

INDIA VISIT PM to secure rational share of all issues Hopes information minister

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Information Minister Abul Kalam Azad yesterday hoped that the prime minister would be successful in securing rational share of all the issues during her talks with the Indian government.

"I hope her (Hasina) visit will be fruitful and she will certainly be able to secure rational share of all the vital issues during her talk with her Indian counterpart. She will come back with a smiling face," he added.

The minister said this at a discussion styled 'Public Demand for Trial of War Criminals and Victory Day-2009' organised by the dainik Manabkontho at the National Press Club in the city.

He said the trials of war

criminals as well as other assassinations would certainly be held during the tenure of the present government.

"We are working hard to start the proceedings of the trial of war criminals as soon as possible."

On implementation of the death sentences of Bangabandhu's killers, the minister said the government is working actively to complete all the legal procedures for executing the verdict.

Referring to the BNP secretary general's remark that the ruling party might change the country's name in line with changing name of different institutes and organisations, he said, "Under the leadership of Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, we fought against the Pakistani rulers for

establishing Bangladesh. It is nothing but a joke to change the name of the country."

Azad blamed the BNP-Jamaat government for manipulating the history of liberation war, nurturing militancy and patronising corruption during their tenure.

Speaking as the chief guest, former home minister Mohammad Nasim criticised the immediate-past caretaker government for torturing political leaders.

Editor of the Manabkontho Mohammad Rezaul Karim presided over the meeting where Editor of the Bangladesh Observer Iqbal Sobhan Chowdhury and AL Dhaka city unit General Secretary Mofazzal Hossain Chowdhury Maya also spoke.



Cherie Blair, wife of former British prime minister Tony Blair and a leading human rights activist, calls on Nobel laureate Prof Muhammad Yunus at the Grameen Headquarters, left, and Brac founder and Chairperson Fazle Hasan Abed at the Brac Centre, right, in the city yesterday. Secretary General of Amnesty International Irene Khan was present during the meeting with Brac chairperson.



PHOTO: COURTESY

'Enact law to prevent sexual abuse at workplace'

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Speakers at a consultation meeting yesterday urged the government to enact a law in line with the High Court directive on prevention of sexual harassment.

They also called for immediate discussion on the issue in parliament to this end.

In May last year, the High Court laid down a set of guidelines to prevent sexual harassment of women and children at workplaces, educational institutions and on the streets.

The speakers at the meeting also stressed the need to set up sexual harassment complaint centres at workplaces and educational institutions and form committees to investigate charges.

They strongly recommended that the issue should be taken to the grassroots level to raise awareness about the court directive and promote rights of the women workers.

Alliance for Women Workers' Rights (AWWR) organised the meeting with women lawmakers at BIAM conference lounge in the city. Some 12 women lawmakers attended the meeting.

The lawmakers urged the mobile phone operators to review low call rates at night,

which are being misused for harassment of young women and girls.

Prof Khaleda Khatun Shefali MP said priority must be given to the education of women.

She suggested increasing the minimum age limit for marriage for girls up to 20 so that they can properly employ their education and become

confident.

Nilufar Chowdhury MP said one of the worst forms of sexual harassment is eve teasing, which did not receive enough priority at policymaking level. Eve teasing creates lack of confidence and mental stress among women, often leading to suicide, she added.

Taleya Rehman, member of the AWWR steering committee, said awareness should be created among women, but special programmes should be taken for men as well.

Prof Ishrat Shamim, chairperson, Afroja Parvin, vice-chairperson and Quazi Baby, treasurer, and Dr Halida Hanum Khandaker, member of steering committee of AWWR, also spoke.



Prof Ishrat Shamim speaks at a consultation meeting at BIAM conference lounge in the city yesterday. On her right is Taleya Rehman and on her left are Afroja Parvin and Dr Halida Hanum Khandaker.

PHOTO: STAR

Cherie Blair discusses health issues with Yunus

METRO DESK

Cherie Blair, wife of former British prime minister Tony Blair, called on Nobel laureate Prof Muhammad Yunus, founder and managing director of Grameen Bank, and discussed healthcare programmes of Grameen Kalyan and Grameen Healthcare Trust yesterday.

