

Govt plans

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In his scripted answer to a lawmaker's query said the government does not have any plan to increase four times the lawmakers' discretionary fund or appoint personal secretary, assistant personal secretary and employees for lawmakers.

Meantime, during the question-answer session in parliament, the prime minister said the government will only allocate funds for local bodies and monitor their activities after they are given the responsibility of looking after primary and secondary level education.

This would reduce bureaucratic complexities, the PM said.

"We will keep on working to this effect in future, Inshallah."

The government is working on strengthening the local government system, she said.

Replying to lawmakers' queries, Hasina, also leader of the House, mentioned different measures initiated by her government for admission of all children to schools by 2011.

The government plans to ensure free education for all, she said.

Setting up of 1,935 primary schools in the same number of villages with a population of over 2,000 each is in process with the locals' support.

The premier also said her government would expand stipend programme to cover male students at secondary level in all upazilas.

The programme is now being implemented in 174 upazilas.

Hasina said another 5,000 teachers would be recruited under the second primary education development programme in the current fiscal year. Besides, appointment of 15,000 assistant teachers under this programme is at final stage.

Responding to queries on

power sector, the PM said the government has already taken various measures to increase power generation by 2,135 MW by the year 2014.

And steps will be taken to start atomic power plant at Ruppor.

She blasted the previous BNP-led alliance government for its failure to increase power generation even by a single MW during its five-year tenure despite spending over TK 20, 000 crore in the sector.

On public administration, the premier said her government has already formed a committee to review the cases of government officials who were deprived of justice during the alliance government's tenure.

Boy killed as bomb goes off at Chapai police station

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Chapainawabganj
A boy was killed and two other children suffered serious injuries as a bomb, abandoned on the sadar police station premises, went off in Chapainawabganj town yesterday.

The diseased was identified as Al Amin, 10, son of ASI Ataur Rahman of the sadar police station.

The injured are Mehedi Hasan, 10, son of a rickshaw puller of Darga Para and Mamun-Ur-Rashid, 7, son of SI Rafiqul Islam of the police station.

Police said the bomb dumped into the dustbin of the sadar police station exploded with a big bang at about 12:30 pm when the three children were playing near the dustbin.

The injured were rushed to Chapainawabganj Adhunik Sadar Hospital immediately. As the conditions of the victims deteriorated, the on-duty doctor of the hospital sent them to Rajshahi Medical College Hospital (RMCH).

Al Amin died at the RMCH at around 6 pm, said officer-in-charge of the sadar police station Amirul Islam.

Mahtabuddin, assistant police super of the sadar circle said that the investigation into the incident is on.

No pension

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The authority and police, however, could not ascertain how the grenades came to the toilet.

Acting Police Superintendent Sayeed Tariqul Hassan said they requested the Bangladesh Army explosive experts to take next course of action in this connection.

He said a general diary on the recovery had been lodged with Rangpur Kotwali Police Station.

SC Appellate

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yesterday made the appointments as per recommendations of the Supreme Judicial Commission and a gazette notification on the appointments will be issued today.

The appointments of the two judges would expedite hearing on the long pending appeal in Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman assassination case, according to the sources.

Earlier on October 16 last year, the commission recommended appointment of four judges of the High Court Division as Appellate Division judges. They include Justice Shah Abu Nayeem Mominur Rahman, Justice Abdul Aziz, Justice Md Abdul Quddus and Justice Bijan Kumar Das.

Justice Quddus, however, retired from service on January 14.

Goods looted

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possessions. Following his confession, Rab recovered Tk 3 lakh from a paddy field in the area.

Rahman is now staying at Pikhana, sources said.

ARMS CASE Babar asked to surrender at trial court

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The High Court (HC) yesterday directed former state minister for home Lutfozzaman Babar to surrender before the trial court as per the Supreme Court (SC) order in connection with an arms case. The trial court earlier sentenced him to 17 years imprisonment in this case.

The HC bench of Justice MA Wahhab Miah and Justice Md Delwar Hossain passed the order rejecting Babar's petition seeking bail extension as his three-month bail tenure expired yesterday.

On Tuesday the SC rejected an extension petition filed by Babar, since he did not surrender to the trial court as per its earlier order in connection with the case.

Additional Attorney General M Enayetur Rahim told newsmen at his office that the court can consider Babar as a fugitive convict and issue an arrest warrant against him if he (Babar) failed to surrender before the court.

About surrender to the lower court, he said there is no scope for the trial court to grant him bail at this stage as he was earlier convicted of possessing arms.

