation of his house about two years before the incident.

The contract was given through his (Latifur) paternal cousin Atiqur Rahman Masum, but it was not a written one. Hasan hired an assistant named Badal, carpenter Shaniram (both now accused) and some more people to do the job.

The witness said that following the incident, he found 10 to 12 people including Shaniram pretending to be asleep in a room on the compound his house despite all the noises around. But they came to the place of occurrence before filing of the FIR.

Shahidul Islam alias Shahid, prime accused in the case, was arrested on April 27, 1998. The investigation officer recorded his statement on the murder case on May 2, 1998 and his statement on the rape case on October 5 the same year. The statements on the two cases were not the same, Latifur Rahman told the court.

Shazneen Tasnim Rahman, 15, the youngest daughter of Latifur Rahman, chairman of Transcom, was raped and murdered at their Gulshan residence on April 23, 1998.

All the six accused - Shahid, Hasan, Badal, Shaniram, Minu and Parvin - now in jail custody were produced in the court yesterday.

Special public prosecutors (PP) Arfan Uddin Khan and Saima Khanam and Assistant PP Anisur Rahman appeared for the state while advocates Mosharrar Hossain Kajol, Mizanur Rahman and Abdus Salam Bhuiyan for the accused.

Time again

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However, the shops have stocked a wide range of commodities to meet the diverse demands of customers. You can get a gem-studded crepe saree, jorowa, at Tk 1.65 lakh at Rangoli in Rapa Plaza. A neelambori sells at Tk 35,000.

If it is beyond your buying capacity, go for handloom cottons priced at Tk 250 and upwards.

Kurta or punjabi has been all the rage for men during Eid. Stores selling quality outfits like Aarong, Probertona, Kay-Kraft or Anjan's boast a wide variety.

Some shoppers prefer to avoid the last-minute rush. "I want to avoid the rush of last-minute buyers," said Tania Tabassum, who was buying a punjabi from Aarong for her father.

Attractive attires, shining shoes or cosmetics are not enough to mark the Eid day, especially for youths, which is why artificial jewellery sellers brought out different new designs with innovative names. A set of shimmering bangles named 'Devdas' may give a dazzling look to damsels.

Furthermore, Devdas Katan Salwar Kameez, Tudi saree or even a Karishma print saree are rather entertaining. "Names of foreign movie stars attract young people more," said a salesperson at Chadni Chawk.

There is always a trend of buying gifts during Eid. A new music album, a book or a greetings card can make the Eid day of your loved ones brighter.

Gift-shops like Archies, Hallmark, Rotomac sell different types of greetings cards and other emotion-recharging items.

Army excesses

FROM PAGE 12
Some terrified customers managed to run away and the shopkeepers shut down their shops in fear.

After the frightful incident, the army pickup made its way into the Sikdar Medical College Hospital premises that house an army camp.

All food stalls along the embankment up to the new Biruganga Bridge were found closed.

Locals said the army ordered them to keep their shops shut. The army assaulted some shopkeepers for playing music, said one shopkeeper.

Viqarunnisa University
Iqbal denies land, fund transfer anomalies

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Chairman of the Viqarunnisa University Foundation Dr HBM Iqbal yesterday denied allegations of irregularities in setting up the institution.

In an explanation to the University Grants Commission (UGC), Iqbal said the allegations of irregularities were baseless, as all transactions since the establishment of the university were carried out in a legal framework.

The explanation came after the former lawmaker was asked by the UGC to explain the much-talked-about irregularities.

"We discussed all necessary steps in establishment with the UGC and the education ministry," Iqbal said.

And the UGC and the ministry issued permission for establishment of the university on July 4, 2001, he said.

Ten bighas of fallow land owned by the Viqarunnisa Noon School and College (VNSC) was registered in the name of the university.

"Former VNSC principal Hamida Ali signed the deed as donor being a member secretary of the VNSC governing body, while I signed as recipient, being chairman of the foundation," said Iqbal. The land was not registered for personal use, he continued.

