

## KM Hasan

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discussion on the 30th death anniversary of Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman organised by the Bangabandhu Parishad at the Engineers' Institute in the city.

"How can a justice feel embarrassed to hear a case while he took oath to keep himself beyond any family tie with anyone?" she said.

The present government extended the retirement age of justices in a planned way to get a loyal person as the chief of caretaker government and rig the election, she said.

The AL chief also questioned the neutrality of Justice MA Aziz as the chief election commissioner.

"Bangabandhu's murder was not merely the act of a few army officers...the defeated forces of the Liberation War and even some freedom fighters were involved in the conspiracy to eliminate the spirit of the Liberation War," she said.

The AL leader made an oblique reference to late president Ziaur Rahman of masterminding the murder, saying, "What was the role of

General Ziaur Rahman, who was picked as the chief of army just after the killing of Bangabandhu and took over power after a few months?"

Being a freedom fighter, Ziaur Rahman rehabilitated the Razakars by grabbing state power and halted the trial of the war criminals, she alleged.

The former prime minister urged all pro-liberation and progressive forces to launch a united movement against the BNP-Jamaat-led coalition to free the nation from the clutches of misrule.

Hasina said the ruling BNP lawmakers have been repressing journalists across the country. "This government has turned the country into a den of criminals. Bangladesh is now being treated as a country of violence and widespread repression on journalists," she said.

Presided over by National Professor Kabir Chowdhury, the discussion was also addressed by Prof Nurul Islam, journalist Golam Sarwar, Advocate Mahub-e-Alam and Bangabandhu Parishad President SAMalek.

## Khaleda, Hasina condole Lankan FM's death

**BDEWS, Dhaka**

Prime Minister Khaleda zia and Leader of the Opposition in Parliament Sheikh Hasina yesterday expressed deep shock at the assassination of Sri Lankan Foreign Minister Lakshman Kadirgamar.

In a message sent to Sri Lankan President Chandrika Kumaratunga, Khaleda said:

"Kadirgamar was an outstanding statesman and with his untimely death, the world and South Asia, in particular, has lost a leader and a man of peace."

"The government and the people of Bangladesh joined me in condemning this dastardly act in the strongest terms," she said, and hoped that the assailants would be apprehended and brought to justice.

Sheikh Hasina also expressed deep shock at the assassination of Lakshman Kadirgamar.

Hasina, also the Awami League Chief, strongly condemned the heinous attack on the Lankan foreign minister and said, "We all have to be united against terrorism."

Hasina said Bangladesh Awami league is always against all kinds of terrorism and for peace.

She expressed condolences to Kadirgamar's family and the people of Sri Lanka.

Foreign Minister Morshed Khan also expressed deep shock at the assassination of his Sri Lankan counterpart.

## Emergency declared

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in the slaying, military spokesman Daya Ratnayake said.

"We strongly suspect the Tigers because he had threats from the LTTE," Ratnayake said.

Two suspected Tamil rebels were arrested a fortnight ago after allegedly spying on Kadirgamar, he said.

The rebel group, which has been observing a ceasefire since February 2002, denied responsibility for the killing and said the government must look "inwards" to get at the killers.

"Denying any involvement in the assassination...LTTE's political head, S.P. Thamilselvan Saturday condemned Colombo for hastily blaming the Liberation Tigers for the killing," the pro-rebel Tamilnet website said.

The rebels had branded Kadirgamar, a member of the minority Tamil community, as a traitor to their cause of setting up a homeland for mainly Hindu Tamils within Sri Lanka, which is mainly Buddhist and ethnic Sinhalese.

Analysts feared for the uneasy truce between the government and the rebels, already rocked by higher violence in recent months, and said the high-profile killing could re-ignite the island's three decade-old civil war.

"There should be both local and international pressure on the parties to hold the course, build confidence and maintain the ceasefire," Sunanda Deshapriya, director of the Centre for

Policy/Alternatives, told AFP.

"Otherwise, there's a chance we will go back to war."

UN Secretary General Kofi Annan led international condemnation of what he called a "criminal and senseless" murder.

"It's completely insane, it's a major setback for the peace process," said Erik Solheim, the top Norwegian envoy trying to engineer a lasting peace deal between the government and the LTTE.

US Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice called it a "senseless murder" and "a vicious act of terror." She said those responsible must be brought to justice.

Neighbouring India also condemned the "terrorist crime," but expressed hope that Sri Lanka would maintain political stability.

## Hajj flight

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"The decision to increase the plane fare for hajj pilgrims is also unfair as the increase is not imposed on the passengers of other routs of the Biman," the HAAB president said.

