

Drop Tipai

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Don't get afraid. You [government] are not alone. We [opposition] will be with you if the national interest is upheld. People will also be with you."

Also leader of the opposition in parliament, she was addressing a programme titled 'A presentation on the harmful effects in Bangladesh due to the Tipaimukh project', organised by BNP and held at a city hotel.

Former power secretary ANH Akhter Hossain made the presentation while former ministers Khandaker Mosharrar Hossain and Hafizuddin Ahmed, Prof Moniruzzaman Mian, Dr Mahbubullah and Sharif Rafiqul Islam took part in the discussion.

Some prominent persons including Prof Emajuddin Ahmed, Prof Yusuf Haidar, Prof Abu Ahmed, Rafique-ul Huq, Zafarullah Chowdhury, Hasna Moudoud and business leader Abdul Awal Mintoo attended the programme, conducted by BNP Joint Secretary General Nazrul Islam Khan. Leaders of BNP and its allies, and environmentalists were also present.

Ruling Awami League leaders, cabinet members, the chairman of parliamentary standing committee on water resources ministry and all MPs from greater Sylhet were also invited to the programme but they did not attend it.

Khaleda said, "We invited all concerned regardless of their political identity as the proposed dam has created apprehension that it would pose a dangerous problem for our country."

Stressing a national consensus to address important national issues, she said it would be tough to face Tipaimukh dam problem

without a national consensus.

The former prime minister said they have heard that the government did not get enough data on Tipaimukh dam.

But BNP has collected data with the help of renowned experts, she said, hoping that this would help the government take a bold decision regarding the Indian project.

"I don't want to criticise them [government]. I am urging them to come forward to work together to resolve the national crisis," Khaleda said. Not only on Tipaimukh issue, they want to help the government uphold all national interests, she added.

ASHRAF'S BRIEFING
Speaking to newsmen after a meeting of the party's council preparation committee at AL president's political office in Dhanamondi, Ashraf urged BNP not to make the Tipaimukh dam a political issue.

He termed the Tipaimukh dam a national problem and said the nation wants to resolve it unitarily.

"If we get divided as a nation, India will take chance and see their interests. United, we will be able to bargain strongly in favour of our interests," he said.

The LGRD minister said the party that led the independence struggle would never allow anything harmful to national interests.

Criticising BNP, he said they did not speak against Tipaimukh dam in parliament or at party forum when they were in power.

"I was then a lawmaker and did not hear a word from any BNP minister, MP or the prime minister against Tipaimukh," he said, alleging that now BNP is out to exploit the issue for mere political gains.

Laskar leader

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Deputy Commissioner Monirul Islam of DB (South) told The Daily Star, "The call lists of the mobile phones used by Obaidullah show that he made calls to Pakistan regularly and often to India."

"He talked to Ameer Reza every day over the phone. But we are yet to find out the subjects of their conversation", Monirul said.

DB sources said there is a strong possibility that Laskar-e-Taiyeba, ARCF, Harkatul Jihad al Islami Bangladesh (Huji), and international mafia don Daud Ibrahim's network are interconnected.

Obaidullah's immediate boss and Laskar-e-Taiyeba leader Mansur Ali alias Habibullah, another senior leader and Pakistani national Khurram Khoiyam, and two other leaders of the militant outfit are still holed up in Bangladesh, said sources.

They entered Bangladesh illegally at least three years before Obaidullah intruded into the country, added sources.

DB officials said they have been trying to track down the four most wanted Laskar-e-Taiyeba leaders in India. However, they suspect that Mansur Ali and Habibullah are two different persons.

All of them receive financial supports from India, DB sources said.

Monirul said, "He got Tk 7,000 as monthly salary from the madrasa. It is quite impossible to meet the expenditure of a seven-member family and six mobile phones."

Quoting Obaidullah, DB officials said his organisation has a firm footing at Shibchar in Madaripur, Srinagar in Munshiganj and Nababganj in the capital with a good number of 'Jihadis' (militants) at the madrasas there.

Laskar-e-Taiyeba has been active in Bangladesh for the last 14 years, said intelligence sources quoting Obaidullah.

He was organising Bangladeshis 'mujahids' to wage 'jihad' following the directives from Ameer Reza, said the sources.

Obaidullah took part in Afghan conflicts four times. Besides, he carried out militant activities in India with the help of Islamist militants from Pakistan and Afghanistan.

He also collaborated with Islamist militants from Kashmir, Banaras, Punjab, and Hyderabad in India.

He entered Bangladesh illegally in June, 1995 to evade arrest after the Indian government declared him most wanted in 1994.

