

Hasina accuses govt

FROM PAGE 12
 "When public life is battered by the unabated price-hike and insecurity, prime minister's family members are siphoning off their ill-gotten money abroad," she said, adding that some of their smuggled resources have been forfeited in Malaysia recently.

The AL chief said if her party gets a chance to rule they will work to turn Bangladesh into a prosperous and wealthy nation by 2020.

"We will give job to at least one unemployed youth from every family of the country if the AL is voted to power next time," she said.

"We will not kill people by crossfire, we will improve law and order through justice and upholding human rights," she said, adding, "Today killing without trial takes place only to protect the godfathers

of criminals."

Hasina called upon the students to make preparations for ousting the present government and reinstating democratic rule in the country.

Referring to the killings of Prof Humayun Azad and Dr Mohammad Yunus, Hasina said communal forces with the help of government are killing pro-liberation and progressive teachers at different public universities.

Hasina alleged that the perpetrators of the grenade attacks including that of August 21 on the AL rally have not been arrested or punished.

The AL chief also criticised the government for distorting history of the Liberation War in the textbooks and said the people responsible will be brought to justice in an appropriate time for dishing out erroneous study materials to students.

Tension over BSF's prison cell at zero point

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Khulna

Tension prevailed at Benapole border yesterday in the wake of Indian Border Security Force's (BSF) bid to construct a pucca prison cell at zero point on Friday in gross violation of international laws.

Bangladesh Rifles (BDR) strongly protested the illegal bid but the BSF fired blank shots, creating panic in the area.

The incident halted export-import through Benapole land port.

Earlier reports from the bordering areas said passport holders at Benapole check post and local people ran helter skelter in panic as the BDR and BSF personnel faced each other Friday noon. BSF jawans equipped with heavy arms fired several blank shots without any provocation from the BDR.

BDR authorities said however BSF men exploded some firecrackers but did not fire shots.

The BSF stopped construction of the pucca cell after a company commander-level meeting between the BDR and BSF on Friday evening.

PM calls for UN

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have to find out the path of their emancipation.

She said the government has formed a special fund of Tk 100 crore for lending through PKSF (Palli Karmo Sahayak Foundation) for employment generation for the hardcore poor.

The prime minister said her government believes that micro-credit is one of the major weapons to reduce poverty and thanked Prof Mohammad Yunus for innovating this economic novelty.

Khaleda said many NGOs run special funds from the savings of micro-credit borrowers and urged the NGO leaders to think whether the money is being utilized properly and can be invested in profitable micro-enterprises.

She said her government will seek support from the NGOs for successful implementation of PRSP (poverty-reduction strategy paper).

The prime minister believes that it is possible to attain the poverty-reduction target with united efforts of all, not by government's single-handed effort.

Finance Minister Saifur Rahman said the interest of microcredits will have to be brought down to a logical level to make the programme dynamic and stable.

Grameen Bank Managing Director Mohammad Yunus urged the prime minister to enact laws for setting up small capital banks and monitoring authority to monitor the banks as well as free the information technology from captivity.

World Bank MD

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from the Washington-based lender is on the up.

Apart from project loans, Bangladesh got \$500 million as budgetary support from the WB in the last two years. The government also expects \$800 million loan from the WB by June this year.

The government is currently negotiating with the WB for \$200 million for health sector programmes, \$200 million for flood rehabilitation, \$300 million for development support credit and \$100 million for education sector.

Although the WB MD's visit is not directly linked to the prospective loans, the government will utilise the visit to show its achievements and difficulties in reform implementation for fruitful negotiations.

Police superintendent, Faridpur, ordered the suspension of OC Shahidullah and Pakuria police outpost ASI Faruque for "neglect of duty".

Meanwhile, six others died in road accidents yesterday.

In Moulvibazar, three people died and six others were injured when a cow-laden truck hit a tree near Sadar Hospital on Dhaka-

Huge security

FROM PAGE 1

He added that all preparations are back up to full speed, with the 'massive security net' for the summit already underway and the 10 sub-committees of the Saarc summit preparation cells restarting their stalled preparations. Twelve thousand security personnel will be deployed around the capital during the summit, he said.

