

Only beneficiaries of govt taking part in dialogue

Hasina tells discussion

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Leader of the Opposition Sheikh Hasina has once again termed the dialogue on combating militancy initiated by the prime minister a 'drama' and said only those getting various benefits from the BNP-Jamaat alliance government are taking part in it.

"Anyone who is pro-democracy and pro-liberation cannot take part in the drama as this government patronises militants... Those getting financial and other benefits from the coalition government are sitting with it," she said.

Hasina, also president of the main opposition Awami League (AL), made these observations at a discussion on 'Glorious victory in 1971 and today's debacle' at the Institution of Engineers in the capital yesterday. Bangabandhu Parishad organised the discussion.

The AL chief reiterated her demand for reforms in the caretaker government and the Election Commission to ensure holding of a free and fair election in the country.

"Without the reforms, people will

not get the opportunity to exercise their democratic right to vote. People want to have their rights ensured, and for this the reforms are a must," she said.

The former prime minister blamed the alliance government for all bomb and grenade attacks in the country, including the August 21 grenade attack on AL rally last year and the August 17 serial blasts this year. This government is patronising militants to destroy democracy and the spirit of the Liberation War, she said.

Law enforcement agencies have failed to track down militant kingpins Bangla Bhai and Shaikh Abdur Rahman as, Hasina alleged, government high-ups are harbouring them. That is why only the prime minister can stop militancy in the country if she wants to, the opposition leader said.

Listing the 'failures' of this government in different sectors, she said they (government) could not add even one megawatt of electricity to the national grid and rate of literacy is going down. She claimed that literacy rate was raised to 67

percent from 45 during the AL rule.

The alliance government has destroyed the national economy through corruption, looting and misappropriation of people's wealth, the AL chief said.

Question papers of the BCS and various other public examinations leaked out repeatedly, she mentioned.

The opposition leader urged the people to make a list of the BNP-Jamaat men who have 'looted' public wealth in the last four years of coalition rule.

She urged people of all walks to unite to end 'misrule' of this government, save the country from the evil grip of militancy and uphold democracy and the spirit of Liberation War.

Participants in the discussion included Barrister Amir-ul-Islam, Prof AK Azad Chowdhury, Mahub Uddin Ahmed, Prof Mamtaz Uddin Ahmed and Shamsuzzaman Khan. Bangabandhu Parishad General Secretary Dr SA Malek presided.

Militant linchpin Hannan put on remand again

COURT CORRESPONDENT

Mufti Abdul Hannan, operations commander of banned Harkatul Jihad's (HuJI) Bangladesh chapter, was placed on a fresh five-day remand yesterday for the eleventh time since his arrest on October 1.

Hannan was remanded in one of the August 17 blast cases filed after an explosion near Dhaka Sheraton Hotel.

The Detective Branch (DB) of police, accompanied by the Rapid Action Battalion (Rab) members, produced Hannan before the Chief Metropolitan Magistrate's Court, Dhaka at 3:00pm on completion of his 10-day remand. He was wearing a helmet and a bulletproof vest.

The forwarding report placed before the court by the investigation officer (IO) of the case said Hannan gave important information about the bomb blasts. He needs to be quizzed further for finding out vital clues to the bomb blasts and the whereabouts of his accomplices, the report said, seeking for a further five-day remand.

After the hearing, Metropolitan Magistrate Mohammad Shafiq Anwar granted the remand prayer.

Awal on fresh remand

COURT CORRESPONDENT

Abdul Awal, son-in-law of Jama'atul Mujahideen Bangladesh (JMB) chief Sheikh Abdur Rahman, an accused in a case filed for the August 17 bomb blasts, was placed on a five-day fresh remand yesterday.

Awal will be interrogated for the August 17 blasts near Jatrabari footbridge.

The Detective Branch (DB) of police accompanied by the Rapid Action Battalion (Rab) produced Awal before the Chief Metropolitan Magistrate's Court, Dhaka at 3:00pm amid tight security.

He was produced before the court on completion of his 10-day remand. The investigation officer (IO) sought for a five-day remand for further interrogation.

The forwarding report placed before the court by the IO stated that Awal was directly involved in the August 17 bomb blasts. His accomplices exploded bombs across the country, including Jatrabari on his directions. Moreover, he gave important information about the countrywide bomb blasts.

He needs to be quizzed to find out more information about the bomb blasts and whereabouts of his accomplices, the IO stated in the report.

Following the hearing, Metropolitan Magistrate AJM Abdullaeh Baqui granted the remand prayer.

'Raise awareness about militancy'

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Law Minister Moudud Ahmed yesterday called on all to be united against the bomb attackers who are posing a threat to independence, sovereignty, constitution, religion, culture and Islamic values.