During the hearing of the extension petition yesterday, Babar's counsel Advocate Ahsanul Karim told the court that his client was seriously ill and his bail should be extended for medical treatment.

The court said it has no jurisdiction to modify the SC order directing Babar to surrender.

Ahsanul Karim then prayed to the court to grant Babar one-week bail extension.

Additional Attorney General Enayetur Rahim argued that the HC has no jurisdiction as per law to grant Babar even an hour more.

The court said after surrendering to the trial court Babar can file a fresh bail petition.

The HC granted Babar a six-month bail on health grounds in the case last October 16 following a pending appeal against the trial court verdict on October 30, 2007.

However, the SC on October 23 revised the HC order and granted him bail for three months and directed him to surrender before the trial court within the time.

People asked to inform army HQ about runaway BDR

UNB, Dhaka

People in the know have been requested to inform the Army Headquarters control room, apart from the nearest police station, about the runaway BDR rebels from the Bangladesh Rifles headquarters and different camps.

"Confidentiality of the informers will be protected," said an ISPR release issuing the public notice yesterday when a countryside drive code-named 'operation rebel hunt' for rounding up the mutineers is already underway.

The contact numbers of the Army Headquarters control room are: 8712197, 01713333 256.

Arrest warrant

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Sudanese media predicted that Wednesday's demonstration in the capital would be followed by larger rallies in Beshir's northern power base later in the week.

Tens of thousands already rallied on Sunday in support of the president in Khartoum while on Tuesday thousands more paraded portraits of Beshir at the inauguration north of the capital of the largest hydro-electric project built on the Nile in 40 years.

Embassies asked their citizens to stay inside for fear of hostile protests.

"As a precaution in case of demonstrations which might inhibit movement, you are advised to maintain several days' stock of food and water," the British foreign ministry said.

4-party bigwigs were in plot

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leader Paresh Barua, who was residing in Dhaka back then.

Ministries for home and industries under the 4-party government, some high officials of intelligence agencies concerned, and the coast guard were well aware of the smuggling which also involved a former Jatiya Party MP and a film director, the accused two said in the confessional statements to the Metropolitan Magistrate Md Osman Gani.

In the 10-page confessional statement one of the principal accused Hafizur Rahman claimed to have given the same statement on different occasions divulging the truth behind the case, since his surrender on October 25, 2005.

But, the confession was never recorded, instead the officials concerned warned him against making such statements in the future, threatening him with death as well, sources said quoting from Hafiz's statement.

Three others including one Ashik, and one Jewel with a mongoloid appearance, received the delivery of the arms cache from a ship near Saint Martin's Island, and guided two engine boats, loading them with the weapons, up to the jetty of Chittagong Urea Fertilizer Limited (CUFL) across the River Karnaphuli, said Hafiz.

Hazi Sobhan provided the engine boats while Din Mohammad, and another local resident identified as Arju alias Pagla Arju hired the labourers and the trucks from Md Yakub, for offloading and transporting the arms supply, said the sources quoting from the confessional statements of Hafizur Rahman and Din Mohammad.

Hafiz confessed, after getting involved in Jatiya Party, he got introduced to Azmal Huda Mithu, a film director.

A month before the October 2001 parliament election, Mithu invited Hafiz to a private event in his residence in the capital, and introduced Hafiz to former Jatiya Party MP Golam Faruk Obhi, and another man named Zaman.

Since Hafiz returned to Chittagong the next day, Zaman kept contact with him over the phone, said Hafiz.

Fifteen days into their introduction, Hafiz got a phone call from Zaman, and met him and Obhi in a fast food shop, Wimpy, in Dhaka. Following a proposal from them Hafiz agreed to help Zaman in receiving and transporting 'imports' the latter quite often used to get at Chittagong port.

After a several months interval, Zaman called Hafiz over the phone again, and met him on the third floor of Rapa Plaza in Dhaka sometime in January 2002, when they talked business.

Since then Zaman was paying Hafiz Tk 50 thousand to Tk 70 thousand a month.

At one stage of the increasing intimacy between the two, around a year later Zaman invited Hafiz to his residence in Dhanmondi of Dhaka. In his apartment, about half a kilometre behind 'UITS', Zaman introduced Hafiz to his wife, two children Babu and Aaksah of eight to ten years of age, and another 7-year old adopted son. He also gave Hafiz Tk 80,000 that time.

After paying some Tk 18 lakh in this way, Zaman finally called Hafiz to Dhaka to reveal his real identity in February 2004.