He sought the prime minister's intervention into the matter before the cabinet meeting tomorrow takes the final decision of increasing the fare.

HAAB Secretary General Zinnur Ahmed Chowdhury Dipu said the government should invite international tender for carrying hajj passengers by other international flights also if it fails to retain the plane fare at \$ 950.

"We strongly believe that many international airlines will come forward to carry the hajj passengers and the plane fare then will come down below \$900," he said.

Presently the Biman can carry only 40 percent of the total hajj pilgrims from the country while other international airlines, including the Saudia, carry the rest 60 percent, Dipu said.

"If the civil aviation ministry decides to increase the plane fare of Biman, the international airlines will also increase the fares of their hajj flights, thus taking away a huge amount of foreign exchange from the country," he added.

Meanwhile, the Bangladesh Hajj Passengers Welfare Council (BHPWC) yesterday at another press conference strongly protested the civil aviation ministry's proposal to increase the plane fare of hajj pilgrims.

"Performing the hajj will become difficult for the country's Muslims because of the government's decision to increase the plane fare," council President Advocate Abdullah Al-Naser said while addressing the press conference at the National Press Club.

He also demanded withdrawal of the government decision to carry hajj passengers by only two airlines.

BHPWC members Sheikh Anshur Ullah, Abdus Salam, Manjurul Islam and Golam Hossain also spoke at the press conference.

## Saarc foreign secy meet postponed

**STAFF CORRESPONDENT**

The 31st session of the Standing Committee of the Saarc foreign secretaries slated for August 17-18 in Islamabad has been postponed in the wake of the assassination of Sri Lankan Foreign Minister Lakshman Kadirgamar.

The August 16 one-day meeting of the 26th session of the Programming Committee of Saarc senior officials has also been postponed.

A highly placed source at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs said the news came when the concerned desk contacted the Pakistan foreign office yesterday.

Islamabad will soon announce fresh dates for the two meetings, the official added.

Pakistan currently holds the rotating chair of the seven-nation South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (Saarc).

The high official however said the death of the Sri Lankan foreign minister would not affect the 13th Saarc Summit in Dhaka on November 12-13.

The Standing Committee was due to chalk out the agenda for the Dhaka summit and review the progress of implementation of the decisions made at the 12th summit in Islamabad in January last year.

The Programme Committee was tasked to finalise a report on Saarc activities since the Islamabad summit.

Official sources said Islamabad has already conveyed the postponement news to the other Saarc member states - Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, the Maldives, Nepal and Sri Lanka.

## SP show-caused

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Four magistrates, six police officials and 112 constables were supposed to be on duty at the shrine of Hazrat Shah Sayed Ahmed Gesu Daras, popularly known as Kolla Shahid, to ensure security of the more than 100,000 devotees gathered there to celebrate the annual weeklong Urs.

But, on Friday midnight, the third day of the Urs, 10 near-simultaneous bomb explosions froze the devotees in terror, sparking off waves of panic throughout the surrounding areas at Kharampur, six km off Akhaura.

Mosaheb Ali, 40, who was killed in the blasts, came from Baradi village in Narayanganj.

Though there was a report that a woman named Hasna Begum was also killed in the attack but the police denied it. Her body was not found on the spot too.

Witnesses said the first bomb went off at 11:50pm near the donation box at the main entrance to the shrine.

The rest of the explosions took place one after another within the next five minutes. Five of them

blasted on the shrine premises, two at the main gate and two in front of the nearby Akhaura Railway School.

Police also recovered another bomb, live, from the spot. Meanwhile, the DC yesterday formed a 3-member probe body into the bomb attack headed by additional district magistrate. The committee has to submit its report within a week.

Of the injured, 26 were admitted to Brahmanbaria Sadar Hospital, Akhaura Upazila Health Complex and various local clinics, while another five with critical wounds were sent to Dhaka hospitals for better treatment.

The seriously hurt people include Litton, 40, of Brahmanbaria; Abdul Barik, 60, of Dhaka; Asadullah, 30, of Manuhardi; Sahed Mia, 50, of Brahmanbaria; Saheda Bhanu, 60, of Sarail; Monir Mia, 60, of Habiganj; Akbar Hussain, 70, of Dhaka; Sukkur Bibi, 70, of Sylhet; Bhanu Chandra Das, 30, of Mirpur, Dhaka; police constable Motahar Hussain, 35; and Rafique, 35, of Narshingdi.

## Traders to keep

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murderers are not arrested and brought to justice within the next three days.

### DISPUTED ADDED TO TOLLS AS REASON

Thirty-six hours into the outrageous murder, the police last night was yet to pin point the motive for it. However, they said issues like extortion and business disputes were gradually gathering more focus in their investigations.

