

Sever relations with Jamaat

Awami League asks BNP

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The ruling Awami League (AL) yesterday asked main opposition BNP to sever relations with Jamaat-e-Islami, a key partner in the four-party coalition, for its involvement in the war crimes, especially repression on women, during the liberation war in 1971.

AL also asked the BNP chairperson to make apology to the countrymen, especially to women, for the party's previous misdeeds, including repression on them.

"Drop Jamaat, the number one oppressor of women, from your [Khaleda] coalition and accept the reality. Otherwise, the people won't forgive you," said AL General Secretary Syed Ashraf Islam.

The AL leader made the call at a crowded press conference organised to condemn Khaleda's falsehood about repression on women at the AL president's political office at

Dhanmondi in the city.

Lambasting Khaleda's statement on Monday that 20 percent women were repressed in the last 13 months of the present government, he termed the speech completely false, fabricated and politically motivated.

Flanked by a number of women lawmakers of the ruling party, including Foreign Minister Dipu Moni, Syed Ashraf threw Khaleda a challenge to make public the repressed women's names, addresses and types of repression.

AL spokesperson Syed Ashraf termed Jamaat the top oppressor of women and main barrier to women's development.

He said the BNP chairperson's statement has tarnished the image of the country abroad, adding that they want a responsible opposition leader for strengthening democracy.

"Khaleda knows very well that the picture of violations, repression and killings of two lakh women by the war criminals and anti-liberation forces will come out afresh with the trial of war criminals. For this reason, she wanted to divert public attention to a different way by resorting to lies about the repression."

Referring to repression on women during the BNP-Jamaat coalition government in between 2001 and 2006, he said the countrymen did not forget the misdeeds. A commission has been formed to bring the BNP culprits to book, who resorted to torture and repression on AL men, women and common people after assuming office in 2001.

Ashraf, also LGRD and cooperatives minister, called on all to provide information about those criminals who resorted to tortures and repression to the commission.

He said the government is firm to

try the war criminals, especially those who led the massacre in 1971, and those 11,000 people who were detained before 1975 and were released later by BNP founder Ziaur Rahman.

"As Khaleda has understood that she could not save her war criminal partners, she has become nervous and speaking baloney," he said.

Saying that the present government would implement women's development policy to eliminate discrimination against women, Syed Ashraf said Jamaat and its fundamentalism, among others, are the key barriers to women's development.

Meanwhile, a meeting of the AL's central secretaries will be held at the same venue at 11:00am today to finalise the party's district tour programmes and to discuss the latest political situation of the country.



President Zillur Rahman cuts a cake at Bangabhaban in the city yesterday on the occasion of his 81st birthday. Officials and employees of Bangabhaban greet him on the occasion.



Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina presides over a meeting of the Executive Committee of National Economic Council (Ecneec) at NEC Bhaban at Sher-e-Bangla Nagar in the city yesterday.

ACC move to probe graft in edn ministry

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The Anti-Corruption Commission yesterday proposed forming a joint committee with the Ministry of Education to investigate corruption in the ministry.

The ACC Chief Ghulam Rahman made the proposal to Education Minister Nurul Islam Nahid during a courtesy call at the secretariat yesterday morning.

"We have identified a number of sectors under the education ministry where

rampant corruption is going on, and the minister promised to cooperate us in efforts to curb the corruption," said Ghulam.

The sectors identified are those which are responsible for MPO (monthly pay order) listing of educational institutions, retirement benefit for teachers, activities of teachers and education ministry employees' welfare trust, purchase under the ministry, appointment of employees at the ministry, and transport in the public universities.

The anti-graft body also suggested some points to ensure transparency and accountability of the ministry.

The ACC chief said there should be a provision under which educational institutions will vow not to indulge in any sort of corruption.

He also requested for inclusion of anti-corruption issues into the curricula of all levels of education system.

The minister assured the ACC chief of taking necessary measures regarding the contemporary issues.

Accused dies in police custody

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

An accused on a remand died in police custody at the city's Ramna Police Station yesterday.

Zakir Hossain, 45, was arrested by DB police from the city's Kadamtali on March 4 on charge of stealing several vehicles and its parts.

OC Shibli Noman told The Daily Star that on Monday night Zakir was brought to his police station on one-day remand in a car stealing case.