DB identified Obaidullah on the basis of confessions of detained Indian national Daud Merchant, a close aide to Daud Ibrahim and one of the main accused in music baron Gulshan Kumar murder case.

Daud Merchant and his associate Zahid Sheikh, also an Indian national, were arrested in Bangladesh about one and a half months ago.

Obaidullah had been teaching at Jamiatul Sunnah

Madrasa of Shibchar upazila in Madaripur since 2003.

Earlier, he taught at different madrasas in Jessore, Moulvibazar and also at Nawabganj in Dhaka using fake name Abu Zafar.

Our Madaripur correspondent adds: The authorities of Jamiatul Sunnah Madrasa yesterday terminated Obaidullah from his post and expelled his son Matinul who was studying at the institution.

Hussain Ahmed, principal of the madrasa, said the decision was taken after authorities became sure about the identity of Obaidullah and his son.

Obaidullah's wife Nasima Begum said her husband made frequent trips abroad in the name of attending religious function.

Officer-in-Charge (OC) of Shibchar Police Station Abdul Jalil said intelligence vigilance has been strengthened to monitor the activities of all madrasas in the area.

UN probe

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head of the three-member UN commission, told a press conference in Islamabad.

"The mandate does not include a criminal investigation," confirmed Munoz, flanked by Indonesia's Marzuki Darusman and Ireland's Peter Fitzgerald at their first public appearance in Pakistan since opening a six-month inquiry.

Benazir, the first woman to become prime minister of a Muslim country, was killed on December 27, 2007 in a gun and suicide attack after addressing an election rally in Rawalpindi, a garrison city near the capital Islamabad.

The government called for a UN inquiry after Benazir's party won a general election in February 2008 with her supporters angered by conflicting accounts of how she died and who was responsible.

They cast doubt on a Pakistani probe into her death, criticised authorities for hosing down the scene of the attack within minutes -- allegedly destroying evidence -- and questioning whether she was killed by a gunshot or the blast.

"The responsibility for investigating the crime and prosecuting the perpetrators remains with Pakistani authorities," said Munoz, who is Chile's ambassador to the United Nations.

The commission on Friday visited the site of the gun and suicide attack.

Munoz said new leads obtained by the Pakistani authorities would help in their inquiries and appealed for help from the general public.

"We have been informed that Pakistani government has new leads into the investigation... the fresh information will contribute to our task."

The UN official said an email address and telephone number would be provided should anyone wish to come forward and provide information.

"We cannot be fully successful without the help of the people of Pakistan... We are approaching the work in a transparent and open-minded manner to clearly establish the truth surrounding this tragedy," said Munoz.

2 dead

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Dadan and Sagar's condition remains very critical, while the three others were also badly burnt.

Witnesses said the fire broke out in the tin shed house at Gas Road, in Palashnagar of Kadamtali when all family members were sleeping.

Shurovi's brother Sohag said he woke up in the early hours of the morning to find that the house was on fire. He woke up everyone but the door was locked from outside and they could not get out. Hearing their cries, neighbours came to their rescue.

They rushed the entire family to DMCH, but not in time to save Liza and Rubel.

Family members said Shurovi was married to a vegetable vendor Sagar, 25, of Japani Bazar, also in Kadamtali, only two months ago. After the wedding, the family discovered that Sagar was not a vegetable vendor as he claimed but a mugger.

Since then Sagar had been regularly beating up Shurovi because her family alleged that he was a mugger. Shurovi's father Dadan brought her back to his home two days ago after telling Sagar that his daughter was going to file a divorce.

At the time Sagar threatened her family and said that he would burn them alive.

Shurovi told The Daily Star from her hospital bed that Sagar beat her because she had come to learn that he was a mugger by profession.

"Finally my family brought me back two days ago," she said. "Sagar then threatened my father that he would burn us alive."

Local residents, outraged at the news of the two deaths, attacked Sagar's house at Japani Bazar but they found the house abandoned as Sagar had fled with his family.

Officer-in-Charge of Kadamtali police station Nur Hossain said police visited the place soon after the incident. However they did not find clues that any petrol or kerosene was used to set the house on fire.

An electric short circuit might have caused the fire, he said.

Bapa rallies

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exchanged views with local people.

The leaders led by Bapa General Secretary Abdul Matin also demanded the government removes sludge from the lake to bring it back to its original shape.

They said the lake is the only water body, which is maintaining the bio-diversity of the area.

Inhabitants of the area alleged that in spite of frequent requests, authorities concerned did not pay heed to improving drainage and sewerage system of the Nikunja Lake.

They also alleged that a vested group is filling up the lake and is constructing building ignoring laws.

