

Manik

FROM PAGE 1
Justice Manik observed that the Speaker had committed an offence tantamount to sedition by commenting in parliament on an HC order.

He said the Speaker was completely ignorant of the apex court and the constitution.

Hamid on May 29 told the House that courts were neutral and independent. However, it looked odd when they took quick decisions to resolve their own problems while people wait for years to get justice.

He made the remarks following Awami League lawmaker Shahriar Alam's statement on the HC order that the Supreme Court be handed over its land that was under the control of the Roads and Highways Department.

The Speaker had said at the time that if people were aggrieved at court verdicts, the day would come when they would stand against the courts. "Likewise, if the government becomes autocratic, people will resist it and there are numerous instances of it."

Hours after Justice Manik's remarks, some senior lawmakers of the ruling alliance said in parliament that the judge had violated the constitution by making the remarks about the Speaker.

They proposed adopting a resolution requesting the president to form a Supreme Judicial Council to remove the judge.

In his ruling yesterday, the Speaker said he respected the lawmakers' sentiment and supported their proposal.

However, he added, that considering the overall circumstances he thought it would not be proper to take such a stern step.

He also noted it was no way a face-off between parliament and the judiciary. "It was some discourteous comments and personal attack on parliament by one honourable judge. Therefore, it won't be wise to bring the entire judiciary into it. Besides, we all should keep in mind that this country of ours is not Pakistan. It's Bangladesh."

Hamid said, "We had expected that the honourable judge would understand the entire matter and take proper steps to withdraw the comments that went beyond limits. But he did not do so."

He said he was elected Speaker unanimously by lawmakers of the ruling and opposition parties.

"Questioning my knowledge and qualifications would call into question the qualifications of all lawmakers. The learned judge should have thought carefully about it before making the comments. He made unpleasant remarks on many other issues but I don't feel it necessary to mention those here."

The Speaker hoped that this ruling would put to rest the debate on the issue.

Dhaka-Yangon

FROM PAGE 20
Chaired by Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina, the cabinet also approved a draft of Sustainable and Renewable Energy Development Authority Act, 2011 aiming at increasing the generation and use of green energy in the country.

The cabinet secretary said use of bio-gas and solar energy increased in the recent years in Bangladesh. The approval will help bringing the use of renewable energy sources under a legal framework. The six-member authority will be headed by a chairman, Mosharraf added.

The cabinet was apprised of the participation of a Bangladesh delegation at the 68th annual meeting of the UNESCAP led by Finance Minister AMA Muhith in Bangkok on May 17-23 this year.

Another report on the participation of a Bangladesh delegation at the 9th session of the Islamic Conference of Information Ministers in Gabon's capital Libreville on April 17-20 this year was also placed before the cabinet.

No space

FROM PAGE 1
[Rohingya] comes to Bangladesh to take refuge," said a senior official of the foreign ministry yesterday.

Foreign ministry officials said they were disturbed as diplomats of some specific countries and UN agencies continued requesting them to allow the refugees to enter Bangladesh despite Dhaka's firm rebuff.

They said some diplomats have even sought permission from the government to pay family visit to Chittagong Hill Tracts and Cox's Bazar. The authorities are not allowing the visits as a top UN official in Dhaka has already visited the CHT and held meetings with locals in which he made several allegations against the government, the officials added.

Meanwhile, a pre-scheduled visit of UNHCR's Assistant High Commissioner for Protection, who was due to arrive in Dhaka today to discuss repatriation of 30,000 registered Rohingya refugees staying in Bangladesh since 1991, has been called off as both the foreign minister and the foreign secretary are abroad.

Besides, Dhaka has imposed restriction on visit of UNHCR Country Representative Craig Sanders in the bordering areas and some other places in Teknaf and Cox's Bazar without prior permission.

The government, which is unhappy with the UNHCR official's recent activities as well as visit to Cox's Bazar on

June 15-17, during which he also toured to Teknaf border, has advised him not to visit beyond the areas of UNHCR office and Rohingya camps in Cox's Bazar.

