

Menon

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and to hold dialogues in or outside parliament.

"After the repeal of the caretaker government system, a new crisis has been created around the issue of holding a fair and neutral election. It has raised fears in the public mind. So the ruling party and the opposition have to take the initiative to solve the issue immediately," observed Menon.

The lawmaker was addressing a rally of the party to press home its 10-point demand at the capital's Mahanagar Natyamancha.

Menon, however, criticised the ruling party for creating the new vacuum by cancelling the caretaker government system without framing a new structure for an interim government.

The Workers Party chief blasted the opposition for taking a stand in favour of the war crimes suspects and urged the grand alliance to get united to ensure the trial of the war criminals.

"You are taking up different programmes and creating destructive occurrences to go to power without considering the public interest," he added.

He questioned how and where thousands of crores of taka have disappeared from the stockmarket. He also criticised the government for not trying the persons responsible for damaging the share market.

Besides, the government has failed to control the prices of essentials and has made public life miserable by increasing the prices of oil, gas and electricity, he maintained.

Now the people are frustrated with such failures of the government, while the opposition is taking this opportunity to destabilise the country by carrying out destructive activities, noted Menon.

The Workers Party has announced a series of programmes to realise its 10-point demand, including speeding up the trial of war criminals, fixing the structure of the interim government and taking necessary initiatives for controlling the prices of essentials.

It will hold rallies from February 28 to May 31 in unions, upazilas and districts across the country.

Bimal Biswas, Fazle Hossain Badsha, Nurul Hossain and Hafizur Rahman addressed the rally, among others.

ADP

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The meeting did not take any decision on increasing energy prices, including that of fuel, but if necessary, the prices could be hiked further during the current FY.

The commerce ministry at the meet proposed to increase tax on imported luxury items but no decision was taken in this regard.

Also yesterday, both the resource and the fiscal coordination committees held separate meetings.

The latest economic situation of the country, the revised budget and the fiscal measures were among the agenda.

The meetings discussed that despite the ADP cut, the bank borrowing might rise to Tk 25,000 crore from present target of around Tk 19,000.

Both the World Bank and International Monetary Fund have forecast that this time the GDP growth may be 6 percent against the government target of 7 percent.

The coordination committee meeting said fulfilling the target is still achievable and if a revision is necessary it will be done in March.

Checking inflation was aimed at 7.5 percent on an average but the meeting observed that it would not be possible and set revised target at 9.5 percent.

BNP instigated

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processions in support of the mutineers. She also urged the people who are now giving legal support to mutineers in the court of law.

Earlier in the day, Hasina at Kuakata of the district said Awami League never tolerates any injustice. The trial of war criminals is underway, and the trial of BDR members who committed crimes will be completed within the shortest possible time, she said.

After laying the foundation stone of Kuakata Pura Bhaban, the prime minister told a rally, "We have upgraded Kuakata to a municipality. As a result, planned urbanisation would be made alongside increasing civic facilities."

With the uplift of Kuakata, the socioeconomic condition of locals has been changed remarkably, she claimed.

Hasina called upon people to assist the government efforts to ensure civic amenities for people living in the municipality, development of roads and sewerage system, creation of pollution-free environment and to get rid of problems regarding drinking water and water logging.

Later, the prime minister inaugurated Parjatan motel Yubo Pantha Nibash and the 20-bed Kuakata Hospital.

Mentioning that Kuakata is enriched with natural beauty, Hasina said no government in the past took any steps for its development. "The previous Awami League government had constructed a tourism complex to make Kuakata a tourism-friendly area and preserved and developed the historic establishments," she said.

The last Awami League government also increased the facilities of the beautiful sea beach so that the people can see sunrise and sunset without any hassle. "Now Kuakata has been turned into an attractive tourist spot," she said.

She also said the living standards of the people have improved with thriving industries and trade and

UN report

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newspaper said the latest assessments by US spy agencies are broadly consistent with a 2007 intelligence finding that concluded Iran had abandoned its nuclear weapons programme.