Bapa leaders said Nikunja area would turn into an uninhabitable place if encroachment goes on.

Bapa leaders demanded setting up of drainage system in the lake area immediately.

Akbar Ali

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minister to continue evaluating the activities of the ministers every six months," he said and added that quality and efficiency of the ministers are needed in this regard.

He was talking to newsmen after speaking as the chief guest at a workshop on 'Capacity and skills development on competition law and policy in Bangladesh', organised by two organisations - Unnayan Shamannay and CUTS International, at a city hotel yesterday afternoon.

Akbar Ali Khan, also the chairman of the Regulatory Reforms Commission, said any reform will not be effective for those institutions where 90 percent officials are corrupt. So, such institutions should be totally reshuffled for ensuring transparency, he added.

Earlier while speaking at the function, he stressed the need for enactment of a competition law and establishment of a competition commission for protecting the interest of consumers, preventing unfair competition and ensuring a healthy business environment in the economy.

Mustafa Mohiuddin, additional secretary of the ministry of commerce, said the government is going to enact a competition law to control or regulate anti-competitive activities and maintain a sustainable competitive environment in the economy.

A proposal has also been placed to establish a competition commission for enforcing the law and also for competition advocacy to maintain a sustainable competitive environment, he said.

Mohiuddin said the ministry of commerce has almost formulated a draft of the proposed act but the main challenge is the enforcement of the law.

Professional expertise as well as awareness of the industries would be prime determinant factors for successful enforcement of the law, he added.

Prof AKM Enamul of United International University, and Uday S Mehta of CUTS International, among others, spoke at the workshop.

BNP presents

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journalists were present.

ANH Akhter Hossain, former secretary to the power and energy ministry during the last BNP rule, presented a keynote paper on the Indian river linking projects and Tipaimukh dam and its possible impacts.

He however did not attribute the proper sources of information he shared at the meet.

Later he admitted that the presentation was prepared by some experts based at home and abroad taking information from the internet. He was unable to say much about the issue when a reporter asked him questions.

During the presentation he said the dam will be 161 metres in height and 390 metres in length. Once built, it will submerge an area of 29,150 hectares from where they will produce 412 megawatt of electricity, he informed.

Citing published reports in The Telegraph, he said if the Tipaimukh dam broke Indian Silchar town would be under 7.7 metres of water, Hailakandi under six metres and Karimganj under 5.5 metres of water.

Lakhipur town will suffer the most as it would go under 10 metres of water, he added.

Initially there was confusion whether India is going to make a barrage at Fulertol point or not, he said, adding, "Just yesterday the construction company mentioned in

their website that they would make the barrage as well."

He said India is planning to extract 86 percent of waters from all rivers flowing through their country though they don't need it.

"India is planning to make more than 300 dams in almost all the Himalayan rivers, many of them are under construction," he added.

He criticised the Joint River Commission's activities in Bangladesh saying its office is not a transparent one. The JRC has no accountability and it never publishes some certain data and documents like lean period's water sharing of the Ganges river, he said.

On the water politics of the neighbouring country, he said India applies double standards in Bangladesh and changes their position in line with the change of power in Bangladesh.

He suggests launching a campaign to increase public awareness on the management of trans-border rivers and mobilising public opinions both at home and abroad.

A panel of BNP leaders and pro-BNP intellectuals including Dr Khandaker Mosharrar Hossain, Maj (ret'd) Hafizuddin Bir Bikram, Prof Moniruzzaman Mia, former vice-chancellor of Dhaka University, and Sharif Rafiqul Islam, former official of Water Development Board, also talked on the issue.

Summit sideline

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conventions and laws regarding trans-boundary rivers are now expected to get priority in the project since Manmohan assured Hasina that India would not do anything which could harm Bangladesh.

"This assurance will also help her new government overcome the embarrassing situation regarding the Tipaimukh issue," Prof Imtiaz said.

Prof Anwar Hossain of Dhaka University saw Hasina's being elected vice chair of the 118-member global forum, representing 56 percent world population, as a very good exposure for Bangladesh.

"Her [Sheikh Hasina] election as NAM vice chairman is a new addition to the summit and I see it very positively," he said and added that her talks with Manmohan could bring a fruitful result over the Tipaimukh issue if successful diplomatic manoeuvring could be made as follow up measures.

"The significance of Manmohan Singh's gesture is immense."

The two-day NAM summit concluded in Egyptian Red Sea resort of Sharm El Sheikh Thursday with adoption of Sharm El Declaration, stressing closer solidarity among the member states to address

the global challenges and promote world peace and development.

This was the first such high-profile international conference Sheikh Hasina joined since she assumed office.

