

Criminals to be dealt with iron hand

PM says at view exchange meet in Ctg

UNB, Chittagong

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina yesterday issued a strong warning to those indulged in gunrunning, drug peddling and misdeeds and assured the nation of dealing with such elements with iron hand.

"Whoever he is, none will be spared. Law enforcing agencies have been directed to take action against all, irrespective of colour and creed," she told a view exchange meeting with lawmakers, AL leaders and cross-section of the port city.

She said the government cannot carry out its development activities without a well-organised party and efficient administration behind it. The government needs a powerful organisation, nay its party, for feedback.

Since the Election Commission has framed rules for the political parties, Awami League has to function within the rules, she added.

In an oblique reference to internal division in AL, Hasina who is also

president of the party said, "There are some people who are always in the ruling party. They use to change the banner with the change of government. We do not need such fair weather birds."

Hasina said some in the party resort to make room for such elements to enlarge the group of the individuals. "This mentality and practice must be shunned," she said, directing at the party leaders. "We have got mass support in free and fair polls."

She said AL is always for the people. It used to give the masses, meet their needs. But when BNP and its allies were in power, they snatched away the legitimate rights of the people.

"Previous (BNP-Jamaat) government indulged in lootpaat, sucked the blood of the people. And the two years of caretaker government was the period marked with fear and panic for which many could not concentrate to their volitions," she added.

She claimed improvement in law and order situation in the country

"despite certain elements tried in vain to create instability and disturbances here and there in a planned way. We are determined to root out all forms of terrorism, militancy, drug dens from the country. Those indulge in such activities will be dealt with severely," she said.

Hasina told the meeting that the Anti-Corruption Commission and Election Commission are now performing independently. "And we are working for economic development of the country and welfare of the people."

"Our objective is to turn Chittagong into a genuine commercial city. Another oil refinery and a tunnel below the Karnaphuli River will be constructed," she added.

The PM admitted a dismal situation in the power sector. "Power situation is very bad. We are all experiencing the crisis," she said sharing the concern of the people. "But we are unable to do anything immediately. For, new plants and generation of electricity needs time. We inherited the power crisis. No

generation capacity was added during the BNP regime."

She said the government is working to develop solar and wind energy. A solar panel has been installed in the Prime Minister's office which meets its requirement of electricity.

Hasina asked the ministers and MPs from Chittagong to ensure all out and speedy development and held out assurance of necessary measures and funds.

She also asked them to find out those who use to provide shelter to the terrorists and incite antisocial activities.

Hasina rubbished the allegation of BNP that Awami League was behind the BDR mutiny in which dozens of army officers were killed. "Ziaur Rahman has the record of killing of army officers. AL has no such bad record."

The meeting at the Circuit House was presided over by Mayor ABM Mohiuddin Chowdhury, also president of Chittagong City Awami League.

SCBA polls begin

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The two-day annual elections to Supreme Court Bar Association (SCBA) began with 833 lawyers casting their votes on the first day yesterday.

The polling for 14 executive posts of SCBA, including president and secretary, started at 10:00am and continued till 5:00pm with a one-hour lunch break.

It will resume at 10:00am today and continue till 5:00pm with the similar break.

The contest will take place mainly between the ruling Awami League-backed Bangladesh Sammilita Ainjibi Samannaya Parishad (BSASP) and the opposition BNP-backed Bangladesh Jatiyatbadi Ainjibi Oikya Parishad (BJAOP).

Munsurul Hoque Chowdhury (BSASP) and Khandaker Mahub Hossain (BJAOP) are contesting for the post of president.

AGARTALA CASE Accused to get state recognition

BSS, Dhaka

President Zillur Rahman yesterday said state recognition and honour will be given to all 35 accused and four witnesses in the Agartala conspiracy case for their brave contribution towards the independence of the country.

The president made the remark when a four-member delegation of the accused in the case, state verses Sheikh Mujibur Rahman and others filed in early 1968, paid a call on him at Bangabhaban in the city.

Deputy Speaker Col (Retd) Shawkat Ali led the delegation. Other members of the team are Brig Gen (Retd) Khurshid Uddin Ahmed, Col (Retd) Shamsul Alam and Flight Surgeon (Retd) Abdul Jalil.

Zillur said the state honour to the accused in the case should have been made much before for their bravery and as well as historic contribution to building public opinion for the mass upsurge in 1969 and the Great War of Liberation in 1971.