Termining the suicide bomb attacks a new phenomenon in the country, he urged all from the top to the grassroots levels to work together to combat bomb terrorism.

Addressing a discussion on 'Anti-state militant activities: Role of the civil society and the media in raising awareness', the minister said the media could play an important role in raising awareness among the people about militant activities.

The media should not publish such news that create tension and encourage the militants, he said, adding that the coverage of fake bomb threats encourage the militants.

"Political leaders in our neighbourhood country sit together when there is a national crisis, but we could not do so," he said, adding that the culture of blame game and the division among the political parties in the country inspire the militants to carry out bomb attacks.

The Swadesh Sangskritik Forum organised the discussion at the National Press Club in the city. Forum President Md Rafiqul Islam presided.



Participants at a roundtable on 'State of Tuberculosis in Bangladesh 2005' held at the seminar room of The Daily Star in the city yesterday. The Daily Star and BRAC jointly organised the event. (Story on Page 16)

Include disability issue in disaster management

Speakers urge stakeholders

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

People with disabilities face additional barriers in accessing emergency support during disaster period and there is a greater risk for people to become disabled or a chance for a person's intensity of disability to rise in disaster-affected communities, said speakers at a booklet launching ceremony in a city hotel yesterday.

The prevalence rate of disability in Bangladesh is 5.6 percent, they said referring to a survey conducted by Handicap International (HI) and National Forum of Organisations Working with the Disabled (NFOWD).

Choudhury Kamal Ibne Yusuf, minister for Food and Disaster Management, unveiled the cover of the booklet titled 'How to Include Disability Issues in Disaster Management'.

Speaking as chief guest, the minister said the booklet will work as a guideline for all stakeholders working in disaster management and will encourage them to mainstream the disability issue in the policy and practice.

Choudhury Kamal also said this booklet would open a new window for the development practitioners as well as for the government to pay attention to identify the vulnerability of people with disability and their immediate needs.

The booklet was prepared by HI,

a France based NGO working in Bangladesh since 1997, focusing primarily on creating sustainable change and inclusion of the people with disability in the society and to establish their rights in every sphere of life.

Speaking as special guest, Jacques-Andre Costilhes, ambassador of France in Bangladesh, urged all to distribute the booklet across the country as soon as possible.

Muhammad Saidur Rahman, director, Bangladesh Disaster Preparedness Centre (BDPC), Blandine Le Bourgeois, country director and Faizul Kabir, project manager of HI spoke on the occasion.

The booklet was prepared by HI,

different political, socio-cultural organisations and professional bodies have curtailed their programmes taken to mark the Martyred Intellectuals Day today.

The programmes have been remained only to laying wreaths at Mirpur and Rayerbazar Monuments, hoisting black flags and discussions due to fear of militant attacks by the extremists.

BNP Leaders and workers of ruling BNP and its student organisation Jatiyatabadi Chhatra Dal (JCD) will hoist party flag and black flag in the morning and lay wreaths at Mirpur Intellectual Memorial Monument at 10:30am.

A discussion meeting has been organised at Dhaka Mahanagar Natamancha at 3:30pm to mark the day.

Awami League Leaders and workers of Awami League (AL) and its student organisation Bangladesh Chhatra League (BCL) led by AL President Sheikh Hasina will place wreaths at the portrait of Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman at Bangabandhu Memorial Museum in the city at 6:30am.

Hasina along with her leaders and activists will also lay wreaths at Mirpur Martyred Intellectual Monument at 7:10am and Rayerbazar Monument at 7:30am. She will meet members of some martyred families at her Dhanmondi office at 3:30pm.

Other organisations Sammilta Sangskritik Jote (SSJ), a leading cultural body, has curtailed its elaborate programmes due to fear of bomb attack.

Air Vice-Marshal (ret'd) AK Khandaker, deputy chief commander of the Liberation War, will inaugurate the programmes at the Central Shaheed Minar at 4:00pm today. The programmes include discussion, song, dance, recitation, film show and reminiscing the memory of liberation war and exhibition of its various documents.

Communist Party of Bangladesh will lay wreaths at Mirpur monument at 8:00am and at Rayerbazar monument at 9:30am.

Liberation War Museum will organise a view-exchanging meeting with the relatives of martyred intellectuals at 5:00pm at its office as part of weeklong programmes.

Swadhinata Chikitsak Parishad has organised a discussion meeting at its central office at 290/1 Sonargaon road at 3:00pm today.

Jaker Party will organise a discussion meeting at its party office at Banani in the afternoon. The Party will also organise Milad Mahfils at every ward in the capital.

Left leaning Bangladesh Samajtantrik Dal (BSD) will hold a rally at Pallabi Lal Math at 4:00pm. Samajtantrik Chhatra Front, student wing of BSD, will organise a film show at Mirpur Ineffectual Martyred Monument and Rayerbazar Monument from the morning.