"Zakir fell sick after he felt chest pain at noon today [Tuesday] and we rushed him to Dhaka Medical College Hospital (DMCH) where doctors declared him dead," the OC said.

DMCH sources said Zakir died before he was brought to the hospital at 2:15pm.

AKM Shahidul Hoque, DMP commissioner, said Zakir died of "natural" causes. He, however, said he asked police to investigate the death forming a medical board.

Police said DB men recovered several vehicles and parts of eight vehicles in separate drives in the city following Zakir's confessional statement after his arrest.

'Tarique to return home to build modern Bangladesh'

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

BNP Leaders yesterday said Tarique Rahman would return home and lead the country with a view to building a modern Bangladesh.

Speaking at a rally, the leaders alleged that a vested quarter had vowed to resist his return. They said no one could bar Tarique, senior vice president of the party, from returning to the country.

They, however, did not mention the name of any quarter.

The leaders said Awami syndicates are responsible for the continuous price hike of the essentials.

Swechhasebak Dal, a BNP front organisation, arranged the rally in front of the party's central office at the city's Naya Paltan marking the third anniversary of Tarique's imprisonment during the caretaker government regime.

Speaking as the chief guest, BNP Standing Committee Member Moudud Ahmed said law and order has extremely deteriorated across the country. The government has failed to provide adequate electricity, gas and water and forgot its pledges to people made before the elections, he added.

He claimed that the name of Zia International Airport has been changed to eliminate late president Ziaur Rahman's name from everywhere.

Another member of the standing committee Mirza Abbas said he hoped that Sajeeb Wazed Joy would bring changes in the culture of Awami League politics.

Among others, Moyazzem Hossain Alal, Nasir Uddin Asim, Abdu Salam, Asadul Karim Shaheen spoke at the rally.

Meanwhile, BNP Secretary General Khandaker Delwar Hossain, in a statement, strongly protested the attack on a BNP rally at Jhalakathi and setting fire to the unit office by ruling party activists.

669 more 'political' cases to be withdrawn

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The government has identified 669 more cases as 'politically motivated' and recommended withdrawal of the cases, which were filed during the tenure of the BNP-Jamaat alliance as well as the last caretaker government.

State Minister for Law Quamrul Islam said this yesterday after the 14th meeting of the national committee to review politically motivated cases at the home ministry.

The committee found no parties that could be recommended for withdrawal, he added.

"The committee examined a total of 1,072 cases referred

by the district committees. Of the cases, pleas for withdrawal of 109 cases were rejected and discussion on 294 cases will be held in the next meeting," Quamrul told reporters after the meeting.

Recommendations were made for withdrawal of the cases filed against ruling party leaders and individuals, including State Minister for LGRD Jahangir Kabir Nanak, Awami League organising secretary AFM Bahauddin Nasim, Asaduzzaman Noor MP Barisal City Corporation Mayor Shawkat Hossain Hiron, Haji Selim, Proshika chief Kazi Faruq and former central unit general secretary of Bangladesh Chhatra League Liaqat Sikdar.

The government also decided to withdraw a case of

vandalism at the Supreme Court filed against noted jurist Dr Kamal Hossain, Barrister Rokonuddin Mahmud and Barrister Tania Ameer and few others.

Asked whether there is any case rejected by the national committee, the state minister said they rejected the plea for withdrawing a case of kidnapping and attempt to murder filed against detained BNP leader Nasiruddin Ahmed Pintu.

The committee decided not to consider any recommendations from the district committees for withdrawal of any more case after March 31, said Quamrul.

"We hope to conclude the activities of the committee within the next one month," he added.

ARMS HAUL CASE Ex-NSI chief placed on 6-day remand

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Ctg

A Chittagong court yesterday placed former National Security Intelligence (NSI) Director General Major General (retd) Rezaul Haider Chowdhury on a 6-day remand in Chittagong arms haul case.

The court of Metropolitan Magistrate M Osman Gani granted the remand after Criminal Investigation Department (CID) produced him before it with a prayer for 10 days' remand.

Investigation Officer (IO) of the case Md Moniruzzaman Chowdhury -- a senior ASP of CID Chittagong division, sought this remand for the ex-NSI chief to extract more information about the case, as he made no confessional statement earlier.

