



Awami League presidium member Suranjit Sengupta discusses a point with Law Minister Moudud Ahmed at a discussion on 'Four Years of Alliance Government: Success and Failure' at the National Press Club in the city yesterday.

## 4 YRS OF ALLIANCE

# 'Achievement fades away with terrorism, price hike'

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Achievement of BNP-led four party alliance in its last four years has faded away with the rise of terrorism and price hike of essentials, said the speakers at a discussion yesterday.

They, however, said the government has made significant achievement in cutting down pollution by introducing CNG-run vehicles and banning the polythene, cracking down on adulterated food and the use of unhygienic substances, reducing cheating in public examinations, possessing a healthy foreign exchange reserve and attracting foreign investments.

The discussion on 'Four Years of Alliance Government: Success and Failure' was organised by Swadhinata Forum Kendro Sangsad (central council for liberation forum) at the National Press Club in the city.

Speaking as chief guest Law Minister Moudud Ahmed said despite having an unfavourable situation the government's achievement in last four years is significant.

The government attracted the highest ever foreign investment of TK 42,000 crore since the independence of the country.

Referring to the increase of per capita income from US \$ 350 to US \$ 450, the minister said revenue income has increased significantly during this regime.

"We worked for women's empowerment and gave away Tk 1200 crore as stipend for female students besides timely delivering of textbooks to students every year," he added.

About the price hike of essentials, Moudud said now people have more purchasing capability than any other time in the past.

He also urged all to unite against the recent bomb blasts saying that it is a national issue and not a political one.

Moudud said it is up to the main opposition party to ensure the accountability of the government but its lawmakers are not attending parliament sessions since September last year.

Awami League Presidium Member Suranjit Sen Gupta said from the first day of Ramadan, the price of essentials went up by 20 percent adding misery to common people.

"We left the price of rice at Tk 10 per kg which is now Tk 20 per kg, and Soybean at Tk 30 per litre, which is now Tk 60 per litre," he added.

Suranjit said series bomb blasts across the country, rise of religious extremists and extra-judicial killings are ample testimony to deteriorating law and order in the country.

He regretted that the Anti-Corruption Commission is yet to function properly.

Suranjit also gave a long list of government's failure that included politicisation of administration as well as election commission, and taking undue time to separate judiciary from the executives.

Sheikh Shahidul Islam, general secretary of Jatiya Party involved with the alliance government, said the rise of religious extremism is the biggest failure of this government.

Presided over by Swadhinata Forum Kendro Sangsad President Abu Naser Mohammad Rahmatullah, the discussion was also participated by Deputy Minister for Land Advocate Ruhul Kuddus Talukder Dulu, Ex-secretary Shah Abdul Hannan, BIWTC Chairman Advocate Shamsur Rahman Shimul Biswas and Bar Council member Advocate Jainul Abedin.

## Kumari Puja today

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Hindu devotees will celebrate the Kumari Puja, a part of Durga Puja, across the country today.

The Kumari Puja, a ceremony for worshipping the Divine Mother in the pure form of the virgin, is held on Mahastami, the eighth day of Durga Puja, or sometimes on Mahanabami, the ninth day.

This year the Kumari Puja is being celebrated on Mahastami in Dhaka, Narayanganj, Barisal, Sylhet, Habiganj and Dinajpur.

The Puja beginning at 10:30am at the Ramkrishna Mission in Dhaka is a crowd puller. Here the devotees will worship a six-year-old girl, Onrina Goswami Jyoti, as a living form of the goddess.

Besides the Kumari Puja, special devotional songs, dance and other rituals will also be performed at different Puja Mandaps (altars) today. The Sandhi Puja will be held from 11.35am to 12:23pm today.

The devotees yesterday celebrated the Mahasaptami Puja. A large number of devotees visited the Dhakeshwari National Temple, Jagannath Hall, Ramkrishna Mission, Ramna Kali Mandir, Siddheswari Kali Mandir and Tantibazar, Shankhari Bazar, Banglabazar, Mohakhali and Farm Gate areas.

Mayor Sadeque Hossain Khoka and State Minister for Home Lutfozzaman Babar visited different Puja Mandaps at Tantibazar, Shankharibazar and Banglabazar areas yesterday afternoon and exchanged greetings with the devotees.

The state minister told the crowds that the alliance government has taken effective measures to ensure security of the Puja Mandaps as well as devotees.

He also said that around 23,000 Puja Mandaps have been set up across the country.

But the Bangladesh Puja Uddjan Parishad put the figure at around 18,000, including 146 in Dhaka.