Addressing the general discussion of the summit, Sheikh Hasina highlighted issues like daunting challenges of climate change that exposed countries like Bangladesh to a critical state alongside the world economic meltdown, international terrorism and food security.

On the sidelines of the summit, the Bangladesh premier also met her Pakistan counterpart Yusuf Raza Gilani as she passed a very busy time in Egypt holding a series of bilateral meetings with NAM leaders.

She met Philippines President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo, Malaysian premier Najib Abdul Razak, Nepalese premier Madhav Kumar Nepal, Jordanian premier Nader Al-Dahabi, Chairman of State Council of Oman Yahya bin Mahfoudh al-Mantheri, Crown Prince of Bahrain Sheikh Salman bin Hamad bin Isa Al Khalifa, Thai Foreign Minister Kasit Piromya and Qatar's Foreign Minister Khalid Mohammad Al Afia during her four-day visit.

Barguna, Kurigram

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said it would be expanded to other districts in phases.

The minister said the youths would be provided with a three-month training through 125 youth training centers. The youths would be employed in different jobs after completion of the training for the next two years.

Sources said two most poverty-stricken districts have been chosen for the pilot project.

Nine upazilas of Kurigram district--Bhurungamari, Char Rajibpur, Chilmari, Phulbari, Kurigram Sadar, Nageswari, Rajarhat, Ulipur and Roumari--and five upazilas of Barguna--Amtoli, Bamna, Barguna Sadar, Betagi and Pathorghata--have been included in the pilot project.

In Barguna 653 youths and in Kurigram 1,335 youths would be selected for employment under the programme.

According to the latest labour force survey, the number of unemployed workable males and females between 15 and 29 years is 1.73 crore.

However, the government concept paper said the number of HSC and equivalent examination passed youths is around 1,39,230 in 2009. The government thinks that 70 percent of the youths may be interested to take jobs under the National Service scheme making the total number of interested youths 98,000.

Finance ministry sources said Tk 1,905 crore will be needed for providing employment to 98,000 youths for two years.

The source said the government, considering its financial capability and to monitor effectiveness of the project, has allocated Tk 20 crore in this fiscal year's budget for the purpose.

According to the draft proposal, 16 types of work are being considered for the youths after completion of the training. The work includes computer training in secondary classes, assisting in giving lessons in primary and secondary educational institutions, collecting statistics/information related to education, assisting the beneficiaries of healthcare, developing communication between the service provider and recipients, helping implementation of the government decision regarding fertiliser, seed and diesel, working as community police to provide security to local people, cautioning people against natural disasters and providing assistance to the local administration in post-disaster rescue and rehabilitation.

Sources said the recruited youths would be given training through nine modules to enable them to discharge their duties. Their appointment in the National Service would be cancelled if they get any other job at home or abroad.

Finance ministry sources said it is a challenge to determine whether the youths to be recruited are unemployed and educated up to the required level. However, the sources said the ministry would recruit them through extensive scrutiny.

Granny stabbed to death

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A man stabbed his ex-wife's grandmother to death and also injured her uncle in city's Khilgaon area on Friday night.

Police arrested Mohammad Jewel from Jhilpar area in Khilgaon the same night and also recovered the knife he used in the attack.

The deceased was identified as Halima Khatun, 65, and the injured Abdul Jalil.

Police said around Jewel arrived at Abdul Jalil's house in Nandipara area at around 11:30pm. On entering the house he attacked both Abdul Jalil and his mother Halima. At one point Halima died dead and jewelled the house.

Neighbours rushed Jalil to Dhaka Medial College Hospital where he is undergoing treatment.

Police said Jewel had a longstanding feud with his divorced wife's family.

Extremism

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held in Chapainawabganj, the four gave important information and said they have yet to fix single leadership as their new offshoot was formed in April.

They claim Selim alias Saifullah is the main organiser but they four altogether equally shared the leadership so far.

Abdur Rahim alias Shahadat was primarily considered for organisational activities, while Selim was looking after operational affairs.

However, a special intelligence team to combat militancy informed that Islam O Muslim has 10 commanders.

The militant leaders held three meetings to decide about the launch of the new offshoot. First they held a meeting in Raghunathpur in Nachole and then in Ranihati and Kansat in Shibganj, Chapainawabganj.

As the four sat in a meeting in Kansat for the last time in April, they decided to call the new organisation Islam O Muslim.

Selim brought in arms from India and they decided to use small weaponry for self-defence as the mainstream had threatened to kill them for "betrayal".

The militants claim they were on the JMB hit list as some of them betrayed the mainstream by misappropriating money. Selim took away around Tk 1.5 lakh from the JMB fund, they add.

