

Nagorik Samaj sees rally attack as well planned

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

People from across the socio-political spectrum yesterday said the attack on Sheikh Hasina and the Awami League (AL) rally was carefully orchestrated and to resist such organised and dangerous criminals a strong political will is absolutely imperative.

The call came from a protest rally organised by Sammilito Nagorik Samaj at the Central Shaheed Minar.

The speakers describing the alliance government as a complete failure asked it to step down. They said the government has manifestly failed to ensure public safety and the people do not want to see it in power even for a day.

Hasanul Haq Inu, president of the Jatiya Samajtantrik Dal (JSD) said, "We've got to resist the organised attackers politically. And we need to form a unified platform to conduct the anti-government campaign."

Professor AAMS Arefin Siddque, president of Dhaka University Teachers' Association, said attempt on the life of leader of the opposition in broad daylight shows this government has lost every right to rule this country.

Nim Chandra Bhoumik, general secretary of the Hindu Bouddha Christian Oikyo Parishad, said if the people fail to stop the evil forces, the

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Russia's Yelena Slesarenko clears the bar yesterday to win the gold at the Olympic Stadium in Athens.

PHOTO: AFP

Fertiliser, seed crises scourge farmers

JS body for more fund, input import to tackle situation

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Fertiliser price hike and seed crises are hobbling farmers' fight to rebuild post-flood life, lawmakers at a parliamentary body meeting said yesterday.

The members of the parliamentary standing committee on the agriculture ministry asked the ministry to immediately import fertilisers and the finance ministry to channel more fund to face the crises and offset the huge agricultural losses.

Committee member Shah Shahid Sarwar, a BNP legislator, told the meeting that in his Mymensingh constituency some dealers did not take delivery of their quotas of fertilisers in an apparent bid to create an artificial crisis and raise prices.

Committee Chairman Abdul Mannan asked the deputy to submit a written complaint for opening an investigation.

Agriculture Minister MK Anwar also

sought a copy of the complaint to take up the allegation with the industries ministry that runs six urea fertiliser factories under Bangladesh Chemical Industries Corporation (BCIC).

Jatiya Party lawmaker GM Kader said a 50 kg bag of urea was selling at Tk 350, much higher than Tk 270 market rate and the triple super phosphate (TSP) price was also hiked to Tk 850 a bag from Tk 650.

Anwar assured the meeting of 'all necessary measures' to ensure availability of fertilisers at reasonable prices.

The committee members also pointed out non-availability of seeds for fresh planting after floodwaters carried away most crops from aus fields, aman seedbeds and summer vegetables.

BNP lawmaker Akbar Ali told The Daily Star that farmers were failing to buy seeds and seedlings because of high prices in Sirajganj. He said he heard of a fertiliser crisis in northern Rangpur, Dinajpur and Bogra regions.

Akbar feared the current wave of hartal and political strife could hinder the normal transportation of agricultural inputs, adding to the farmers' woes.

Opposition Chief Whip Abdus Shahid told The Daily Star that acute crisis of seeds erased farmers' hopes in his home district Moulvibazar.

Weeks of monsoon flooding this year brought 48,84,000 farming families to their knees and caused a financial loss of Tk 2,291 crore, damaging crops and seeds on 8,51,114 hectares, the meeting was told.

Of the affected families, 26,65,000 are of small and marginal farmers.

The agriculture ministry has taken a Tk 158 crore agricultural rehabilitation programme, but has so far got a fund of Tk 68.77 crore released.

RAOZAN MONK MURDER

Six sentenced to death

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Ctg

The First Additional District and Sessions Judge Court here awarded death penalty yesterday to all the six living accused of the murder of a Buddhist monk in Raozan on April 21, 2002.

The monk, Gyanojyoti Mohathero, was brutally slain in his monastery at Hingala Warapuyan Buddha Bihar, a temple cum orphanage, in Raozan of the district triggering outrage at home and abroad.

Summing up a 72-page verdict in the case Judge M Belayet Hossain delivered the judgement at around 12:35pm before a packed courtroom in presence of three of the convicts, and lawyers and relatives of both the accused and the victim.

The persons ordained to walk the gallows are Azizul Haq, Putul Barua, Aliach Mohammad, Nurul Islam, Manik and Zahir.

Of them, Putul Barua, a teacher of the Buddhist temple and one of the two masterminds behind the murder, went into hiding after obtaining bail. Two others, Manik and Zahir, are also absconding.

The other mastermind Azizul Haq, a top-notch terrorist of the district and chief of Raozan-based terrorist outfit Aziz Bahini, is behind the bars along

with his accomplices Aliach Mohammad, a confessed murderer, and Nurul Islam.

An army contingent caught Haq with two AK-47 assault rifles after a shootout in a hilly forest at Kaokhali in Rangamati hill district on May 12 last.

