

Convicted JMB militants

FROM PAGE 1 "We're not afraid of execution or imprisonment. The Muslims of this country will establish Islamic rule here, no matter how many of us are executed," Sunny was shouting at the top of his voice as he was being dragged to the prison van along with it.

When photojournalists rushed there for taking photographs, the police and Rab men assaulted them leaving several of them wounded.

Earlier in the day, Judge Monzurul Bachnid of the Fourth Additional Metropolitan Sessions Judge's Court handed down the punishment to the convicts in a packed courtroom.

However, three other JMB men were acquitted of the charges, even though there were specific allegations against them, the prosecution alleged.

The cases, one under the Arms Act and the other under the Explosive Substances Act, were filed with Sabujbagh Police Station on December 14 last year.

The prosecution, unhappy with the verdict, would decide whether they would appeal against it after getting the judgement copy. Assistant Public Prosecutor Shahidul Islam Sardarsaid.

The acquitted are Sunny's friend Fariduzzaman Swapan, Kamru alias Sumon alias Zahidul and Alamgir alias Bijoy. Swapan provided funds to JMB and the other two safeguarded the arms, ammunition and explosives, the prosecution alleged.

On September 17, another Dhaka court sentenced five JMB members to 78 years' rigorous imprisonment in the same category cases filed in January this year.

In its verdict, the judge mentioned that the three were acquitted due to lack of proper investigation into the matters, saying the investigation officers (IOs) did not make the landlords of the acquitted witnesses in the cases. Moreover, the IOs failed to prove the allegation against Swapan as a money supplier to the JMB.

After his arrest on December 13 last year, Sunny confessed to Rab that his close friend Swapan is their fund provider and he lived at a rented house in Kalabagan. On his information, Rab arrested Swapan from there the next day.

Moreover, it was found that Swapan sent money through TT to Ashraful Alam, another JMB leader,

who was arrested in Chittagong during the suicide bomb attacks on policemen.

During the trial of the cases, Sub-Inspector ABM Rashidul Bari of Rab-3 gave his statement saying that witnesses of the adjacent area told them that the Bijoy and Kamru stayed at the rented house and they fled the scene sensing their presence.

In addition, three high officials including a vice-president of Islam Bank, Bangladesh Limited Local Office, gave their statements before the court saying that Swapan has a savings account with their bank and he sent Tk 1,42,000 through three TTs to another JMB member in Chittagong on three dates last year.

On March 14, Rab pressed charges against Sunny and four others in the two cases, showing 36 people as prosecution witnesses.

Rab dropped the names of Monir and Abul Khair, the landlords of Sunny, from the charge sheet as their involvement with JMB could not be proved.

Sunny, also a member of the JMB top tier Majlis-e-Shura, masterminded the August 17 serial blasts across the country. He was arrested at the Polytechnic Institute in Tejgaon on December 13 last year.

Leads obtained from Sunny prompted Rab to seize 56 items of arms, ammunition, explosives, bomb-making materials, and books on jihad from the house of Abul Khair at South Manda in Sabujbagh area of the capital.

Garment

FROM PAGE 1 Ritan Kanti Barua, general manager Perfect Sweaters Limited, however, commented that the authorities could not meet the workers' demands as those were irrational.

The factory workers later withdrew their barricade at around 4:30pm after the owners promised the workers to sit with them for more discussions over their demands.

The factory owners will meet with the workers' representatives at BGMEA Bhaban today to review the nine-point demands of the workers.

Both factories are to resume operations today after three days of closure.

Nagorik Committee

FROM PAGE 1 Convenor of the 28-member committee Prof Rehman Sobhan chaired the discussion held at the CIRDAP auditorium.

The committee said the caretaker government's primary responsibility will be to ensure a free and fair national election for constituting the 9th parliament. And for this it will have to go for electoral and political reforms.