The message was conveyed when a three-member delegation led by UNHCR Country Representative Craig Sanders met Director General (UN) of the Foreign Ministry Saida Muna Tasneem, official sources said.

The sources added instruction has been given to the district and local administration not to allow any diplomats of foreign or UN missions in the bordering areas if they don't have permission from the authorities concerned.

The UNHCR officials during the around 90-minute meeting requested the government to allow the refugees from Myanmar on humanitarian ground, but the foreign ministry official reiterated the position of Bangladesh, the sources informed.

The government rather reaffirmed that vigilance in the international border with Myanmar will be strict so that no Rohingya can enter Bangladesh territory.

"Bangladesh is not doing anything inhuman with the Rohingyas, rather they were provided with food, medicines and fuel for engine boats and were motivated to return to their homeland. There was no misbehaviour or use of force," according to a high official of the foreign ministry.

Exporters threaten

FROM PAGE 1
expressed solidarity and, if necessary, they will close down their factories," Mohiuddin told reporters.

In the memorandum, Shamim demanded that the government stop "anarchy" at a time when the garment sector was passing through a critical time.

"Every day the factory owners of Ashulia are losing export orders owing to the impasse. They are losing buyers," he said.

The image the Bangladeshi garment has earned over the last 30 years is now being tarnished, he added.

The BGMEA president at the press briefing said the business community across the country had already expressed solidarity with the association, and garment owners in Chittagong held a meeting on Sunday and extended their support for the shutdown decision.

"We will reopen our factories, but we need security, we need normalcy to return to the workplace. And we demand punishment of those involved in vandalism," he said.

It may be mentioned that the weeklong labour unrest that erupted on June 11 in the Ashulia industrial belt left

more than 200 garment factories vandalised, some 300 vehicles damaged and about 500 people, including law enforcers, injured.

"I do not see any hope of a reopening of factories soon as the government is yet to come up with any measure," Mohiuddin said, adding that nobody should take the issue lightly as the garment sector was the lifeline of the country's economy.

Different ministries, departments and government agencies were discussing the matter, but not in an organised manner, he said.

The owners saw no immediate solution, he said, adding: "The biggest loss is the loss of buyers' confidence."

According to him, a few vested quarters are out to destroy the sector, the main foreign currency earner of the country. "The government must bring them to book."

Asked, Additional Secretary of Home Ministry Kamaluddin Ahmed told The Daily Star that the Industrial Police were assigned to tackle the unrest.

He added it was for the labour and employment ministry to broker a deal between the owners and the workers.

Bibiyana-1

FROM PAGE 1
PRG makes bank loans easy for the implementer.

As per the agreement with the government, Summit was supposed to close its finance for the Bibiyana schemes in February. The local company won the projects' bids by submitting a very low price of around Tk 2.9 per kilowatt-hour for 22 years.

Yesterday's meeting discussed the issue and the PDB termed the financing situation a "force majeure" (unavoidable accident), for which neither Summit nor the government was responsible.

The meeting felt that the WB had refrained from giving the PRG following its suspension of loans for the Padma bridge.

Besides, the government could not hand over the land for the project. Hence, it cannot totally hold Summit responsible for not being able to start the project.

Meeting sources said in case of such a withdrawal, the government would return Summit its \$ 3 million bank guarantee.

The government may opt for several options to implement the project. It may go for a buyers' credit formula where interested bidders

would arrange the funding; or for state-to-state deal with some Middle Eastern investors, who have recently expressed interest to invest in the power sector.

The meeting also reviewed the progress of Meghnaghat (335 MW) dual fuel combined cycle plant.

Summit had kick-started the Meghnaghat scheme without any financial closure. It arranged Tk 2,200 crore from different local banks which was paid to the company's bidding US partner GE to engineer and procure equipment.

"The work for the Meghnaghat project is progressing in full swing. By July, the test of the plant's gas turbine will begin in France. By July next year, the turbine will be installed and the plant will start generating partial power with it. By December next year, the full component of the plant will start generating power," said a source.

The plant is expected to be commissioned two months ahead of schedule.