"As I met him in Rapa Plaza, Zaman this time around had with him a girl of about 10 years of age. He revealed himself as the Ulfa military wing chief Paresh Barua, and the girl as the daughter of Anup Chetia," said Hafiz in his confession.

Anup Chetia is one of the top leaders of Ulfa, detained in Bangladesh for quite a few years now since his arrest in the 1990s.

"Zaman or Paresh Barua also claimed that he looked after Anup's family, while some people of intelligence agencies ensured their safety," Hafiz continued to confess.

"On March 23 or 24, Paresh called for me on an emergency basis. I immediately rushed to Dhaka and rented a room in Red Star Hotel opposite Rajarbagh Police Line, and met him in Wimpy again."

"Paresh asked me to help him to transport a delivery of some machinery from a ship anchored in the sea near the Myanmar border near Saint's Martin Island. He also said the goods could not be brought to Chittagong port due to some technical problems. Asked about the required permission from the Bangladesh Navy, coast guard, customs authority, and the CUFL jetty authority, he said the NSI and DGFI chiefs had made all arrangements, and the jetty permission had also already been there, so no body would ask me any question," said Hafiz.

"I returned to the hotel and went to the same restaurant

again early next morning. After some fifteen minutes, Paresh came with another person in a white car which had 'on test' written on the registration plate. The man with Paresh was introduced to me as Ashik. He gave me 50 lakh taka in four packets. Then I and Ashik went to Chittagong in the same car. Leaving Ashik in Golden Inn hotel in Chittagong I went to meet Hazi Sobhan, and rented two engine boats for around 13 lakh taka. Sobhan was to keep the engine boats ready near the Marine Academy pier. On March 28, I took Ashik and two other persons including one Jewel from the hotel to the pier in a taxi cab. We reached Saint Martin's Island on the engine boats the next morning. Jewel and the other guy guided the boats following a map."

"Around 10:30 that night a vessel came to our view. We approached the vessel and following directions given by Paresh, Ashik started talking to the captain in English. Following exchange of some codes which sounded like passwords, Ashik was allowed to anchor the boats next to the other vessel."

Half an hour later Ashik handed over some papers satisfying the captain of the other vessel and offloading of wooden boxes onto the engine boats started.

The offloading was completed around noon the next day, some 14 hours into the rendezvous, the date was March 30, 2004.

"Then the engine boats were re-anchored in the Bay of Bengal near Teknaf until we started back towards Chittagong in the early morning of March 31, 2004," said Hafiz.

"I and Sobhan got off the engine boats in Cox's Bazar and went to Chittagong in a microbus."

"As I contacted Ashik who was still with the boats, he expressed fear that they could be robbed or get caught. I talked to Paresh about the fear over the phone, and he assured me that the coast guards would protect and guide the engine boats. I conveyed the message to Ashik. Then I went to CUFL jetty area and made a deal with Arju, who took 9 lakh taka for providing me with some 25 labourers for transferring the boxes from the boats onto the trucks," Hafiz went on.

A vessel was being loaded with fertiliser at the CUFL jetty. But, they asked the vessel crew to move it aside to make room for the engine boats.

"I talked to Ashik over the phone and told him to moor the engine boats at the CUFL jetty around 9:00pm," Hafiz said.

As it was proving difficult to moor the engine boats due to pitch darkness of the night, lights were flashed from a coast guard vessel to help them moor safely.

Transferring of the wooden boxes filled with firearms and ammunition onto three trucks started right away, when Sergeant Alauddin and Sergeant Helal suddenly appeared.

"Replying to their queries I told them that the goods belonged to the government, and had the required permission," Hafiz said.

But the sergeants challenged Hafiz's claim, alleging that the goods were being smuggled from Myanmar.

"I contacted Paresh over the phone, and he asked me to put Ashik on the phone," Hafiz went on.

Following Paresh's direction, Ashik informed the sergeants that the goods were for Ulfa, and they had the required permission from the government.

But, the sergeants were intransigent and insisted on opening the boxes. As they opened them they found the firearms.

At that point Ashik urged the sergeants to talk to 'someone' over the phone, and even tried to offer them money in exchange for a safe passage.

But, the sergeants refused to talk to anybody other than the erstwhile deputy commissioner (port) of Chittagong metropolitan police.

"When I wanted to know why he didn't tell me about the illegal caches of arms being transported, Paresh told me that he had already talked to DGFI and NSI chiefs regarding the matter."

As the offloading continued, a good number of police arrived there by mid-night.

