

Hasina meets McKinnon Appeal for ensuring fair election process in Bangladesh

UNB, Dhaka

Opposition leader Sheikh Hasina has made a strong plea for ensuring fairness and integrity of the election process in Bangladesh to accurately reflect the electorate's will in future elections.

She made the plea during an hour-long meeting with Commonwealth Secretary General Don McKinnon at Marlborough House, London yesterday morning.

Hasina apprehended that the question of legitimacy would arise again undermining governance unless fair voting is ensured.

Deputy Secretary General of the Commonwealth Florence Mugasha and Political Affairs Division Director Matthew Neuhaus were present during the meeting.

Sheikh Hasina was assisted by her Political Secretary and Awami League Organising Secretary Saber Hossain Chowdhury.

A message from London said the Awami League president had frank and constructive discussions with the Commonwealth Secretary General on the imperative of making Parliament functional and the need to address the critical issue of strengthening the foundation of democracy in Bangladesh.

Don McKinnon emphasised the importance of giving the opposition its due space so that it could play the role that is so essential in making parliamen-

tary democracy meaningful.

He said he looked forward to continuing dialogue with the Awami League and all concerned in Bangladesh in this regard.

Human chain at DU to protest new PSC move

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Some 100 students of Dhaka University yesterday formed a human chain to protest the new initiatives by the Public Service Commission (PSC) regarding pre-requisites to sit for the Bangladesh Civil Service (BCS) examinations.

According to the new proposal, a student must have 45 per cent marks in both Bangla and English in the Higher Secondary Examinations (HSC) to be qualified for the BCS exams.

The students under the banner of 'General Students' made a six-point demand that included immediate cancellation of the proposal and quota system, and exemplary punishment to those involved in leaking the questions of the 24th BCS exams.

A number of students threatened to launch a greater movement if the government did not withdraw the decision immediately, campus sources said.

"Forty five per cent marks in Bangla and English in the HSC examinations cannot be a yardstick to justify the merit of a student," Kaimul Haque, one of the students, said.

Saifur off to Delhi

UNB, Dhaka

Finance and Planning Minister M Saifur Rahman left here for Delhi yesterday morning on a goodwill visit to India at the invitation of his Indian counterpart Jaswant Singh.

During the visit, the finance minister will have talks with Indian Prime Minister Atal Behari Vajpayee and Opposition Leader Sonia Gandhi.

He will also meet with the Indian ministers for Finance, Law and Justice, Trade and Industry, Communications, Information Technology, and External Affairs.

Prior to his departure, Saifur Rahman told newsmen at the Zia International Airport that increasing mutual cooperation, including trade and communication development, between the two neighbouring countries would be discussed during the visit.

State Minister for Finance and Planning Shah Muhammad Abul Hossain and Indian High Commissioner to Bangladesh ML Tripathi were present on the occasion.

The finance minister is expected to return home on Thursday.

JCD attacks BCL procession at JU:5 injured

UNB, Savar

Five leaders and activists of pro-Awami League Chhatra League (BCL) were injured when BNP's student wing Jatiyatabadi Chhatra Dal (JCD) attacked their procession at the Jahangirnagar University yesterday.

Witnesses said the JCD activists swooped on the BCL leaders and activists when they brought out an anti-Shibir procession from JU cafeteria at about 11 am.

Of the injured, JU unit BCL vice president Ismail, general secretary Shiraj, organising secretary Shoibal and activist Farid were admitted to different clinics.

Nishimizu

FROM PAGE 12

Nishimizu, who came here for the two-day meeting of Bangladesh Development Forum (BDF) that ended Sunday, expressed the views when she called on the prime minister at her office yesterday afternoon.

Nishimizu lauded the personal initiative, political will and commitment of Prime Minister Khaleda Zia to carry out necessary reforms to improve the lot of the people.

She thanked the prime minister for her frank statement made at the inaugural session of the donors' meet held under the aegis of the World Bank.

The Bank's executive observed that the BDF meeting enabled the participants to have a better idea of development and circumstances in Bangladesh.

Khaleda Zia told the WB executive about various measures taken by the government, and the potentials as well as impediments to development. She thanked Nishimizu and her delegates for correctly understanding Bangladesh's position and demonstrating it in the BDF meet.

She said her government has taken various steps to ensure a development-friendly political culture in the country and hoped the WB and the development partners would continue supporting the efforts.

