

# Women policy

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government has been facing pressure from some religious bigots like Mufti Fazlul Haque Amini to scrap the policy.

"After going through the Quarn, especially Surah An-Nisa, we have removed contradictions from the policy," she said reiterating AL would never enact any law or adopt a policy which conflicts with the Quran or Sunnah.

She complained a vested political group is carrying out propaganda against the women and education policies in the name of religion and urged the Islamic scholars to remain alert about such evil attempts.

Referring to using children during the April 4 hartal, Hasina said "We learnt those children were told that they won't be served food in their madrassas if they don't take to the streets and vandalise vehicles. How cruel it was?"

The premier asked those religious bigots whether they had paid 'den mohar' to their wives, a must in Islam.

She announced that an Islamic-Arabic affiliating university would be set up soon and other facilities of madrasa education would be increased for the advancement of religious education.

As the Modarasin leaders demanded the proposed university be named after Sheikh Hasina, she said she does not want anything for her personal gain. "I just want to continue my work for the welfare of the people and country."

Modarasin President AMM Bahauddin, also the editor of the Daily Inqilab, and Secretary General Sabbir Ahmed Momtazi also

## Mobile pool

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providers of the makeshift facility said yesterday.

Students of Agragati Shikkha Niketon as well as other schools in Agargaon area will have the chance to get training on swimming free of cost for six hours every day; five days a week.

The imported mobile pool, costing nearly Tk 500,000, will require 75,000 litres of water.

Australian High Commissioner to Bangladesh, Justin Lee, at the inauguration ceremony said his government has donated an amount of 600,000 dollars to set up an international drowning research centre in Bangladesh and save thousands of young lives from drowning.

"Over 18,000 children lose lives in Bangladesh every year, but much of the deaths can be prevented through simple interventions -- teaching children on how to swim and little precautions," the envoy said, adding experiences from Australia could be shared in Bangladesh as it is done in Thailand and Vietnam.

# BNP's crucial

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secretaries of the party's district units will share their views on the agitation programmes which party Chairperson Khaleda Zia will later finalise, party sources said.

The NEC members will also speak about party issues while the party chief might bring some changes in the 386-member committee on suggestions of the grassroots.

Sources said the issue of party secretary general may also be raised. Recently, Mirza Fakhrul Islam Alamgir has been appointed the acting secretary general after the demise of Khandaker Delwar Hossain.

Asked about the meeting agenda, Alamgir said the current political situation and a number of organisational matters will get top priority.

The previous NEC meet was held in July last year. According to the party constitution, the NEC must sit every six months.

However, many of the decisions taken at that meeting remain unimplemented due to internal conflicts and

addressed the meet.

Education Minister Nurul Islam Nahid, prime minister's Adviser Dr Alauddin Ahmed, State Minister for Environment and Forests Dr Hasan Mahmud, among others, were present.

PM herself delivering fatwa, claims Jamaat

Acting Secretary General of Jamaat-e-Islami ATM Azharul Islam yesterday accused the prime minister of delivering fatwa (religious edict).

"Prime minister herself delivers fatwa many times. She gives her opinion about women development policy saying that it is not contradictory to the holy Quran. Giving opinion is fatwa in Islam," he told a questioner at a press conference at the party's central office in the capital.

Azhar also said they would try those who had pardoned 195 war criminals, identified by Sheikh Mujibur Rahman.

Jamaat arranged the press conference to announce a five-day agitation programme against the government.

The party will hold countrywide demonstrations on April 23 protesting price hike, on April 27 against the share market scam, on May 7 demanding scrapping of some provisions of the women development policy and on May 18 demanding the release of its detained leaders.

## Rice for OMS

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his salesmen and the truck driver fled the scene, said the ASP.

Khademul Islam Hero, Rangpur Sadar upazila food officer, confirmed that the rice found in the depot was meant for sale under the OMS and fair price card programmes.

The ASP said Rab had information that Fattah had long been procuring OMS rice from dealers in different areas and sold it at higher prices to retailers in Rangpur and other parts of the country.

Food Department sources at Rangpur said a number of OMS dealers and food officials were involved with the sale of OMS rice in the black market.