In the process of such reforms, the caretaker government will have to accomplish 16 major tasks. These include ensuring neutrality of the Election Commission, law and order, separation of the judiciary, disclosure of particulars of the candidates, liaison with other institutions, declaration on tax amnesty by the candidates, amendment to Representation of the People Order, enacting the 'code of conduct' as law, increasing the number of polling booths, updating voter list, introduction of the voter identification system, accreditation of monitors, proper access to print and electronic media and enforcing the bar on bank loan defaulters in contesting the election.

The 38-point action plan concerns parliament and cabinet related issues, local government, macroeconomic issues, employment generation, infrastructure, foreign direct investment proposals, health and education, national policy for women, judiciary and new institutional initiatives.

On the cabinet and parliament related issues, the Nagorik Committee suggested disposal of election disputes within 180 days, appointment of deputy speaker from the opposition bench, proportionate representation of opposition members in parliamentary standing committees, filling the reserved women's seats through direct election, declaration of assets and liabilities of members of the cabinet and leading opposition functionaries, declaration of financial and commercial interests of all parlia-

ment members, and cancelling the provision of duty free car import by parliament members.

In the local government sector, the committee suggested announcing a firm schedule for upazila election to revive the upazila system, and restriction on members of parliament in interfering with the functioning of upazila.

On macroeconomic issues, the newly elected government will have to review the annual development programme to eliminate unapproved projects, review the PRSP in a five-year context to regain the lost grounds and develop a set of measures for strengthening capital market.

The committee suggested undertaking a survey of regional inequality within 12 months.

For infrastructure development, it suggested finalisation of immediate decisions on connectivity with the Trans Asian highway and railway systems.

The suggestions include deploying a high-powered competent committee to finalise Tata's investment proposal and formation of an independent committee of experts and stakeholders to assess the economic viability and social impact of Phulbari coal mine project.

In judiciary, the Supreme Court should introduce a system of recording the exact reasons if and when any judge feels embarrassed to hear particular cases, the committee suggested.

Review of the national women's policy and implementation of the Chittagong Hill Tracts peace accord are also among its suggestions.

On new institutional initiatives, the committee suggested forming a permanent pay and service commission for government officials and employees, passage of freedom of information act in the first sitting of the parliament and suitable amendments to the official secrets act and constitution of an independent and fully empowered human rights commission.

Electoral reforms

FROM PAGE 1 and Justice MAAZiz will be the chief adviser to the caretaker government and the chief election commissioner.

BUSINESS LEADERS' MOVE A delegation of business leaders including Mir Nasir Hossain, president of Federation of Bangladesh Chambers of Commerce and Industry (FBCCI), Annisul Huq, former president of Bangladesh Garment Manufacturers and Exporters Association, and Mahbubur Rahman, president of International Chambers and Commerce, held a closed-door meeting with Mannan Bhuiyan at his official residence.

After the meeting, Mir Nasir told newsmen that they discussed holding the dialogue. "The discussion was fruitful and we hope the dialogue will take place within two to three days," the FBCCI president said.

Earlier on Tuesday night, the business leaders held another meeting with Bhuiyan.

Later at their meeting with Jalil at his Gulshan residence yesterday, the business leaders urged him to sit with Bhuiyan to put up an end to the political deadlock for the greater interest of the country and the business sector. "He [Jalil] told us that he is ready to sit with BNP if he gets formal proposals,"

Nasir told reporters.

The business leaders told reporters that they will meet with Bhuiyan again today.

JALIL-SIKRI MEETING

Indian High Commissioner to Bangladesh Veena Sikri held an hour-long meeting with Jalil from 10:00am at the latter's Gulshan residence discussing the overall situation of the country including the electoral reforms agenda.

Sikri urged the AL leader to go for the dialogue. In response, Jalil told the envoy that he will sit in the dialogue if the BNP formally gives proposals.

HASINA-BUTENIS MEETING

US Ambassador Patricia A Butenis and Sheikh Hasina held a one-to-one closed-door meeting at Hasina's Sudha Sadan residence, discussing the dialogue between the government and the AL.