Law enforcers and family members also hinted that Shahidullah's stiff insistence to realise an outstanding rent to the tune of Tk 65 lakh from a garments factory owner might also be a reason for his assassination.

Roots Garments, which rented a 19,200-sq-ft floor of the Mirpur Mazar Co-operative Market building, owes the sum to the market association, of which Shahidullah was the general secretary.

The owner of Roots Garments, who claims to be a ruling BNP leader and on very good terms with a BNP minister and a Dhaka lawmaker, did not bother to pay the rent despite repeated reminders from the market association, local business leaders alleged.

"Mazar Co-operative Market Association submitted a written complaint to Mirpur-based Rapid Action Battalion (Rab-4) on February 17 and requested it to help the association realise the due," said an association leader seeking anonymity.

He also said, after submission of the complaint to Rab-4, the garments factory owner had a brawl with Shahidullah.

"We are now mainly focusing on

illegal tolls demand and the dispute over the rent [as possible causes]," said Mirpur Police Station Officer-in-Charge Abdul Rob.

Meanwhile, police arrested Mohammad Selim, 18, an alleged criminal, from his south Bishil house at about 1:00pm, suspecting his involvement in the killing.

The OC said Selim was present on the spot. "Once we start interrogating him, we may find a lead to the killing," he noted.

### CASE FILED

Jobaida Akhter, wife of slain Shahidullah, filed a case with Mirpur Police Station early yesterday. But she did not mention any specific reason for the killing or name anyone as killers.

She said a gang of six unidentified criminals shot her husband dead.

However, in the FIR (first information report) she mentioned that some criminals had been demanding a huge amount in illegal tolls from Shahidullah for the last few months.

She also mentioned that her husband might have been killed also due to unknown reason.

### CONDITION OF PRINCE

Kazi Tofazell Hossain Prince, son of Shahidullah, is gradually recovering from his bullet wound. Doctors at Shamirita Hospital said prince is still in a post-operative unit, but his condition is now better.

The killers shot Prince in the abdomen when he tried to save his father when they were shooting at his father soon after the Jumma prayer at South Bishil.

## Niko solely blamed

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However, Energy Adviser Mahmudur Rahman yesterday told the press the government will discuss with legal experts before taking action against Niko when it receives investigation reports from two other committees-- one is assessing the loss in gas reserves and the other is determining the environmental damage.

"We expect the report on gas loss to be submitted by August 31 and environmental damage by September 30," Rahman said.

The report also noted that the second blowout inside six months could perhaps have been averted had Niko's relief well contractor chosen a better option.

"The Niko contractor had two options when it reached a precari-

ous situation on June 23 while trying to drill the relief well. It either could control the sudden kicks by letting the gas flow out and burning it down or manage the gas pressure by using mud," said a committee member.

"The committee felt that the better option was to use mud technology. We experienced a similar situation in January where Niko tried to flow out the highly pressurised gas and that led to the first blowout," he added.

The investigators also found lack of teamwork in Niko's operation. A small company, Niko relies heavily on contractors, whose commitment and accountability were shrouded in questions. The company has less than a dozen staff on its payroll.

"Some staff on contract visited the gas field only once. A few hurriedly left the spot soon after the disaster instead of helping tame the raging fire," said another investigator.

Niko hired a US company after the first blowout to carry out the drilling of a relief well. "The chief was a leading blowout expert, but the field staff never worked on a relief well before," he said.

The probe committee, however, did not find any fault in Niko's planning for the relief well.

Niko, which was found disqualified on technical and financial grounds during the evaluation of the second round block bidding in 1997, is now drilling a so-called 'data well' for geological information of the area damaged in two major blowouts. Thereafter it will draw up its plan for a second relief well to plug the hole in the main well.

But sources at the energy ministry are highly critical of the Niko move. "This move will drive the last nail in the coffin of the 260 billion cubic feet (bcf) gross reserve. The Tengratia field will continue to burn till December," said an energy expert.

"You need to plug the hole through a relief well as soon as possible. I'm not sure if the government would ever be able to put any pressure on Niko," he said in frustration.

The energy advisor earlier said that the government will collect due compensation from the Niko by blocking its payment against gas bill from the Feni field, also jointly developed by Niko and Bapex.

Experts, however, contradicted his line of thinking, saying that as per contract the government can not legally tag Feni with Tengratia.

## Fakhruddin

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"The firm does not mix any sort of chemicals in their food but we found the kitchen unclean, and there were insects like bees in the raisins they mix with food," the magistrate told The Daily Star yesterday evening.

