

Dhaka to enact law to curb militancy  
Moudud tells US attorney general  
UNB, Dhaka

Bangladesh is going to enact law providing for harsh measures against financing militant activities. Law Minister Moudud Ahmed told US Attorney General Alberto R Gonzales in Washington, an official release said.

During the meeting they discussed matters of bilateral relations and exchanged views how the two countries could enhance cooperation in the fields of law and justice.

Moudud apprised the US Attorney General of the government programmes undertaken during the last four and a half years for reforms and modernisation of the judiciary.

He briefed him about the success of Alternative Dispute Resolution (ADR) in speedy disposal of cases. He said pre-bargaining system will be introduced soon in the judicial process.

Lauding the success of the government programme Alberto Gonzales assured Moudud of US assistance in improving the judiciary and anti-militancy measures.

Bangladesh High Commissioner in USA Shamsur Mobin Chowdhury was present during the meeting.

FALL OF AUTOCRACY DAY  
Step up movement to oust govt: Hasina  
BDNEWS, Dhaka

Leader of the Opposition in Parliament and Awami League President Sheikh Hasina yesterday urged the people to step up movement to oust BNP-Jamaat coalition government in a message on the 'Fall of Autocracy Day'.

'Through corruption, plunder, politicisation, violating human rights arbitrarily the alliance government has tarnished the image of the country to the world community' mentioned Sheikh Hasina saying responsibility lies with all patriotic citizens to free the country and its people from the grip of this failed, despotic and corrupt government through stronger movement.

The leader of the opposition said, unified on the issue of caretaker and electoral reform proposals on this day in 1996 the BNP government formed through a voter less poll was compelled to quit in the face of vigorous mass movement, though they bragged to run for the full tenure.

People at that time rejected the election of theft and rigging, said Hasina adding the founder of BNP Ziaur Rahman introduced the vote theft saga, who forcefully grabbed power that was completely unlawful and unconstitutional.

Hasina observed, Zia obtained 99% votes through a mock 'Yes/No' election in 1977.

The chronicle went on while in 1978 keeping Army rule in force Zia brazenly used the administration in presidential election.



## Appeal for help

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A mother has sought financial assistance for the treatment of her son who has been suffering from Hepatitis C.

Arman Bin Kamal, a student of class five at Saroj International School and College, contracted Hepatitis C following a blood transfusion during a surgery on his body soon after his birth. But his illness was diagnosed in 2001.

According to doctors, his liver has already been affected by his virus and he needs immediate hospitalisation.

But the prolonged treatment involves about Tk 15 lakh, which his family cannot afford.

Arman is not only a meritorious student but also writes poems in this young age.

His mother has appealed to generous people to extend a helping hand to save her son's life.

Contributions can be sent to Parvez Akhter, SB A/C No. 5698/29, Sonali Bank, Begum Rokeya Sarani Branch, Mirpur, Dhaka.



Non-government primary school teachers stage a demonstration in the city yesterday demanding nationalisation of their jobs.

## Biharis should be helped to avert trouble

Says UK House of Lords member

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Baroness Tonge, a member of the UK House of Lords, yesterday expressed concern over the status of stranded Pakistanis in the country, saying that they might cause troubles in the future, if deprived of their due rights.

"If the Biharis (stranded Pakistanis) are not helped, they will go to other people for help, which may lead to troubles," she said while addressing a roundtable at the British Council auditorium in Dhaka. The Dhaka Initiative and the British Council organised the roundtable titled 'A solution to the Bihari issue'.

Leaving young people of the Bihari community out of education, healthcare and other basic needs is dangerous for all, said Tonge, who is also a trustee of The Dhaka Initiative.

Baroness Tonge, now on a three-day visit to Bangladesh, informed the roundtable that the UK government and the European Parliament, under

their strategy paper for Bangladesh, have initiated a project in the Bihari camps to improve their status.