But the IAEA inspectors also found that Iran had stepped up the installation of centrifuges at its main uranium enrichment plant in Natanz. Over the past three months, 2600 new centrifuges have been brought into operation, spinning uranium gas.

The report found that Iran has now produced nearly five and a half metric tonnes of low enriched uranium enriched to about 3.5% and about 109kg of uranium enriched to 20%. If enriched further, to more than 90% purity, the total stockpile would be more than enough to make four nuclear warheads.

However, the report may not be enough for western countries, led by the US, the UK and France, to persuade Russia and China to take part in an escalation of sanctions.

The Russian Prime Minister Vladimir Putin said the focus on the nuclear programme was a cover for western attempts to oust the clerical regime in Tehran.

The report also criticised Iran for not co-operating with investigations into its nuclear programme, not allowing inspectors to visit a suspect nuclear site and refusing to answer questions about a former Soviet nuclear weapons scientist who provided technical advice.

The report concluded that because of Tehran's lack of co-operation "the agency is unable to provide credible assurance about the absence of undeclared nuclear material and activities in Iran".

The IAEA also said it had

commerce.

"With the formation of the municipality, we want to provide modern civic facilities to the people." To this end, she said, the present government has established nine new municipalities while upgrading many of the 312 municipalities.

The government has framed a time-befitting municipality act and ensured the women representation in the municipalities, Hasina added.

The prime minister said municipalities have been brought under the web network, while computerised tax management has been introduced in 108 municipalities. All municipalities now have information service centres.

During her day-long visit to the coastal district, the prime minister laid the foundation stones of three bridges on Kuakata-Kalapara road named after Father of the Nation Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman's three sons--Sheikh Kamal, Sheikh Jamal and Sheikh Russel--and inaugurated a 50-bed hospital.

At Rangabali, Hasina said her government after assuming office in 2009 has taken initiatives to run local governments by elected representatives of people.

"Only the elected representatives of people will run the local government bodies as per the constitution," she said at the meeting held on the occasion of laying the foundation of Rangabali Upazila Parishad Complex.

Hasina said her government enacted the Upazila Parishad Act in 1998 according to article-59 and -60 of the constitution.

She also said all local government buildings in the coastal areas would be constructed in a way so that they can be used as shelters during cyclones, tsunamis, floods or other natural disasters.

The government wants to deliver timely services to people at ward- and village-levels in a transparent, accountable and effective manner, the prime minister said.

Japan-Korea

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asked questions on insurance and material and equipment list.

An official pointed out that had the PDB really wanted to remain rigid on following rules, Marubeni-Hyundai joint venture's bid would have been disqualified. But that did not happen, as a powerful ruling party parliamentarian, also a lawyer, was lobbying for the bidder, the official claimed.

The official added that if clarification was sought from other bidders, at least two or three would have qualified. "All the Chinese bidders had issues related to power plant boilers. A couple of them did not produce the proper experience certificate," the official said, adding, "But it's likely some of them could have corrected their shortcomings."

The official added that in the interest of getting more financial options the tendering authorities should have been more flexible.

The PDB on Thursday recommended Marubeni-Hyundai as the responsive bidder and forwarded its recommendation to the power ministry for approval.

The PDB went for Bibiyana-3 tender on such financial arrangement as a measure to overcome project financing problems and quickly implement projects.

The IAEA also said it had

TEACHER RECRUITMENT

8 sued for selling fake questions

OUR CORRESPONDENT,
Thakurgaon

Eight people including two high school teachers have been sued in Panchagarh and Thakurgaon for selling and possessing fake question papers of a teacher recruitment test.

Wares Ali, sub-inspector of Panchagarh Police Station, filed a case on Friday night against three people.

They are Obiadur Rahman, 34, assistant teacher of Bishnu Prasad Government High School, Md Monsur Ali, 35, assistant teacher of Kholapara High School, both under Panchagarh Sadar upazila, and Monir Hossain, 17, employee at a photo-copier shop in the town.

A total of 10 lakh candidates of 61 districts took part in Friday's recruitment test against 10,650 vacant posts of assistant teachers in the government primary schools.