The magistrate filed a case under section 24 of the Dhaka City Corporation Act and punished the firm a fine of the said amount, which Hazi Mohammad Rafiq, son of Fakruddin, paid immediately.

Another court, led by ABM Abdul Fattah, raided Ganakutli in Hazaribagh and Nazimuddin Road in old Dhaka.

During his raid, he fined Tk 25,000 to Sonar Bangla Food Products at Ganakutli for selling expired vermicelli.

The same court sealed off Sydney Bakery and Confectionery when none of the firm's staff could be found during the raid. The owner, along with his staff, fled the scene and closed the shop after hearing that the court was coming. The magistrate issued a warrant against his owner.

Magistrate Fattah also closed Happy Pharmaceuticals for having no legal papers.

The magistrate asked the owner to submit his documents to the local police station, and ordered him to keep the shutters down until police find the papers satisfactory.

## FDI grew 50pc

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and power to support the momentum, the survey report suggested.

The principal constituents of manufacturing sector are textile (17.69 percent), chemical (7.16 percent) and leather and rubber (2.83 percent) sub-sectors that represent about 88 per cent of this significant sector. Textile continued to be the highest FDI-recipient in the manufacturing sector. Growth in the manufacturing sector creates enormous employment opportunities.

Agro-based (1.37 percent), food and allied (0.49 percent) and glass and ceramics (0.19 percent) also have been attracting FDI to a certain extent.

BOI officials expect that the announcement of lucrative fiscal incentives for agro-based sectors would attract more FDI in the short and long term.

Western Europe is the largest regional source (45.22 percent) of FDI in Bangladesh during 2004, which could be sub-divided into two European Union (18 percent) and other Western Europe (27.22 percent). North America's investment amounts to 13.33 percent.

In the European Union, the United Kingdom contributed 16.26 percent that is 90.33 percent of the total FDI from this area.

The developing region consists of Asia (33.61 percent)-- the second largest source-- which includes South, East and Southeast Asia (31.47 percent) and West Asia (2.14 percent). Africa also contributed 3.02 percent of the FDI in 2004.

## Dhaka, S'pore

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economic cooperation in potential sectors.

Foreign Secretary Hemayetuddin yesterday left for Singapore to lead the Bangladesh side at the talks. The consultation is considered an important event following Prime Minister Khaleda Zia's return visit to Singapore on March 20-22.

Earlier on June 21-24 last year, Singapore Prime Minister Lee Hsien Loong visited Bangladesh. The two countries signed Investment Guarantee Agreement and decided on MFA-to-MFA consultations during Loong's visit.

Bangladesh seeks Singaporean investment, particularly relocation of their sunset industries. Two-way trade is insignificant as the balance of trade is in favour of Singapore.

Ahead of his Singapore visit, Hemayetuddin had told reporters Dhaka would try to persuade the Singapore government to buy more products from Bangladesh.

Singapore imported fresh vegetables and fruits worth about \$10 million in the 2004-05 fiscal year.

"We will approach them to buy more goods from Bangladesh. Though there is a bright prospect in this regard, we can't compete with the neighbours of Singapore because of airfare," Hemayetuddin said.

"We will ask them to reduce the airfare so that Bangladeshi

businesspersons can export more items," he added.

At the consultation, Bangladesh side will emphasise export of skilled and semi-skilled human resources and signing of a trade agreement. Besides, Bangladesh will also seek more Singaporean investment.

The foreign secretary said Bangladesh would seek technical cooperation in different sectors, scholarships for Bangladeshi students, cooperation in horticulture, training to Bangladesh port officials by Singapore Port Training Authority and visa liberalisation for Bangladeshis.

Foreign ministry officials said a common outlook and shared interests have led to broader and deeper ties between Bangladesh and Singapore.

"Our relations with Singapore is positive and friendly. Leaders of both the countries had made several visits in recent years, showing a positive indication towards working together for each other's benefits," said a senior official of the foreign ministry.

Finance Minister M Saifur Rahman visited Singapore in May last year to attend the Bangladesh Investors' Conference jointly organised by the Singapore Manufacturers' Federation and Bangladesh's Metropolitan Chamber of Commerce and Industry.

## Deal with Lahmayer

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the new project. We have spent 60 percent of the project's budget."

On August 4, the LIPPS refused the RPCL high officials, its parent organisation the Rural Electrification Board (REB), police and magistrates' entry to the plant site. The officials were visiting the place to investigate corruption charges against the LIPPS and Sky Engineers.

The government last week issued arrest warrants against LIPPS chief Captain Reza and more than seven of his accomplices. Meanwhile, Reza and his gang had fled to Singapore one day after the sabotage took place, sources said.