Underscoring importance of the power sector, the prime minister sought more cooperation of the World Bank in the sector.

Principal Secretary to the Prime Minister Dr Kamal Siddiqui, World Bank Country Director Frederick Temple and its Adviser Christine Wallich were present.



Vice-President of the World Bank for South Asia Meiko Nishimizu shakes hands with Prime Minister Khaleda Zia during a courtesy call at the Prime Minister's Office yesterday.

Floods wreak havoc, claim 200 in Lanka

AFP, Reuters, Colombo

Sri Lanka yesterday began the grim task of looking for bodies as the worst flooding in more than half a century left a trail of destruction which claimed more than 200 lives.

The social services ministry, which is coordinating the relief operation, said they expected a fleet of inflatable rubber dinghies from neighbouring India to help reach remote areas where people were still marooned after the weekend floods.

It said some 300,000 people had been left homeless in five districts in the southern and south-central regions of the island.

Reports from police and local officials suggested at least 141 people had been killed, but the ministry said details from remote

areas were yet to reach them.

"We have a problem in coordinating with the district officials to get a good idea of the extent of the damage and casualties," said Social Services Director, Milla Vithanachchi.

He said dry rations were being rushed to the homeless, while a joint police, army, navy and airforce operation was underway to retrieve the remains of people who were buried alive in mudslides and look for survivors.

A team of doctors was assembled from neighbouring areas to carry out autopsies in the worst affected south-central Ratnapura district, where 81 people were confirmed dead, officials said.

Four outlaws, 2 listed criminals held with arms in Khulna

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Khulna

Police arrested four outlaws and two listed criminals from three thanas of Khulna district at midnight on Sunday.

Police also recovered six fire-arms and five cartridges from their possession.

The arrestees are Rabindra Nath Krishna, 26, Shanti Mondol, 40, of Tildanga village under Dakop thana, Dilip Biswas, 40, and Biswajit, 25, of village Aitapur under Balighata thana.

All the four belong to outlawed New Biplobi Communist Party, police said.

Besides, Batiaghata police nabbed listed criminals -- Birendra, 35, and Polash, 28, from Alaipur village the same night.

Depression

FROM PAGE 12

centre is about 50 kph, rising up to 60 kph in gusts or squalls. Sea will remain moderate.

Maritime ports of Chittagong, Cox's Bazar and Mongla have been advised to keep hoisted local cautionary signal number three.

All fishing boats and trawlers over the North Bay and deep sea have been advised to take shelter immediately.

JCD cadre murdered in Sylhet

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Sylhet

A JCD (Jatiyatabadi Chhatra Dal) cadre was stabbed to death by his two friends at a residential hotel in the city's Kalgit area Sunday midnight, police said.

Rafique, 25, was brutally murdered at Tara Boarding at Shahchat Road. His body was recovered by police from room 23 of the hotel and bore multiple stab wounds.

Sylhet Kotwali police arrested the victim's two friends -- Rumel, the hotel owner's son, and Sohel, manager of a transport agency -- and recovered two daggers that were used as murder weapons. Both men confessed to their complicity in the murder, police said.

According to police and boarders, Rafique was attacked by the two men while all three were drinking in the hotel room at around midnight. The victim was stabbed in the throat, chest and abdomen. The killers tried to flee the scene but was apprehended by boarders who later handed them over to police.

Police also recovered a revolver from the hotel's office room and took hotel manager Sayeed into custody.

The victim's body was sent to the MAG Osmani Medical College Hospital for autopsy and was later handed over to family members.

Garment worker killed by muggers in city

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A garment worker was stabbed to death by muggers at Maya Kanan in the city's Sabujbagh early morning yesterday, police and hospital sources said.

The victim was identified as Mehedi Islam Ripon, 25, son of Nazrul Islam, and a resident of Kadamtala, Bashabo.

Ripon, who had travelled overnight from Jessore, was on his way home in a rickshaw at around 6:00 am when a group of four muggers stopped him in front of a house at Maya Kanan and ordered him to hand them over his valuables.

But as Ripon refused to comply, the muggers stabbed him in the chest and took away the valuables before fleeing the spot.

A fatally injured Ripon was taken to the Dhaka Medical College Hospital (DMCH) where doctors declared him dead.

Panni's wife killed

FROM PAGE 1

of Panni's house, then climbed a ladder and peeped into the bedroom. He immediately came down, finding it ransacked.

House members informed Sultana's daughter Sonia who lives in Banani. Sonia then called the police.

