

Secret killings

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decomposed bodies with their hands and legs tied were found floating in the river or in some water bodies or beside the roads later," she said, expressing concern.

According to Odhikar, another rights group, 18 people disappeared in 2010, 14 of them being allegedly picked up by Rab, two by police and two by the detectives.

Though relatives of such victims often blamed law enforcement agencies, the agencies neither proved their innocence nor arrested anyone in connection with those disappearances and the subsequent killings, added Sultana, also a former caretaker government adviser.

Instead of ensuring people's security, the police and the Rab remain under the control of some influential quarters," she noted, without specifying who those influential quarters were.

And even as the number of such incidents continues to mount, the government is taking no effective measures to stop those. Instead, she added, top government officials and law enforcers were issuing contradictory statements.

The ruling Awami League in its 2008 electoral manifesto pledged to stop extrajudicial killings and try those involved in such killings, said ASK Director (investigation and information) Nur Khan.

But during the tenure of the current government, he added, there have been allegations of extrajudicial killing against Rab.

Between January and December last year, 92 people were killed in "crossfire" with law enforcers, mostly Rab members, while 116 died in the custody of various law enforcement agencies, said the ASK report titled "Bangladesh Human Rights Situation Review-2011".

During the same period, 134 people were killed in mob beating while 206 journalists were repressed in the hands of the law enforcers and the ruling party men. These incidents demonstrate gross violation of law and worsening law and order, the report says.

Thirty-three women committed suicide failing to stand sexual harassment by stalkers and 23 others were killed by the perpetrators for protesting such harassment, while 1,346 women fell victim to rape and acid attacks.

The ASK director said the government imposed section 144 for 133 times mainly to thwart opposition programmes last year.

The government also failed to check border killing as 39 Bangladeshis were killed by the Indian Border Security Force (BSF) in 2011 alone, he said, adding that 30 more Bangladeshis were abducted and 64 injured in the border region during the same period.

The rights body in its report also criticised the trial process of the BDR mutineers.

It said Bangladesh National Human Rights Commission (NHRC) cannot function effectively to uphold human rights for lack of staff. Established on June 22, 2010, with a chairman and six commissioners, the NHRC has 28 staff against its need for 68.

Govt may ask

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Usually, 30 to 35 lakh tonnes of fuel is imported in a fiscal year. But it was 48 lakh tonnes in the last fiscal year and could hit 70 lakh tonnes in the current fiscal year, the official said.

According to the import policy 2009-12, private power plants can directly import fuel on government permission. In that case, the importer has to sign an agreement with the BPC mentioning the quantity of fuel in line with the Petroleum Act 1974.

The official said Khulna Power Company Ltd directly imports furnace oil on government permission. Private companies have set up 16 rental and quick rental plants with a production capacity of 1,372MW electricity. All of them, except four, run on furnace oil, said the Power Division.

Another 19 plants with a generation capacity of 2,120MW electricity will go into operation next year in public and private sectors. Most of the plants run on furnace oil and diesel.

106 journalists killed in 2011

Media rights body urges UN action

AFP, Brussels

The International Federation of Journalists (IFJ) called on the UN Saturday to take "drastic action" against governments of the most dangerous countries for media.

They made the call after 106 journalists and media personnel were killed in 2011.

The year 2011 was "another bloody year" for the media, the media rights body observed.

It blamed "governments' failure to uphold their international obligations for the ongoing violence targeting media".

In a letter to UN Secretary General Ban Ki-moon, the IFJ called for effective implementation of international legal instruments to combat the prevailing culture of impunity for crimes against journalists.

"It is abundantly clear that deadly violence against journalists is not just a blip due to conflicts around the world but has become a regular cycle in many countries where journalists are hunted down, targeted and murdered by the enemies of press freedom," said the letter signed by Jim Boumelha, the IFJ president.

"In a situation where governments are in denial or indifferent to what has become a regular pattern of targeted killings of journalists, it is incumbent upon yourself and the United Nations to remind them of their responsibility to protect journalists," the letter reads.

The IFJ list of work-related media killings of 106 journalists and media per-

sonnel was coordinated with the International News Safety Institute. The figure is up from 94 killings recorded in 2010.