The dealers alleged that food officials charged them Tk 1,000 against 3 tonnes of OMS rice six days a week and Tk 5,000 against 20 tonnes of fair price rice a month.

When contacted, District Food Controller Shantosh Kumar Pandit said no dealer informed him that food officials were charging money for drawing rice under fair price and OMS programme.

He said action would be taken against those officials.

"We will also investigate as to how the OMS rice moved to the depot of Fattah from OMS dealer Sheikh Asif Hossain," he added.

sickness of former secretary general Khandaker Delwar, a number of BNP leaders told The Daily Star.

The meeting asked all the district and upazila units to take office with phone and fax connections but most of them have yet to rent an office.

It also decided not to encourage anyone to hold more than one post in the party.

But Mirza Fakhrul Islam Alamgir, for example, holds two posts -- one of the senior joint secretary general and the other of the president of Jatiyatabadi Krishak Dal. Standing committee member Nazrul Islam Khan is also the president of Jatiyatabadi Sramik Dal.

The party also could not complete formation of district committees as per the NEC meeting.

At Saturday's meeting, the party may discuss the formation of some district committees.

On last year's NEC meet decisions, Alamgir said many of them have been implemented while some others are being implemented.

## Amini warns

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"missing" since April 10, within 24 hours.

He claimed his son was picked up by law enforcers on orders of the prime minister.

However, Inspector General of Police Hassan Mahmood Khandker termed the claim "totally baseless".

Police are looking into the matter after Amini filed a general diary in this connection, the police chief told The Daily Star yesterday.

A partner of the BNP-led four-party alliance, Amini's party under the banner of Islamic Law Implementation Committee has announced countrywide protest programmes on May 6, 7, 11, 12, 16, and 22 at the divisional headquarters and on May 27 in the capital against implementation of women's development policy and education policy.

## Shakib Khan

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Metropolitan Magistrate SKM Tofail Hassan passed the order after Monowar Ehtesham alias Shish Monowar, a film producer filed the case against the accused.

In his complaint, Monowar said Shakib entered into an agreement with him for working on two films at Bangladesh Film Development Corporation (BFDC) on December 7, last year.

As part of his payment, Shakib received Tk 40 lakh in advance from the complainant. However, he failed to show up on April 10 and 12 which were the scheduled dates for shooting, the statement said.

When the complainant inquired the reason for his absence, the actor responded rudely and even denied of having received any money from the producer.

Meantime, Shakib filed a case with Tejgaon Police Station on April 16 against Monowar and five others for allegedly threatening to kill him.

## 20 months

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Awami League rally on August 21, 2004.

With this, the CID has been given 21 months and 10 days in nine phases for investigating the case filed under the Explosive Substances Act.

Judge Mohammad Zohurul Hoque of the Metropolitan Sessions Judge's Court passed the order following a petition submitted by CID's Special Superintendent Abdul Kahar Akand, also investigation officer (IO) of the case.

The IO submitted the petition on Tuesday seeking 45 days more to complete investigation into the case as the time for further investigation expired yesterday.

In the forwarding report, the IO said Harkat-ul Jihad (Huji) chief Mufti Abdul Hannan confessed before a Dhaka court on April 7 claiming two former director general (DG) of National Security Intelligence to be involved in the conspiracy.

Maj Gen (ret'd) Rezaqul Haider Chowdhury and Brig Gen (ret'd) M Abdur Rahim were shown arrested in the case and interrogated during remand. The interrogation process requires more time, said the IO.

Earlier on April 4, the court warned the IO for the second time for delaying the probe and asked to submit the report by April 20.

Meanwhile, the murder case filed for the August 21 grenade attack is now pending with the Second Additional Metropolitan Sessions Judge's Court in Dhaka. The judge of the court had earlier extended time for the probe till April 22.

Apart from the two former DG, former state minister for home Lutfozzaman Babar, Dhaka City Corporation ward councillor Ariful Islam Arif, Pakistan based Lasker-e-Taiba leader Abdul Majid Butt alias Abu Yusuf Butt, Huji leader Moulana Abdur Rouf and four others were shown arrested following further investigation into the cases.