DW Bangla programmes on FM radio

DU CORRESPONDENT

Deutsche Welle, a German radio station, will soon start broadcasting its programmes in Bangla using the FM frequencies of the state-run radio station Bangladesh Betar.

In this regard, a partnership agreement between Bangladesh Betar and Deutsche Welle was signed at the information ministry in the city yesterday, said Abdullah-Al Ferooq, Editor-in-Chief of the Bangla Service of Deutsche Welle.

Bangladesh Betar Director General Md Mahbul Alam and Managing Director of DW-AKADEMIE Gerda Meuer signed the agreement on behalf of their respective parties.

Information Minister Abu Kalam Azad and German Ambassador Holger Michael were also present at the signing session.

"We are trying to start broadcasting our programmes using FM frequencies of Bangladesh Betar on April 14," Ferooq said at a press conference at the National Press Club.

According to the agreement, Deutsche Welle will use Bangladesh Betar's transmitters at Dhaka, Chittagong, Sylhet, Khulna, Rajshahi and Rangpur to broadcast its programmes from 8:00am to 8:30am and from 8:00pm to 8:30pm daily.

The FM frequencies in the regions will be -- 97.6 in Dhaka, 105.4 in Chittagong, 105 in Sylhet, 102 in Khulna, 105 in Rajshahi and 105.4 in Rangpur.

Abdullah-Al Ferooq said the Deutsche Welle was broadcasting programmes in Bangla since 1975 in short wave and through this attempt, this station had tried to connect a good number of audiences.

He hoped that the audiences of Bangladesh would be able to hear Deutsche Welle's programmes more clearly in FM frequencies.

Ferooq said the station will also broadcast discussions on the Bangladesh media and programmes on different aspects of Europe.

Gerda Meuer said, "We are excited to continue our partnership with Bangladesh Betar. We have worked together in many areas for more than 30 years and are sure that this new agreement will be beneficial to both parties."

WHO to provide technical support: Margaret Chan

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The World Health Organisation will provide technical support to Bangladesh for building capacity to control quality of medicines and vaccines, visiting WHO Director General Margaret Chan said yesterday.

The government needs to establish a strong regulatory authority and a laboratory for quality control before producing vaccines in the country, she said at a press briefing at the conference room of the

health ministry.

The WHO DG also said that they have already sent three teams of experts to review the situation and assess the potentials and they also gave advice to the government in this regard.

Replying to a question, she said WHO would provide H1N1 vaccines for Bangladesh this month.

During her two-day stay, Margaret Chan visited health complexes and community clinics at Chougachha in Jessore.

She said Bangladesh is on

the right track towards achieving Millennium Development Goals 4 and 5 that calls for reducing child mortality and improving maternal health.

WHO will continue to support effective and pro-poor health programmes, she added.

Health Minister AFM Ruhul Haque, State Minister Mojibur Rahman Fakir, Secretary Sheikh Altaf Ali and Director General of Health Services Prof Shah Monir Hossain were present at the press conference.

Committee formed to eradicate monga

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The government yesterday formed a working committee to prepare a strategic paper for permanent solution to the seasonal unemployment "monga" in the northern region.

The seven-member committee will examine how to coordinate various programmes run by different ministries and NGOs in that area and will recommend steps to the National Committee to Eradicate Monga.

The decision was taken at a meeting of the National Committee to Eradicate Monga chaired by the Food and Disaster Management Minister Dr Abdur Razzaque at the ministry auditorium.

Monga is an annual cyclical phenomenon of poverty and hunger in the northern

districts of Rangpur, Kurigram, Gaibandha, Nilphamari and Lalmonirhat during September and November when rural workers get no jobs.

"The government wants a permanent solution to the Monga. So, we are taking about coordinated efforts to create round the year jobs for the unemployed," Dr Abdur Razzaque told newsmen after the meeting.

He said the government took various steps including Employment Generation Programme. It offered employments for some 90,000 unemployed in November-December last year, he added.

Razzaque said most of the activities of the NGOs in that area are awareness programme, which do not directly benefit the people concerned.

