

BNP bodies

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committee member, said competition among the young leaders for positions in the committees led to such disputes.

"The conflicts will end once effective leadership emerges through holding of councils," he told journalists yesterday at his Segunbagicha office.

Both Moshtarrif and Mabbub said the disputes are not serious and hoped that those would be settled once new committees are formed through holding of councils.

The newly formed convening committees will have to hold councils of all units including those for districts by November 15.

Two BNP factions got involved in clashes in Pabna centring the new committee. Some party men burnt the effigy of Shamsur Rahman Shimul Biswas, personal aide to the BNP chairperson.

Following the clash, BNP expelled local municipality mayor and party leader Kamrul Hasan.

A group of leaders of Panchagarh BNP declared district convener Mozaher Hossain unwanted in the district and threatened to quit

the party protesting his appointment.

Harunur Rashid Harun stepped down as joint convener of Chapainawabganj district protesting the appointment of former lawmaker Shahjahan Mia as district convener.

Najmul Haque Soni, joint convener of Naogaon, at a press conference announced his resignation from the committee.

Barisal district BNP leaders including former secretary general Nazrul Islam Rajan at a press conference protested the appointment of Sarfuddin Santu, a former PDP leader, as joint convener of the new committee.

BNP leaders and activists in Barguna declared district convener Motiur Rahman Talukder unwanted.

Shah Md Selim, joint convener of Comilla, resigned, saying the party high command failed to do justice to devoted leaders.

A group of party activists brought out processions in Jhalakathi demanding expulsion of Juba Khan and Hossain Ali from the new committee.

Palestinians hold reconciliation talks in Gaza, West Bank

AFP, Gaza City

The two main Palestinian factions Fatah and Hamas convened meetings in the West Bank and the Gaza Strip on Sunday in a new bid to reconcile their differences, officials from both groups said.

"The reconciliation committee including Fatah and Hamas will convene today for the first time in Ramallah and Gaza to look for ways to ease tensions and pave the way for the next round of dialogue," Ibrahim Abu al-Naja, a senior Fatah leader in Gaza, told AFP.

"The committee is aiming to remove all obstacles before arriving at the announcement of a final agreement on the seventh of next month," he said.

The meetings come on the eve of the two-year anniversary of the Islamist Hamas movement's violent takeover of the Gaza Strip, which split the Palestinians into hostile rival entities.

The two main movements have made several failed attempts at reconciliation, including holding a series of inconclusive talks in Cairo since the start of the year. They are set to meet in Egypt again on July 7.

Tensions between the two groups flared in recent weeks when clashes between Palestinian security forces and Hamas militants in the West Bank town of Qalqilya killed nine people including a top Hamas commander.

"The committee will study how to resolve the issue of political detainees in the West Bank and halting the targeting of the resistance, the closing of institutions and media campaigns," senior Hamas official Ismail Radwan said.

Since the Hamas takeover each group has accused its rival of launching waves of politically-motivated arrests, mistreating detainees and closing political institutions.

Palestinian human rights groups have slammed the conduct of both parties.

Water minister

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the project area. The government will take necessary actions on receiving the report of the delegation, the water resources minister said in a scripted answer.

He said discussion on construction of Tipaimukh dam on Borak river has been taking place since 1972.

Workers Party lawmaker Rashed Khan Menon, Jatiya Party lawmaker Hafiz Uddin Ahmed, BNP lawmaker Shahid Uddin Chowdhury Anne and Awami League lawmaker Apu Ukil raised questions on Tipaimukh dam project seeking answers from the water resources minister.

In response to a query of AL lawmaker Nazma Akhtar, the water resources minister said the government will implement a project titled 'Augmentation of Buriganga flow by restoring silted links with Jamuna' with a cost of Tk 610.70 crore to increase navigability of the river and to reduce pollution in it.

In response to another query of AL lawmaker Apu Ukil, he said the government has taken up a project titled 'Rehabilitation of embankments and excavation of rivers/khals' with a cost of Tk 547.95 crore to re-excavate rivers and canals across the country. "The government is considering to begin the project soon and the project is under approval," the water resources minister said.

Besides, the minister said the government wants to implement another project titled 'Development of the capital; dredging and action plan for the river system of Bangladesh' to carry out dredging in the inland major rivers.

He said terms of reference for the project have been finalised. On approval, a feasibility study on the project will begin.