The invitation letter to the prime minister from the JS special committee on constitution amendments. Chiefs of Jatiya Party and BNP also received the invitation yesterday.

# Hasina, Khaleda

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of AL, JP and BNP.

Signed by Syeda Sajeda Chowdhury, chief of the parliamentary special body, the letters read, "On behalf of the committee members, I am earnestly inviting you and senior leaders of your party to join the talks and contribute to the process for bringing amendments to the constitution."

AL Deputy Office Secretary Mrinal Kanti Das received the invitation at the party chief's political office in Dhanmondi.

Salehuddin Ahmed, personal secretary of the opposition chief whip, received the invitation on behalf of BNP Chairperson Khaleda Zia at her Gulshan office around 8:00pm. Opposition Chief Whip Zainul Abdin Farroque was present at the time.

The delegation conveyed the invitation to Jatiya Party Chairman HM Ershad in the evening.

The chiefs of BNP and JP were invited to sit with the special committee on

Monday, April 25 while AL President Sheikh Hasina the next day.

The talks start from April 24 with a sitting with experts on constitution.

Contacted yesterday, Suranjit Sengupta, co-chair of the parliamentary committee, said the heads of other political parties representing the present parliament and constitution experts will today [Thursday] be sent invitations.

"The special committee is interested to discuss the overall issues of the constitution with them. We will carefully consider their recommendations," said Suranjit.

### KHALEDASLATES GOVT MOVE

The BNP standing committee will sit tonight to discuss the party's course of action regarding the talks, said sources.

Opposition Leader Khaleda Zia last night said the government wants to amend the constitution as it wishes, but the people would

not accept it.

"There exist no constitution in the country right now which has created a constitutional vacuum," she said when the newly elected office bearers of Bangladesh Federal Union of Journalists (BFUJ) met her at her Gulshan office.

BFUJ President Ruhul Amin Gazi and its Secretary General Shawkat Mahmud led the delegation.

The BNP chairperson expressed discontent over, what she said, the government making the judiciary absolutely partisan by appointing justices, including the chief justice, loyal to it. She also alleged that the International crimes tribunal did not meet the international standard.

She said it would be a farce if the government did not touch the war criminals within their own party.

Khaleda Zia also condemned the placing of BNP leader SQ Chowdhury on remand when he is ill and unable to move.

# No bail for Sayedee

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two other petitions filed on behalf of other top four Jamaat-e-Islami leaders--Ameer Motiur Rahman Nizami, Secretary General Ali Ahsan Mohammad Mojahid, assistant secretaries general Muhammad Kamaruzzaman and Abdul Quader Molla.

Nizami, Secretary General Ali Ahsan Mohammad Mojahid, assistant secretaries general Muhammad Kamaruzzaman and Abdul Quader Molla.

In one of the two petitions, the four Jamaat leaders sought bail in connection with charges of war crimes. The other petition was filed by Nizami and Mojahid seeking review of the tribunal's order on April 13 which allowed investigators to quiz them at a "safe home" in the capital instead of Dhaka Central Jail about their links with war crimes during the 1971 Liberation War.

All the five Jamaat leaders were produced before the court yesterday.

The three-member tribu-

nal headed by its Chairman Justice Nizamul Huq directed the prison authorities to allow Sayedee, Nayebe-Ameer of Jamaat-e-Islami, to receive treatment at Birdem Hospital at his own cost.

The tribunal also asked the prosecution to submit a report of the investigation into the allegations against Sayedee as early as possible. The prosecution has to submit the progress report, if it fails to submit the full investigation report, by May 31.

It ordered the jail authorities to produce Nizami, Mojahid, Kamaruzzaman and Quader before the tribunal today.

Sayedee's counsel barrister Tanvir Ahmed Al Amin yesterday prayed for conditional bail of his client on medical and humanitarian grounds.

Opposing the bail prayer, Prosecutor Syed Rezaur Rahman said the investigators have collected documents and evidence of Sayedee having committed crimes against humanity and

war crimes during the Liberation War.