The defendants were awarded with capital punishment after the charge of masterminding and executing in a planned way the brutal killing of the monk pressed against them under Section 302/34/120 (B) of the Penal Code was proved beyond doubt, the judge said.

The court ordered to execute the convicts by hanging them until death upon approval of the High Court.

The judgement, however, provided for the convicts to appeal to the higher court within seven days after receipt of attested copies of the verdict.

The court also fined the convicts Tk 10,000 each with an order to deposit the penalty money to the national exchequer.

After the April-21 gory murder of Gyanojyoti Mohathero in 2002, his brother Sulal Barua filed a case with Raozan Police Station.

A number of ministers including the home minister visited the spot and assured to bring the killers to justice. Awami League lawmakers

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HC asks govt why secy Nurul's retirement not illegal

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The High Court yesterday issued a rule asking the government to reply in six weeks why the section 9 (2) of the Public Service (Retirement) Act, 1974 should not be declared illegal.

The court issued the order following a writ petition filed by prime minister's acting secretary AHM Nurul Islam, who was forced into retirement on June 3 reportedly on charges of violating service rule and acting against the government.

A release of the Press Information Department, however, said the same day that the government forced him into retirement in public interest.

However, Bureau of Anti-corruption (Bac) on June 7 filed a case against Nurul Islam and three other employees on charge of leaking 'highly classified information' violating the Official Secrets Act.

Dr Kamal Hossain, Shahdeen Malik and Tanjib-ul Alam moved for the petitioner.

Prayer Timing		
August 30		
	Azan	Jamaat
Fajr	4-30	5-05
Zohr	12-45	1-15
Asr	4-45	5-00
Maghrib	6-33	6-36
Esha	8-00	8-30
Source: Islamic Foundation		

ATHENS OLYMPICS

US hits 100 medals, looks beyond

AFP, Athens

Capturing more medals and more gold medals than any other nation at the Athens Olympics, the United States met its goal of 100 medals with a day to spare but is concerned about holding off China in 2008.

US officials were pleased to enter the final day of the Games of the 28th Olympiad with 34 gold, 38 silver and 28 bronze medals for a perfect 100 compared to 31 golds, 17 silver and 14 bronze for nearest rival China.

But with Beijing hosting the 2008 Olympics, US Olympic Committee (USOC) chief executive Jim Scherr is already preparing for a challenge to hold the top spot against the quickly rising future hosts.

"To achieve that number of medals at these Games is a huge testament to our athletes," Scherr said.

Hitting the 100-medal target produces a can-do spirit that should serve US athletes in good stead when plans are made for Beijing.

"It was important for us to achieve that goal," US chef de mission Herman Frazier said.

"Hopefully we situated ourselves with that to help ourselves going into 2006 at Torino (Winter Games) and 2008 in Beijing."

Major corporate sponsors provide much of the funding for US athletes so they can train and still handle day-to-

day expenses. They will be called upon to finance the fight at even higher levels in Beijing.

"We have to raise our level of support in all sports, especially those in which the Chinese are doing well," Scherr said.

"We will try and provide resources where opportunities exist."

Scherr also admits that staying atop the medal chase is more than simply one rising rival.

"It's not only about China, which is coming," Scherr said.

"Russia has done really well in the second half of the Games and other countries have improved their overall programs, Japan and Australia and several European countries."

Scherr noted that simply qualifying for enough spots in the Games to win 100 medals is more difficult since the breakup of the Soviet Union, formerly the main US political and Olympic medal rival.

"It's really harder to find an entry with the former Soviet Union now putting in athletes from 12 nations," he said.

Peter Ueberroth, the USOC chairman, is confident that Beijing will build upon the success of Athens.

"Those will be terrific Games," he said.

"The Chinese people are behind it and the government is giving it their full support. They will probably take it to another level."



PHOTO: STAR

Justice Joynul Abedin, middle, of the one-member judicial inquiry commission inspects the scene of the August 21 deadly grenade attack on an Awami League rally on Bangabandhu Avenue yesterday as a crowd of spectators looks on.

Freedom fighter Mortuza Khan dies in road accident

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Engineer Golam Mortuza Khan, a valiant freedom fighter and politician, died in a road accident in Netrokona yesterday morning. He was 63.

Mortuza was one of the leaders of the student movement in 1960s. He was also actively involved in trade unionism and left politics.

Mortuza went to Netrokona on Friday. He used to go there every week as he was setting up a primary school at Katli.

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121 O-level examinees to retake exam

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

As many as 121 O-level examinees of May 2004 session will have to sit for a re-examination in Bengali paper on September 25 due to misplacement of their exam papers, said the British Council.

"The Bengali scripts of those students have been missing somewhere between the Edexcel and individual exam evaluator," said an official of the British Council, exam

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