The Deputy Speaker recalled various plots, facts and incidents of this seditious case, lodged by the then Pakistani government against Father of the Nation Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman and 34 others.

In early 60s, Col (Retd) Shawkat said Bangabandhu had sent secret messages to Bangalee officers, serving in Pakistan Armed forces to be united themselves and prepared for an armed struggle as he could realise far ahead that the independence would not be achieved without a war.



Commanders of Artillery Corps pose for photograph with Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina, Chief of Army Staff Gen Md Abdul Mubeen, Security Adviser to PM Maj Gen (retd) Tarique Siddique and PSOAFD Maj Gen Abdul Wadud at Commanders Conference at Artillery Centre and School at Halishahar in Chittagong yesterday.

Hasina smells 'games' behind CHT unrest

UNB, Chittagong

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina has termed the recent violent incidents in the Chittagong Hill Tracts unfortunate, saying that there might be international and national games behind the incident.

"Definitely, different sets of games were behind it," she remarked while addressing the officials of Chittagong Division and the district administration at the Circuit House yesterday afternoon.

The premier said her government had signed the CHT peace treaty to resolve the problems in the hill tracts region, but the previous BNP government did not implement the treaty.

She, however, said that if the economic activities could be stepped up, peace would be maintained in that region.

Mentioning the increase in salary of the government officials, she said this money

comes from the public taxes.

"Problems will remain but we have to overcome it. Poverty won't be there if we could utilise our resources properly," Hasina said adding, "I want work from you."

On power crisis, Hasina said alongside the increase of production, demand is also growing and the deficit could not be met. In this context, she blamed the BNP-Jamaat government for not producing a single MW of electricity.

The PM said militancy and terrorism is another big problem, which was patronised by the past government. "If not so, how 500 bombs could be exploded in 30 minutes across the country?" she said, adding militancy and terrorism impede development of a country.

Stressing the importance of the local government, Hasina said the local bodies will be given more power. Certain level of law and order, education, etc, will be kept under the local bodies while budgetary allocations and policy formulation will be done centrally.

Soumen Murder Case filed against some schoolboys in Ctg

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Ctg

A murder case has been filed against some unidentified schoolboys with the Kotwali Police Station in Chittagong in connection with the killing of Soumen Biswas, a schoolboy who was stabbed to death.

Chhaya Ghosh, mother of Soumen, filed the case on Tuesday night.

Soumen Biswas Anik, 14, a class nine student of Chittagong Collegiate School, was stabbed at Rahmatganj at around 5:30pm on Monday and he died in the early hours of Tuesday.

Soumen came under attack allegedly by a group of students of Chittagong Government High School when he along with his schoolmates was going to a coaching centre.

Investigation Officer (IO) of the case Sub-Inspector Shafayet Hossain Chowdhury said they came to know that a love affair led to the murder.

"We have quizzed some friends of Soumen and are verifying the information to find out the reasons behind the murder," he said. However, none was arrested as yet.

Ratification of Rome Statute to make war crimes trial credible

UNB, Dhaka

Foreign Secretary Mijarul Quayes said that the ratification of the Rome Statute of International Criminal Court (ICC) will provide more credibility in the trial process of war criminals.

He made the remark during his meeting with UNGA President Ambassador Christian Wenaweser in New York Tuesday, a release from Bangladesh UN mission in New York said.

The foreign secretary said he personally came to convey the government's important political decision that Bangladesh ratified the "Rome Statute", which was also conveyed to the UN Secretary General Ban Ki-moon.

He recalled the blood-ravaged independence war of Bangladesh in 1971 and the return of the Father of the Nation Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman in early January 1972, who could not move forward with the judicial proceedings against the war-criminals.

Quayes said the present government is determined to finish this process, for which the parliament has given a unanimous mandate last year.

Although the ratification will not provide any scope for retroactive effect of the Rome Statute for 1971 war crimes, however, this historic ratification will provide greater credibility to the ongoing efforts for trial of the war criminals in Bangladesh, he added.

Ambassador Wenaweser thanked the foreign secretary for such a bold initiative taken by the Bangladesh government. He was particularly moved by the fundamental rationale behind the ratification process to become more credible in the trial process for war crimes committed almost 40 years before that this will send a very strong political message in South Asia and elsewhere.

Through this ratification process, Bangladesh became the 111th State to be the Party to the Rome Statute, he said.