If Sayedee is released on bail, the investigation into the allegations against him might get hampered, he continued.

He also sought permission so the jail authorities can keep Sayedee in custody until the investigation is completed.

### COURT REBUKES JOURNALIST

The tribunal yesterday rebuked David Bergman, editor, special reports at the daily New Age, for writing an article headlined "Int'l Crimes Tribunal: growing independence or a return to being the rubberstamp?" on April 13.

The court said the comments he made in the article about the tribunal is very contemptuous and highly punishable. If he repeats such things in future, the tribunal will take stern action against him.

He (David) is not aware of the legal proceedings in Bangladesh, the court noted.

# Moscow offers gas

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with a Russian technical team in the recent months, and has prepared a draft Mou seeking Russian technical and financial help for drilling wells as well as installing some major pipelines.

Gazprom will help Bangladesh develop a gas sector strategic master plan, said an announcement following a meeting between the prime minister's adviser Tawfiq-e-Elahi Chowdhury and the Russian team yesterday.

Valeri Gulev, who represents Russia's biggest gas company which is also the largest gas producer in the world, told the press after the meeting, "'We are keen to support Bangladesh's energy sector. We feel that we could do a lot to enhance the collaboration between the two countries. We want to do a lot, and we want to do that fast."

The meeting discussed five issues to be incorporated in the Mou. The first deal would be on drilling five wells in five of the state-owned gas fields in the country. The two countries primarily agreed to reach an

agreement within October next. Once the agreement is signed, Gazprom will take just six weeks to complete drilling these wells. This will be considered as a short-term cooperation.

Secondly, Gazprom will install two gas compressors in the national grid to boost gas supplies at a desired pressure. Location of these compressors has not been fixed yet, although initially it was suggested that these be installed in Ashuganj and Elenga where the authorities are already preparing two such devices through a tender with funds from the Asian Development Bank.

On this issue, Tawfiq said at an April 5 press conference that the tender for the ADB-funded compressors would not be affected by any deal with Gazprom. The country needed more gas compressors to boost gas supply to places far from the producing gas fields. And the two compressors (of Gazprom) would be required especially in the gas-starved southwestern region where gas pipelines are being installed now, he added.

Thirdly, Russia will help prepare a gas sector strategic master plan outlining Bangladesh's future exploration, drilling and distribution network.

Fourthly, Gazprom is interested in joint venture agreements with the national gas companies for long term operation. It will also open a local office in the country.

Finally, Gazprom will help Petrobangla and its subsidiary companies in capacity building by providing training and higher education facilities, and sharing experience.

Yesterday's meeting was also attended by State Minister for Power Enamul Haque, Energy Secretary M Mijbahuddin, Power Secretary Abul Kalam Azad, Petrobangla chairman Hossain Monsur and officials of the ministry concerned, Petrobangla and its affiliates and Power Development Board. Russian Ambassador in Dhaka Gennady P Trotsenko was present.

The Russian team continued negotiations with officials.

# Draw up plan

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The prime minister made the statement at the inaugural ceremony of Fourth Ministerial Consultation of Colombo Process and opening of Expatriate Welfare Bank at Sonargaon Hotel in the morning.

Hasina underscored the need for collective action of labour sending countries in Asia for stopping irregularities during migration and ensuring overall welfare of the workers including minimum wage, acceptable working conditions and health benefits.

She said for many of the labour sending countries in the region, including Bangladesh, unethical recruitment practices are a major challenge.

The problems of exploitation and malpractices in labour migration process, high migration cost, involvement in low skilled and unregulated sectors, ignorance of the labour migrants, are issues common in many of the countries in the region, she added.

Hasina said despite global economic downturn and subsequent fall in labour migration, expatriate Bangladeshis remitted over \$ 10 billion in 2010 which is about 11 percent of country's GDP and the government identified labour migration as a thrust sector.

Referring the return of over 35 thousand Bangladeshi migrant workers from Libya, many of them without their documents, personal possessions, and without their pay and meager savings, Hasina requested the IOM and other concerned international agencies to help ensure their employment opportunities.

