

Rowling readies pen for final Potter book

AFP, London

JK Rowling, the British author of the record-selling Harry Potter series, said she plans to start writing the final book about the boy wizard next month and finish it some time in 2006.

"For 2006 will be the year when I write the final book in the Harry Potter series," the British author wrote on her official website.

"I contemplate the task with mingled feelings of excitement and dread, because I can't wait to get started."

Joanne Kathleen Rowling, 40, has spent much of the past decade writing about the adventures of Potter and his friends at Hogwarts School of Witchcraft and Wizardry.

On her website, she said she felt compelled to wrap up the gripping tale that has captured the imagination of millions of children and adults worldwide.

At the same time, Rowling doubted her ability to answer all the questions generated by the seven-

part series.

The writer also wondered about her life after Potter.

"It will all be over at last and I can't quite imagine life without Harry," she said.

Turning to the task at hand, Rowling said she had been fine-tuning her ideas for the seventh instalment of Potter's life and was ready to start work in January.

"Reading through the plan is like contemplating the death threats to an unknown country in which I will soon find myself," she said.

At times while writing the previous six books Rowling said she ran into trouble, such as chapter nine of the fourth one: "Harry Potter and the Goblet of Fire".

In October, Rowling's literary agent said the boy wizard series had sold more than 300 million copies worldwide.

The six books published in the series so far have been translated into 63 languages. The first four have also been made into blockbuster movies.

Govt using militants to create anarchy: AL

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Leaders of the main opposition Awami League (AL) yesterday said the BNP-Jamaat alliance government, sensing defeat in the upcoming national election, has been using militants to create anarchy in the country as part of its election engineering plan.

At a press conference at the party's Dhanmondi office that was called following death threats to AL Presidium Member Suranjit Sengupta, AL General Secretary Abdul Jalil said, "The responsibility will obviously go to the prime minister and her coalition partner Jamaat-e-Islami in this regard."

Using the JMB's suicide squad, the alliance government has targeted the democratic and pro-liberation forces, he said, adding, "No attacks were launched on the BNP and Jamaat men and this indicates who are conducting the bomb attacks."

In separate letters sent to the UNOs of Dirai and Shalla upazilas, Suranjit's parliamentary constituency, and Karimpur union parishad chairman, the JMB recently threatened to kill the AL leader in bomb attack.

Terminating the death threat a part of "planned political killings", Suranjit said JMB's threat ahead of the upcoming national elections is aimed at postponing it.

The JMB's objective is to spread communalism, keep him away from the election race and create panic among the general people and the AL workers, he said.

Suranjit demanded proper investigation into JMB's death threat as well as three previous attacks on and threats to him.

"I requested the Speaker to investigate the earlier attacks and threats through a parliamentary committee, but nothing has been done," he added.

AL leaders Motia Chowdhury, Obaidul Quader, advocate Abdul Mannan Khan, Asim Kumar UKI, Tanjim Ahmed Shohel Taj MP, among others, were present at the press conference.

Biman tries

FROM PAGE 1
flag carrier Biman Bangladesh Airlines for not arranging adequate flights for the intending pilgrims. It said Biman would not be able to carry more than 35,000 pilgrims, while foreign carriers might fly 6,000 to 7,000 more.

Biman may carry up to 39,000 pilgrims to Saudi Arabia using the 86 air landing slots in Jeddah airport, official sources told The Daily Star yesterday. About 6,000 to 7,000 more could avail foreign airlines, but Biman requires more flights for the rest.

Biman is now frantically trying to get 10 more slot permission from the Saudi authorities so that it can operate extra flights.

However, the only wide-bodied craft, a Boeing 747, which Biman had chartered from France, has already expressed inability to operate after December 31.

Sources said even if Biman gets the 10 slots, it would have to operate DC-10s with limited capacity and hardly 2,700 more pilgrims could be ferried.

The government high-ups are also trying to negotiate with Saudi Arabian Airlines to arrange some last moment special hajj flights, Biman sources said.

There is no slot barrier for Saudi airlines in Jeddah. Moreover, it is also authorised to operate hajj flights even after the Saudi government seals off the special hajj airport on January 4, 2006.

AL demands

FROM PAGE 1
AL General Secretary Abdul Jalil also demanded immediate removal of the "politically appointed" district and upazila election commissioners.

He accused the families of the prime minister and the finance minister of involvement in the "fertiliser scam".

Asked about the possibility to join the parliament to save the membership, Jalil said after the meeting, "Time will say what to do."