Four out on bail

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All the leaders who had long been absconding surrendered to the special judge's court on different dates in May following the HC order when they sought bail from HC.

Haji Selim was sent to jail on May 20 and former state minister Shahjahan Omar on May 6 this year after they surrendered to the court in separate corruption cases.

The lower court sent Maya and Mohiuddin to jail on May 19 on their surrender to it in separate corruption cases.

Babu was sent to jail on May 20 after he surrendered to the court in a graft case.

Two of the criminals received bullets in their legs while another in the head, said Sub-inspector (SI) Animesh Chandra Sarkar of Mohammadpur Police Station, adding that constable Shahidullah of the police post also sustained minor injury during the shootout. ASI Moinul filed a case with the police station in this regard.

Interestingly, the authorities gave the media varying numbers of BDR fugitives -- 2,000, 1,800, 1,000 and 250-- since the mutiny.

NEWS

Laws lack teeth

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in fighting against the powerful, she said, adding that the DoE too sometimes cannot implement the law because of influence of offenders and technical limitations.

Jamshed Ahmed, DoE director for Dhaka division, said that technical and manpower capacity of the DoE is too inadequate to cope with the volume of work assigned to it.

"The Dhaka division has so far filed only 167 cases with the environment court," he said.

Environment conservation rules of 1997 provide for pre-requisite of EIAs only for 'Red' category industries (highest polluters) but do not have any detailed guidelines on how to carry it out, said legal experts. It does not mention 'Orange Kha' category industries that are also potentially hazardous to environment.

One penal provision in the law is a fine of Tk10 lakh, which in many cases is too insignificant to become a deterrent to wealthy industrialists, they said.

Dr Amin Nishat, country representative of International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN), said that there should be provision to make the Environmental Management Plan (EMP) of an industry and public hearing on EIAs report.

Dr Mihir Kanti Majumdar, secretary-in-charge to the environment ministry, said at a press conference on May 30 that the law has various shortcomings. The law has a penal provision for 10 years of imprisonment, which a mobile court cannot hand

6 die

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Abu Amin Md Wayezul Haque Bachchu, 55, Rajshahi Haripur union parishad member Amzad Hossain, 45, Hanif Paribahan bus supervisor Hamidul Haque, 30, truck helper Jewel Rana, 20, Panna Khutun, 33, of Kalia village in Chapainawabganj and Masud Rana, 35, of Boalia in Rajshahi city.

The injured, admitted to RMCH, were identified as Entaj, 32, Farhad, 22, Asadul, 55, Shahana, 55, Sabdul, 45, advocate Rabbi, 40, Mominul, 27, Rafiqul, 35, Rana, 18, Nazrul, 30, Rubel, 35, Shilpi, 25, Shahnaz, 28, Habibur, 25, Nurul Islam, 25, Masud, 30 and an unidentified youth of about 30.

A case was filed with Puthia Police Station.

Amnesty

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Justifying the significantly large allocation for the agriculture sector, Masihur said such allocation would help keep prices of agro-products low, which is needed in the national economy at this moment.

He said the government would try to get Bangladesh's share of the global recession package worth \$1.1 trillion announced at the G-20 summit in London.

Lauding the government's new concept of public-private partnership (PPP) in the budget for improving the weak infrastructure and power sector, he said the government may go for gas exploration soon.

Masihur said the government has proposed 5 percent duty on import of newsprint to protect the local newsprint industry. "But, the government may reconsider it," he added.

He said the government would bring changes in Bangladesh Better Business Forum for making it dynamic.

FICCI President Waliur Rahman Bhuiyan, who moderated the meeting, opposed the provision of allowing whitening undisclosed money. Referring to the support extended by Federation of Bangladesh Chambers of Commerce and Industry (FBCCI) to the provision, he said the apex trade body does not represent all business communities of the country.

He said the FICCI supports privatisation of the loss-incurring state-owned enterprises.

Describing the proposed budget as a positive one for business growth, he urged the government to strengthen monitoring in implementation of the budget.

He also suggested that the law commission's opinion on the International Crimes (Tribunal) Act to start the trial process, he said.

"We shall not wait for the law commission's opinion on the International Crimes (Tribunal) Act to start the trial process," he said.

He suggested that the government declare Sunday and Monday as weekly holidays.

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