An additional 20 journalists and collaborators also died in accidents and natural disasters.

The deadliest region in 2011 was the Middle East and Arab World with 32 journalists and media personnel killed.

'Muggers' kill

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storage in Daudkandi of Comilla, was found dead near the rail lines at the Tongi-Modhumita level crossing, his daughter Salma Akter told The Daily Star.

She said her father left home around 5:30am for Daudkandi. Half an hour later, she heard some neighbours talking about a body lying near the rail lines at the level crossing, some 150 yards from their house.

Out of curiosity, she went to the spot with others and identified the body as her father's, she added.

Tongi police recovered the body and sent it to Gazipur Sadar Hospital morgue for an autopsy.

The body bore injury marks on the waist and cheek, morgue sources said.

Zahid's mobile phone and a bag containing his clothes were missing, said his family members.

A case was filed in this connection with Tongi Police Station.

Gazi Ruhul Imam, officer-in-charge of the police station, said they assumed it was a case of mugging.

Police were investigating whether there had been any previous enmity behind the incident.

New Year gift

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about 22,13,66,383 copies of textbooks to some 3,12,13,759 students of primary, secondary and technical education schools and Ebtedayee and Dakhil madrasas. The distribution will continue for seven days, officials say.

Education Minister Nurul Islam Nahid inaugurated the festival by handing over books to the students of Vigarunnisa Noon School and College at its Bailey Road branch in the capital at 10:00am.

Around noon, Nahid went to Motijheel Government Boys School and started the distribution. There, students from adjacent Motijheel Government Girls School also received books.

All the children were jubilant at getting books from a minister. They played drums and waved placards and balloons. Parents and teachers too joined the ceremony.

"I am very happy today [yesterday] getting new books," said Atiqur Rahman, a class-VII student of Motijheel Government Boys School. "We want to get books on time every year."

"Since the students are getting books on the very first day of the academic calendar, they would be encouraged to learn more," Harun-ar-Rashid, father of a school-goer, said.

The education minister on the occasion said the government had presented the students with this New Year gift despite many challenges.

He said the free textbook distribution reduces the anxiety of parents and students over getting books on time, makes students more attentive, cuts dropout rate and thus helps improve education quality.

Recent public exam results are the outcome of this initiative, he said, urging the students to study more. "It is you who can change the country."

Of the total books printed, over 10.35 crore copies of 56 subjects are for over 1.81 crore primary-level students, including those of English medium; 1.58 crore copies of 34 subjects are for some 25.53 lakh ebtedayee students, over 8.52 crore copies of 172 subjects for 84.23 lakh secondary and SSC vocational students and 1.66 crore copies of 54 subjects for 19.42 lakh Dakhil and Dakhil vocational stu-

dents.

All the textbooks of primary and secondary grades have also been uploaded as e-books on the National Curriculum and Textbook Board website: www.ncrb.gov.bd.

This year, the government has printed all primary textbooks in four colours through international tender. Around 40 percent of the books have been printed in India while the rest by local printers.

Asked about the international tender, Primary and Mass Education Minister Afsarul Ameen said printing through international tender has reduced the printing cost, improved the quality and helped local printers take a competitive attitude.

He was briefing newsmen at his ministry's conference room at 1:30pm.

Ameen inaugurated the distribution at Motijheel Ideal Government Primary School around 11:00am.

He asked journalists to inform the ministry and other offices concerned if anyone does not get textbooks.

Elsewhere in the country, the distribution was held under supervision of people representatives, government officials and school authorities.

In reply to a question, AKM Abdul Awal Majumdar, secretary of primary ministry, at the briefing said punitive action will be taken if anyone asks money for the books.

In the wake of recurring textbook crisis in previous years, the government in 2009 took the decision of free book distribution at both primary and secondary levels.

JCD blocks road

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It is really very unfortunate that general people have to suffer when the ruling party or the opposition party conducts such programmes, said Jhuma Akhtar, a resident of Gendaria.

Leaders of both the parties should think about people's suffering and find out a solution, she added.

Last week, a mass rally of the ruling Awami League-led grand alliance at the same venue kept traffic movement suspended for hours in most parts of the capital.