Mayor Khoka urged all to keep vigilance to maintain communal harmony during the festival.

In a press release, Shree Shree Ramsta Mandir Committee said the Awami League leaders will distribute clothes among the distressed people on the temple premises at 11:00am today.

## 2 Bangladeshis killed in US road accident

BDNEWS, New York

A 23-year-old Bangladeshi girl and her aunt were killed on Saturday night on their way home after celebrating family get-together when their vehicle collided with a drunken driver's, Suffolk County police said.

Farhana Ali, 23, and Hafeza Reza, 43, were declared dead early Sunday morning. Farhana suffered internal injuries and Reza died due to severe head injuries, police said. The driver of the family's car, Mohammad Ali, 56, his wife, Shamsun Ali, 49, and his younger daughter, Farzana Ali, 20, were taken to local hospitals with serious injuries. Shamsun and Farzana remained in a critical condition on Sunday night.

The driver of the other car, Willie Ellis, 33, was charged with drunk driving.

Sunday, grief-stricken members of the Ali family gathered at Good Samaritan Hospital in West Islip, just one day after enjoying a dinner in celebration of Ramadan.

"It's just a disaster," said Habiba Hoque, Mohammad Ali's sister. "I don't know what's going to happen to them."

The family, living in Bay Shore since coming to the United States from Bangladesh in 2002, had gathered Saturday night at a relative's house in the neighborhood.

# Text of prime minister's speech

BSS, Dhaka

Following is the text of Prime Minister Khaleda Zia's address to the nation marking the fourth anniversary of the BNP-led alliance government:

Bismillahir Rahmanirrahim Assalamu Alaikum.

The BNP-led alliance government completes its fourth year today. We are now stepping into our last year. Four years ago, you elected us to office with a huge margin. You gave us the responsibility of running the statecraft. We always received your support while discharging this responsibility. We got your cooperation. For this, I extend my gratitude to you at the very outset. I am optimistic, you would continue to render us assistance, cooperation and support in the future as well.

Please accept my best wishes on the occasion of completing four years of our government.

I have repeatedly said, I am saying it again today -- the present government is your government. We brought democracy after crossing one-party rule and by overcoming autocratic governance. Our sole responsibility is to work according to your will. To run the country in accordance with your hopes and aspirations, I am appearing before you this blessed evening to give an account of and provide clarifications on the extent of our successes, and lack of it in some areas, while discharging that task.

At the same time, I want to say something on the prevailing situation in our region as well as in the globe.

Side by side, I shall tell you about the coming days -- about some of our plans for the future.

Now, the holy month of Ramadan is in progress. Many of you are fasting by enduring hardship. I felicitate the fasting people.

I extend my autumnal greetings to the citizens who are followers of Hinduism on the occasion of Durga Puja.

I extend my best wishes to the adherents of all other religions as well. **Brothers and Sisters,** In this month of purification and self-discipline, we should exercise restraint not only in deeds but also in words. So I shall not increase your toil by taking too much time.

I shall ask you to recall the circumstances four years ago. What was the situation when we took over the responsibility of governance?

Recall the economic condition of the country. The situation in the stock market and foreign currency reserve!

Recall the state of education. The textbooks of children and public examinations!

Think of the state of trade and commerce then. You must all surely be recollecting the incidents of extortion and tender-piracy. You certainly have not forgotten the condition of roads, ports and communication network.

Please try to remember the intolerable situation created in cities, towns and ports by traffic jams and environmental pollution.

It was you who used to quip so many jokes out of deep anguish at the terrible predicament in the supply of water, electricity and gas.

The process of building industries and factories had almost stopped then. The unemployed youths could not get new work or jobs. The Bangladeshis working abroad were being sent back home.

Partisan politics, propaganda and personality cult were getting more importance, bypassing the problems faced by the masses. In all areas, their focus was mostly on politicisation along party lines.

And you all had direct experiences of law and order. I only want to remind you a bit about those fearful days.

You wanted to free yourselves from that situation. You wanted a change of government through ballots in the hope of a healthy, normal and peaceful environment. At that time, I could feel your pulse by travelling from one corner of the country to another.

We did not compromise with terrorism after assuming office.

During the past four years, we have waged a relentless battle against terrorism. We took strong measures one after another. We framed special laws, courts and forces for ensuring stringent punishments of crimes and criminals. We took initiatives for raising the efficiency and strength of existing forces. Special operations were conducted with their participation.

I shall not give too long a list. You all know them and have also benefited from them. So it is not necessary to debate on the difference between the situation obtaining now and the state of affairs four years ago.