Jatiya Samajtantrik Dal will hoist black flag at its office and lay wreaths both at Mirpur and Rayerbazar monuments.

Left Democratic Front, Bangladesh Mahila Parishad Dal, Bangladesh Krishak Sramik Mukti Andolon, have taken several programmes to mark the day.



Hameeda Hossain, chairperson of Manusher Jonno Steering Committee, speaks at a conference on 'Right to Information: National & Regional Perspectives' at the BIAM auditorium in the city yesterday. On her right are Aruna Roy of Mazdoor Kisan Shakti Sangathan, India, Shailaja Chandra, chairman of Public Grievances Commission, India, and Shaheen Anam, team leader of Manusher Jonno, and on her left is Kishali Pinto Jayawardena, deputy director of Law and Society Trust, Sri Lanka. The Manusher Jonno organised the two-day conference. (Story on page 16)

'Political unrest responsible for deterioration of law & order'

Reveals survey

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Political unrest is mainly responsible for the deterioration of law and order in the country, revealed a survey yesterday.

Society of Justice, a local human rights organisation, conducted the survey titled 'State of Human Rights in Bangladesh: Citizen's Perception' on 321 respondents belonging to 18 professions across the country during a period from October to November 2005.

According to the survey, 69 percent of the respondents identified the political unrest as the main cause of law and order deterioration while 12.77 percent blamed both politics and economy.

The findings of the survey were presented at a seminar titled 'Rule of Law and Human Rights' at the BILIA auditorium in the city.

While reading out the summary of the survey findings, Dr AKM Saifullah

said the respondents also blamed administrative failure, militancy and poverty for law and order deterioration.

He said most of the respondents are not happy with the present law and order situation.

About 38.01 percent respondents defined good society as peaceful and politically stable one, 26.48 percent as rule of law, while 19.94 percent as rule of religion, he added.

Dr Saifullah said most of the respondents think that the civil society members have some responsibilities in ensuring better law and order, but they are not playing their due role.

Former chief advisor of the caretaker government Justice

Muhammad Habibur Rahman said people are losing faith in judiciary.

He said magistracy in the country is not independent.

"It is better to work with the existing laws," he said, adding that enacting stringent law is easy but implementation is much more difficult.

Deputy High Commissioner of Australia Richard Rodgers, European Commission Delegate Jenni Christensen, Programme Officer of ICCO- Netherlands Nellie van der Pasch and General Secretary of Society of Justice Advocate Mahubul Islam also spoke.

Wildcat bus strike to protest police action


BDNEWS, Dhaka

Bus communications of Dhaka with northern districts and greater Mymensingh were disrupted for hours yesterday as transport owners and workers began a wildcat strike protesting misuse of power by policemen.

The workers stopped plying buses from Mohakhali bus terminal at 8:00pm on Monday, but the strike

was overwhelming since early morning Tuesday. The strike was, however, withdrawn at 1:00pm after police authorities announced that two sergeants have been closed.

Hundreds of passengers remained stranded at Mohakhali and bus terminals in various districts for hours.



WEATHER TODAY

Dry weather likely

UNB, Dhaka

Weather is likely to remain dry over the country in the next 24 hours as of 6:00pm today.

Light to moderate fog may also occur over the river basins of the country during early morning, met office said.

Night temperature may fall slightly over Rajshahi and Khulna divisions and nearly unchanged elsewhere over the country.

Highest temperature 29.6 degree Celsius was recorded yesterday at Sitakunda and lowest 10.5 degree Celsius at Srirangal.

The sun sets in the capital at 5:14pm today and rises at 6:34am 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	26.8	16.2	65	52
Chittagong	29.5	16.3	69	64
Rajshahi	26.5	12.6	58	59
Khulna	26.0	14.4	64	64
Barisal	26.5	13.0	79	79
Sylhet	29.0	14.8	59	59
Cox's Bazar	28.5	19.0	63	72



DHAKA TODAY

Crest for blood donors

Quantum Foundation will accord crests to its one hundred life long blood donors. Venue: Quantum Medical Hall, Kakrail. Time: 5:45pm.

Symposium

Bangladesh Earthquake Society organises the 1st Earthquake Symposium with Chowdhury Kamal Ibne Yusuf, minister for food and disaster management, as chief guest. Venue: Buet Council Bhaban. Time: 3:00pm.

Discussion

Friends in Village Development Bangladesh organises a discussion on the occasion of launching the new materials of informal education for

Exhibition of artworks by Kibria to be held in India

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The Indian Council for Cultural Relations (ICCR) in association with the Society for Promotion of Bangladesh Art (SPBA) has organised an exhibition in India in honour of artist Mohammad Kibria, one of the pioneers in contemporary art of Bangladesh.