The ALCWC meeting with AL President Sheikh Hasina in the chair also decided to stage demonstrations across the country tomorrow in protest against the attack on its Organising Secretary Akhtaruzzaman and the death threat to Presidium Member Suranjit Sengupta.

The AL will stage demonstration across the country on January 5 protesting the grenade and bomb attacks in the country.

They will observe Banga-bandhur Swadesh Pratrabartan Dibosh (Bangabandhu's home coming day) on January 10 and former finance minister Shah AMS Kibria killing day on January 27.

Senior AL leaders attended the meeting.

Rab rushes

FROM PAGE 16
Rab-3, Rab-10 and also Rab head-quarters rushed there to join in the operation. Police from the Ruppaganj Police Station also joined them. Rab and the police searched all the mosques, madrasas and schools in the villages but failed to arrest anyone. The drive at the Tarabo village continued till 3:30pm.

Colonel Mahub, additional director general of Rab, told BDNEWS: "It was nothing but a rumour that Bangla Bhaeis arrested."

Talking to BDNEWS, Commander Masuk, director of legal and media wing of Rab, said, "Rab often conducts such types of operations."

It may be mentioned another operation at Nikunja in Mohakhali area in the city failed earlier due to leakage of information.

AL out to split

FROM PAGE 1
conspiracy against Bangladesh as well as Islam. Conspirators might want to create a pretext for foreign aggression through terrorism and anarchy in the country, they cautioned.

The Jamaat leaders also pointed fingers at a neighbouring country for its involvement in recent bomb blasts and other terrorist activities in the country.

The recent series of suicide bombings in the name of Islam is part of a conspiracy of the AL to break the ruling coalition and tarnish the image of the Islamic parties including Jamaat, they alleged.

Denying any links with the banned Jama'atul Mujahideen Bangladesh (JMB), the Jamaat leaders said JMB is a creation of the AL as General Secretary of Awami Jubo League Mirza Azam is a close relation of the JMB chief.

Jamaat believes in democracy and always tried to uphold it. The party never provoked or supported subversive and terrorist activities, its leaders claimed.

They also criticised a spiritual leader who recently termed Jamaat a non-Islamic party.

The recent surge of Islamist militancy in the country is part of a strategy to create division between Islamic and nationalist forces," Matjur Rahman Nizami, ameer of Jamaat and minister for industries, told the rally.

The AL started conspiring as it could not go to power in the 2001 general election due to coalition between nationalists and Islamic forces, he said.

It wanted to destroy democratic politics in the country and make the country a failed state, he alleged.

He pointed out that the government has acted timely and nabbed many militant leaders with huge arms and ammunition.

The Jamaat chief claimed AL central leader Amir Hossain Abu had offered him ministership and a number of women's seats in parliament to forge coalition before the general election in 1991. But the AL could not go to power because Jamaat turned down the offer.

The AL went to power in 1996 only because of a misunderstanding between Islamic and nationalists forces, he noted.

Nizami urged the people to help continue politics of production, development, investment and stability that started since the four-party alliance came to power.

Islam never supported bombing or terrorism. It takes time to establish Islamic rule in a country, he added.

The rally was also addressed by Jamaat Secretary General and

Minister for Social Welfare Ali Ahsan Mohammad Mujahid, Naeb-e-Ameer Moqbul Ahmed, party lawmakers Dolbar Hossain Saidee, Abdus Sobhan, Shah Mohammad Ruhul Quddus and Mian Golam Parwar, Mohammad Quamaruzzaman, Abdul Quader Mollah, A T M Azharul Islam, Tasneem Alam and some district unit leaders

The huge gathering at the rally spilled over to nearby thoroughfares, lanes and by lanes and open spaces. Although the main rally started at 2:00pm, Jamaat activists and supporters started gathering at the rally venue since the morning.

By noon, the entire area was heavily crowded, and Islamic songs were rendered from the dais to entertain the audience.

In his speech, Ali Ahsan said, "Militancy originated across the border to make our country a subservient state. Its main objective is to break the ruling coalition and tarnish the image of Islam."

Islamic scholars never provoked militancy or bomb attacks, he added.

Saidee said the AL forged coalition with left parties as it does have any base among the people.

Moqbul Ahmed said the renaissance of Islam could not be resisted through writings in a few newspapers.

Quamaruzzaman claimed that a number of senior AL leaders including Amir Hossain Abu and Mohammad Nasim held meetings with Jamaat leaders on several occasions in the past.