Caretaker must be on agenda

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on the occasion of its 33rd founding anniversary. Several thousand JCD leaders and activists attended the rally carrying portraits of Ziaur Rahman, Khaleda Zia and Tarique Rahman. The crowd spilled over into the adjacent thoroughfare causing traffic congestion in the area.

President Zillur Rahman invited BNP to join him in a dialogue he initiated on formation of the next Election Commission. BNP's dialogue with the president is scheduled for January 11 at Bangabhaban.

Khaleda at the rally made a blistering attack on the government for its "failures", saying the AL-led government could not implement its electoral pledges in the last three years, and people in the government have even forgotten many pledges.

Demanding elections to Ducs (Dhaka University Central Students Union) and

student unions of residential halls, the leader of the opposition asked the Dhaka University vice-chancellor to create a congenial atmosphere on the campus so that pro-opposition students may use the campus freely.

Asking JCD leaders and activists to be united against the government she labelled autocratic, and to be aware about controversial persons within their organisation, the BNP chairperson said she did not use students as cannon-fodder for politics or for going to power, and she will never do that either.

She urged JCD members to be prepared to elect their leadership through votes in the future, and to be liberal, modern, and secular. Currently the JCD central committee is selected by the BNP chairperson.

"The new committee of the organisation will be announced soon, but you have to give emphasis on

ideology rather than posts. Good, talented, loyal and dedicated leaders will be included in the new committee," she said accusing pro-AL student organisation Bangladesh Chhatra League of criminal activities.

"We did not allow Chhatra Dal to get involved in any wrongdoing when we were in power," she claimed.

The former premier said the country is now in an acute crisis, as corruption has spread all over the society "from palaces to villages".

"The parliament has become ineffective. The government made the administration partisan. People of BNP are becoming victims of secret killings. Rab is being used to suppress the opposition. Double standards are being maintained in the sector of law and judiciary," she said.

Accusing ruling AL of politicking with the legacy of Liberation War, Khaleda said

Jamaat-e-Islami was a friend of AL when they were in a movement together for introducing the caretaker government system. "Jamaat was not a war criminal to them back then," she quipped.

She said people are now with BNP and that is why the government wants to eliminate her party, but none will get any respite by making Jatiya Party the main opposition. "Ershad himself is anti-liberation. Check what was his role during the Liberation War," she said.

BNP acting secretary general Mirza Fakhrul Islam Alamgir, Khandakder Mosharraf Hossain, Amanullah Aman, and Fazlul Haque Milon also spoke among others, while JCD President Sultan Salahuddin Tuku presided over the rally.

Earlier, Khaleda inaugurated the programme by hoisting the national flag and releasing pigeons.

Dr Kamal seeks caretaker for next 2 polls

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election commissioner (CEC) and election commissioners expires next month.

Dr Kamal mentioned that full text of the SC verdict on the caretaker issue is yet to be published.

"The court commented in favour of continuing the caretaker government system for the next two parliamentary polls," said Kamal, who led a 13-member party delegation at the dialogue.

Referring to massive rigging in the 1996 Magura by-elections to parliament during the then BNP-led

alliance government's tenure, the jurist said there are also other reasons for holding parliamentary polls under the caretaker system. The Election Commission alone will not be able to hold free and fair elections without this system, he added.

On appointment of the next CEC and ECs, Dr Kamal, who is one of the framers of the country's constitution, said it can be done in three ways. "The president may appoint any one he wants, (or) a law can be enacted in line with the constitution

under which a search committee will be formed or the president can take some names from all concerned and select them.

"Asked if his party would support reappointment of the incumbent, the Gonoforum chief said, "We will submit names if the president wants us to do so."

TALKSWITHIOJ

Joining the talks later in the day, Bangladesh Islami Oikya Jote (IOJ) Chairman Misbahur Rahman urged the president to ask the ruling Awami League and the oppo-

sition BNP-led alliances to give five names each for appointment as the CEC and four ECs.

He suggested appointment of the four ECs with two each from the two sides.

The other parties which already took part in the ongoing talks are Jatiya Party, Jatiya Samajtantrik Dal, Workers Party, Jatiya Party-JP, Liberal Democratic Party, Islamic Front Bangladesh, Communist Party of Bangladesh and Bangladesh Samyabadi Dal.

