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Hasina gives up role as BCL guardian

Orders sternest action against extortion, tender manipulation, criminal activities

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Awami League (AL) President Sheikh Hasina will no more be the organisational chief of her party's student wing Bangladesh Chhatra League (BCL), which recently got involved in internal clashes at several educational institutions.

The AL Presidium took this decision at an emergency meeting at Hasina's political office in Dhanmondi yesterday evening.

From the meeting, Hasina directed law enforcement agencies to take stern action against those involved in criminal activities, extortion and tender manipulation, no matter what organisation they belong to, AL spokesperson Syed



Ashrafur Islam told newsmen after the two-hour meeting. Ashraf, also LGRD and cooperatives minister, said, "She [Hasina] will no more

be the organisational chief of Chhatra League as the (party) presidium has decided so."

Hasina and other leaders of her party are annoyed and worried about the recent violence and criminal activities at different educational institutions, meeting sources said.

The AL spokesperson announced that a countrywide crackdown on violence by students or in the name of students started yesterday.

"She [Hasina] proposed that she would no longer remain organisational chief of BCL, and the presidium meeting accepted it. Even, she doesn't want to see her portrait hung in BCL's offices," Ashrafur said.

The government has directed law

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15 injured as BCL factions clash at JNU

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Two groups of Bangladesh Chhatra League (BCL) activists yesterday locked in a clash at Jagannath University (JNU) over establishing supremacy on the campus, leaving at least 15 injured.

The latest fighting came a day after violent clashes between two BCL factions on Jahangirnagar University campus and in the wake of clashes among rival groups in a number of educational institutions.

Sources said the clash erupted between the supporters of BCL JNU unit president Kamrul Hasan Ripon and general secretary Kazi Abu Sayeed at about 12:00 noon and continued for over an hour.

Both the groups used bamboo and hockey sticks and attacked others, injuring at least 15 BCL men.

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Economists project higher growth rate, reject WB forecast

SAJJADUR RAHMAN

Renowned economists predict gross domestic product (GDP) growth in Bangladesh will be around 5.5 percent this fiscal year, higher than the World Bank (WB) forecast.

The WB on Wednesday projected GDP growth at 4.5 percent, which economists, the finance minister and the central bank governor rejected outright.

The economic indicators are still strong enough for achieving GDP growth of 5.5 percent or more in the current fiscal year, they told The Daily Star when contacted separately.

"I guess this (fiscal) year's GDP growth will be around 5.5 percent," said Prof Wahiduddin Mahmud.

Growth could not dip in such a way in the remaining less than three months of this fiscal year that it would be only 4.5 percent, said the noted economist.

Bangladesh achieved more than six percent GDP growth on an average in the past five fiscal years since 2003-04 despite political uncertainties and natural disasters. The highest growth was 6.63 percent in 2005-06, and next to that 6.2 percent in 2007-08.

The world, especially the western nations, is facing a serious economic meltdown this year. Economic growth has slowed down significantly in many countries, including Asian giants Japan, China and India.

The WB, Asian Development Bank (ADB) and International Monetary Fund have predicted a lower growth for almost every economy in the wake of the global recession.

The ADB however projected Bangladesh's GDP growth this fiscal year at 5.6 percent, which is close to the prediction made by the country's top economists.

Asked about the WB forecast, Finance

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Unscrupulous people occupy a section of the Buriganga near Kamrangirchar Bridge and fill it up with earth.

PHOTO: STAR

BDR CARNAGE

Investigators dig into the past of mutineers

JULFIKAR ALI MANIK and SHARIFUL ISLAM

Investigators of the BDR carnage are now digging into the past of the mutineers as several questions including the motive behind the BDR carnage still remain unanswered.

Although several perpetrators of the BDR Headquarters carnage have already been identified, the investigators made the move to unearth important clues to infiltration of terror elements in the force.

The Criminal Investigation Department (CID) and the military investigators who are trying to get the detailed life-sketches of the perpetrators believe any piece of information could lead to a significant breakthrough.

The CID and military investigators are working to collect the mutineers' past records from their families and every other possible source.

Speaking anonymously, an investigator said the signs of brutality and some other actions in Pilkhana give the impression that members of a disciplined force can't show such cruelty in the name of a mutiny.

"Either outsiders directly got involved in the carnage or some people were recruited in the border force in recent years with motivation to commit such a heinous crime. We're still trying to find out the answers to these suspicions by searching backgrounds and in many other ways," he said.

The investigator added they would screen the background of the mutineers to find out their past political affiliation, criminal records, if any, educational background (school or madrasa) and links to any suspicious groups or organisations.

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PRESIDENT'S SPEECH

JS set to pass thanks-giving motion today amid protests

SHAKHAWAT LITON

Amid protest from both the treasury and opposition benches, the House passes today a resolution to thank former president Iajuddin Ahmed for his inaugural speech in the ninth parliament.

During discussion on the president's address, most ruling and opposition lawmakers criticised Iajuddin for "violating the constitution and conspiring against democracy" in the last two years and opposed the proposal to thank him.