If proved guilty of subversion and damaging the power plant among other allegations, the culprits may be awarded at the most capital punishment.

Captain Reza and his companies have been keeping the RPCL hostage for a long time and draining out millions of dollars as the annual 60-million-dollar LIPPS O&M contract is actually worth \$1 million, according to the Power Development Board (PDB).

Using the LIPPS as consultant of the RPCL, Captain Reza also acted as a middleman for Alstom and Siemens which built both the existing two units of the Mymensingh plants. Each of these projects cost double the price of the power projects of similar size implemented by the PDB.

Sources close to the Siemens said the German company now regrets having any association with Captain Reza. Lahmayer, the German consultant that was the parent organisation of LIPPS, now has no relationship with LIPPS as Captain Reza bought all its shares.

Last year, the RPCL lost 45 million euro German grant due to corruption of the LIPPS which was exposed by The Daily Star.

### CORRECTION

The Daily Star news item headlined "Cops raid office to nab Lahmayer chief" published August 11 mistakenly named Zahurul Islam as the chief of Sky Engineers. The name of the chief of Sky Engineers is actually Mostafa Kamal, who is now wanted by the police.

## Trial of killings

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the army personnel who took part in the Bangabandhu killing operation also killed Habibur Rahman, Anwara Begum-1, Anwara Begum-2, Moyful Bibi, Sabera Begum, Abdullah, Rafiqul, Safia Khatun, Shahabuddin, Kasheda, Aminuddin, Honufa Bibi, Rezia Begum and her daughter Nasima in Mohammapur.

On November 29, 1996, Mohammad Ali, a resident of Sher Shah Suri Road who was injured in the attack, filed the case with Mohammapur Police Station accusing Lt Col Syed Farook Rahman, Lt Col Sultan Shahriar Rashid Khan, Major Bazul Huda, Lt Col Khondader Abdur Rashid, Lt Col Shariful Qad Dalim, Lt Col SHMB Noor Chowdhury, Maj AKM Mohiuddin Ahmed, Lt Col Abdul Aziz Pasha, Capt Abdul Majed, Capt Mohammad Kismat Hasem and Lt Col MA Rashed Chowdhury.

The Criminal Investigation Department on April 30, 2001 pressed charges against 18 people. Of them, Lt Col Farook and three others were detained.

The absconding accused are Resalder Mostehuddin, Lt Col Khondader Abdur Rashid, Lt Col Shariful Qad Dalim, Lt Col SHMB Noor Chowdhury, Maj AKM Mohiuddin Ahmed and Lt Col AM Rashed Chowdhury, Maj Ahmed Shariful Hossain, Lt Col Abdul Aziz Pasha, Capt Abdul Majed, Capt Mohammad Kismat Hasem, Capt Nazmul Hossain, Dafadar Marfat Ali Shah and Dafadar Mohammad Abdul Hashem Mridha. Of them, Aziz Pasha died in Zimbabwe in 2002.

Former minister Taher Uddin Thakur, the lone civilian accused in the case, is now on bail.

## 64 district bodies

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Talking to reporters yesterday, EC Secretary SM Zakaria said the EC will form the committees at the field-level to coordinate the enumeration task. "Such committees will be formed before the start of collection of information about people eligible to be voters," he said.

Meanwhile, preparatory work is going on in full swing as the EC secretariat plans to complete collection of information by October and enumerators will start registering people as voters in November.

The EC secretariat plans to recruit some three lakh enumerators, 75,000 supervisors, 7,000 assistant registration officers, and 500 revising authorities for preparing the list. After completion of the recruitment, training programmes will start for those officials.

Meanwhile, the printing of over eight crore registration forms has already started.

### BUDGET AT A GLANCE

The EC yesterday again sought from the finance ministry a fund of Tk 146.29 crore as the ministry on Thursday sent back the budget proposal due to procedural flaws.

The EC secretariat yesterday sent the proposal with a summary signed by its secretary SM Zakaria.

The EC officials said they hope the budget issue would be settled in a week through discussion with the finance ministry.

The proposed budget estimates a cost of Tk 75 crore for remuneration of about four lakh enumerators and supervisors. Remuneration cost EC Tk 56 crore in preparing the last voter list in 2000.

This time, the EC secretariat estimates the cost of printing the voter list to be at Tk 27 crore while it was Tk 22 crore in 2000.

The officials at the EC secretariat said they sought Tk 111 crore in 2000 for preparing the previous voter list but were allocated Tk 101 crore. Finally, it took Tk 95 crore to have the list prepared.