"For a permanent fund of Tk 5 crore, all the VNSC governing body members decided to raise funds...Tk 4 crore was borrowed from the VNSC and I lent Tk 1 crore without any interest," Iqbal said.

A deed was signed between the VNSC governing body and the university foundation on the rent-free lease of Aparajita, a VNSC building, to begin academic and administrative activities.

Iqbal said the university was named after the VNSC as it took land and borrowed funds from the VNSC. And to ensure transparency and accountability, members of the VNSC governing body were included in the foundation.

Iqbal alleged that a quarter circulated wrong information about the university when complexities arose from the removal of Hamida Ali.

He sought help from the UGC for immediate reopening of Aparajita to resume the university's academic activities.

After the inception of the university last year, 133 students enrolled at its three departments.

But the VNSC authorities closed the university after three semesters, alleging irregularities in transfer of land and funds to the university.

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Saifur

FROM PAGE 12
incumbent and formers directors of the bank while talking to The Daily Star termed Saifur's behaviour with the central bank officials "undesirable".

The visit has also generated speculations and rumours among officials at different levels of the bank.

"Bangladesh Bank is not like other commercial banks. If the minister himself took the senior officials to task in front of their subordinates, where does the image of the bank stands as the regulator of the financial sector," questioned one official.

Rumours are rife that the governor and deputy governors may resign following the incident.

Sources close to the central bank governor said Governor Dr. Fakhruddin Ahmed is not contemplating resignation. Rather, the governor himself tried to bring discipline to different departments soon after he took office.

Another source said following the finance minister's 'undesired behaviour' with the central bank officials, a quarter is deliberately spreading the rumour to prompt the governor to step down.

New forum

FROM PAGE 12
Ahmed of the Inquilab, Motiur Rahman Chowdhury of the Manav Zamin, MA Malek of the Daikik Azadi and Mozammel Huq of the Daikik Karatwa are members of the executive committee.

The committee's tenure is up to December 31 next year.

The new organisation aims to protect press freedom and help modernise newspaper technology and management. It would work unitedly to improve the financial position of newspapers and create greater public support for and trust in the print media.

AL MPs walk out of JS

FROM PAGE 1
that some cases of the same offence would be tried by a speedy tribunal and some others by normal court?" he said, apprehending that it would divide the judiciary.

As the speaker switched off his microphone and allowed the law minister to reply, the opposition leader and her deputies sprang on their feet and started shouting at the Chair.

Amid noises across the benches, the AL lawmakers walked out of the House at 4.03pm, leaving only three Jatiya Party MPs in the opposition bench.

Dismissing the opposition points as having no substance, the law minister told the House that the proposed tribunal would rather help ensure quick dispensation of justice in the country.

He alleged that the AL had never believed in justice and speedy trial of criminals. While in power, he added, the party kept pending many cases that implicated its activists.

The law minister quoted Article 35 (3) of the Constitution that states that every person accused of a criminal offence shall have the right to a speedy and public trial by an independent and impartial court or tribunal established by law.

However, he did not reply to the opposition's query as to why two separate laws would be enacted to try the same offenders by two separate law-courts.

The House earlier heard a constitutional debate over disposal of a disapproval motion by the opposition against the ordinance and introduction of the bill, both on speedy trial tribunal.

The opposition lawmakers argued that the speaker must dispose of the notices submitted earlier before the bill was introduced in the House.

But the treasury bench said such notices could be disposed of any time within 30 days since the ordinance was laid.

Participating in the debate, Sheikh Hasina wondered how the bill on speedy trial tribunal was brought before disposal of notices seeking disapproval of the ordinance on the issue.

"You must dispose of the notices first provided you want to follow the Constitution and the Rules of Procedure," she told the Chair.

She said since the bill originates from the ordinance and since the opposition members submitted notices of disapproval under section 144 of the rules of procedure, the

speaker should dispose of the notices first. Until and unless the disapproval notices are disposed of, the ordinance cannot come in the form of a bill, she argued citing the Constitution and parliament rules.