"Around 3:00am Paresh Barua phoned me again, and told me that everybody had betrayed him, asking me to leave the spot quietly," Hafiz said.

shipment was confiscated in the early hours of April 2, 2004."

"After charges were pressed against me, I surrendered to the High Court on October 26, 2005."

"I was shown arrested in a pending case, and was interrogated in the Taskforce Interrogation Cell, where I made the same confession as I am making now. But, the statement was not recorded," Hafiz said.

"They instead warned me against making such statements in the future, threatening to kill me if I disclosed anything regarding the matter," he added.

"I made the same statement when the erstwhile investigation officer CID ASP Mohammad Ismail interrogated me in remand at CID HQ," he said.

"But again instead of recording the statement, I was sent to jail custody. I want a proper probe and a trial of the real criminals in the case. I didn't know that the boxes were carrying deadly weapons and ammunition," Hafiz claimed.

The erstwhile director (counter intelligence bureau) of the Directorate General of Forces Intelligence (DGFI) Maj Gen (retd) Rezakul Haider Chowdhury said DGFI had known nothing about the 10-truck load arms haul in Chittagong before its seizure.

"After seizing the weapons, the government formed a probe committee headed by the then home secretary Omar Faruk. I was one of the members on the committee. We could not bring out the key findings due to a time constraint," he said.

LAHORE ATTACK

Pak president vows to deal with 'iron fists'

BBC ONLINE, Islamabad

Pakistan President Asif Ali Zardari has vowed that those who attacked the Sri Lankan cricket team will be caught, and punished "with iron hands".

Zardari told visiting Sri Lankan Foreign Minister Rohitha Bogollagama in Islamabad that progress was being made in investigating the attack in Lahore.

The Sri Lankan team has arrived back in Colombo amid emotional scenes.

Gunmen opened fire on the team's convoy on Tuesday, killing six policemen and a driver and injuring eight tour members.

Zardari said: "Progress has been made in the investigation and the perpetrators will be exposed and brought to justice."

He admitted that the attack was "a serious setback that had also undermined the sport of cricket in Pakistan".

Zardari welcomed Sri Lanka's assertion that the attack would not harm ties and called for the two nations to work together to "learn from each other's experiences in fighting terrorism".

Up to 14 gunmen were involved in the attack at the Liberty Square roundabout in the heart of Lahore on Tuesday.

Sources said in Islamabad hundreds of people have been questioned in poorer areas of Lahore to find clues to the attackers.

Meanwhile weapons have been seized by police following an ambush of the Sri Lankan cricket team in Lahore. Police say the cache of weapons suggests a long operation was planned.

BNP ready

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Ambassador James F Moriarty at her Gulshan office last night, the leader of the opposition hoped that the government will be able to utilise US cooperation properly in this regard.

"There was no lack of sincerity on opposition side to assist the government to overcome this tough situation and now it depends on the seriousness of the government," Shamsur Mobin Chowdhury, foreign affairs adviser to BNP chairperson, quoted her as saying.

Cha-wallah's

FROM PAGE 16
The 14-year-old boy came to the bustling city two years back to forage for food and he knew nothing about what was going on at the Bangladesh Rifles (BDR) headquarter.

He had been passing through the ordeal of life in the hospital bed since the bloody massacre at BDR headquarters.

"The Elisha river eroded our ancestral village home in Barisal forcing us to send our younger brother of class five to the capital city for eking out a living," Khadiza, Akhter's elder sister, sobbed.

"I came out of my home only 20 minutes before I was hit by bullets and engaged myself in selling teas at Jigatola. Out of blue the bullets struck me and I fell down on the road ending up in this hospital," the boy narrated his story as tears were welling up in his eyes.

"Initially we had to spend Tk 8,000 in first four days through much hardship as my father is out of work for disability though we don't have to pay now," said Khadiza.

She also questioned about the sufferings of innocent people for playing no part of their own in the BDR mutiny and alleged that the government is not looking after the innocent victims.

The cabinet announced it would help civilians' families from the government fund on Sunday but the government is yet to decide upon the amount.

"There is nobody to bother for poor people like us," said Nargis whose son Al Amin, 17, was also hit by bullet in his leg and receiving treatment at the DMCH.

"Everyday I have to spend at least Tk 100 for my son but nobody cares for how we are managing the amount," said the frustrated mother adding that her hawkson son used to earn around Tk 200 daily and gave it to her to run the family of seven members.