Although Bangladesh will not be able to have the retroactive effect of this ratification process for war crimes committed in 1971, it would be very much possible that the Court to offer technical support to Bangladesh in conducting its business in the upcoming trial process by providing staffs, including quality judges, Wenaweser mentioned.

GRAFT CASE HC quashes all proceedings against Sajeda

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The High Court (HC) yesterday in a verdict quashed all proceedings against Deputy Leader of the House Syeda Sajeda Chowdhury in a corruption case filed during the BNP-Jamaat alliance government.

The then bureau of anti-corruption (Bac) on August 2, 2002 filed the case with Motijheel Police Station against her on charge of suppressing information in getting a five katha plot at Gulshan while she was forest and environment minister in 2000.

In the case, it was stated that Sajeda Chowdhury got a plot at Gulshan although she earlier took a three katha plot in the Nikunja residential area in the city. The now defunct Bac submitted charge sheet in this case in 2003.

Following a petition filed by Sajeda, the HC in 2003 stayed the proceedings against her and also issued a rule upon the government and the Bac to explain why the proceedings should not be quashed.

The case was transferred to the Anti-corruption Commission (ACC) after its formation in 2004.

After holding hearing on the rule, the HC bench of Justice Md Shamsul Huda and Justice Abu Bakar Siddiquee yesterday scrapped all the proceedings against her in the case on the ground that the allegation against her was not proved.

Barrister Rokanuddin Mahmud appeared for Sajeda while Deputy Attorney General Motahar Hossain Sazu represented the government and Advocate Khurshid Alam Khan argued for the ACC.

DISASTER MANAGEMENT 'Ensure children's participation'

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Speakers at a discussion yesterday called for ensuring the participation of children, who constitute the most vulnerable section in disaster situations, in disaster management programmes.

Children's enhanced vulnerability and risk in disaster situations need to be included in the proposed Strategic Action Plan on disaster management and incorporated in mainstream planning and decision-making, they added.

Channel i and Save the Children Sweden-Denmark organised the discussion on disaster impact on children and their participation in risk reduction in the follow-up to eight TV talk shows on the issue.

Experts, development activists, high government officials and policy makers during the talk shows, telecast on Channel i, recommended building awareness and sensitivity that children deserve a special attention during disaster.

The policy recommendations made in the talk shows include developing government programmes to address children's needs, incorporating disaster risk reduction concept in the curriculum, incorporating risk reduction in urban planning and making 74 lakh street children aware of disaster risks.

Mohammad Mohiuddin, senior consultant of Comprehensive Disaster Management Programme (CDMP), said consultation with the children is vital to know their needs during any disaster.

Poverty enhances children's vulnerability and sufferings many times, particularly during a disaster, revealed the summarised version of the talk shows.

Disaster management mechanism should be extended down to the union level. The government and policy-makers have to be more friendly and sensitive to the children's vulnerability.

Taleya Rehman, executive director of Democracywatch, also spoke at the discussion held at the National Press Club in the city with Executive Director of Impress Telefilm Israrul Haq in the chair.

Deputy Country Representative of Save the Children Sweden-Denmark Shamsul Alam Bakul moderated the programme.

Call to launch 3-yr midwifery course

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The concluding ceremony of a regional workshop ended in the city yesterday with a call to introduce a three-year midwifery course similar to nursing courses to reduce maternal as well as newborn deaths and morbidity.

The five-day workshop was jointly organised by Brac, United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) and International Confederation of Midwives (ICMs) at Brac Centre Inn.

ICM President Bridget Lynch said midwifery needs a strengthened footing through improved education, association and regulation, which protects midwives as distinct healthcare professionals.

"Midwifery has been neglected for several decades in this region of the world which needs it most. It is the time that this profession be recognised once again as the best form of care for mothers and their newborns."

Midwives working at health facilities and attending home deliveries are central in saving the lives of mothers and newborns, by providing basic emergency obstetric care and timely referrals when hospital services are required, said Prof Sayeba Akhter, president of Obstetrical and Gynaecological Society of Bangladesh (OGSB).

JCD leader, AL man killed over control of char

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Narayanagarj

Within nine hours of the killing of a local Jatiyatbadi Chhatra Dal (JCD) leader by Awami League cadres in remote char area of Kalapaharia IZarakandi Tuesday night, BNP cadres took revenge by beating an AL man to death yesterday morning.

The BNP cadres also injured two others.

According to police and locals, the killings took place following a feud over establishing supremacy in the area.