The PM said from now on intending migrant workers could take collateral-free loans from the bank for meeting their migration cost.

The new bank will contribute to bring down the migration cost, especially costs which are incurred to fund the migration process.

Besides, Hasina said returnee migrant workers could take loan from the

## Govt to move

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The recommendations include shifting warehouses and factories of inflammable chemicals to a safer place, intensification of mobile court drives against illegal chemicals warehouses and industries, and giving no permission to set up such installations within 10 metres of academic institutions, mosques, community centres or public space.

The taskforce also recommended that different sorts of chemicals should be kept separately at warehouses, roads around the warehouses or factories be at least six metres in width, and "no objection" certificate by the fire service be mandatory for issuing licences to such warehouses and industries.

Deputy Secretary Salma Begum of the home ministry told reporters the government will fix deadlines to complete the tasks after formation of the two committees.

Salma said the association of chemicals warehouse owners has already proposed the government for a 10-acre plot in Keraniganj for their shifting. The government will first try to find khas land in this regard, she added.

The land acquisition committee headed by the BSCIC chairman will rehabilitate the factories and shops. The committee will also be engaged in land acquisition and earth filling in Keraniganj or Kamrangirchar in this regard.

Meanwhile, a technical committee headed by an industries ministry joint secretary will work to implement the 19-point recommendation submitted by the taskforce.

There are around 1,000 chemical warehouses and factories, of which only 127 have licence, said a home ministry official.

Land Minister Rezaul Karim Hira was also present along with Industries Minister Dilip Barua at the meeting chaired by the home minister.

bank for running employment generating programmes.

She handed over cheques of collateral-free loan among four workers to meet their migration costs. She also released postal stamps issued by Bangladesh Postal Department marking the inauguration of the bank.

Expatriate Welfare and Overseas Employment Minister Engineer Khondaker Mosharraf Hossain presided over the function while Foreign Minister Dipu Moni, Indonesian Manpower and Transmigration Minister Muhaimin Iskandar and Director General of IOM Ambassador William Lacy Swing, among others, addressed it.

## Road, river

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press release signed by PBCP convener Abdul Majid yesterday.

Dipankar Talukder, state minister for Chittagong Hill Tracts Affairs, is likely to visit Shankhola today.

Meanwhile, PBCP activists held a protest rally on Chittagong University campus yesterday wearing black badges, and hoisted black flags on many buildings in the three hill districts.

They will hold protest rallies in the port city today and arrange special prayers at mosques and temples at Khagrachhari tomorrow to mourn the three victims of the incident.

PBCP will submit a memorandum to the prime minister through Khagrachhari deputy commissioner on Monday demanding proper investigation into the incident.

It will also hold protest rallies in the three districts the same day.

The section-144 still remains in force in Manikchhari and Ramgarh upazilas.

Sunday's clash between indigenous people and Bangalee settlers left three people dead, 20 people injured and many houses burnt.

Earlier on Monday, three separate cases were filed in connection with the violence.

## Waive VAT

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and information technology business in the country.

The parliamentary standing committee on post and telecommunication ministry also recommended that the government reduce tax on internet service equipment to four percent from existing 8 to 31 percent.

"Reduction of tax and VAT on internet and telecom equipment may lessen government's revenue income for the time being. But this step will help increase revenue earning in future as the number of internet and mobile phone users will grow," Hasanul Haq Inu, chief of the committee, said after the meeting.

At a press conference at the Jatiya Sangsad media centre, Inu said the committee urged the government to implement their recommendations while preparing next fiscal year's budget.

Officials of the post and telecommunications ministry agreed with the recommendations of the parliamentary committee.

The House panel asked the telecommunication ministry to prepare a proposal in light of the committee's recommendation and submit it to the finance ministry soon.

The parliamentary body suggested fixing VAT on mobile phone set at Tk 200 from the existing 12.5 percent.

It also recommended fixing taxes and VAT on all kinds of internet and telecom equipments and imported raw materials of mobile SIM between zero and five percent.

The committee, however, proposed increasing tax on imported fibre optic cable to 25 percent from the existing 3 percent to protect the country's industry.