Lawmakers of the main opposition BNP, which had elected Iajuddin president in the last parliament, submitted around 200 notices to the Parliament Secretariat opposing the motion, officials concerned said.

Lawmakers of the ruling alliance led by the Awami League (AL) who earlier opposed the proposal will, however, have to support the

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ACC to suffer as Mashhud resigned

BBC dialogue told

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Anti-corruption Commission (ACC) chairman Hasan Mashhud Chowdhury's resignation might have negative impact on the drive against corruption as honest and competent leaders like him are hard to come by, said speakers at the BBC Bangladesh Sanglap yesterday.

They said recasting the ACC by appointing a neutral

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Power trips a day after record generation

STAR REPORT

Power generation saw a new record, 4,148MW, on Friday against the demand for 4,550MW, thanks to an increased gas supply to power plants at appropriate pressure.

The generation however fell to 3,845MW yesterday against a demand for 4,600MW as erratic gas pressure tripped the Tongi 80MW power plant and reduced generation elsewhere. Tongi plant resumed generation yesterday evening.

During the last caretaker government's tenure, Power Development Board (PDB) had achieved another power generation record, 4,130MW in October, 2007, with improved gas supply at good pressure.

Due to inadequate supply of gas and low gas pressure, many

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Nor'westers kill 1, destroy 350 houses

STAR REPORT

Nor'westers across the country yesterday left one person dead, at least 67 people injured, 350 dwellings destroyed and standing crops on vast tracts of land damaged.

One person was killed and seven others were wounded when a nor'wester lashed Sunderganj upazila in Gaibandha early yesterday, our Gaibandha correspondent reports.

Moshreka Begum, 22, a

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Rice import drops to one-third in 9 months

REJAUL KARIM BYRON

Rice import in the first nine months of the current fiscal year has dropped to one third due to increase in production of rice and a price fall.

According to Bangladesh Bank statistics, a total of 6.26 lakh tonnes of rice was imported from July to March 26 in the current fiscal year while it was 19.52 lakh tonnes during the same time last year. The fall in import was about 216 percent.

Letters of credit (LCs) have been opened for importing 1.97 lakh tonnes of rice this fiscal year in place of 19.80 lakh tonnes last year.

Sources at the food ministry said, if import of 5 lakh tonnes of rice from India through

government-to-government agreement is not counted, the import figure comes down further.

In the last fiscal year, following significant increase of rice prices in the country, an agreement was signed with India for importing 5 lakh tonnes of rice, which reached this year.

According to primary data, the country has crossed the production targets for Aus and Aman and is expected to cross production target for Boro, which will help to further reduce the dependency on rice import, agriculture ministry sources said.

According to agriculture ministry's primary statistics, the production of Aus stands at 23

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30 hurt as 2 trains collide head-on

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Dinajpur

At least 30 people, including seven children, were injured in a collision between two trains at Parbatipur Railway Junction in Parbatipur upazila yesterday evening.

M. Musfir Rahman, general manager of railway western zone, said the rail communications with several districts remained snapped following the accident adding that the rescue operation started to restore the communications.

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BNP activist killed over land dispute

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Rajshahi

A BNP supporter was killed and 20 others were injured while some houses and shops were ransacked in an attack allegedly by a group of Awami League activists over land dispute at Dahia village in Shingra upazila of Natore yesterday.

The deceased was identified as Abdus Samad, 38.

Ali Ahmed Hasmi, OC of Shingra police station, said there had been a longstanding dispute between two groups of people—one led by AL leader Khair and another by BNP leader and UP member

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Playground occupied for 4yrs with DCC blessing

Contractors of abandoned flyover project make parking space, build warehouse

PINAKI ROY

Although the caretaker government scrapped the controversial Gulistan-Jatrabari flyover project last year, the construction companies are still occupying Golapbagh children's playground as their parking space-cum-warehouse.

Dhaka City Corporation (DCC) arbitrarily rented out the playground to the Middle-Eastern construction company Belhasa and its local partner Orion Group in 2005.

Mayor Sadeque Hossain Khoka believes he did the right thing by renting out the playground. It was an urgent project and we had to provide space for keeping construction materi-

als."

The mayor went on to defend their failure to recover the land: "Following cancellation of the flyover project, Belhasa Accom JV group went for a legal battle. So we couldn't recover it from them and it is still under their control."

Khoka did not explicitly say if they had initiated a legal move to recover the land but said, "We have certain process to fight the legal battle and we are doing it."

Locals who are unwelcome at this public vicinity have long been demanding that the playground, where Belhasa-Orion even constructed an office building, be opened for children and players of the neighbourhoods.

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Contractors of the abandoned Gulistan-Jatrabari Flyover Project erect an office and leave their equipment on the Golapbagh playground. The DCC had rented out the playground to the contractors depriving the children of the area.

PHOTO: STAR

War crime trial process starts this month

Says law minister

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Law Minister Shafique Ahmed yesterday said the government will begin this month the trial process of war criminals who committed genocide in 1971 during Bangladesh's liberation war.

"The government will take assistance of the international community in trying war criminals who collaborated with the Pakistan army in arson, looting and killing of intellectuals," he said.

The minister said he would have a meeting with a delegation of the United Nations

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