When Dhammond police opened the room with a spare key at about 10:30 am, Sultana was found dead in the balcony.

Police sent the body to Dhaka Medical College Hospital (DMCH) for autopsy.

The victim's relatives received the body at 5:15 pm after autopsy. The body has been kept at the Combined Military Hospital mortuary. She will be buried after arrival of her younger daughter and son from abroad. Her son Sadat Ali Khan Panni lives in the US and the daughter, Tina Panni, in Karachi. They are all doctors by profession.

Police picked up cook Alauddin and domestic helps Mamun and Ruby to quiz them about the murder. Humayun Khan Panni is sick and unable to talk.

Other than the two domestic helps, three young men -- Mizan, Shahabuddin and Mainuddin -- worked in the tailor shop during daytime. Ruby's husband Rony also stayed there.

Mamun who joined the house three months back used to look after Panni. He used to come to the house at 8:30 am and leave after serving dinner and medicine to the former deputy speaker.

There is a gymnasium on the ground floor and the victim's elder daughter Sonia used to exercise there everyday except Friday.

The victim owned four houses in Banani, Mohakhali and Dhammondi. She advertised in newspapers last month to sell her Dhammondi residence. She wanted to donate the money to a charity. Even yesterday, a former employee of the house met Sultana to discuss selling of the house.

According to sources, Sultana's elder daughter Sonia was against the plan to sell the house and often used to get into altercation with her mother over this.

According to the victim's driver, Sultana went to her Mohakhali residence and asked construction contractor MA Wahab to look for a buyer for her Dhammondi residence.

Family sources said Sultana was a teacher of the Urdu department of Dhaka University.

One held in constable Noor killing case

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Police yesterday arrested an accused in the killing of police constable Noor Jahid in front of Azad Cinema Hall in the old part of the city Sunday night.

Jahid Hassan Lablu, 25, a gang member of Minto Gosh group and the fourth accused in the First Information Report, was arrested in Badamtali area in the morning yesterday. He was arrested when a team of Satrapur police station raided Badamtali area.

Kotwali police meanwhile held eight others for their alleged involvement in the killing.

Teams of the Kotwali and Satrapur police stations raided different parts of city to nab the criminals who were engaged in a shootout when police, after being tipped off that notorious criminal Minto was hiding behind the cinema hall, went there. Exchanging fire and exploding crackers, the criminals left the spot leaving behind the body of Noor Jahid and two of the injured law-enforcers.

Sub-inspector Mojibur Rahman, who led the operation against the Minto group Sunday night, filed a case accusing six criminals of the group and eight other unidentified gang members. Sub-inspector Monirul Islam is the Investigating Officer of the case.

The namaz-e-janaza of the police constable was held at the Rajarbagh Police Lines mosque, which was attended by the inspector general of police, police commissioner and other senior officials.

Jail rejoinder

FROM PAGE 1

On promotion of deputy jailers to the post of jailer, it said "The Officers and Staff (Department of Prisons) Recruitment Rules, 1984" did not reflect the jail code. The 1984 rules did not have the provision for examination in case of promotion, though there was no substitute for examination to measure merit. The jail directorate argued that in order to enhance the merit of jail officials it introduced the examination system as per the section 242(A) of the old jail code. It has issued a circular in this respect and there was no ill motive behind it.

The rejoinder again claimed that the directorate has taken up a lot of new programmes as a result of which the number of immoral activities within jails have gone down significantly.

The jail directorate has introduced various reform activities. When these are implemented, irregularities and anomalies in the jail administration would be eliminated to a great extent that is why, the directorate claims, a vested quarter has resorted to propaganda against it.

Our Reply: The reporter himself witnessed how the jail officials collect tolls from relatives of prisoners.

Regarding transfers, one example would make it clear whether the directorate took such decisions on the basis of merit and seniority. The DIG Prisons of Chittagong, during an inspection, discovered two trucks loaded with illegal goods in the Chittagong Central

Jail. The jail authorities transferred the jailer to Jhalakathi jail, a much smaller place, as punishment. Surprisingly, the senior superintendent of that jail was transferred to the Dhaka Central Jail -- which is considered a better position than the Chittagong jail. The same person was again found guilty of serious negligence of duty by the DIG Prisons, Dhaka on December 30, 2002. But no action was taken against him.