Road crash

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left his Uttara residence in the capital with his family Saturday night to attend the namaj-e-janaza of one of his maternal uncles.

When their car reached Nautola around 5:00am, the driver lost control over the steering and the car fell into the pond, said locals. All of them in the car died.

When people were going to a nearby mosque to say Fajr prayers, they saw the floating car and called for help through a loudspeaker of the mosque.

Locals then recovered the bodies and informed Sonaimuri police of the incident.

Humayun Kabir, officer-in-charge of Sonaimuri Police Station, said they handed over the bodies to relatives of the deceased.

PM takes

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had sat with the leaders of Newspaper Owners Association of Bangladesh (NOAB), who wanted to know of the latest power situation in the country.

"Their attitude is one of surprise at all the progress we have made," said Hasina. On a note of sarcasm, she said: "You [newspapers] are the nabaws [rulers] and we are your subjects."

Hasina said the NOAB leaders asked her why the government had gone for fuel-run and quick rental power plants at higher costs.

"To that I told them, 'All right, let us stop the diesel-run power plants.' But the NOAB leaders said it [power] was required. My response was, 'You [newspapers] say it is required, but when you write, you say precisely the opposite. That is not fair.'"

Alluding to the newspapers, Hasina said: "If we say anything against you [newspapers], the heavens come crashing down."

"It looks as if those of us who are in politics have thick skins that will always be the target of others' wrath."

Hasina said 2,900 megawatts of electricity had already been added to the national grid, and the government planned to construct three coal-fired power plants soon to reduce dependency on fuel-run plants.

Buet erupts in protests

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prompted several hundred students to take to the streets and stage sit-ins.

The authorities of Bangladesh University of Engineering and Technology (Buet) yesterday suspended all academic activities until further notice, as the students continued to stage sit-ins inside the administrative building, demanding expulsion of the attackers.

The agitating students were still on the premises till 1:30am. They closed off all the gates except the main entrance to the university campus.

Sujit Saha and Saifullah Shikdar, students of the material and metallurgical department, and Arif Raihan, student of the mechanical engineering department, beat up Tousif Ahmed after they got involved in a scuffle, said agitated students.

His left hand broken, Tousif has been receiving treatment in the capital's Square Hospital. He also received injuries on his leg and other parts of the body, said

his classmate Sunayan.

Tousif underwent surgery on his broken hand, he added.

Sunayan said the attackers entered his room at Nazrul Islam Hall and beat him up with sticks at about 1:30pm on Saturday.

On Wednesday, Tousif and several senior students got into a fight with some junior students, including the three, who were trying to occupy some chairs reserved for seniors at a concert at the university auditorium, said sources.

The concert was organised as part of a farewell for the university's 2006 batch to which Tousif belongs.

The scuffle was the reason behind the assault on Tousif, said the sources.

On Saturday, the protesters confined Buet Pro-Vice Chancellor Prof Habibur Rahman and director of the Student Welfare Council Aminul Islam to their offices for hours.

Following the incident, Aminul Islam tendered his resignation to the pro-vice chancellor yesterday evening

citing health reasons, said the sources.

Meanwhile, the Buet administration formed a four-member committee to probe the incident. The committee has been asked to submit its report today.

Tanmoy Ahmed, general secretary of Buet unit of the Chhatra League, admitted that the three were Chhatra League activists and often participated in the organisation's programmes.

Arif claimed that Raihan, one of the three alleged attackers, was not involved in the incident.

Tanmoy said the question of expelling them did not arise, as they were not members of the organisation. They, however, have been asked not to attend any Chhatra League programmes in the future.

Buet VC Prof Nazrul said politics had nothing to do with the incident.

The VC said the university would bear the costs of the victim's treatment.

The teachers will not take any classes in line with yesterday's decision, he added.

Minister, adviser

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be predicted whether prices will be increased or reduced. All I can say is that prices will be adjusted in future," the energy adviser said.

The Power Division organised the briefing on the power situation and deals reached with organisations and companies under the division.

Muhith said he did not think the latest hike was caused by rental power plants.

Defending the government's decision to opt for costly rental power plants, he said, "What could we do? The country would have plunged into darkness had the rental power plants not been set up."