Eight to ten AL cadres hacked to death Kalapaharia union JCD unit president Abdus Jamal, 28, at around 10:00pm on Tuesday while he was on the way to his father-in-law's house at IZarakandi, said police.

AL cadres stabbed the JCD leader indiscriminately and then he was rushed to a local hospital in Sonargaon where the doctors declared him dead.

Following the incident, over one hundred men of the deceased JCD leader made a counter attack -- being equipped with bamboo sticks and sharp weapons -- the residence of local AL leader Nuruzzaman, also a teacher of Murapara College, at around 7:00am.

The BNP men picked up Nuruzzaman's two brothers Lal Miah and Abdur Rashid and sister Marium Begum from their house and beat Lal Miah to death, the locals said.

Later, police rescued critically injured Rashid and Marium and admitted them to a local hospital.

Araihazar police station Officer-in-Charge Syed Nazrul Islam said they showed Rashid arrested in connection with the killing of the JCD leader.

Additional forces were deployed in the area to avert further clashes.

'A minister, not PM, should have defence portfolio'

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The defence portfolio must be given to a minister instead of the prime minister and a standard civil-military relationship must be developed to safeguard the sovereignty of the country, said noted historian Prof Syed Anwar Hossain at a seminar yesterday.

"There is no reason behind the prime minister holding the defence portfolio. The parliamentary standing committee on the defence ministry will not be able to call the prime minister even if it is required or in case of necessity. So, the defence portfolio must be given to a competent minister," Prof Anwar Hossain said in his paper titled 'Possible role of general people in Bangladesh defence'.

Bangladesh Institute of International and Strategic Studies (BISS) organised the seminar titled 'Role of mass people in the Liberation War: Future defence', at the institute auditorium to mark the Independence Day.

Most of the people of our country were involved in the Liberation War, Foreign Minister Dipu Moni said.

She also said that the trial of war criminals will be held very soon.

BISS Director General Maj Gen Sheikh Monirul Islam was present at the seminar presided over by Chairman of BISS Board of Governors Maj Gen Muhammad Ferdous Miah.

3,000 more women police to be appointed: Sahara

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Home Minister Sahara Khatun yesterday said the government has taken an initiative to appoint 3,000 more women police by 2010 in line with a decision taken by the government for appointing 32,000 police.

The government of Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman in 1974 introduced women with appointing 14 women in police department and now there are 2,267 women police, she added.

The minister said this while addressing the first founding anniversary of Bangladesh Police Women's Network (BPWN) at Rajarbagh Telecom Auditorium in the city.

Talking to reporters, Sahara she also said that she asked the IGP to ensure security across the country so that no untoward incidents take place ahead of formation of the war crimes tribunal agency.

She awarded 10 women police, including seven of the 14 women police recruited in 1974, for their outstanding performance.

Speakers at the discussion stressed the need for women police-friendly infrastructure and behaviour from their male counterparts.

If women police members are not empowered properly in police department, the problems of female victims cannot be treated properly.

Home Secretary Abdus Sobhan, Additional Inspector General (AIG) NBK Tripura and UN Resident Coordinator Renata Lok Dessalines attended the function with DIG Fatema Begum in the chair.

Later, a colourful procession was taken out from in front of the auditorium gate.

Prof Monirul to be buried today

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Prof Monirul Haque, vice chancellor of Darul Ihsan University, former chairman of Geology department of Dhaka University (DU) and ex-member of University Grants Commission, will be buried at the Martyred Intellectuals' Graveyard at Mirpur in the city today.

Prior to his burial, the body will be kept at geology department at 12:30pm for the people to pay their last respects to him.

The namaz-e-janaza of the deceased will be held at the central mosque of DU after Zohr prayers, says a press release.

A doa mahfil will be held at the auditorium of the department at 3:00pm on Saturday.

Obituary

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Osir Ali Mallick, a freedom fighter and retired Ansar member, passed away due to old-age complications at his village home in Meherpur at early hours of yesterday at the age of 70, says a press release.

Osir popularly known as Osthir Mallick left behind his wife, two sons and one daughter to mourn his death.

He was buried with state honour at his village yesterday.

Senior officials of the Ansar, district administration and police attended at his namaz-e-janaza.

Senior official of the Ansar expressed deep shock at his death and conveyed sympathy to members of the bereaved family.

Osir was one of the Ansar members who gave guard of honour to acting president of government in-exile at Mujibnagar in Meherpur in 1971.