It is seen from the history of our land and the experiences of other less developed countries that the big criminals find refuge and indulgence with the ruling party in many instances. Sometimes, the leaders and workers of the ruling party engage in horrendous acts of terror. The common people become helpless. The forces deployed for maintaining law and order become dysfunctional.

We did not allow that to happen. Stringent measures were taken against our own party-men whenever

they were found to commit any crime. I have remained resolute about establishing rule of law and ensuring the security of your lives, properties and honour. I have never back-tracked on the question of maintaining peace in public life even in the face of criticisms and antagonism. I am giving you word, I will not be soft on any kind of crime or criminal in the future as well, by the grace of Allah.

**Conscious Countrymen,** Just at the moment when we were stepping into the doorway of success in establishing peace in society and public life through diverse, tough and realistic initiatives, Bangladesh has been attacked with bombs at that very juncture. The bombings have commenced anew.

You all know, these bomb attacks had started at various places of the country when we were in the opposition. At that time, many innocent people had to die because of bombings at various places of worship, offices and public meetings of political parties, musical programmes and newspaper offices. Many more were injured and crippled.

The criminals involved in these mysterious attacks had remained hidden in most cases. Although intense political campaigns were waged against opponents at that time centering on those incidents, none of the criminals were caught or identified.

We took initiative to bring the bombing culture and the bombing era to an end after assuming office. But we could not fully stop the bomb blasts resorted to by the opposition for making their programmes, including strikes, a success.

These blasting of bombs centering on political programmes have encouraged others as well. Bombings and subversive attacks have returned in the cover of programmes intended to forcibly evict an elected government within a deadline, ignoring the established norms of democracy.

We have faced and thwarted the conspiracy to unsettle the government with the unwavering support of the people. We have upheld democracy, which was achieved through huge sacrifice. But we could not be careful about the bombers who have emerged simultaneously at the same juncture. I express my regret for this administrative and intelligence failure. We have already started various programmes with the objective of overcoming this failure.

I express my deep sympathy and condolences for those who were killed or injured by these bomb explosions.

In one of the incidents, an honoured guest and foreign diplomat was attacked. The people of the country were deeply embarrassed by this.

These bombings have tarnished the image of the country outside.

Especially, the reputation of the religion of peace -- 'Islam' -- has been tainted. This is because, the bombers wanted to hide their real intent and identity behind the masks of a sacred religion.

But we could comprehend their aims quite clearly.

Their aim is to tarnish the reputation of Bangladesh. Consequently, they are the country's enemies.

Their purpose is to scare the people of this country. To disrupt peace and social stability. Therefore, they are against peace.

Their intention is to stop the country's progress, social and infrastructure development and investments. So, they are the enemies of development.

Their goal is to create hindrances in democratic governance. Therefore, they are against democracy.

The majority of this country's population is Muslims. These terrorists have put these very people into difficulty. It is therefore clear that these attackers are the enemies of Islam, Muslims, and in other words the whole of humanity.

These bombers have tried to prove as true the propaganda of those people who have waged a campaign of disinformation and untruths against Bangladesh during the past few years. Consequently, we can understand where their roots lie, whatever clothing they may wear.

It is not difficult for Bangladeshi people to comprehend their motives and the instigators behind them.

We have therefore, taken the initiative to tackle these bombers with a firm hand for the sake of the country and Islam, for people who uphold religious values irrespective of creed, for safeguarding development, democracy and peace.

Many have already been arrested. We now know the identity of bombers. It has also been possible to identify the main schemers. I can tell you, we shall be able to eliminate this terrorism as well from the country by the grace of Allah.

The Islamic intellectuals have supported the government steps by taking a stand against bomb attacks under the cover of sacred religion. I thank them all.

I extend my thanks to the citizens of other communities holding religious values, for their unflinching cooperation.

We have maintained peace, friend-

ship and amity in this country with the cooperation and unity of all. We shall uphold this glorious heritage at any cost.

**My Dear Countrymen,** Come; let us all tell the whole world in one voice: Bangladesh is on the side of peace. There is no place for religious or any other kind of extremism here.

Whether they are Muslims, Hindus, Buddhists or Christians, the people of this country have faith in religious values. But we have never tolerated preaching, spreading or instituting religion through bombings, nor shall we tolerate these in future. Our sacred religion Islam does not approve of it.