Al sources said the US envoy suggested the AL president to go for the dialogue to break off political facets.

Details of the two-hour long meeting could not be known as journalists were not allowed at Sudha Sadan.

Musharraf

FROM PAGE 1

brave soldiers cried with me. It remains most sad and most painful day of my life," he wrote in his book 'In the Line of Fire'.

"It was nexus between Bhutto and small coterie of rulers that destroyed Pakistan. The hypocritical attitude of (Bangladeshi leader) Sheikh Mujibur Rahman did not help matters.....," he said.

Musharraf said he, along with a company of Special Security Group (SSG) commandos, were tasked to go East Pakistan before it fell.

"My troops were brimming with confidence and we were all set to go when the ceasefire was announced and East Pakistan was forcibly torn away from us to form the separate state of Bangladesh. It was terrible day."

"When I was telling my troops about the ceasefire, the surrender of our 90,000 personnel, (military and civilian) came about," the Pakistani leader said.

"What happened in East Pakistan is the saddest episode in Pakistan's history," Musharraf said, adding that it was due to 'inept handling' since independence.

"Blame ultimately fell on the army. As events developed, the army was confronted with an impossible situation -- mass popular uprising within and an invasion from without by India supposedly non-aligned but now being overtly helped by Soviet Union under a treaty of peace and friendship. It was actually an alliance of war," he said.

Blaming the US of failing to help Pakistan, he said, "..... our long time ally, USA, apart from making sympathetic noises and wringing its hands was nowhere to be seen."

"No army in the world can sustain such a multi-dimensional threat. Nonetheless, the operational handling of the troops by the army's senior leadership was simply incompetent."

AL walks out

FROM PAGE 1

rules of procedure and the constitution. The speaker created a bad precedent by allowing Mujahid to place the bill," AL Lawmaker Suranjit Sen Gupta told reporters after the walkout.

"It is a finance bill so the minister could not table it without the permission of the president," he said adding, "But he placed it without taking permission from the president."

Earlier, AL lawmaker KM Jahangir repeatedly pointed out the anomaly while Social Welfare Minister Ali Ahsan Mujahid was placing the bill. But, Speaker Jamir Uddin Sircar, who presided over the session, ignored him.

After the bill was placed, AL lawmaker Sheikh Fazlul Karim Selim on a point of order drew the attention of the speaker to the matter and said the social welfare minister has no right to place the bill according to the constitution.

But the speaker said the law will take its own course. "He (Mujahid) tabled another bill earlier so it is nothing new," the speaker replied.

Following the speaker's reply Law Minister Moudud Ahmed said, "The remedy to the alleged anomaly is in the bill itself if the opposition cares to find out."

After the law minister's reply, opposition lawmaker Suranjit Sen Gupta stood up to speak but the speaker did not give him the floor, following which AL lawmakers walked out of the House led by the deputy leader of the opposition.

Later Education Minister Osman Farrukh placed Karmichael University Bill 2006, Shaheed Ziaur Rahman University Bill 2006, Islamic University (Amendment) Bill 2006 and Madrasa Education (Amendment) Bill 2006.

After the bills had been placed in the House all were sent to respective standing committees to finalise them through scrutiny. The committees will place their reports to the House following which they will be passed by parliament.

According to Karmichael University Bill 2006, Rangpur Karmichael College would be transformed into Karmichael University. According to Shaheed Ziaur Rahman University Bill, a new public university would be set up in Barisal which would be named after late president Ziaur Rahman.

But, opposition lawmaker Fazlul Karim Selim said in the House that the name of the university should be Sher-e-Bangla University.

"All of these are election bills and the government just tricked the people of Barisal as it had failed to set up a university there in the last five years," Selim said.

Denying the allegation of the opposition, Education Minister Osman Farrukh said it is a demand of the people of Barisal and the government has taken the initiative to fulfil their demand."

