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BDF MEET Govt obliged to protect people from criminals

Donors want proper probe into political murders

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The government cannot shirk the responsibility for the killing of Awami League lawmaker Ahsanullah Master, as it is obligated to protect people from criminals, said World Bank's Vice-President for South Asia Praful C Patel yesterday.

"It should not be an answer that we (the government) did not kill him," said Patel, also head coordinator of the donor community at the Bangladesh Development Forum (BDF) meet, at the Sonargaon Hotel.

"The government must take responsibility and ensure two things - properly investigate the murder

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The Bangladesh Development Forum meeting in progress yesterday, the second day of the three-day annual meet, at Hotel Sonargaon.

PHOTO: STAR

Saifur takes a swipe at dev partners

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Finance Minister M Saifur Rahman yesterday hit out at development partners for their barrage of criticism during the Bangladesh Development Forum (BDF) meeting, saying that 'his elected government is not bound to oblige to what donors say.'

"We are not here to please the donors. We have placed our plans and programmes before the donors. They are free to accept or reject them. We don't work for the satisfaction of the donors but the people," he told journalists during session breaks of the three-day meeting.

The minister was also highly critical of the donors' criticism about human rights violation in Bangladesh. "You can all see who are violating human rights," he said hinting at the shocking prisoner abuse in Iraq by the US and British troops.

"How an elected government should operate is up to us to decide. It does not depend on the donors," said Saifur, who is leading Bangladesh team at the meeting.

On dismal law and order state, he said, "Murders or rapes happen also in America. Its (American) newspapers print those on the back pages.

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Govt defends NGO stand against donors' censure

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The government yesterday defended its position on non-governmental organisations at the Bangladesh Development Forum meeting, saying some of them were indulging in politics with specific agenda and corruption after donors expressed concern about recent actions against them.

Without naming Proshika, a key policymaker said actions would be taken against the NGOs involved in activities they should not do.

"We don't want the NGOs to be involved in politics. We don't want to use them in our politics and we don't like that other parties will use them in their political interest," Abdul Mannan Bhuiyan, local government, rural development and cooperatives minister, told reporters after the third session on 'Enhancing Partnerships between Government and NGOs.'

About 2,000 NGOs are working in Bangladesh with funds from foreign countries and investigations have been opened against only five or six of them, he added.

"Otherwise, we have good relations with the NGOs," he said.

Praful C Patel, vice-president of the World Bank's South Asia region, said the donors wanted the government to expedite the law making process on foreign finance for NGOs.

John A Roome, operations director for World Bank's South Asia region, said everybody knew that NGOs played very constructive roles in Bangladesh.

Donors are concerned about some of the legislation in the process of formulation, he added.

The donors said NGOs should be given reasonable freedom to operate without political influence and bureaucratic control.

Interactions between the government and the NGOs should take place using transparent and predictable processes including the principles of 'innocent until proven guilty', a level playing field and timely processing of payment for services and approval of donor fund release.

"Unfortunately this has not

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AL gives memo to development partners

UNB, Dhaka

The Awami League has flayed the governance of Prime Minister Khaleda Zia's alliance in a memorandum handed over to the donors at the Bangladesh Development Forum (BDF) meet, saying that a midterm election is the only panacea for the sordid situation.

The memorandum, which focused on existing law and order, corruption, human rights, political persecution, judicial independence, free press, parliamentary practices and transparency of public

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Donors want more watch on education

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Donors at a meeting yesterday asked the government to strengthen monitoring and supervision of financial management of education sector that failed to deliver, meeting sources said.

"The donors have praised the government's initiatives and some

SEE PAGE 11 COL 4

AHSANULLAH MURDER Brother files case accusing Judo Dal leader, 16 others

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The younger brother of slain Awami League (AL) lawmaker Ahsanullah Master has charged a central leader of ruling BNP's youth front, Nurul Islam Sarkar Dipu, with masterminding the murder in a case filed on Saturday night.

In the first information report (FIR) filed with Tongi Police Station, Motiur Rahman named Dipu, a central committee leader of the Jatiyatabadi Judo Dal, Shahidul Islam Shipu and Wahidul Islam Bipu as the main accused in the case.

He also accused 16 others of the gruesome murder in a Friday shoot-out at Noagaon in Tongi. They are Kana Hafiz, Anwar Hossain Anu,

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Controversy over hurt League leader's shift to CMH

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A Judo League leader was shifted to the Combined Military Hospital on Saturday at the directive of high authorities allegedly to extract a statement from him to link the killing of Awami League (AL) lawmaker Ahsanullah Master to an intra-party feud.

An official at Dhaka Medical College Hospital (DMCH) confirmed that Mahfuzur Rahman Mahal, a member of the central committee of AL's youth front, was sent to the CMH on an instruction from a high-level government office despite his family's objection.

Mahal, also a contractor, suffered a bullet wound in his back in

Friday's shootout at a political rally in Tongi that left Ahsanullah and a schoolboy killed and at least five others injured.

Professor Shafiquddin Ahmed, head of DMC Neurosurgery Department and in charge of Ward No. 30 where Mahal was kept, disclosed the decision to send him to the military hospital. But his relatives did not agree and said it would be difficult for them to see him once he was taken there.

Mahal's father Mojibur Rahman Sikder was told that he was being taken there for better treatment.