Summit also assured the government of arranging funding for Bibiyana 2 plant. For this it is negotiating with US Exim Bank and China Development Bank.

VANDALISM IN CTG

Bail for 65 opposition activists

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Ctg

Sixty-five leaders and activists of BNP and its ally Bangladesh Jamaat-e-Islami secured interim bail yesterday in a case filed against them for vandalising vehicles at Kazir Dewri in Chittagong on May 13.

Additional Chief Metropolitan Magistrate Abdur Rahman granted them bail till charge framing when they had surrendered before him following a High Court order.

All the defendants including Abu Sufian, vice-president of Chittagong city unit of BNP; its Secretary General Shahadat Hossain; and Chittagong city unit Jubo Dal President Kazi Belal appeared before the court and sought bail.

Defence lawyer advocate Abdus Sattar said the High Court on May 20 granted interim bail to his clients and asked them to surrender before a lower court by June 20.

At least 100 people including the police and journalists were injured in a clash between BNP-Jamaat activists and law enforcers. The clash took place when the police blocked two opposition processions heading towards the BNP's city office at Kazir Dewri on May 13.

Three vehicles were torched and many others vandalised during the clash.

Hours after the clash, the police filed the case with Kotwali Police Station under Explosive Substances Act for the vandalism.

China firework factory blasts kill 14

AFP, Beijing

Explosions ripped through two fireworks factories in China killing 14 people and injuring 13, state media reported yesterday.

A blast yesterday morning at a factory in Dongtun, in Huaiyang district of central Henan province, left seven dead and 12 injured, Xinhua news agency said, quoting local authorities.

The factory was operating illegally as its licence had expired, and the family of the owner had been detained by police, it said.

Local authorities have ordered the closure of all fireworks factories in the district, the news agency added.

I want my father

FROM PAGE 20
wife Tahsina Rushdir Luna recently tried to meet the prime minister for a second time, but was denied permission to meet her. Saiyara wrote the letter to deliver it in person to Sheikh Hasina.

The letter was disclosed to newsmen yesterday on the occasion of Saiyara's birthday.

Talking to journalists at her Banani residence, Luna alleged that the law enforcement agencies' search for her husband lost steam after she (Luna) met the prime minister at the latter's office on May 2.

"But I am still waiting. I am hopeful that my husband will return to us," she added.

Meanwhile, BNP acting secretary general Mirza Fakhrul Islam Alamgir yesterday once again blamed government men for Ilias' "abduction."

"Witnesses and several sources have confirmed that government's men have abducted Ilias. So it is the responsibility of the government to trace him and give him back to his family," he told reporters while visiting Ilias's house to wish Saiyara on her 10th birthday.

Fakhrul said the prime minister had assured Luna that Ilias will be returned to his family and the LGRD minister had also reiterated the assurance, but Ilias remains missing even after two months of his abduction.

Ilias, BNP organising secretary and a former lawmaker, and his driver went missing from the capital's Banani area in the wee hours of April 18.

Rohingyas coming in again

FROM PAGE 1
go back, the forces brought them to the Shah Porir Dweep jetty. Another two groups of boat people, caught by the forces a few hours earlier, were also kept there.

Around 3:00pm, a small boat of seven Rohingyas trying to make an entry through the river was stopped by a coast guard team. This group, too, was taken to the jetty.

The BGB provided meal for all the intruders. Some locals of Shah Porir Dweep also bought from a local store some dry food and bottles of mineral water for the Rohingyas.

The store owner, Nurul Absar, who also donated some dry food, told The Daily Star that the locals were helping the Rohingyas on humanitarian and religious grounds.

Absar, however, said providing shelter to Rohingyas in Bangladesh was not a good idea. "Myanmar is their [Rohingyas] country; their government has to solve their problem."

He said the countries that were concerned about Rohingyas should put pressure on Myanmar to resolve the crisis.

Also, two boats carrying eight Rohingyas were intercepted by guards in Sabrang and Naitong areas in the

morning and all of them were pushed in the course of the day.