"We're now discussing the nitty-gritty of the 2-day summit," he said.

Rahman stressed that only essential programmes would be given priority in the draft schedule, given that the summit itself has been curtailed by a day, while the council of ministers, a meeting comprised of foreign ministers, has been shortened from two days to one.

He also suggested that the Saarc cultural programme, originally scheduled to be held around the summit dates, is uncertain due to the sombre tone of the summit following the devastation of three Saarc member states by the Asian Tsunami on December 26.

Leaders from Saarc member states will arrive on February 5th and will begin leaving on the evening of February 7th, starting with Indian Prime Minister Manmohan Singh, said foreign ministry spokesman Zahurul Haq.

Most of the bilateral meetings between the Saarc states are likely to be concentrated on the first day of the summit after the opening ceremony, with additional meetings likely to be held on the evening of February 5th and after the concluding session on February 7.

Pre-summit agenda setting meetings will start on February 1st, with the Saarc Programming Committee comprising senior officials on Feb 1-2nd, Standing Committees comprising foreign secretaries on Feb 3-4th and Council of Ministers comprising foreign ministers to be held on Feb 5.

Gas pipeline deal

FROM PAGE 1
 pipeline project proposal pushed by a private company, saying such a scheme implies national security issues and needs political decision at the tri-national level with involvement of the governments concerned.

But in the meantime that stance of the government has reversed and, so, Mosharrif Hossain said, "This pipeline will be set up by an international private sector consortium. The government will not invest in it."

Each country will be responsible for the security of the pipeline on its soil, he added.

Sharing the outcome of the Yangon meeting from January 12 to 13, the state minister said a six-member working committee -- with two representatives of each country -- headed by the director general of Myanmar energy ministry has been formed.

This committee will hold meetings in all the three countries to determine the pipeline route and deal with the ownership and technical issues. It will prepare and submit a report by March so that the tripartite agreement can be signed by April.

The cabinet of each of the three countries will have to approve its portion of the pipeline scheme to give it the go-ahead.

On the issue of the Indo-Bangla treaty, Dhaka and Delhi in a joint statement on Thursday said, "With regard to Bangladesh's request for the provision of electricity facilities from Nepal and Bhutan to

Bangladeshi, the Indian Minister agreed that the Government of India would examine positively any fresh proposals received from Bangladesh in regard to examining required facilities."

"In regard to Bangladesh's request for transit facilities to Bhutan and Nepal through India between Bangladesh on one side and Bhutan and Nepal on the other, the Indian Minister conveyed that the Government of India supported this request. He pointed out that some facilities had already been provided at Phulbari which at present were not being fully utilised," the statement said.

The Indian government will favourably examine any further requests that might arise to augment the existing facilities, it added.

On Bangladesh's request to rectify the bilateral trade imbalance, Indian Petroleum Minister Mani Shankar Aiyar said the bilateral trade has to be expanded to bridge the gap. Projects like the tri-national gas pipeline will contribute towards that end, he noted.

The prime minister in December formed a secretary-level committee to scrutinise the various aspects of a transnational gas pipeline that may carry gas from Myanmar to India entering Bangladesh in the east and exiting in the west.

Although the concept of this pipeline is eight years old, Myanmar has been hammering it out in the recent times and then invited Bangladesh and India to talk out the energy issues in Yangon in early January.

Sylhet highway early yesterday.

The dead are cow traders Rajab Ali, 43, Shahabuddin, 40, and Giasuddin, 45.

Police said the truck, loaded with sacrificial animals, was going to Sylhet from Kishoreganj.

In Jhenidah, three day-labourers traveling on the rooftop of a bus were killed at Bezpara in Kaliganj upazila on Dhaka-Khulna highway yesterday.

Police and witnesses said the accident took place at about 4pm when the day-labourers, returning home in the Kushtia-bound bus, fell down from the vehicle as it dashed a roadside tree.

Two labourers died on the spot while another succumbed to his injuries on way to the upazilla health complex.

Two of the deceased were identified as Aslam, 30, and Firoz, 22.

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 The bandits halted several buses, including the two of the Bar members, near Bhanga crossing at Nowpara felling trees on the road. They broke the windpanes of the buses and started robbing the passengers of their valuables.