Talking to The Daily Star at the DMCH on Friday, Mahal lying in bed and flanked by his wife shook his

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CTG CUSTOMS Tk 500 crore unrealised in pending cases

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, CTG

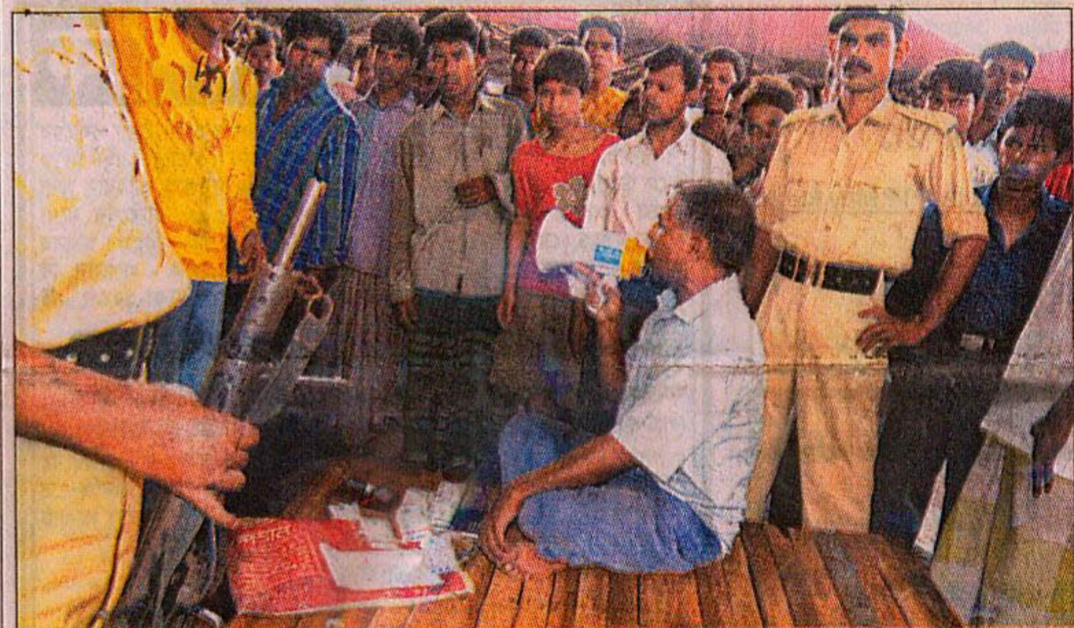
Chittagong Customs could not realise a huge revenue of Tk 500 crore due to a large number of pending cases.

The parliamentary standing committee on finance ministry has proposed the government to form a special bench in the High Court for immediate disposal of the 5,249 cases pending in different courts.

Chairman of the standing committee lawmaker Gazi Shahjahan Jewel at a meeting at the conference room of Customs House here discussed the matter yesterday morning.

"The committee will take effective measure for the formation of the

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A railway staff sells tickets in the open at Tongi Railway Station yesterday after protestors burnt down the ticket room on Saturday after the assassination of Awami League lawmaker Ahsanullah Master.

PHOTO: STAR

AL may return to JS May 12

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The main opposition Awami League (AL) is pondering a return to the Jatiya Sangsad to participate in the adoption of an obituary reference on slain lawmaker Ahsanullah Master when the session resumes on Friday.

Deputy Leader of the Opposition Abdul Hamid proposed for the return to the House to AL presidium members Abdus Samad Azad, Zillur Rahman and Suranjit Sengupta on Friday.

"I've requested senior party leaders to consider whether we can join discussion on the reference and speak out on record that the government had links with the killing of the lawmaker," Hamid told The Daily Star yesterday.

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Best of luck to all HSC candidates.

CITYCELL
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50 hurt as pickets fight with cops during hartal

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Opposition activists fought pitched battles with police during the countrywide dawn-to-dusk hartal enforced by the main opposition Awami League (AL) yesterday, leaving at least 50 including four policemen injured in Chandpur, Comilla, Brahmanbaria and Gaibandha.

The AL enforced the shutdown in protest at Friday's killing of AL lawmaker Ahsanullah Master and has called another dawn-to-dusk hartal in Gazipur district for today. The 12-hour strike passed off almost peacefully in the city yesterday,

leaving some stray incidents of violence including setting vehicles on fire, cracker blasts and scuffles between pickets and law-enforcers.

The hartal brought life to a standstill in Dhaka and elsewhere, disrupting transport movement, shutting down most shops, schools, banks, businesses and stock exchanges in Dhaka and Chittagong, and affecting cargo handling in the seaports.

Police sealed off Bangabandhu (BB) Avenue where the AL is headquartered, kept its leaders and activists confined to the area and

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Search body formed for anti-graft commission

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The selection committee to pick commissioners for the proposed independent Anti-corruption Commission was formed yesterday.

The move follows growing pressure on the government from Bangladesh's development partners on the issue.

Under the framework of the commission act, the proposed commission will have three commissioners, who will be picked for a four-year term by the president from a six-member panel chosen by the selection committee.

The five-member selection committee will have a judge of the

Appellate Division of the Supreme Court as its chairman and a judge of the High Court Division, the chairman of the Public Service Commission, the comptroller and auditor general and the last retired cabinet secretary as its members.

The chief justice yesterday nominated Appellate Division Judge MA Aziz and High Court Division Judge Nazrul Islam Chowdhury for the selection committee.

Now the committee, led by Justice MA Aziz, will meet to make a panel of commissioners. The act stipulates that people with 20 years of experience in law, education, administration, judiciary or armed

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Prime Bank announces the opening of its thirty-first branch at Pragati Sarani, Moddhya Badda, Dhaka.

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