

Opposition not skipping JS totally

Says Hasina

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina in parliament yesterday said lawmakers of the main opposition BNP want to join parliament sittings but cannot do so because the party's leadership has some problems regarding this.

"BNP lawmakers do not attend parliament sittings but they submit questions. It is one kind of participation," Hasina said while replying to a scripted query from BNP lawmaker Zafrul Islam Chowdhury.

In the half-an-hour long question-answer session, the premier gave scripted answers to six scripted questions, four from BNP lawmakers.

The BNP and Jamaat-e-

Islami have been boycotting the House since the budget session last June. But their lawmakers have been submitting questions to ministers and notices under different sections of the rules of procedure of parliament.

Their participation means the opposition did not completely boycott parliamentary proceedings.

Jatiya Party lawmakers Mujibul Haque Chundru and Anisul Islam Mandal, and independent lawmaker Fazlul Azim placed three questions on behalf of the absent opposition lawmakers. A few MPs raised supplementary questions.

Speaker Abdul Hamid, who was presiding over the sitting at that time, said he felt good

that opposition lawmakers were participating in the House proceedings in that way.

He said the opposition lawmakers, who submitted questions, talked to him over telephone and named specific lawmakers to allow them to raise the questions in the House on their behalf.

In response, Hasina said although participation of the BNP lawmakers is invisible, it is clear that they want to join the House. "But the problem might lie with the party's leadership," she said.

She said she would like to accept queries from opposition lawmakers since it is their privilege to ask questions.

The opposition lawmakers also participate in the activi-

ties of parliamentary standing committees. Two BNP MPs, who are chiefs of two parliamentary bodies, are also discharging their due responsibilities.

A number of BNP and Jamaat lawmakers yesterday also submitted notices, opposing passage of the public procurement amendment act bill and proposing further scrutiny of the bill. However, their proposals were not placed in parliament during passage of the bill since they were not present.

Hasina also spoke about her government's efforts to create employment, development of the tourism sector, and housing projects for people belonging to low- and mid-level income groups.

CLIMATE IMPACTS

13 species of animals now extinct

BSS, Dhaka

Climate change and man-made adverse environment have so far caused extinction of 13 species of animals and endangered 800 other species in Bangladesh.

Wildlife Trust of Bangladesh (WTB) sources

said the extinct animals include peacock, crocodile, wolf, wild buffalo, sambar (neelgai) and rhinoceros.

Talking to the news agency, WTB Chief Executive Officer Prof Anwarul Islam said half of the country's 1,600 species are endangered.

Stressing the need for protection of biodiversity, he said political as well as social commitment are a must in this connection, otherwise 150 more species will become extinct gradually.

The endangered species include 50 species of fish, 41

species of mammal, eight species of amphibian and 58 species of reptiles.

At present, the country has 708 species of fish, 22 species of amphibians, 126 species of reptiles, 528 species of birds, 113 species of mammals and 3,006 species of algae.



Two children fill jerrycans with drinking water in an unhygienic condition at Jagannath Saha Road in the city's Lalbagh area. Some people employ the children to collect and supply water to shops in the area. But those who are buying water from them are unaware that they are at risk of various diseases.

PHOTO: SHAWKAT JAMIL

19 get Meena Media Awards 2009

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

UNICEF yesterday awarded a total of 19 reporters, writers, presenters, filmmakers and producers with 'Meena Media Awards 2009' for their outstanding contribution to promoting child rights through their write-ups and productions.

The award giving ceremony was held at the British Council auditorium in the city in presence of UNICEF Country Representative Carel de Rooy.

In the Print Media - Journalistic/Reporting (over 18) category, Hossain Zakir of the daily Jugantor, Sukdeb Sana of the weekly Robbar and Md Zahangir Alam Sarker of the Shimontini won the award while Ajmine Ekteder Adib of the Shishu Odhikar Barta, Md Sajib Khandokar of the Shishu Buli and Md Sadekur Rahman Nayan of the Shishu Dhoni received the award in Print Media - Journalistic/Reporting (under 18) category.