An official who was in the meeting told The Daily Star that Rural Development Academy, Bogra is taking a project of over Tk 11 crore under which it will provide the farmers with livestock and set up a biogas plant in that area to supply it to the households as well as for converting it into Compressed Natural Gas.

Besides, the British Department for International Development runs poverty eradication programmes, Pally Karma Shahayak Foundation operates micro finance and vocational training programmes.

"The working committee will make a list of all those and suggest a comprehensive plan of action for the area so that real initiatives are there that can help mitigate the Monga," the official said.

EU concerned over slow repair of Aila-affected embankments

UNB, Dhaka

Thousands of people displaced by the Aila cyclone, who have now been living in makeshift shelters for the last ten months, are at grave risk now, said Dr Stefan Frowein, Head of the European Union's Delegation to Bangladesh, yesterday.

Dr Frowein narrated the sorry state of the rehabilitation and reconstruction arrangement. He observed many of the displaced people are still living in appalling conditions on strips of raised land.

He said it is essential that the embankment repairs are completed by the end of March when storms and high tides come as a natural course of weather in Bangladesh.

He reminded that if the embankments aren't repaired urgently, the humanitarian consequences would be catastrophic. He said many fami-

lies have already been displaced several times and have lost their homes and livelihoods since Aila struck.

Over 700 km of coastal embankments were destroyed by cyclone Aila while the seawater flooded villages and fields displacing over 200,000 people last May.

Cyclone Aila caused devastation in hundreds of villages, exacerbated by the heavy monsoon rains, which flooded agricultural and shrimp-farm lands. The tidal waves salinated land and water sources -- it could take years to recover.

Since the cyclone struck, the European Commission's humanitarian aid department (ECHO) has allocated 9 million to help provide the worst affected people with food, drinking water, access to sanitation, temporary shelter and assistance with income-generating activities.

CONCERN OVER FATWA HR activists urge IGP to take action

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A delegation of human rights activists met Inspector General of Police (IGP) Nur Muhammad at the latter's office in the city yesterday to express their concern over an incident of issuing Fatwa (religious edict) at Manikganj and harassing women for not using veil at Rangpur.

The human rights activists urged the IGP to take necessary actions to this end.

The delegation comprised of Khushi Kabir, coordinator of Nijera Kori, Mohsin Ali Khan, executive director of Bangladesh Legal Aid and Services Trust (BLAST), Shamsul Huda, executive director of Association for Land Reform and Development (ALRD), Obaidur Rahman, senior coordinator of Ain O Salish Kendra (ASK), and Sumaiya Islam, staff lawyer of Brac.

Noted human rights activist Barrister Sara Hossain was also present at the meeting.

The IGP assured the human rights activists that stern actions will be taken against the people responsible.

TODAY

Seminar
DORP and the Spanish Embassy in Dhaka will jointly organise a seminar on the inclusion of maternity allowance in the budget. Venue: LGED Bhaban seminar room. Time: 10:30am.

Publication ceremony
The publication ceremony of "Prison's Diary" by Deputy Speaker Col (retd) Shawkat Ali will be held. Venue: Public Library auditorium. Time: 10:30am.

Celebration
Oxford International School (OIS) and Goethe Institute, Bangladesh will jointly organise a programme to celebrate 20 years of the 'Fall of Berlin Wall'. Venue: OIS auditorium. Time: 1:00pm.

WEATHER

Dry weather likely

UNB, Dhaka

Prevailing dry weather is likely to continue over the country in the next 12 hours as of 6:00pm today.

Day temperature may remain nearly unchanged over the country, Met Office said.

The sun sets in the capital at 6:06pm today and rises at 6:12am tomorrow.

Yesterday's highest temperature of 36.8 degree Celsius was recorded at Cox's Bazar and the lowest of 14.7 degrees at Srimongal.

The highest and lowest temperature and humidity recorded in some major cities and towns yesterday were:

City/Town	Temperature in Celsius		Humidity in percentage	
	Max	Min	Morning	Evening
Dhaka	32.5	21.2	29	27
Chittagong	33.3	22.0	62	42
Rajshahi	32.9	17.0	50	34
Khulna	33.7	20.5	48	55
Barisal	33.8	20.0	53	55
Sylhet	33.7	19.5	60	37
Cox's Bazar	36.8	24.0	62	53