

Innocent WP man gets death sentence

Claims grand alliance

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Rajshahi

Local ruling grand alliance leaders and freedom fighters at a press conference yesterday claimed that Ali Khawaza MA Mazid, awarded capital punishment in a murder case five years ago, is innocent.

Mazid, presidium member of Workers Party of Bangladesh district unit and a freedom fighter, is suffering in Rajshahi Central Jail since being convicted in BNP leader Abdul Hamid Moru murder case in June 2006, they said. Moru was murdered on November 9, 2003.

The press conference was organised by lawmaker Fazle Hossain Badsha at a city restaurant.

Local leaders of former BNP-Jamaat government intentionally implicated Mazid in the case, producing false witnesses and influencing the court to get Mazid convicted, they added.

Badsha and Rajshahi Mayor AHM Khairuzzaman Liton said they sent a prayer to the president seeking Mazid's clemency.

Mazid, his nephew Mohammad Boltu and upazila parishad member Abdus Shukur Ali were awarded with death and three others were given life term by Speedy Trial Tribunal of Rajshahi.

The leaders Mir Iqbal, Shams-uz Zoha, Liakat Ali Liku, Muktijoddha Sangsad district unit Commander Saidur Rahman and city unit Commander Abdul Mannan were present.



Passenger buses illegally parked on the roundabout, right at the entrance of Karnaphuli Shah Amanat Bridge in Chittagong, as drivers compete for passengers, causing traffic congestion and frequent accidents. The photo was taken yesterday.

PHOTO: ANURUP KANTI DAS

Indian PM's visit fruitful

Says AL general secretary

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Awami League General Secretary Syed Ashraful Islam yesterday said the party does not see any mark of failure in the outcome of the Indian prime minister's recent visit to Bangladesh.

"All the scheduled deals, except sharing of Teesta river's waters were signed during the visit of Prime Minister Manmohan Singh, and with this visit the relationship between the two neighbouring states has been further strengthened," he said.

Addressing a press conference at the political office of party President Sheikh Hasina at city's Dhanmondi, Ashraful termed the visit a landmark in the history of bilateral relationship between the two countries.

He pointed out that many longstanding problems like exchange of enclaves and border demarcation were resolved during the visit.

The AL leader highlighted the deal that would ensure duty-free access for 46 products from Bangladesh to India and expressed hope that this will help reduce the country's trade deficit with India.

He urged the opposition political parties to analyse the outcome from Manmohan's visit objectively and not merely from an anti-Indian sentiment.

"I expect the Teesta River water sharing

deal will be signed soon. If any regional ministers oppose it, the central government will manage it," he added.

Replying to a query, Ashraful said the deals, MoUs, and protocols which have been signed during Indian premier's visit were discussed at multiple levels in both countries.

"All documentation of the deals and agreements were discussed in the cabinet. We have discussed the issues with our political counterparts as well," he said, adding that the discussions were held under strong secrecy.

Ashraful said the government also collected expert opinion on the issues before finalising the deals.

When asked whether the Teesta deal would be held as a condition for signing the transit deal, Ashraful said, "That is not correct, these two issues are separate and will be treated so."

The supportive infrastructure for the transit process is yet to be developed in Bangladesh. It has to be developed before giving India any transit rights, he said.

Replying to a question about BNP's fresh anti-government movement, the AL general secretary said the government is not worried about the opposition's movement, rather it is interested in implementing the party's electoral pledges to people.

Workshop on banks' credit programmes begins

METRO DESK

A five-day long workshop on credit programmes of public banks began at the Swanirvar Bangladesh office in the city yesterday.

Swanirvar Bangladesh, a local NGO, organised the workshop with a view to solving the problems of credit activities at field level and implementation of target achievement of current fiscal year.

Md Nazrul Islam Khan, PS to the prime minister, inaugurated the workshop as the chief guest with managing director of Swanirvar Bangladesh Col (ret'd) Awlad Hossain in the chair.

They urged the public banks for strengthening their credit programmes.

A total of 38 general managers of Sonali Bank Limited, Bangladesh Krishi Bank, Agrani Bank Limited, Janata Bank Limited and 32 area managers of Swanirvar Bangladesh are participating in the workshop.

People to people contact a must for stronger ties with India: Quader

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Awami League (AL) presidium member Obaidul Quader yesterday stressed the need for strengthening communication at individual level among people of Bangladesh and bordering states of India to strengthen bilateral relations between the two countries.

If "people to people" communication was stronger, the Teesta agreement could have been signed during Indian Prime Minister Dr Manmohan Singh's visit, he said.

"Encouraging people to people communication should be a major diplomatic strategy of our government," he said.

Quader was speaking as the chief guest at a discussion titled "Perspective: Politicians' role and duty in current politics" organised by Janatar Prattasha (people's expectation), a social organisation, in the city's Dhaka Reporters Unity.

Deploring the remark by BNP leaders that Manmohan's visit failed to secure any achievement for the country, Quader said the visit is the beginning of success.

The economic framework agreement

and duty-free access of 46 Bangladeshi commodities in India will have a significant impact upon the country's economy, he said.

"It will remove trade imbalance between the two countries and expand our trade and commerce," he said. However, he acknowledged that the visit could not fulfil people's expectations.

Referring to the BNP chief's remark that the government signed secret contracts with India, he said, "Please do not make such remarks without any evidence. Irresponsible comments question your responsibility as the opposition party."

Quader brushed away BNP's allegation that former chief justice ABM Khairul Haque delivered the verdict of cancellation of caretaker government system for money.

"He received around Tk 10 lakh from the prime minister's relief fund for medical treatment abroad as per rule," he said.

He also urged his party men to refrain from talking too much. "Your unrestrained speeches tarnish the image of the party and the government," he said.

Janatar Prattasha Convenor MA Karim chaired the function.

Meghna fined Tk 30 lakh

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The Department of Environment (DoE) yesterday fined Meghna Group of Industries Tk 30 lakh for filling lower areas of the Meghna riverbank in Narayanganj area without any authorisation.

A DoE press release said they directed the company to pay the fine within today and to halt any ongoing work on the project until they get an environmental clearance certificate for the authority.

It also asked the authority to submit an Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) report on the project.

DoE Director (Monitoring and Enforcement) Mohammad Munir Chowdhury gave the order in presence of the company officials following a drive in the area in August.

During the drive on August 17, DoE team found that the company had filled up almost 30 acres of lower land of the river from South Anandabazar to Mamlutpur Union under Sonargaon Upazila.



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