Opposing Islamic University (Amendment) Bill and Madrasa Education (Amendment) Bill, AL lawmaker ASHK Sadique said, "Islamic University has already become ineffective due to terrorist activities and corruption there, it cannot take any more burden."

The present government is scheduled to hand over power on October 28.

THE PROJECTS

Of the 18 projects approved yesterday, eight will be fully financed with the government's own resources while 10 others will be implemented with partial financial assistance of Tk 5,846 crore from the Asian Development Bank, UNDP, Opec Fund, and DFID.

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Power offices

FROM PAGE 1

The supply situation aggravated on Tuesday after a 210MW unit at Ghorashal Power Station tripped due to technical faults, bringing down the total power generation to below 3,000MW.

Sources in the PDB said the power supply situation worsened when 110MW power plant at Haripur tripped at 5:57am yesterday, but the plant resumed power generation after a quick repair.

Like the previous day, Dhaka city and its adjoining areas experienced 600MW load shedding. The situation in other cities and rural areas deteriorated further. Many rural areas had been without electricity for hours together.

In Cox's Bazar, at least 4,000 Muslim devotees attacked Palli Bidyut Samity (PBS) office after 'tarabi' prayers for power outage during Iftar and Tarabi prayers in the last two days.

Witnesses said load shedding in the upazila town from 6:00pm angered the residents. After the 'tarabi' prayers they came out in hundreds and attacked the Palli Bidyut office and officers' quarters.

As police intervened, the angry people swooped on the law enforcers, leading to a clash between the two sides. At least 20 people, including four policemen, were injured.

The incidents followed a major attack on Tuesday that killed 18 people in the town of Lashkar Gah, about 145 kilometres to the west.

The Taliban claimed responsibility for that attack, one of the deadliest in a surge of suicide blasts this year.

The Kandahar blast was near a busy intersection that sees most of the city's regular suicide attacks aimed at foreign troops.

There are around 2,300 Canadian soldiers in Kandahar province as part of a NATO-led force which is operating alongside the US-led coalition to help Afghan forces defeat the resurgent Taliban.

Building of the puja mandaps and preparations for the rituals are already complete as goddess Durga will be displayed in the act of killing Mahishashur. Offerings of delicious foods, fruits, incense etc will be made to the goddess and later distributed among the assembled devotees.

The main puja mandap in the capital is at Dhakeshwari National Temple. Large mandaps have also been put up at Jagannath Hall in Dhaka University, Ramkrishna Mission, Ramna Kali Mandir, Siddheshwari Kali Mandir, Tanti Bazar, Shankhari Bazar, Bangla Bazar, Mohakhali and Farmgate.

Bangladesh Puja Uddapan Parishad has directed its district committees not to use loudspeakers and musical instruments during the worship.

Locals said as power went off during the 'tarabi' prayers, hundreds of devotees took to the street and staged demonstration in front of Fatullah power station at Panchabati at 9:00pm.

They hurled brickbats at the power station, forcing the employees to flee. The angry people also took away a wireless set of a power worker and damaged furniture of the office and a pick-up van.

They also blocked the Dhaka-Narayanganj highway, halting traffic for about an hour. Police later brought the situation under control.

The devotees alleged that power outage during 'iftar' and 'tarabi' prayers has become a regular phenomenon, causing untold sufferings to them.

In Narayanganj, workers of Kararchar BSCC industrial estate in Shipur upazila yesterday put up a barricade on the Dhaka-Sylhet highway, demanding uninterrupted power supply.

Over 10,000 workers blocked the highway at about 8:45am, disrupting traffic for about three hours.

The 18 projects approved yesterday, six were revised projects while 12 others were new ones.

But the speaker said the law will take at least three years for these new power projects to go into production if everything goes smoothly.

The project for Aminbazar Old Air Port 230KV transmission line and associated sub-station will be implemented at a cost of Tk 653 crore. Donors will provide Tk 372 crore of the cost.