She also accused the government of misinterpreting the Constitution and dishing out falsehoods in the parliament.

Chief Whip of the Opposition Abdus Shahid and Suranjit Sengupta shared the statements by Hasina on the disapproval motion against the presidential ordinance.

Besides the law minister, Chief Whip of the House Khondakar Delwar Hossain and PM's Parliamentary Affairs Adviser Salahuddin Quader Chowdhury were of the view that there is no timeframe for disposing of the disapproval notices.

But, there is compulsion of passing the bill within 30 days of its placement in parliament, they added.

The speaker also said such notices could be disposed of anytime in 30 days from the day of laying the presidential ordinance in the House. In his ruling, the speaker said there is no link between the disapproval notices and the bill.

'Not enough gas to export'

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to avoid embarrassment or there was some ulterior motive behind the non-disclosure of information on the proven reserve."

Perhaps, formation of the national committees in October 2001 could be assigned to a dubious gas export proposal to India by Unocal. Yet, it is critical to spell out the proven reserve, the committee noted.

Apparently, there was a conflict between two rival groups within the NGRC that resulted in the two reserve estimates to appease each other, it added.

SKM Abdullah, convener of the committee and former chairman of Petrobangla, Dr Md Hossain Monsur, secretary general, and Dr Badrul Imam, Nuruddin Mahmud Kamal, Dr Kazi Kholiuzzaman, Dr M M Akash, Dr Abu Barkat and Dr Md Golam Mohiuddin, members of the committee, were present at the briefing.

"If the international oil companies (IOCs) decide to withhold investment, we shall have to augment the capacity of Petrobangla as much as possible and in all manners. A contingency plan on the basis of a countrywide campaign will have to be prepared before long so that we can withstand the IOC pressure calmly and with enough national dignity."

Gas export would offer a very insignificant inflow of foreign

exchange, which is bound to be offset by the many times higher cost of the implied future import liability, the committee members observed.

The proposal of Unocal shows that gas export earnings will on average be about only US\$200 million or Tk 1000 crore (for 20 years approximately) which is only 0.03 per cent of the country's present export earnings or equivalent to only one month's remittance inflow, they added.

Also, data given by the Gas Utilisation Committee (GUC) show that the proceeds from gas export are expected to become almost zero per cent of the export earning or equivalent to 15 days' remittance by 2020. "So, why run after a short-term benefit knowing that it will ultimately mean long-term loss apart from risking political turmoil" the committee wondered.

The IOCs, the World Bank and the US lobby are out to maximise their interest. Nowhere in the world have they allowed the national authorities to smoothly develop a national capacity for exploration and domestic use of gas and oil, the committee noted.

In the past, the IOCs had termed many gas and oil deals ideal for many other countries. Later, those turned out to be a nightmare for those countries. Fortunately, the production sharing contracts (PSCs) signed between Bangladesh and the IOCs - although

less ideal than those of the early '70s - still give Bangladesh ample scope for bargaining, the committee members mentioned.

"In the PSCs, there is no provision for pipeline export of gas. So, if the IOCs want to renegotiate on this point we can always refuse to do so," the committee suggested.

The committee members argued that should the IOCs discover new gas fields, still they would not have sufficient gas of their own to export through pipeline unless the Bangladesh government supplies them a part of its share. "But according to the current agreement we are not at all bound to do so."

The Gas Utilisation Committee has made it clear that there cannot be any export from the proven gas reserves. It has kept an option for limited export only from the IOCs' share of the gas, they said.

Technically speaking, this is not an option at all unless a very large amount of recoverable gas reserve was discovered by the IOCs or the country complements their supply largely from its own resources, the committee said.

All technical studies done so far have shown that there is no way that an underwater pipeline can cross the Jamuna river (whether by 'open cut' or 'deviation drilling'), the Nagorik Committee added.

Rickshaws rule

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shaws

The worst affected areas are the stretches of road between Moggabazar to Malibagh crossing, Daikik Bangla to Press Club, Shahbagh crossing to Science Laboratory crossing, Katabon to Kankhalbagan, Green Road and Nilkhet crossing to Sangsad Bhaban.