In the Mymensingh Central Jail, a high official of the directorate found the quality of pulse served to the prisoners very poor. He punished the jailer by transferring him to Madaripur jail. However, the jail superintendent got a better posting as he was sent to the Comilla Central Jail.

There are many more examples like these, which can be cited to prove that the transfers did not depend on the merit and seniority of officials.

On the promotion issue, the directorate does not have any right or authority to change the law of the land. It cannot decide on its own which criterion is most suitable to measure the merit of officials and resort to a law that is not in use. The 1984 rules dictate that only the Public Service Commission would decide on promotion. The jail authorities cannot even recommend the name of an official for promotion.

The rejoinder itself admits that there are 'immoral activities' in the jail which the authorities expect to eliminate by implementing the reform plan.

Faster reforms

FROM PAGE 1

important. We have seen the design of the commission which is world class in nature with execution power. But it needs to be implemented soon to give a clear signal to the corrupt that their days are numbered."

"But the commission itself is not going to solve the problem. It will be effective to catch the big fishes. But here everyone has been suffering from extortion of one kind or another. It might be Tk 100 for you, but this country is big population wise and the small amounts add up to big money," she said.

"Corruption has to be fought by informing different sectors like education, health, energy etc. I am satisfied with what is being done in education. We are happy about the power sector reforms and judiciary reforms. I am not so happy about the health where I don't see any shape of reforms," Nishimizu said.

"But every minister has to fight vested interests in eradicating corruption. It's a very hard work and so we respect leaders who are biting the bullet to make a change. We were surprised by many of the reforms undertaken by the government, we did not know that so much is being done in the judiciary and power sector."

She said Pakistan is an example of how corruption can be fought effectively through reforms. "Pakistan has reached a point where everyone can feel it. The banking system has undergone a sea of changes -- default

loans tackled, central bank strengthened, unionised workers gone and a modern banking in place.

"The state-owned banks brought in reputable private management to make them profitable for privatisation. Interest rate has come down to 4-5 per cent from 14 per cent, which has spurred investment. The revenue system has also improved with better-paid efficient people managing it."

"Bangladesh can do these even faster," she said, "because it has a strong democracy working."

SC verdict

FROM PAGE 1

Users' Forum Farid Ahmad Chowdhury said, "There should not be any part at the estuary of the Karnaphuli, especially considering the national security."

He added, "The SSA was given the lease during the tenure of the past government without floating any tender and the entire process lacked transparency."

General Secretary of Chittagong Port's Collective Bargaining Agent (CBA) Nurullah Bahar said the verdict proved that agitations were rightly launched against the SSA-proposed port.

Labour leader Mahfuzur Rahman Khan termed the verdict 'an achievement' of the port workers and employees who had agitated against 'an evil plot' against the national interest.

Suicide bombing

FROM PAGE 12

All three of the weekend's suicide bombers came from the flashpoint West Bank city of Hebron, Hamas said, where a 600-strong Jewish settler enclave sits in the middle of 120,000 Palestinians.

The Ezzedin al-Qassam Brigades vowed to "burn the earth beneath the feet of the Zionist occupiers" and said the attacks were in retaliation for the killing by the army of their leader and three of his bodyguards in March.

In the absence of a large scale military response to the worst spate of anti-Israeli attacks this year, Israel slapped a total closure of the West Bank and Gaza Strip.

The restrictions were later eased around Ramallah, where Palestinian leader Arafat is virtually penned up in his headquarters, but travel to Israel was still impossible, leaving thousands of Palestinians unable to reach their jobs.

Israeli Prime Minister Ariel Sharon's government also turned up the heat on Arafat, accusing him of abetting radical militant groups and doing everything he can to sabotage his rival Palestinian prime minister Mahmud Abbas' action.

A high-ranking official announced Sharon's government would boycott foreign officials who meet with Arafat in the future.

"We have cancelled no meeting already planned with a foreign official, but those who want to see Arafat in the future should know that they will not be able to meet Israeli officials," the official told AFP.

34 garment workers hurt in stampede

UNB, Chittagong

At least 34 garment workers were injured in a stampede in the city's Nasirabad area yesterday evening.

Hospital sources said the workers, mostly women, got injured as they tried to hurriedly come out of 'Descent Garments' factory on the second floor of a four storied building following a fake fire alarm at about 5:30.

Ten of the injured were admitted to the Chittagong Medical College Hospital.