The winners in the Print Media - Creative (under 18) category are Nabila Shawlin Orion of the Nabarun, Tanzia Akter Sumaiya of the Shishu and Abdul Motin Shipon of the Uthchash while Ashraf Alam Pintu of the Anondo Alo, Abul Kalam Azad of the Toi Tumbur and Shawkat Hossain of the Shatrang were the winners in Print Media-Creative (18 and above) category.

In the Television Broadcast - Journalistic/Reporting (under 18) category, Tanzia Islam Prianka and Monir Hossain Topu, both of ATN Bangla, became first and second while Munni Saha and Shahnaz Munni of the same TV channel clinched the first and second spot respectively in Television Broadcast/Journalistic (18 and over) category.

Mushfek Manzoor of RTV, Tanveer Hossain Probal of Desh TV, and Sohel Mazumder of RTV were the winners in Television Broadcast-Creative (over 18) category.

The winner in each category received Tk 50,000, runner-up Tk 25,000 and third place winner Tk 15,000 apart from crest and certificate.

The jury panel featured Selina Hossain, Ratan Paul, Shahnoor Wahid, Sumana Sharmin, Robayet Ferdous, Shamim Shahed and Kays Chowdhury.

UNICEF introduced the Meena Media Awards in 2005 to celebrate excellence in raising awareness of children's issues in both print and broadcast media.



PHOTO: STAR

Pratyasha, an anti-drug organisation, forms a human chain in front of Fine Art Faculty at Dhaka University yesterday demanding a ban on advertisements of tobacco products in theatres and cinema halls.

2 murdered in capital

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Two people were murdered in separate beating and mugging incidents in the capital yesterday.

The deceased were identified as Raju Ahmed, 18, a resident of Dakkhin Pirer Bagh of Mirpur and Alamgir Hossain, 30, a rickshaw-van puller, on the city's outskirts, Amin Bazar.

Police sources said Raju picked a quarrel with a local people in the Bhanga Bridge area of Dakkhin Pirer Bagh while he was fishing there Tuesday evening.

Following the altercation, a group of people beat him severely there.

Raju was soon rushed to the Dhaka Medical College and Hospital (DMCH) where he died around 7:00am yesterday.

Meanwhile, a group of muggers intercepted Alamgir at Amin Bazar around 8:30pm on Tuesday in a bid to snatch his rickshaw-van.

The criminals stabbed Alamgir indiscriminately and took away Tk 750 from him, said Khokon, a relative of Alamgir.

Alamgir was rushed to the DMCH where he succumbed to his injuries yesterday morning.

Officer-in-charge of Savar Police Station said Alamgir might have been killed following previous enmity.

URDU-SPEAKING PEOPLE

Rehabilitate them as rightful citizens

Speakers urge govt

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Representatives of Stranded Pakistanis General Repatriation Committee (SPGRC) living in different camps across the country yesterday urged the government to take an initiative to rehabilitate the Urdu-speaking camp dwellers as rightful citizens of the country.

They also demanded reunion of the divided 'stranded Pakistani' families, adding that many families were divided when the repatriation process to Pakistan took place after the independence in 1971.

They were speaking at the 14th National Council of SPGRC at the Institute of Diploma Engineers in the city where State Minister for Labour and Employment Munnunjan Sufian was present as the chief guest.

M Shawkat Ali, general secretary of SPGRC, said, "After the independence when repatriation took place, many families were divided. Those who were left behind should be allowed to be repatriated to Pakistan to reunite with the rest of their family. The two countries should together to resolve

the matter."

Those who want to stay in Bangladesh should be rehabilitated with dignity, he added.

The High Court on May 18 last year granted citizenship to Biharis, ending a long-lasting argument over their status.

There are around 250,000 to 300,000 Urdu-speaking Biharis in Bangladesh. Of them, around 160,000 are languishing in 166 camps across the country, says a survey of UNHCR.

According to government estimation there are 70 Bihari camps in the country.

The state minister said the Urdu-speaking people and the Bengalees should bridge the gap between themselves, a gap that was created over a long period.

Biharis should now think of the next generation and equip them with education, she added.