"During the holdup, the driver of one of the picnic buses tried to run his vehicle on the back gear to save the passengers. But the bus fell into a roadside ditch, killing 11 on the spot," says a spot account of the accident.

On receiving information, deputy commissioner and police superintendent of Faridpur and firefighters rushed to the spot.

Police and firefighters, aided by local people, retrieved the bodies and rescued the injured.

When the bodies were taken to Kushtia Bar Bhaban at 1:00pm, colleagues and people in general burst into tears.

All activities at the district judge's and all the magistrate courts halted as a pall of gloom descended on the town.

The lawyers hoisted black flag and wore black badges to mourn the tragic end of their colleagues and their kinsmen.

Textiles and Jute Minister Shajahan Siraj, who is the minister-in-charge of Kushtia, and four MPs from the district expressed their deep shock at the deaths of the lawyers and their family members.

Immediately after the accident, the officer-in-charge (OC) of Bhanga Police Station and another police officer have been put under suspension.

Police superintendent, Faridpur, ordered the suspension of OC Shahidullah and Pakuria police outpost ASI Faruque for "neglect of duty".

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The climax of the pilgrimage will see an estimated more than two million worshippers climb Mount Arafat, the site of Mohammed's (PBUH) last sermon 14 centuries ago.

Saudi Arabia has been facing a wave of attacks by militants and plans to deploy up to 20,000 policemen to safeguard this year's pilgrimage, officials said last week.

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BSS, UNB, Reuters

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JS body unhappy

FROM PAGE 12
 medicare for the poor.

The committee members pointed out the poor performance of the upazilla health complexes and rural health centres and said the government spends huge money every year to run the centres, but people are deprived of quality healthcare service.

They alleged the doctors and other staff are not sincere in discharging their duties. "Most doctors are not found at the health complexes after 12:00noon. They leave several hours before the office-hours ends," said the committee chairman.

To tackle the situation, the parliamentary body asked the health and family welfare ministry to strengthen the activities of the upazilla health committees headed by local lawmakers and bring about transparency in their spending.

"We have asked the ministry to issue circulars asking all the upazilla health complex officials that they would not be allowed to spend money without prior permission of the health committee," the committee chief said.

The health committees have also been asked to hold meeting at least once a month to monitor the performance of the health complexes, Moshirur added.

Awami League lawmaker and member of the committee Prof M

Amanullah said the activities of the public hospitals are not satisfactory. "We discussed the ways to improve the situation at the hospitals," he told reporters.

About the prevailing situation at the government medical college hospitals, the former state minister for health said the professors usually do not visit the hospital at night though some of them are supposed to do it.

Krishak Samik Janata League lawmaker Abdul Quader Siddiqui pointed out the poor management of the public hospitals. "Shortage of manpower and lack of discipline among the doctors have made the situation worse," he told reporters after the meeting.

Health and Family Welfare Minister Mosharrif Hossain however told the committee that the government had initiated steps to improve the situation at public hospitals. The health ministry has already increased allocation for every hospital.

The parliamentary body formed a sub-committee to identify the obstacles to different development projects in the health sector.

It also asked the ministry to initiate step to merge the drug administration with the food directorate to gear up monitoring of the market to stop adulteration of food items.

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"As the three attempted to wheel away with the money, I cried for help. At this a criminal shot me in the abdomen and ran away," he added.

The muggers, aged 25 to 30 years, drove away through Uttarkhan Major Road.

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Grenade found in microbus

UNB, Rangamati

A British-made grenade and some bullets of 303 rifle were recovered from a microbus at a checkpoint at Betunia on the Rangamati-Chittagong highway last night.

Official sources said army and police jointly conducted the raid on the microbus at the rubber garden checkpoint at about 8:30pm and recovered the grenade and bullets.

They also arrested all the passengers of the microbus.

Policy decision

FROM PAGE 1

Ain O Salih Kendra Director Dr Hamida Hossain initiated discussion at the opinion-sharing meeting with the bureau members of South Asians for Human Rights (SAHR). The Daily Star Editor Mahfuz Anam moderated the discussion.