The case statement says the accused were arrested while making copies of four set fake question papers at Arabi Computer shop on Thursday night. Acting on a tip-off, a joint team of the police and the National Security Intelligence (NSI) conducted the drive and arrested Monir with fake questions.

Sensing presence of police, the two teachers who gave the question papers at the shop, fled the scene.

Local people and police sources said many candidates bought the sets at different amounts of money ranging between Tk 5,000-30,000.

In Thakurgaon, five persons were made accused in a case filed with Pirganj Police Station for possessing fake question papers.

Assistant Sub-Inspector of Pirganj Police Station Rezaul Karim filed the case against Anisuzzaman Shanta, 35, Ali Akbar, 36, Belal, 30, Shader, 34, and Shohaq, 33.

Police said they were arrested with one set of fake question papers from rail crossing area at Pirganj Bazar in the town early Friday when they were coming to the town on a microbus from Haripur, an upazila in the district.

It was a plot

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also to destroy the future of the nation," he told a commemorative meeting at the capital's Institution of Engineers, Bangladesh.

The main opposition party organised the programme marking the 3rd anniversary of the carnage.

The BNP leader claimed that weakening the army was another objective of the BDR mutiny. "A conspiracy is now going on to destroy the army linking it with militancy and religious fanaticism."

He also criticised the government for detaining BNP leader Nasir Uddin Pintu on charges of his involvement in the mutiny.

In his address BNP standing committee member Lt Gen (ret'd) Mahbubur Rahman said the ongoing trial of the BDR carnage is just a show. The nation wants to see a proper trial and for that, a fresh investigation into the incident is required, he added.

UNB adds, Mirza Fakhrul yesterday said the Pikhana carnage was committed following a deep-rooted conspiracy to weaken the national security.

"A fair trial for the gruesome killings couldn't be held even after three years of the incident. Instead, a smokescreen has been put up," he said.

He was talking to newsmen after placing wreaths along with leaders and workers of BNP at the mazar of former president Ziaur Rahman.

Meanwhile, BNP leaders Mirza Fakhrul, Lt Gen (ret'd) Mahbubur Rahman, Brig Gen (ret'd) Hannan Shah and Air Vice-Marshal (ret'd) Altaf Hossain Chowdhury yesterday placed wreaths at the graves of the slain army officers at Banani military graveyard and offered Fateha (prayers).

None held illegally

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sold at a discussion at Hotel Sonargaon in the city.

The minister made the remarks in response to a statement from the United Nations. "We have received a written statement from the UN which says the persons in custody have been detained illegally on charges of committing crimes against humanity. I want to categorically say that detaining anybody without any evidence and someone's detention for trial on specific charges are not the same."

The accused under trial have been enjoying all kinds of rights including scope for defending themselves in accordance with the law of the land, insisted Shafique.

The government is taking action against any reported violation of human rights in the country, he mentioned adding, the National Human Rights Commission (NHRC), several human rights and civil society organisations, and media are very much aware of any such abuse.

On another issue, the minister said there is no

indigenous citizen in Bangladesh.

Tribal people in our country cannot be treated as indigenous as per the definition of International Labour Organization (ILO) convention No 169.

It states that only the people who lived in a county at the time of conquest or colonisation can be treated as indigenous, he pointed out.

Shafique also mentioned that the government will not abolish the provision of death penalty, although the European Commission has been urging to repeal it.

The socio-economic condition of Bangladesh has not become so developed that it can be repealed, he argued.

The number of death penalties in the country has reduced in recent years since the lower courts' verdicts are reviewed by the High Court and Appellate Divisions of the Supreme Court. Even the president of the republic can pardon the convicts on logical grounds, maintained the minister.

Infrastructure

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fraudulent activities in the name of transit of goods. "Modern technology can detect tampering easily. So, you don't have to waste your time over a physical examination of goods in the matter of transit."

In a joint communiqué signed after Sheikh Hasina's visit to New Delhi in January 2010, Bangladesh and India agreed to put in place a comprehensive framework of cooperation in transportation and connectivity, among other matters. Dhaka also agreed to allow the use of Mongla and Chittagong seaports for movement of goods to and from India by road and rail.