She also said, the Urdu-speaking people have all the rights ensured to other citizens of the country.

Humayan Zafar from the Daily Jang newspaper of Pakistan also spoke.

Protect northern region from desertification

Speakers tell Rajshahi programme

A RU CORRESPONDENT

Speakers at an awareness programme on climate change in Rajshahi yesterday urged the developed countries to stand by the most vulnerable ones.

They also called upon the conscious people to protect the northern region of Bangladesh from desertification.

Around hundred people under the banner of 'Communication for Social Change in Bangladesh (CSCB)' formed a human chain in the Padma char area to press home their demands.

The speakers urged all developing and developed countries to act out an agreement with legal support at COP15 in Copenhagen.

They also demanded compensation from the developed countries to face the impacts of climate change.

Prof Dulal Chandra Bishwas, chairman of CSCB, said developing countries need all the support they can get, but it is unfortunate to see a country like Saudi Arabia reluctant to cooperate to this end.

Five get life for killing night guard in N'ganj

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Narayanganj

A Narayanganj court yesterday sentenced five people to life imprisonment for killing a night guard at Baktaboli in Fatullah in 2006.

Additional District and Sessions Judge Md Jalaluddin handed down the verdict on Habib Gazi Habi, 25, Zakir, 22, Kala Chand, 28, Alauddin, 32, and Dulal, 26. They are workers of Mohammadia Brick Field Manufacturers Ltd.

The court also fined them Tk 50,000 each. If they fail to pay, they will have to serve three more years in jail.

Of the convicts, only Habib Gazi was present in the court during the delivery of the verdict. Four others are still at large.

According to the prosecution, the five convicts killed night guard Iqbal, 30, with sharp weapons as he resisted their gambling activities on the night of October 25 in 2006.

UK lawmakers visit Brac projects in Sirajganj

METRO DESK

A high-profile delegation consisting four members of the UK parliament visited several core programmes of Brac in Sirajganj recently.

The delegation came to Bangladesh to watch the development projects funded by DFID, says a press release.

The delegates visited Brac's pre-primary school and government primary school at Char Kalyani and spoke with the students and their parents.

Later, they visited the government general hospital and Comprehensive Reproductive Health Clinic.

The team also met members of Brac's 'CFPR-TUP' project and became familiar with their income-generating activities.

They also had a discourse with the Village Poverty Alleviation Committee, health workers, panel doctors and members of the Health Forum.

The members of the UK Parliament are John Battle, Mark Hendrick and Marsha Singh from Labour Party and Nigel Evans from Conservative Party.

Daniel Davis from DFID and Tania Zaman, director, Brac Chairperson's Office, Faruque Ahmed, director, Health Programme, Safiqul Islam, director, Education Programme, Dr Faustina Pereira, director, Human Rights and Legal Services Programme, and Rabeya Yasmin, programme head, Challenging the Frontiers of Poverty-Targeting the Ultra Poor, were also present.

Bangabandhu took steps to build powerful army

Says PM's adviser

BSS, Jessore

Security Affairs Adviser to the Prime Minister Maj Gen (Retd) Tarique Ahmed Siddique yesterday said Father of the Nation Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman had taken an effective step to build a powerful armed forces despite financial limitation during the post independence period.

He said the significant role of the armed forces in various activities in assisting the people during natural disasters, establishing peace in the CHT region and UN peace-keeping mission, made the nation proud at home and abroad.

Gen Tarique was addressing the re-union and parade of the signal core of the army at Jessore Cantonment.

Jessore Cantonment as the chief guest.

He said Bangabandhu laid emphasis on training to restructure the armed forces. As part of the initiative to impart training, a military academy was set up at Comilla Cantonment, he added.

The adviser recalled the supreme sacrifices of 86 members of the armed forces during the War of Liberation.

He said the government would work sincerely for welfare of the signal core members to develop their professional excellence.

Earlier, Gen Tarique and Army Chief General Md Abdul Mubeen inspected parade and took salute on Shaheed Cap Hamid Parade Ground at Jessore Cantonment.

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