"Bangladesh government has assured me of taking neutral stance on various activities of the religious extremists," said Asma who received prestigious Ramon Magsaysay Award in 1995 for 'greatness of spirit shown in service of the people'.

She said the government has also assured her that it would ensure the freedom of expression of the followers of all religions.

About the Islamist extremists' movement against Ahmadiyya community in Bangladesh, she said, "The civil society of Bangladesh is protesting the anti-Ahmadiyya campaign. But it did not happen in Pakistan in 1974 when similar campaign was going on there. Now there is a law in Pakistan to punish Ahmadiyyas if they claim themselves to be Muslims."

The leaders behind different movements on religious issues consider these as part of their politics but the religious people think it is their divine duty, she noted.

Asma, a founding member of the Human Rights Commission of Pakistan, called for co-ordinated initiatives by the South Asian rights organisations at national and regional levels to protect human rights in the region.

Lauding the courage shown by Bangladesh people in the 1971 Liberation War, Asma Jahangir said, "The Liberation War will be meaningless if Bangladesh follows the path Pakistan has taken and the way the country is being run."

The SAHR bureau members at the meeting agreed in principle to identify discriminations in religious issues in textbooks and address the problems of tea garden workers.

FROM PAGE 1
 Islam left behind his wife, a 14-year-old son and a 23-day-old daughter.

At least five thousand people from Laxmikola and the neighbouring villages gathered in the field, about 20km from the district town, to enjoy the show, an annual winter event.

Witnesses said the first bomb went off in front of the women audience as soon as a woman came on the stage to dance a typically indecent number. The second bomb followed after about 15 seconds.

Locals rushed the splinter-hurt people to Bogra Mohammad Ali Hospital, some in critical condition.

Talking to The Daily Star yesterday noon, a number of villagers said a local influential quarter had forbidden the organisers, a group of youth, from holding the theatrical shows, which it considered as immoral and irreligious. The locals guess that quarter might have masterminded the attack.

A few of the villagers also suspect a link between the incident and Bangla Bhai, whose home is in neighbouring Karnipara village which he reportedly visited last month.

Madia Union Parishad Chairman Abdul Latif said there was no feud over holding the theatre, but the attack was a sequel to other blasts in the country.

Police officials visited the spot but could not immediately ascertain the motive for the attack.

UNB adds: Locals and police said the bomb attack was a sequel to clash of two rival groups over horse race, a component of the event, in which six people were injured earlier on the day.

The police super of the district who visited the spot refused to name the attackers before investigation is completed.

NATORE

UNB reports: Fuad, 42, of Ankutia village under neighbouring Chalmohar upazila, died in the bomb attack on the Boroigram jatra show at about 1:00am Saturday.

Most of the 20 injured were victims of a stampede of the terrified audience. Of them, the condition of local union parishad member Badsha and a peasant named Nasir were reported to be critical.

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Most of the 20 injured were victims of a stampede of the terrified audience. Of them, the condition of local union parishad member Badsha and a peasant named Nasir were reported to be critical.

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At least five thousand people from Laxmikola and the neighbouring villages gathered in the field, about 20km from the district town, to enjoy the show, an annual winter event.

Witnesses said the first bomb went off in front of the women audience as soon as a woman came on the stage to dance a typically indecent number. The second bomb followed after about 15 seconds.

Locals rushed the splinter-hurt people to Bogra Mohammad Ali Hospital, some in critical condition.

Talking to The Daily Star yesterday noon, a number of villagers said a local influential quarter had forbidden the organisers, a group of youth, from holding the theatrical shows, which it considered as immoral and irreligious. The locals guess that quarter might have masterminded the attack.

A few of the villagers also suspect a link between the incident and Bangla Bhai, whose home is in neighbouring Karnipara village which he reportedly visited last month.

Madia Union Parishad Chairman Abdul Latif said there was no feud over holding the theatre, but the attack was a sequel to other blasts in the country.

Police officials visited the spot but could not immediately ascertain the motive for the attack.

UNB adds: Locals and police said the bomb attack was a sequel to clash of two rival groups over horse race, a component of the event, in which six people were injured earlier on the day.

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