Since then, the transit issue has been widely discussed in the public domain.

The Hasina government, however, maintains that it will not sign any transit treaty since transit between the two countries has existed since 1947. It says it is just updating the expansion of the old transit deals and working out the operational modus operandi.

Government policymakers on different occasions have said though connectivity protocols between the two countries cover air, rail, water and roads, the use of roads will have to wait until the infrastructure is upgraded to a point where it can handle enhanced traffic.

At yesterday's programme, Muhith expressed disappointment at the poor progress in intra-regional trade (which now stands at less than 5 percent) among Saarc countries.

He said many studies had underlined the need for cooperation in trade and investment to boost intra-regional trade.

Pointing to the inclusion of trade and environment in the Saarc Charter years after

the forum's formation, he said, "This kind of decision requires political will."

Such political will is needed to boost cooperation in trade and investment, which are crucial in establishing a union or a common market, the minister said.

"If cooperation is ensured in trade and investment, other issues such as water, agriculture, food security, tourism and power will fall into line."

On the formation of executive agencies or boards, the minister said such boards could implement the decisions made at the government level.

Referring to electricity trade in the region, Sanjay Bhattacharyya, acting Indian high commissioner to Bangladesh, said dissimilarity in the grid system makes it difficult for countries to do such trade.

He said Bangladesh could invest in the power sector in India.

On the sharing of water of common rivers, Bhattacharyya said, "The Ganga sets the template for other agreements."

He stressed the need for regional connectivity, saying it would lead to future closer relations in this part of the world.

"If people are connected nothing can stop us."

He said of India's \$1 billion credit to Bangladesh, both sides had reached an agreement on \$830 million for a number of projects.

The Indian acting high commissioner claimed that Bangladesh now hardly faced any tangible non-tariff barriers (NTBs) to export goods to his country.

However, Tariff Commission Chairman Mozibur Rahman told The Daily Star that Bangladeshi businesses still faced many non-tariff barriers in exporting goods to India.

2 US advisers

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of Quans at a US-run military base -- an incident that forced US President Barack Obama to apologise to the Afghan people.

Nato said that in the Kabul shooting "an individual" turned his weapon against International Security Assistance Force officers in the interior ministry, killing two, without giving further details.

A government source told AFP the two men were American advisers and a member of the Afghan police shot them dead.

"For obvious force protection reasons, I have ... taken immediate measures to recall all other ISAF personnel working in ministries in and around Kabul," said General John Allen, commander of Nato's International Security Assistance Force.

"We are investigating the crime and will pursue all leads to find the person responsible for this attack,"

he added.

The US, which leads a 130,000-strong military force fighting an insurgency in Afghanistan, has advisers throughout the Afghan government.

Britain also said its embassy was also temporarily withdrawing all civilian mentors and advisers from Afghan government institutions in Kabul.

The latest deaths come hard on the heels of the killing of two American troops on Thursday when an Afghan soldier turned his weapon on them at their base in eastern Nangarhar province as demonstrators approached.

The Quran burning has inflamed anti-Western sentiment already smouldering in Afghanistan over abuses by US-led foreign troops.

Violent anti-US protests have seen furious Afghans attack French, Norwegian, UN and US bases, shouting "Death to America" after the

The government will neither formulate nor amend any law which could hurt the religious sentiment of the people, he noted.

Presiding over the meeting, NHRC Chairman Prof Mizanur Rahman hoped his office would be turned into an institution.

Some 24 secretaries of the government and members of the NHRC attended the programme.

Earlier in the morning, the law minister at the inaugural session of a training programme of district and sessions judges said the government will amend the civil and criminal procedure codes in order to dispose of cases within a specific time frame to ensure the litigants get justice within a reasonable time and their sufferings are eased.

He urged the lower court judges not to adjourn proceedings of cases without any plausible reason.

Thirty-five district and sessions judges attended the session at Judicial Administration Training Institute in the city.