Like Akhter and Al Amin,

JS session

FROM PAGE 1
Awami League (AL) lawmaker Prof Ali Ashraf presiding over the sitting as a member of the panel of chairmen adjourned the sitting at 9:15pm when only 50 lawmakers were present against 60 required to constitute a quorum.

The House will resume at 3:30pm today.

When the opposition lawmakers drew the chair's attention to the matter at 9:12pm, Ashraf said he would check whether enough lawmakers were in the House to constitute a quorum.

When Ashraf found that there was a quorum crisis, he asked AL lawmaker Khandaker Abdul Baten to take seat completing his speech on thanks-giving motion on the president's address.

At that time, only 47 lawmakers were in the chamber with only three lawmakers sitting in the front row of the treasury bench.

After three more lawmakers hurriedly entered the House, Ashraf said the quorum had been constituted.

As Baten resumed his speech, four opposition lawmakers including Opposition Chief Whip Zainul Abidin Faroque claimed that the quorum had not been constituted.

Ashraf asked Baten to complete his speech quickly and later adjourned the sitting without giving floor to any other lawmaker to participate in the discussion on the thanks-giving motion on the president's address.

Although the current session witnessed quorum crisis several times, none pointed out the issue in the House allowing the speaker to continue parliamentary proceedings.

The AL-led alliance has 260 seats in parliament.

Most of the previous sittings of the current session began at least 15 minutes behind the schedule due to lack of quorum.

Yesterday's sitting began at 3:50pm, 20 minutes behind the schedule.

over 25 civilians injured on that very fateful day were admitted to different city hospitals. Most of them have already been released by now except for some five at the DMCH.

"I was at Laxmipur in Noakhali and watching news on television on that day. Suddenly I saw people carrying my bullet-hit son to the DMCH," said Ojufa Begum, mother of Masud, 25.

Ojufa made a dash for the DMCH as soon as she watched her bullet-hit son on the television news.

"The condition of my son has improved much by now but we have to spend a huge amount of money for his treatment. But I don't know if he will ever be able to work," Masud's mother lamented.

Masud was on his way from Jigatola to his workplace at a book binding shop in city's Nilkhet area when bullets struck him.

Zahir, 25, and Hasibur Rahman Shaon, a class seven student of city's Rayer Bazar High School were also admitted to the DMCH as they were hit by bullets off the guns of the BDR rebels on February 25.

We don't know what was our fault and why we have to suffer for nothing. The health and home affairs ministers came to visit us but they did not tell us anything about financial help, they said in emotion-charged voices pleading for government's help.

Mutiny upsets

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week or so," he told reporters replying to a question about possible policy support to different economic sectors in the backdrop of the global recession.

The Minister was talking to the reporters after two separate meetings with Light Engineering Association of Bangladesh and Bangladesh Corrugated Carton & Accessories Manufacturers & Exporters Association at the Finance Ministry conference room.

The finance minister assured the trade bodies of considering their requests for reducing lending rates and VAT while formulating the budget for the next fiscal year.

Replying to a question, Muhiith said the high-powered task force on monitoring the developments of the global recession and undertaking policy measures has already been formed and the first meeting of the body was scheduled to be held in a day or two.

"It'll now be deferred by few days as the BDR mutiny drew all the attention of the policymakers," he said.

The minister said he had expected that the current fiscal year would be a good one for Bangladesh, but the BDR mutiny might intensify the apprehensions over the global recession that already started affecting the sectors though mildly. He, however, said that it could be controlled.

Replying to another question, Muhiith said the incidental expenditure for the victims of the BDR mutiny, including their early pension, would add some extra pressure on the current budget. Estimate of the expenditure was not available yet, he added.

Iran urges

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Clinton reiterated support for the two-state answer in talks this week.

Khamenei said any negotiation to solve the issue was fruitless, adding that the United States and Britain committed the "crime of creation and supporting this cancerous tumour (Israel)."

"Even the new president of the United States who came to power with the motto of changing the (George W.) Bush administration's policies talks about unconditional commitment to secure Israel. This is defending terrorism by a government."

Khamenei also came down heavily on the United Nations, saying it played a "fundamental role" in the creation of a "tyrant" Israel.

Iran's hardline President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad too called for setting up a "global anti-Zionist front."

Musa Abu Marzuk, a top leader of the Islamist Hamas movement that controls Gaza and is backed by Tehran, told delegates that the movement "wanted national unity talks to succeed... but a unity which satisfies Palestinian people and not a pact which compromises their rights."

Civilians asked

FROM PAGE 1
yesterday.