A top Traffic Department official said managing traffic on the Mirpur Road is next to impossible owing to the large number of rickshaws. Moreover, the problem has been compounded by arrivals of more illegal rickshaws prior to Eid-ul-Fitr, official sources added. And the Traffic Department officials fear more illegal rickshaws to pour in as the city dwellers have already started flocking to the shopping centres.

Meanwhile, new rickshaws are being built in some rickshaw garages in city areas including Maniknagar, Muggadapara, Khilgaon and Mohammadpur. A rickshaw garage owner at Muggadapara said 30 rickshaws from his garage hit the road in a day or two as there is a huge demand prior to the Eid.

Sources said that about 10 associations of the owners and drivers of the rickshaw-vans give illegal plates with number and serials to run in the city making arrangement with some officials of the Wheel Tax Department of the DCC.

According to the Wheel Tax Department of the DCC, there are 79,616 licensed rickshaws in the city now. But DCC sources said about 5 lakh rickshaws ply the city roads. About 15 rickshaws operate against one registration number through underhand dealings with some corrupt DCC officials and different rickshaw-van associations, DCC sources said.

They also said a powerful syndicate in the Nagar Bhaban makes the arrangement with these associations, depriving the DCC of revenue earnings in the process.

Recently, soon after the initiation of the ongoing drive the DMP and the rickshaw owners associations authorities reached an agreement to legalise more than 50,000 illegal rickshaws. However, the move is waiting DCC approval, said a top Traffic Department official.

Rafiqul Alam, authorised officer of the Wheel Tax Department of the DCC, told The Daily Star that the plates with number and authorisation provided by different associations are 'illegal'.

Abu Musa Mohammad Fakrul Islam, deputy commissioner of the Traffic Department, told The Daily

Star that the rickshaw owners and pullers are pressuring the traffic department not to seize the illegal rickshaws till the Eid.

"We may stop the drive for a few days, but fining the illegal rickshaws will continue," he said.

He said his department is considering extending the duty hour of the traffic police to 80 hours from the present 60 hours a week to tackle the city traffic congestion. He informed that the traffic police already work 60 hours a week instead of the stipulated 40 hours.

Islam added the Traffic Department some new steps are going to be taken for the city's designated shopping areas shortly to tackle traffic tangles.

No deaths

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say anything about the progress in probe into the custodial deaths.

On a question about a High Court order not to arrest a Bagerhat Jubo Dal leader, the PIO said the government would abide by court verdict.

Asked whether the government would amend any law or introduce any new law to indemnify the army against action for the custodial deaths, he said the prime minister deployed army as per executive authority and there is no plan to make any new law.

He drew the newsmen's attention to a press report which said the government would form a judicial inquiry commission to investigate the deaths. "The report is completely baseless and the government has no such plan at all," the PIO said.

Asked about per day expenditure for about 24,000 troops deployed in the current drive, neither the PIO nor the ISPR official could give any figure.

Sources said the expenditure is being met from the government's revenue budget, not from army budget.

The PIO said the time extension for surrender of licensed arms has felicitated many people to deposit their arms.

He however said the home ministry informed him that 21,925 licence holders are yet to buy arms against their licences.

The PIO said the government has taken short and long term programmes to modernise the police force with appropriate logistics. A process to give them sophisticated arms replacing the age-old 303 rifle has been started.

Besides, a 144-member "Rapid Action Team" is being given special commando training. It will start operation on completion of its two and a half months' training, he said.

Dicey DCC deals

FROM PAGE 1
DCC's mechanical engineering division (MED) is allegedly 'manipulating' tenders worth crores of taka in connivance with 'some top officials' and two 'close aides' of the city mayor.

The DCC insiders confirmed to this reporter that the syndicate, working under the direct patronisation of the Superintendent Engineer of the MED, Sujat Ali Khandaker, handles the entire procedure of tender floating and bidding, making underhand dealings with some influential contractors.