Weak infrastructure and poor banking facilities at border points are among those barriers, he said.

Bangladesh Unnayan Parishad, a private think-tank, and Centre for Research in Rural and Industrial Development (CRRID), India, jointly organised the dialogue.

It was co-chaired by PKSF Chairman Qazi Kholiquzzaman Ahmad and CRRID Executive Vice-Chairman Rashpal Malhotra.

Schoolteacher

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went to the victim's house around 2:00am, and asked Purnamoy to come out. The criminals shot him at point-blank as he came out, leaving him dead on the spot, said Sobhamoy Chakma, younger brother of the victim.

Baghaichhari police recovered the dead body and sent it to Khagrachhari Adhunik Hospital for an autopsy. The body was later handed over to the victim's family, said Md Shafiq, sub-inspector (SI) of the station.

He said they could not identify the criminals, and that none lodged a case with the police station.

United People's Democratic Front (UPDF) in a press release yesterday blamed the Parbattya Chattagram Jana Sanghati Samity (PCJSS) for the killing. It demanded arrest of the killers and exemplary punishment.

Sajib Chakma, assistant information secretary of PCJSS, refuted the allegation, and claimed that the murder could have been occurred due to conflicts between the PCJSS's reformist group and the UPDF.

Very recently, the UPDF is indulging in criminal activities in the area, the PCJSS spokesperson claimed.

Palestinian 'shot dead' in W Bank

BBC ONLINE

A Palestinian man has died after being injured in clashes with the Israeli army in the West Bank, Palestinian medical sources say.

The man, believed to have been in his 20s, was wounded in violence between Palestinians and Israeli soldiers at an Israeli checkpoint near Ramallah. Palestinian witnesses say he was shot. The man was taken to hospital but died several hours later.

There were also clashes in Hebron and outside al-Aqsa mosque in Jerusalem.

Hundreds of Palestinians threw rocks after Friday prayers.

Israeli police said they opened fire in the incident near Ramallah after being attacked with rocks, fire-bombs and fireworks.

The protests came on the anniversary of a massacre at a mosque in Hebron 1994 by the Jewish settler Baruch Goldstein, who killed 29 Palestinians.

US urges Myanmar to lift ex-prisoners' restrictions

AFP, Washington

The United States yesterday urged Myanmar to lift all conditions placed on recently released political prisoners as authorities planned a fresh trial of a leading dissident monk.

The long-closed country won wide international praise last month for freeing hundreds of political prisoners.

But rights campaigners say Myanmar did not release inmates unconditionally and instead suspended sentences under a section of the legal code that allows the president to put them back behind bars at his discretion.

Myanmar state media reported that freed monk Gambira will face charges of squatting in a monastery and breaking into two others.

Toner urged Myanmar to "begin a genuine dialogue with these released political prisoners and ethnic groups to promote national reconciliation," noting Washington had long called for them to be released without conditions.

Gambira, who goes by one name, was freed in January, cutting short a 68-year jail term imposed for his key role in 2007 mass protests known as the "Saffron Revolution," which were brutally crushed by the former junta.

The monk remains out of prison but was detained by authorities for one day on February 10, also leading to US condemnation.

Teesta water

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next session of Indian parliament for its ratification, Shahara told newsmen after a 20-minute meeting with the Indian minister at his office in the city.

The two ministers discussed Teesta, border firing by Indian Border Security Force (BSF) and implementation of the Indira-Mujib accord.

The home minister said she urged Pranab as the leader of Lok Sabha, lower House of Indian parliament, to help resolve the Teesta issue.

She also asked the Indian minister to help ensure there is no more firing and killing of Bangladeshis along the border by BSF.

Sources said both Dhaka and New Delhi have agreed that early ratification of the deal on land boundary and exchange of enclaves by Indian parliament would greatly help check cross-border illegal movement and consequent incidents of firing.

The agreement on land boundary demarcation and exchange of enclaves was signed during Indian Prime Minister Manmohan Singh's visit to Dhaka in September last year.

It had paved the way for resolution of a long-standing major irritant in India-Bangladesh relations.