The exhibition will be held in Kolkata from December 22 to January 1 and in New Delhi from January 5 to 12. The Governor of West Bengal, Gopal Gandhi, will inaugurate the exhibition in Kolkata.

The Indian High Commission in Dhaka is providing necessary support for the exhibition.

Indian High Commissioner Veena Sikri made the announcement of the exhibition at a simple ceremony at her residence at Gulshan in the city yesterday.

A total of 24 works of Kibria - 10 paintings, 10 etchings and printings, and 4 collages - will be put on display. Also, 10 noted Indian artists, including Ganesh Pyne, Paritosh Sen and Jogen Chowdhury, will take part in the exhibition.

On Kibria's contribution to contemporary art, Veena Sikri said, "Mohammad Kibria needs no introduction. Besides being a treasured artist in Bangladesh, he is highly regarded in India as well as other countries. In fact, when developing the contemporary art scene is concerned, he is one of the trailblazers in this subcontinent."

"During the crucial period of 'partition', Kibria was studying in Kolkata. He represents a generation of artists who have insight of our common heritage. His admirers, art enthusiasts and peers in India are eagerly awaiting his arrival," she said.

Sikri added: "Cultural links and exchanges is one of the best ways to strengthen the bonds between countries. The Indian High Commission in Dhaka is delighted to be a part of this commendable effort and similar endeavours are likely to follow soon."

Speaking on the occasion, Kibria said, "I studied at the Calcutta College of Art and Craft 55 years ago. I have numerous pleasant memories of Kolkata."

"Although I am now physically unwell, the fact that I am being honoured by some of the most distinguished Indian artists makes me elated. I do believe the cultural exchange between Bangladesh and India will expand new horizon for our art. We have to provide exposures of our art to other countries so that the entire world can appreciate what we have to offer. The ICCR and SPBA have taken a step that should be lauded," he said.

Eithem B Kabir, chairperson of the SPBA, said, "The SPBA has been working to promote Bangladesh art to the world and the exhibition of Kibria's works in India can be the beginning of a new relationship. We appreciate the assistance of the Indian High Commission for making the exhibition possible."



Artist Mohammad Kibria speaks at a ceremony at the residence of Indian High Commissioner at Gulshan in the city yesterday while Indian High Commissioner Veena Sikri and SPBA Chairperson Eithem B Kabir look on.

200 structures knocked down at Agargaon

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The Public Works Department (PWD) yesterday knocked down about two hundred illegal structures at Agargaon in the city and recovered a few acres of land.

In presence of a magistrate of the department and Mohammadpur police, three bulldozers started demolishing the structures situated by the Agargaon school and passport office building at 10:30am.

During the three hour long drive, at least two hundred different types of structures, including rickshaw garages, roadside restaurants, groceries and different kinds of shops, were bulldozed into the ground.

"Those PWD lands were illegally grabbed and occupied for a long time. Besides, antisocial activities were taking place there. So we knocked those illegal structures down," said an

engineer from the PWD, requesting anonymity. "There was a provision for 150 feet wide road over there, but the road was only 70 feet. The rest 80 feet was occupied by them and we recovered the space," he added.

The PWD sources said they did not face any obstacle during the drive. Apart from protecting the recovered land, the department has plans to widen the roads over there, the sources added. A number of PWD officials were present during the drive.

Witnesses said, the eviction drive caused a huge loss to the shop owners as well as to the poor traders, who have been conducting their small businesses by renting shops.

"They did not warn us before their drive. Many of us could not take out all of the things from the shops," said an angry shop owner.

Rab, DB raid 2 student hostels for JMB men

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Members of the law enforcement agencies yesterday raided two student hostels in the city following intelligence report that the militants of banned Islamist outfit Jama'atul Mujahideen Bangladesh (JMB) are hiding there.

Witnesses said a huge contingent of Rapid Action Battalion (Rab) and police cordoned off the four-storey Laif Hostel of Tejjagon Polytechnic institute at around 1:30pm following information that a JMB member who trained militants on how to make and explode bombs, is staying there.

"Showing the picture of a bearded youth, the Rab men asked us whether we knew the youth or had seen anyone resembling him," said a number of students.

They told the reporters that Rab members picked up a youth from the hostel and seized Tk 40,000 from a room during the four-hour raid.

The director, however, denied it. Mohammad Sagor, a security guard of the hostel, said three youths went to the hostel at around 12:45pm and asked him about the number of flats there.

"As I told them that this is the only gate to enter and exit, the youths left the place," he said, adding that a few minutes later the Rab men went there.

Meanwhile, the DB (Detective Branch) police raided the North Hostel of Dhaka College.

"We conducted an hour-long raid in the hostel but none was arrested," said Deputy Commissioner Shahidul Islam.