In this context, I deem it necessary to dwell on another theme. Terrorism is today an international problem. Not only Bangladesh, the developed countries are also facing the challenges of poverty, unemployment and social discrimination, especially in education which have to be reduced fast if the basis of terrorism and bombing is to be uprooted. Your government is working on the matter with full awareness. Quantitative improvements have been brought about in these fields within a very short time. Sincere cooperation of all and some more time is needed if qualitative improvements in the situation are to be made. Today, I seek that cooperation and time from you all.

**My Dear Countrymen,** As you know, the government has to mainly pursue two kinds of tasks. Firstly, the government itself does some development and welfare-oriented work and helps the people advance on the same path. Secondly, the government restrains itself from doing any unfair act or offence, and stops others from doing so.

Today I can tell you in unequivocal terms, we have set innumerable examples of success in development and welfare-oriented work during the past four years. We also strove to maintain a distance from injustice and crime. But it is also true that we have not been successful in curbing injustices and crimes in all areas of society.

In this context, I have already talked about terrorism. Now I shall speak a few words on corruption and prices of essentials.

The task of curbing corruption has all along fallen on our shoulders. Corruption was a most talked about issue among many other problems before the responsibility of running the country was reposed on Shaheed President Ziaur Rahman in 1976. He succeeded in tackling that corruption.

The subject of corruption in Bangladesh again became a topic of discussion in the international arena before we assumed office in 1991 and 2001. We have not been so successful during the past four years compared to the successes achieved in curbing corruption during our tenure of 1991-96. The reason is, corruption had proliferated at all levels.

For freeing society from this infectious diseases, we took the initiative to bring transparency and accountability in government transactions, trade and commerce, before anything else. After that, whenever any anomaly was observed, we took remedial steps against that.

In the meantime, we have constituted the Anti-Corruption Commission. The Commission has started working. It is we who have taken this courageous initiative for the first time in Bangladesh. I believe, this Commission would become stronger, more capable and more effective through accumulation of experience. It would play a dominant role in curbing corruption.

I believe, the intensity of corruption is decreasing compared to the past because of adoption of multifarious steps. But it is not easy to erase a bad impression in the minds of the foreigners, once it is instilled in their kinds. Besides, some news items are published in the newspapers of our country on the basis of motivated allegations of people who gets beaten in business competitions. On many occasions, the vested quarters spread concocted tales in the shape of rumours or gossips with ulterior motive.

For these reasons, our achievements in checking corruption are not all that visible. But this situation would change. I want to say with firm conviction, I am discharging with honesty the responsibility you reposed on me based on your faith on the issue of eliminating corruption. I shall not allow anybody the opportunity to spoil this sacred trust you reposed on me.

**Struggling Countrymen** The government is not a business establishment. Neither does it produce commodities. The scope for government control over the market in a free-market economy has diminished manifold. Even then, you expect the government to take measures so that the prices of commodities remain low. It is the responsibility of the government to see to it that the people do not suffer. With that objective, we have been trying to decrease the prices of essential commodities by

reducing or eliminating taxes and in some cases by providing subsidies. Despite that, the prices of some goods occasionally rise. One major reason is that the prices of many products, including fuel, edible oil and steel, have increased in the world market. These have to be imported at a higher price.

On the other hand, the production costs of many items have also risen in the country. The prices of rice and vegetables slightly increased in order to give fair prices to the farmers. We occasionally took the initiative of selling rice at a lower price in the open market so that low-income people did not suffer much. The distressed are provided with multifarious assistance.

I know, increased pressure is exerted on your income if prices of goods rise at various times. We therefore, have taken various initiatives for enhancing the purchasing power and financial capacity of people. The income of our countrymen has now increased because of various economic programmes. Their salaries have also been upped.

Here, I would like to cite an example. Those who are older, please recall the experiences of 1974. At that time, most people did not have the ability to purchase rice.

As a result, there was famine. Many people had died then due to hunger and intake of improper food. But now, people can feed themselves by purchasing food. Nobody has to remain unfed. It means their capacity has increased. The difference lies here. The big question is -- whether the purchasing power of people has risen -- and not the price of products. So I shall tell those people who like to wage campaigns on the pretexts of temporary rise in prices of goods, please take into cognizance the increase in purchasing power of people while making comparisons of price levels. Despite this, we are making all-out efforts for ameliorating the sufferings of the masses.

**My Dear Bangladeshi Brothers and Sisters**

There is no similarity between the present situation and the global scenario in vogue when we assumed office in 2001. Previously, a stable and typical situation was prevailing. But the world was severely jolted by the attacks on the Twin Towers and the Pentagon in America and the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq. The situation has completely changed now. International assistance for the developing countries has waned.