The militant leaders had another aim of reorganising the inactive JMB leaders in the region and collecting small weaponry for their cadres. They collected some 16 small firearms and the police have recovered 14 of them.

Senior police officials term the arrest of the four a great relief as the law-enforcement agencies including the Rapid Action Battalion held them at very primary level.

The police last month arrested four militants in Chapainawabganj followed by the arrest of another three militants including Shahadat.

Later, Rab and BDR jointly arrested Selim in early this month.

PM briefs

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Nam summit, President's Press Secretary Abdul Awal Howlader told reporters.

The prime minister informed the president that Bangladesh was elected Nam vice-chair for Asian region for the next three years, considered as an achievement of the country.

She also briefed the president about her bilateral meetings with other heads of the states and government on the sideline of the summit, Howlader said.

Sheikh Hasina invited the president for attending today's dinner, being hosted in honour of former Indian president Dr APJ Abdul Kalam, who is due to arrive here today on a three-day visit, he said.

Principal Secretary to the Prime Minister Md Abdul Karim, Press Secretary to the Prime Minister Abul Kalam Azad, Secretary of the President's Office Mohammad Shaful Alam and Military Secretary to the President Major General Md Ehtesham Ul Haque were present.

Jakarta hotel blast

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Suicide bombers posing as guests attacked the JW Marriott and Ritz-Carlton hotels in Jakarta on Friday, setting off a pair of blasts that killed eight people and wounded more than 50, authorities said.

A police investigator also told The Associated Press on Saturday that Noordin was the most likely suspect.

"Considering the target, the location and content of the bombs, it was clearly the work of Noordin," the investigator said, declining to give his name because he wasn't authorised to speak to the media.

He said police had confiscated handwritten notes, a cell phone and a bomb encased in a laptop computer from room 1808 of the Marriott, where the bombers had apparently prepared for the blasts.

The investigator said a hotel receptionist told police that the man who checked into the room gave his name as "Nurdin". He gave a \$1,000 cash deposit because he had no credit card, he said.

Authorities have not officially named a suspect, but suspicion quickly fell on Jamaah Islamiyah or its allies. The al-Qaeda-linked network is blamed for past attacks in Indonesia, including a 2003 bombing at the Marriott in which 12 people died.

The heads of four of the bodies recovered from the blast

Hasina

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and treasurer at a national council every three years, in practice, they (councillors) leave the matter to the party president's discretion.

Meeting sources said Sheikh Hasina even said nomination forms for the election would not be given to those who have not cleared the monthly contribution to the party. Usually a presidium member has to pay Tk 3,000 a month and other central leaders Tk 2,000. But most of them have not done that.

Briefing newsmen after the preparatory body's meeting, AL spokesperson and Joint General Secretary Syed Ashraful Islam said transparent ballot boxes would be used this time for electing party leadership.

The party chief has already asked them to prepare ballot papers to this end, he said.

A three-member Election Commission headed by veteran AL leader MA Mannan would conduct the election, said Ashraf, who is also LGRD and cooperatives minister.

Asked whether he would be a candidate for the post of general secretary, Ashraf said normally none becomes a candidate for the post. Rather, the councillors authorise the party chief to decide on the matter.

In reply to a question, he said they do not have any fund for the council. But cabinet members, lawmakers and party leaders are making donation for this. Estimates of the amounts and the expenditures would be kept for approval by the AL Central Working Committee at its next meeting.

Party sources said the meeting fixed Tk 25,000 for presidium members and Tk 10,000 for other central leaders as donation for the council. It also decided that donation from AL lawmakers and others including well-wishers of the party would be appreciated. Moreover, around 55,000 councillors will have to pay Tk 200 each.

Hillary calls

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senseless and searing effects of violent extremism," she wrote in a condolence book.

"Now it is up to all nations and people who seek peace and progress to work together. Let us rid the world of hatred and extremism that produces such nihilistic violence. Our future deserves no less."

Counter-terrorism is one of a number of issues on Hillary Clinton's agenda, alongside tackling nuclear proliferation and climate change plus opening up trade and new markets.

Prime Minister Manmohan Singh met his Pakistani counterpart Yusuf Raza Gilani in Egypt this week, agreeing to cooperate to fight extremism.

But he was quickly accused back home of making too many concessions to Pakistan, which is charged with harbouring Islamist extremists who allegedly trained, equipped and financed the Mumbai gunmen.

Hillary denied that President Barack Obama's administration was pressuring India into seeking peace with Pakistan so the latter could focus entirely on beating an Islamist insurgency on its border with Afghanistan, a US priority.

"The US... is very supportive of the steps that the governments take but we are not in