The opposition parties have already understood that they would face a debacle also in the next general election if the four-party coalition remains intact, he said.

Islamic parties would succeed if democracy succeeds in the country, he thought.

Pry teachers

FROM PAGE 1
Bangladesh Non-government Primary School Teachers Association.

He went on, "We have been informed from the PMO that the PM will sit with us today (Thursday) on receipt of estimates of the financial requirements for nationalising our jobs."

The Primary and Mass Education Ministry was to submit the estimates yesterday evening, Akkas said.

The fast unto death and sit-in at the Shaheed Minar will continue until their demand is met, he said.

Wearing shrouds, 20 teachers started the fast at 5:00 pm on Tuesday.

Mirpur erupts

FROM PAGE 1
the National Zoo.

Traffic movement resumed around two hours after the demonstration at 8:30pm.

Two motorcyclists shot Aftab, general secretary of the Mukta Bangla Shopping Complex, on Sunday near his house at Block-E in Mirpur as the businessman refused to pay tolls.

With bullet wounds in the head and left arm, Aftab was undergoing treatment at Samarita Hospital. He breathed his last at about 5:30pm.

The agitating businessmen held a rally on the road at Mirpur-1 and demanded arrest of the killers within 24 hours starting from last evening.

They also demanded removal of the officer-in-charge of the Mirpur Police Station alleging him of harbouring criminals.

Manik Miah, president of Mirpur Cooperative Market, announced at the rally to keep around 100 markets in Mirpur, Kafur, Pallabi and Shah Ali police station areas closed for an indefinite period to protest the killing of Aftab.

Local business leaders will meet

the leaders of the Dhaka city unit of the Dokan Malik Samity today and announce their next programmes.

Six businessmen, including Aftab, have been killed by toll collectors in Mirpur area in the last 11 months and around 15 others were shot and wounded for refusing to pay tolls to the local criminals.

An uneasy calm was prevailing in the area last night as all markets and shops remained closed and people and vehicles on the roads were few.

Additional force, including the Rapid Action Battalion (Rab) and the Detective Branch of police, were deployed in the area.

The police and Rab have so far arrested five people in connection with the shooting of Aftab.

The family members of Aftab meanwhile alleged that local criminal Shahadat and his gang members, who are suspected to have shot Aftab, are threatening to kill them if their demand for Tk 10 lakh as extortion is not met.

JMB men back

FROM PAGE 16
in the remote Sathkira areas following countrywide crackdown after series of suicide bomb attacks by the JMB.

The JMB resumed its activities in full swing in the Assassuni, Tala, Kalaroa, Shyamnagar and Sadar upazilas, using mosques and madrasas as their base stations, intelligence agencies said.

The JMB is now busy recruiting new members from madrasas, and students from ultra-poor families are its main target, said some villagers, preferring not to be named.

Unknown persons are seen in the mosques and madrasas in Pratapanagar, Khajra, Sreeula (Assassuni upazila), Baikari, Banshdah, Kushkhali (Sadar upazila), Nagarghata, Kumira Tentulia, Khalinagar (Tala upazila), Munshigonj, Gabura, Kaikhali and Burigolai unions. "They introduce themselves either as student or teacher when approached," a local said.

Returning home, some fishermen, meanwhile, told this correspondent the militants who, with the help of pirates, fled to the Sundarbans and set up their dens in the deep forest.

"We saw from afar, they now make bombs there," a fisherman said.

When asked, police officials said they heard about it but were yet to get any specific information. We will take action after gathering information, they said.

Locals are quite sceptic about police action as the Sathkira law enforcement members have failed to arrest most of the charge sheeted accused in Aug 17 blasts and other top JMB leaders even over four

Sedition case against JMB accepted

BDNEWS, Dhaka

The charge sheet in the first sedition case against members of militant outfit Jama'atul Mujahideen Bangladesh (JMB) was accepted by a Dhaka court yesterday.

However, none of the top brasses of the JMB was implicated in the sedition case filed following press reports.

Of the eight accused in the sedition case, seven are absconding while one is under custody.

Police had arrested five more accused, but they got released on bail as at first they were shown arrested under section 54 along with one now under custody.

Accepting the charge sheet, Dhaka's first class magistrate Tahabul Alam fixed the next date of hearing for January 22. On the day, gazette notification will be published for confiscating the properties of the absconding accused if they don't surrender, sources concerned said.

Police on Tuesday submitted the charge sheet in the sedition case relating to recovery of written formula of bomb making, jihadi books, black mask, false hair and other materials used in extremist activities at Joypara Beside Dhaka-Aricha Highway in Dhamrai on February 20.