Tremendous pressure was exerted on our economy. The prices of oil and commodities rose very swiftly. The quota for our readymade garments and other products in the USA was abolished. No country is free from the adverse impacts of these. We had to perform during the past four years within such an unstable and unfavourable global regime.

Not only in economy and trade, we face a hostile scenario in all directions. Therefore, it is not proper to compare the changed state of affairs of the past four years with the normal circumstances existing before 2001.

Even in this precarious situation, we are crossing many risky terrains with caution. We did not allow any imbalance to creep in. We have upheld the independence-sovereignty of the country as well as national dignity and distinctiveness. We did not bow down to any pressure. Our source of strength has remained firm faith in Almighty Allah and profound confidence in our people.

Despite so many hindrances, we succeeded in creating one milestone after another on the path of development and welfare during the past four years with the cooperation of you all.

Development is a theme which needs no elaboration. This is because you can see it, feel it, comprehend it for yourselves, and can decipher the difference between the past and the present. Therefore, I will present before you today only some of our notable accomplishments.

Bangladesh has achieved maximum success during the past four years in the field of poverty alleviation. Previously, the rulers of this country had brought in huge amounts of money from abroad by capitalising on the poverty of men. But that money was not spent for the welfare of the poor. Many people had become rich by obtaining slices from it, while the condition of the poor had remained the same.

Your government has changed this scheme. We have decided that our principal target would be elimination of human poverty. With that objective, we have tagged the subject of poverty alleviation to all our programmes in the ministries and divisions. The main purpose of our development is to eradicate human poverty.

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## Attempt to grab land: 29 held in Chittagong

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Ctg

Police on Sunday midnight arrested 29 persons, mostly labourers, including a BNP leader, for attempting to illegally grab land property of a physician at Khulshi in the port city.

They all were sent to jail yesterday. Sources said about 30 to 35 workers led by Khwaja Mainuddin, general secretary of colony unit BNP, went to the land of Dr Fazlul Haque, a physician of Chittagong Eye Hospital, at Firoze Shah Colony and started erecting thatched houses.

On receipt of information, a team of Khulshi police rushed to the spot and caught the 29 red handed. They also seized some earth-digging materials.

Of the 29, identities of seven persons were confirmed. They are: Jalal Uddin, Noor Meah, Abdul Jalil, Ripon, Farhad, Selimuddin and Rubel.

Police said Dr Fazlul filed a case in this connection accusing 34 persons that include the arrested 29 people.

## WEATHER TODAY

### Light to moderate rain likely

**UNB, Dhaka**

Light rain or thundershowers accompanied by temporary gusty wind is likely at one or two places over Chittagong, Barisal and Sylhet divisions and weather may remain mainly dry elsewhere over the country till 6:00pm today.

Day temperature may remain nearly unchanged over the country during the period, Met Office said.

Highest temperature 35.6 degree Celsius was recorded yesterday at Sitakundu and lowest 22.2 degrees at Srimongal.

**The sun sets in the capital at 5:36pm today and rises at 5:55am tomorrow.**

Highest and lowest temperature and humidity recorded in some major cities and towns yesterday were:

| City/Town   | Temperature in Celsius |      | Humidity in percentage |         |
|-------------|------------------------|------|------------------------|---------|
|             | Max                    | Min  | Morning                | Evening |
| Dhaka       | 34.0                   | 25.7 | 66                     | 67      |
| Chittagong  | 34.0                   | 25.5 | 76                     | --      |
| Rajshahi    | 33.0                   | 24.0 | 79                     | 71      |
| Khulna      | 33.6                   | 26.5 | 77                     | 88      |
| Barisal     | 34.2                   | 26.3 | 76                     | 82      |
| Sylhet      | 34.8                   | 24.8 | 69                     | 65      |
| Cox's Bazar | 33.7                   | 25.8 | 67                     | 81      |

## RU controversial staffs demand salary

RU CORRESPONDENT

The controversially appointed 544 employees of Rajshahi University (RU) yesterday met the university registrar Prof Abdus Salam at his office at the administrative building to demand their salary, sources said.

They urged the registrar to confirm their jobs immediately through publishing advertisement.

The employees led by convener Rafiqul Islam Sardar told the registrar that they were not getting their salary for the last four months.

They threatened a tougher movement if their salary is not paid before Eid.

The registrar assured them of doing his best in this regard. Prof Salam said that he would raise the issue at the Finance Committee meeting today.

The recruitment of the employees had been stayed following a court order. Abu Aslam, a lawyer, filed a case alleging that the appointments were unnecessary and politically motivated.