"No statement can be as silly as the one that the price of power is rising because power is bought from rental plants," he added.

The minister also talked about the government's plans and said public concern over power production would be over once the plans were implemented.

"Use of coal, renewable fuel and furnace oil has been increased to boost power production. A deal to set up a nuclear plant has also been signed," he added.

Muhith's comments came less than two weeks after a Tk 0.55 per unit hike in electricity prices took effect on December 22 for all retail customers across the country.

The price of per kilowatt-hour electricity soared by 13.24 percent to Tk 4.71 in the first phase of the two-stage increment announced on December 1.

The energy regulator will again increase the retail tariff by 7.09 percent on February 1, taking the per unit price to Tk 5.02.

Power tariff was also raised for charities, irrigation pumps and religious institutions by 5 percent.

It was the second rise last year. Earlier on February 8, Bangladesh Energy Regulatory Commission (BERC) increased the average retail electricity tariff by 5 percent.

At a news conference on December 22, BERC Chairman Syed Yusuf Hossain said the increase in electricity prices would help the government save about Tk 1,000 crore in annual subsidies. He, however, said the estimate was not final.

Officials say the govern-

ment has been spending huge sums of money on energy subsidies, contributing to rising inflation and higher bank borrowing. This price hike will ease the pressure on government coffers.

The government claims the electricity prices in Bangladesh are the lowest in South Asia.

Muhith yesterday said power would be imported not only from India, but from other countries, including Nepal and Bhutan, as well.

The government is having difficulty feeding its diesel-run power plants (see related story on page 20).

The demand for fuel oil has risen to 68 lakh tonnes in the current fiscal year, which was 48 lakh tonnes in the last fiscal year, as Bangladesh is importing a huge amount of oil for rental and quick rental power plants.

The energy adviser, however, said higher power production was contributing to economic growth.

State Minister for Power Muhammad Enamul Huq, Power Secretary AK Azad and Power Development Board Chairman ASM Alamgir Kabir were present at the briefing.

COMMENTS ON PM BCL men stab policemen

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Rajshahi

Bangladesh Chhatra League activists of Rajshahi University unit yesterday stabbed an on-duty policeman and humiliated a police officer for making "derogatory comments" about the prime minister.

Constable Abdur Rashid was admitted to Police Line Hospital with injuries to his hands and left shoulder, said police officials.

Assistant Sub-inspector Abul Bashar of Motihar Police Station, who was in charge of the on-duty police personnel at Shah Makhdum Hall on the campus, alleged that the BCL men forced him to get up from knees and sit down holding ears in public.

The incident took place around 1:00am, when a group of BCL men armed with sticks and knives swooped on the policemen and blamed them for hurling abuses towards the PM.

At one stage of an altercation with Rashid, they stabbed him.

Later, law enforcers from Motihar Police Station rescued the policemen around 3:00am.

BCL activists Abdus Salam of management and Tanim Ahmed of public administration departments, who allegedly led the attack, acknowledged that they "taught the police personnel a good lesson for abusing the premier".

Contacted, RU BCL unit President Ahmed Ali said both the policeman and the BCL activists committed wrong.

The BCL men should not have taken law in their own hands instead of complaining to the police high-ups, he added.

Morshedul Anwar Khan, deputy commissioner (headquarters) of Rajshahi Metropolitan Police, told The Daily Star that they are going to take legal measures in this connection.

BCL activists create chaos at SUST reception

SUST CORRESPONDENT

Bangladesh Chhatra League (BCL) of Shahjalal University of Science and Technology unit yesterday created chaos at a reception programme of first year students.

As the programme began in morning, BCL activists under the banner of general students motivated by the Liberation War formed a human chain at 12 noon and demanded punishment of the 'corrupt' administration.

At one stage, some 20 BCL activists got on the programme stage and submitted a memorandum to UGC Chairman AK Azad Chowdhury, who was present there as chief guest.

Considering the BCL memorandum, the UGC chairman in his speech labelled the VC as a liar alleging that the administration is involved in corruption.

His speech sparked protests and criticism among students and teachers. Terming it 'beyond the bounds of decency', several teachers expressed their grievances to The Daily Star.

A reliable source said the BCL activists created the incident