The accused are Abdul Wahab of Kayetpara in Dhamrai municipal, Rafiqul Islam Sentu

of village Kakran, Faruk Hossain alias "Kosai Faruk" of Kakran Nayapura, Anwar Hossain of Kakran Roopnagar, Nurul Islam of Tentulia, Yakub Ali of Kuria and Abdus

Salam and Wahiduzzaman Pintu alias Pintu alias Nantu of Dhamrai Sadar.

Among them, Rafiqul was arrested on December 3 under section 54. The rest are absconding.

Outlaw killed

FROM PAGE 16
of the city on Tuesday morning.

According to a Rab press release, they took Shamim to Kartikdanga village under Dumuria upazila to recover illegal arms following his confessional statement. When they reached the spot at around 1:30 am, Shamim's accomplices opened fire on Rab, against which they retaliated.

Shamim died on the spot when he got caught in the shootout, while his accomplices fled.

One pistol, one pipegun and four rifle bullets were recovered from the scene.

According to the press release, Shamim was wanted in several criminal cases including murder and was involved with the Jama'atul Mujahideen Bangladesh (JMB) as a bomber. He also confessed his direct involvement in the bomb attack on a traffic sergeant at Daulatpur on November 19, the press release added.

31st night

FROM PAGE 1
raids on different slums, hotels and other places to prevent storage of alcoholic beverages and drugs.

Deployed alongside the police, the doctors will carry out test on the people out on streets and legal action will be taken if anyone found drunk, Babar told newsmen emerging out of the meeting.

The government earlier asked the bars in the capital and elsewhere to keep the shutters down during the year-end celebration.

The vigilance will be stricter in police-prone areas like Gulshan, Baridhara, Banani, Uttara and Dhaka University campus.

Meanwhile, Babar said the deputy inspector general (highway police) has been asked to take necessary steps to stop extortion of cattle traders coming to Dhaka ahead of Eid-ul-Azha.

Free degree edn

FROM PAGE 1
for the 2007 national elections from the district.

She was addressing a large gathering at the Naldanga Mohila College at Sonapatil in Natore.

Obliquely referring to the main opposition, the PM said a particular party is involved in terrorism and bomb attacks in the name of 'movement' against the coalition government.

"Describing various development activities during her two terms, the PM said the BNP has performed best for the farmers and agriculture."

"The Awami League government gave a patty Tk 100 crore subsidy to agriculture while we have subsidised Tk 1,315 crore," she said.

She urged the people of North Bengal to cultivate onion, ginger and chilli on both sides of road so that Bangladesh no more has to import them. She also urged them to get involved in social forestation as well as to cultivate corn and soybean.

Organised by the local BNP, the meeting was presided over by Atiqur Rahman Talukdar, president of Naldanga unit of the BNP. Communications Minister Nazmul Huda, State Minister for Labour Aman Ullah Aman, Political Secretary to the PM Haris Chowdhury and Rajshahi City Corporation Mayor Mizanur Rahman Minu also spoke at the meeting.

Earlier, the PM inaugurated the Naldanga bridge and Ziara Rahman Auditorium at the Nawab Sirajuddinola Government College. She also laid the foundation of the Natore Vocational Training Institute at Basudevpur.

Bimstec to form body

FROM PAGE 16
third party involvement is required in discussing the import surge, countervailing duty and other issues that directly affect foreign trade.

Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, Myanmar, Nepal, Thailand and Sri Lanka are the members of Bimstec (Bay of Bengal Initiative for Multi-Sectoral Technical and Economic Cooperation) that was established in 1997.

The Bimstec set July 1, 2006 to implement FTA agreement on trade in goods in the region.

"The TNC has narrowed down differences significantly," a foreign ministry high official yesterday said, adding that the issues of investment promotion and protection would be discussed in the 11th meeting of the TNC to be held in Bangkok in February 2006.

Before that, a sub-group will meet in New Delhi to thrash out differences on value addition, the official said.

The TNC has concluded negotiation on Dispute Settlement Mechanism (DSM) at the just concluded Kathmandu meeting, sources said.

Member states differed on the percentage of value addition and product specific rules falling under the "Rules of Origin" that seek to ensure that the goods to be exported have their origin in the exporting country and are not imported.

While LDCs pressed for 30 per cent value addition criteria, developing countries insisted on 40 per cent.