During the meeting at the Grameen Headquarters at Mirpur in the city, they also discussed Grameen's nursing colleges, health management centres, eye care hospitals, thalassaemia initiative and overall health issues pertaining to women, says a press release.

Winter clothes distributed

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Kalabagan Welfare Society (KWS) distributed winter clothes among poor people in the area yesterday, says a press release.

Acting president of KWS and convener of Kalabagan Krira Chakra Nazmul Karim Tinku distributed the clothes among 200 poor people.

Meanwhile, KWS also started a programme to mark 'Clean Dhaka Week 2010'. As part of the programme, KWS will sensitise people to stop indiscriminate dumping of waste everywhere.

USING JUTE IN PACKAGING New law on the cards

Jute minister tells parliament

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A new law making it mandatory to use jute goods in packaging various goods, including food grains, sugar, fertiliser and cement, is under process, Textile and Jute Minister Abdul Latif Siddiqui told parliament yesterday.

The initiative is aimed at boosting the jute industry, he added.

Export of jute and jute goods has fetched Tk 3,700 crore in the last six months and it is expected that another Tk 1,300 crore would be earned in the current fiscal, the minister said, adding that the last fiscal year's figure was Tk 2700 crore.

The amount of losses incurred by the jute mills has been reduced to Tk 90 crore from Tk 470 crore, he said and hoped that the jute mills will be able to make profit after two years.

Replying to lawmakers' queries, the minister said the government has already formed a high level jute commission to ensure multifari-

ous use of jute and to revive the jute industries, which are now in a sorry state.

Different departments, including food directorate, Bangladesh Agriculture Development Corporation and Bangladesh Chemical Industries Corporation, have already started using jute sacks in packaging their goods.

"All-out efforts were taken to ensure optimum use of jute bags in those organisations," he said.

The minister also announced that the government has taken various steps to bring back the past glory of jute. The golden fiber lost its shine because of a conspiracy, he added.

"The Bangladesh Textile Institute was closed down in 1978 with an ill motive to prevent flourishing of the jute industries," he said, adding that all jute mills have also been forced to incur losses since then.

The previous BNP-led alliance government and the caretaker government have further damaged the jute industries, he alleged.

Cherie Blair lauds Brac's human rights programme

METRO DESK

Cherie Blair, wife of former British prime minister Tony Blair and a leading human rights activist, praised the Brac's human rights and legal empowerment programme yesterday.

During a meeting with Brac founder and Chairperson Fazle Hasan Abed at the Brac Centre in the city, Cherie also referred to the Brac's innovative work on maternal and child health in urban slums.

They exchanged information on work being carried out to further girls' education, women's access to financial resources and women's empowerment.

In this context, Cherie was particularly appreciative of the government's support for the Asian University for Women in Chittagong.

The Cherie Blair Foundation for Women works to strengthen the capacity of women entrepreneurs in countries where they lack equal opportunities so they can grow their businesses and become greater contributors to their economies.

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RU BCL cadres beat up journo

A RU CORRESPONDENT

Bangladesh Chhatra League (BCL) cadres beat up the university correspondent of the daily Dinkal at Rajshahi University (RU) on Sunday night.

Sources said a group of BCL cadres, led by Delwar Hossain Drills, a 3rd year student of Anthropology department, and Nayan, a 2nd year student of Management department, beat up Mansur Ahmed severely.

The BCL cadres stormed the room of the victim at Bangabandhu Hall around 11:30pm and beat him up with hokey sticks and iron rods without any specific reason, said the resident students of the dormitory.

Following the incident, RU correspondents of other dailies formed a human chain in front of the central library yesterday and submitted a memorandum to the vice chancellor (VC) demanding punishment to the attackers.

They also demanded immediate suspension of the cadres' studentship and threatened to launch a tougher programme if their demands are not met.

Meanwhile, the RU unit BCL suspended the membership of Drills and Nayan for attacking the reporter, says a BCL press release.

The RU VC was not available for his comment.

Assistant Proctor Mustak Ahmed said the authorities will take steps after investigating the matter.

BCL Secretary Ayen Uddin said stern action would be taken against the culprits who will try to damage the image of the associate body of Awami League.

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