BSF beats to death abducted fisherman, returns body

UNB, Kushtia

Indian Border Security Force (BSF) has returned the decomposed body of a Bangladeshi fisherman kidnapped on Wednesday while fishing in a river bordering the two countries.

The body of Iru, 45, who was mercilessly beaten to death, was handed over at a BDR-BSF flag meeting at Daulatpur border on Sunday.

Villagers said BSF troops had trespassed on border village Thotapara and kidnapped Iru who was fishing in the river along the village.

BSF's criminal action has caused strong resentment and disquiet among the villagers.

New road tech

FROM PAGE 12

The new way of using cement with brick aggregates will prevent rainwater entering the bituminous surface, he says.

Communications Minister Nazmul Huda, attending the seminar as chief guest, appreciated the research work and asked the departments concerned to have tests on it. The government welcomes the cost-effective technology for development, he said.

Engineer Rabiul Islam of RHD, Engineer Shahidul Hasan of the Local Government Engineering Department, Paul Ackroyd, head of the Department for International Development (DFID), UK in Bangladesh, were also present at the seminar.

Bangladesh is a developing country and progressing in road development, the main demand of rural people, said Paul Ackroyd. Bangladesh should try the new technology in constructing roads after proper field tests, he added.

Professor Md. Zakariya of the Bangladesh University of Engineering and Technology and Professor Dr RJ Whirl and Dr Ghatauer from Birmingham University, PM Lyer of Holcim Cement Company and Engineer Bill Hopkins also addressed the seminar, chaired by Engineer Quamrul Islam Siddique, IEB president.

The seminar concluded that the new technology can increase 50 per cent of longevity and save 33 per cent of maintenance cost.

SSA loses legal battle

FROM PAGE 1

terms and conditions are settled between the parties," the High Court noted.

While approving the projects, the government did not consider feasibility, economic analysis, project implementation costs and other issues.

The government also did not consider applications of two British and Australian companies which were interested in the Patenga terminal. No competitive bidding was arranged for the projects.

The High Court observed that the government decision went against the interest of the nation.

The idea of setting up private terminals was first conceived in 1997. It emerged as an important national and international issue and different groups of people supported or opposed the project. The main opposition surfaced on the issue of the Patenga terminal.

While thousands demonstrated against the government decision in the following years, US Ambassador Mary Ann Peters publicly said future US investment in Bangladesh would depend on this project.

SSA Managing Director Ashfaq Jamilur Rahman told the BBC Radio last night that the company would sue the government for compensation if yesterday's court decision is the result of the government's fault.

He claimed that the company has already spent \$25 million against a project cost of \$440 million.

Attorney General AF Hasan Arif told the BBC Radio that upon receiving the copy of the Appellate Division verdict, the government would decide if it would go for a review petition in the Appellate Division.

On behalf of the petitioners, Dr Kamal Hossain told the BBC Radio that this verdict has stopped a process that would have given the terminals to a company for 200 years.

On December 29, 1997, the SSA proposed to the government to award it the construction of Patenga and Narayanjan private terminals. The government on April 28, 1998, approved the proposal. But on July 4, 2001, the Awami League government suspended the projects under public pressure.

After the BNP came to power, it formed a secretary-level committee on this issue. The committee gave its decision in favour of the SSA on April 30 last year. On May 8, the prime minister approved the project summary.

Former chairman of the Chittagong Port Authority Engineer Mahmudul Islam along with President of Bandar Sramik Union SM Nazrul Islam, port worker Sunil Aich and one Shah Alam filed the writ petitions challenging the legality of the govern-

ment decision.

Dr Kamal Hossain and Harisadhan Dev Barman represented the petitioners, while Khandker Mahub Uddin Ahmed moved on behalf of the SSA and Additional Attorney General AJ Mohammad Ali moved for the government.

Artists

FROM PAGE 12

SPBA, underscored the need for such a book to introduce Bangladesh art to the world.

Gerd Wahlstrom, the Norwegian ambassador, said she was delighted with the colours and motifs of Bangladeshi artworks that she saw at the galleries, museums and private homes. She added that the book reflects Bangladeshi culture.

Ola Ree, managing director of Grameen Phone, also spoke on the occasion.

Senior artist Safiuddin Ahmed said he was happy with the publication of the book.

Prof Mohammad Kibria, chairman of the advisory committee for the book project, thanked the SPBA for launching the project.

Shabab Sattar, member of the SPBA board of trustees, presented the background of the publication of the book.

After the launch the book was displayed to the visitors for their comments.