The TNC meeting, however, agreed to limit commodities under PSR to 400 items.

The members, meanwhile, agreed to open 10 per cent of total tariff lines under the fast track of trade

Fakruddin

FROM PAGE 16
sentenced 13 people to different term imprisonment.

The courts lodged cases against them under Hygienic Food Act, BSTI Act, Environment Act, Motor Vehicle Ordinance and other acts, a home ministry press release said.

Finance agrees

FROM PAGE 1
Kofiuddin Ahmed clarified the importers would not release four lakh tonnes of fertilisers more imported but not yet brought under subsidy coverage.

Meeting source said changes are expected to be made in connection with providing subsidy in the coming fiscal year and this will be decided at the highest level of the government.

"We are going to very much streamline the policy [regarding disbursement of subsidy for the import of non-urea fertilisers] from next year. We'll let the subsidy now when the concerned committee sends us the bills after scrutinising those," Saifur said.

The inter-ministerial committee comprising representatives from the finance, industries and agriculture ministries, National Board Revenue, and other concerned bodies fix the import rate of non-urea fertilisers.

High officials from the Cabinet Division, Bangladesh Bank, the agriculture, industries and finance ministries, Agriculture Minister MK Anwar, and LGRD and Cooperatives Minister Abdul Mannan Bhuiyan attended the meet.

The meeting discussed various sorts of irregularities regarding the subsidy and means to solve this malpractice.

"Terminating the fertiliser crisis situation a delicate issue, especially in the election year, Bhuiyan emphasised resolving the problem as early as possible," a meeting source said.

There are flaws in the policy, based on which subsidy is disbursed among the importers. The subsidy is being given on the basis of the import prices, but the last several months' invoices show different rates.

One importer has quoted \$210 per tonne of fertiliser and another quoted

liberalisation programme. Tariff of items included in its final list would have to be slashed directly to zero to 5 per cent as agreed upon during the negotiations.

Tariffs of other items, however, could be reduced gradually to zero to 5 per cent level within 10 years from July 2006, when Bimstec FTA on trade in goods will come into effect.

At the TNC meeting, the members requested each other to exclude items of their export interest from the negative list. The meeting agreed to exchange exclusion requests and notify decisions through electronic transmission to speed up the negotiation. The members have agreed to limit items in the sensitive list to 20 per cent of the total tariff lines.

The TNC also decided to prepare a draft of investment promotion and protection agreement, and exchange lists of service sectors they would open to expedite negotiation on Bimstec FTA on service trade and investment, sources said.

Police submit

FROM PAGE 16
Rahman's younger brother Ataur Rahman Sunny, JMB regional commander of Chittagong Mohammad alias Javed Iqbal and JMB suicide squad member Ahmed Hossain, who died at the Chittagong Medical College Hospital of injuries sustained in the bomb blast.

Investigating Officer (IO) Leching Prue submitted the charge sheet before the Chief Metropolitan Magistrate's Court (CMM).

Later, the investigating officer requested the court to exclude Ahmed Hossain (since deceased) from the charge sheet.

Among the accused, Ataur Rahman Sunny and Javed Iqbal are now in jail custody while the others are absconding.

Police constable Razib Barua and a leader of local Swechchhasebak League Shahabuddin were killed on the spot and 16 people injured in the twin bomb blasts at the Chittagong Court Building.

\$260 per tonne.

The meeting considered disbursement of the subsidy should be made on the basis of volume rather than the price. The volume can also be determined by the agriculture ministry to ensure that required amount of fertilisers is imported.

The meeting also discussed tasking the government with importing non-urea fertilisers in addition to importing urea fertilisers.

Oposing views also came as some questioned the government's ability to handle the extra burden of importing and distributing all kinds of fertilisers.

The BB governor told the meeting a huge amount of fertilisers has been imported during July-November, resulting in the dollar crisis at the exchange market.

Following the meeting, Saifur told reporters some importers have quoted \$260, while some have quoted \$216, raising questions on which prices the subsidy should be given.

"We should examine if someone is misappropriating money through over invoicing," he said.

Asked if fertiliser import at private level will be stopped, Saifur said no decision to this effect has been made.

He said the government itself does not want to do anything exclusively, but along with the private sector Bangladesh Chemical Industries Corporation and Bangladesh Agriculture Development Corporation will also sell non-urea fertiliser in subsidised prices.

This new arrangements will be done in phases, the minister added.

Hefty borrowing

FROM PAGE 1
bid to raise their sale. The move will also help reduce the government borrowing from the banks.