Presently, The Dhaka Initiative is conducting a survey on the condition of the Biharis across the country and their opinions about whether they want to live in Bangladesh or return to Pakistan.

The Biharis who want to return to Pakistan should be helped and those don't should also be helped in their settlement in Bangladesh under the national and international legal framework on an urgent basis, Tonge stressed.

According to a rough estimate by the Refugee and Migratory Movement and Research Unit (RMMRU), there are about four or five lakh Biharis living in the country. And 75 percent of them were born here after the War of Liberation in 71.

The survey, which began in December last year and is likely to complete in the next two or three

months, suggests that more than 90 percent of the Biharis expressed their willingness to stay in Bangladesh, as they were born here and are accustomed to this society, said Nigel McCollum, another trustee of The Dhaka Initiative.

They, however, need to be recognised in the social, cultural and political contexts, including voting rights, he said.

RMRRU Coordinator Prof CR Abrar, who chaired the roundtable, said the issue of the Biharis should be brought to the table for thorough discussions.

Other participants stressed the need for providing basic amenities to the Biharis.

Prof Quazi Quamruzzaman of The Dhaka Initiative, Dr Tasneem Siddiqui of RMRRU, Khushi Kabir of Nijera Kori, Advocate Sultana Kamal of Ain O Salish Kendro, Farida Akhter of Ubinig and Syeda Rizwana Hassan of BELA also spoke.

## 'Groundwater level falling gradually'

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Groundwater level in the country is falling gradually due to shortage of fresh water supply from the upstream and over-extraction of water for irrigation, water experts said yesterday.

They also warned that if such situation continues and the groundwater aquifers are not recharged, the country will face massive disasters.

"If water table continues to fall, a vacuum will be created in the aquifer, which could cause the ground to subside suddenly," said Giasuddin Ahmed Choudhury, executive director of the Centre for Environmental and Geographic Information Services (CEGIS).

Groundwater aquifers cannot be recharged properly as most rivers and water bodies in the country have either dried up or become severely polluted, he said while delivering a lecture at a course on 'Water and Flood Management for Journalists'.

The water flow from the upstream has declined as India has constructed around 400 dams on the Ganges basin, which is the main source of Padma water, he added.

The Press Institute of Bangladesh (PIB) and Institute of Water and Flood Management (IWFM) of Bangladesh University of Engineering & Technology (BUET) jointly organised the three-day course at the PIB auditorium in collaboration with the Institute of Water Modelling (IWM) and CEGIS.

Prof Rezaur Rahman of IWFM said water flow of the rivers have decreased to a great extent because of diversion of water further upstream through Farakka barrage and other dams constructed by India.

He suggested preserving water bodies and open spaces across the country so that the aquifers can be recharged through rainwater for the greater interest of the country.

Prof Abul Fazal M Saleh said about 75 percent of water used for irrigation is extracted from aquifers.

Deputy Minister for Information Abdu Salam Pintu distributed certificates among the participants of the course at its closing session yesterday. Information Secretary M Haider Ali and PIB Director General Dr Rezwan Hossain Siddiqui were also present.

While presenting the annual report, the Commission members explained the necessity of setting up the secretariat office building of the Judicial Service Commission and also raised some of their problems.

The president assured them of his cooperation in this regard.

Chairman of the Judicial Service Commission and senior judge of the Supreme Court Justice MM Ruhul Amin led the delegation that included Finance Secretary Siddique Rahman Chowdhury, Law Secretary M Alauddin Sarder, Establishment Secretary Dr Muhammad Mahbubur Rahman, Supreme Court Registrar M Fazlul Karim, member of Bangladesh Public Service Commission Latifur Rahman and Dhaka District Sessions Judge M Rafiqul Islam.

The president made the remark when the annual report of Bangladesh Judicial Service Commission for the year 2005 was presented to him at Bangabhaban.

Thanking the commission for submitting the 2nd annual report in time, Iajuddin also emphasised establishing rule of law in the country. "None of us are above law," he added.

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