Local officials who keep themselves updated about the developments in the neighbouring country said there was a "cordon and search operation" at Maungdaw on Saturday and Sunday nights.

The Myanmar army arrested many male villagers from the town and those who were picked up were still traceless.

Lt Col Zahid Hassan, commanding officer of BGB 42 Battalion at Teknaf, told The Daily Star, "As they [Rohingyas] are aware of the hospitality of Bangladeshis, they prefer to come here instead of looking for safe places within Myanmar."

Zahid said the BGB had fed the intruders on humanitarian grounds.

But some other officials in the force and local administration say if the other Rohingyas came to know about this hospitality they would prefer to come to Bangladesh.

About yesterday's intrusion attempts, Zahid talked to Myanmar border force Nasaka. "Nasaka claimed they didn't send the Rohingyas to Bangladesh forcefully."

Things were different in 1991, during the second influx of Rohingyas as refugees, when the Myanmar

government itself sent them forcefully.

Yesterday, one of the Rohingyas, identifying himself as Mir Ahmad, 25, claimed that on Sunday he along with his younger brother and two nephews fled his village at Bakghona of Maungdaw after Maghrib prayers fearing possible arrest.

They started on a boat with 15 others aboard from a nearby coast in the dark and escaped Nasaka vigilance, but were intercepted by the BGB.

He said Rohingya males of the village were being taken by some unknown people to unknown places in the last few days and none of them had returned home. Asked, Ahmad could not give any details.

Ahmad Shah, another intruder, said he had fled his village at Padongcha two days back and remained in hiding in a forest.

He got on a boat yesterday morning and tried to enter Teknaf but failed.

When the Rohingyas tried to come to Bangladesh yesterday morning, there were more than a hundred Bangladeshi boats in the Naf River near Shah Porir Dweep for fishing.

They rowed across as if theirs were fishing boats like any other.

15 held over Ashulia violence

FROM PAGE 20

The turmoil led to the closure of over 300 garment factories in the Ashulia industrial belt since Sunday.

Meanwhile, it was a calm day yesterday in the area as nothing untoward occurred. Hundreds of idle workers were seen roaming the streets amid strict vigilance by police and Rapid Action Battalion members.

Being frustrated over the closure of factories, around 60 percent of workers left Ashulia, said Sirajul Islam Rony, coordinator of Bangladesh Garment Workers' Unity Council.

The workers on June 11 started violent demonstrations demanding hikes in their wages.

On Saturday, BGMEA leaders declared to close the factories from the following day for an indefinite period.

Different garment workers' organisations yesterday demanded immediate reopening of the factories and hike in the workers' wages.

They also condemned the BGMEA (Bangladesh Garment Manufacturers and Exporters Association) authorities' decision to shut down the factories and termed the closure illegal.

Bangladesh Textile-

workers to resort to violence. The following day, another case was lodged against 11 local BNP leaders and several hundred unidentified people on charges of vandalising vehicles and obstructing law enforcers in their duties.

The authorities of private television channel Maasranga sued several unknown people on Thursday accusing them of torching a microbus.

On the same day, authorities of IDS garment factory filed another case bringing allegation of vandalism against unknown garment workers.

Sultana Kamal, executive director of Ain o Salish Kendra, in a press release yesterday said the BGMEA has decided to close the garment units going beyond its jurisdiction.

The garment owners' body has forced the shutdown by flouting the labour law, complained Babul Akhter, president of Bangladesh Garments and Industrial Workers Federation.

He said they would go for legal action against the closure of the factories, unless the BGMEA cancel its decision.

Troubles never shot; managed

FROM PAGE 1

down around 300 garment factories at Ashulia, on the outskirts of the capital, failing to tackle labour unrest with the help of law enforcers.

"Protests and unrests are inevitable if there is no regular pay hike," said Zaid Bakht, research director of Bangladesh Institute of Development Studies (BIDS).

He said the government had an important role to play here as the industry was fully export-oriented. On the other hand, he said, workers' agitation was obvious as they work for small pay despite significant hike in living and housing cost.

"We try to calm the unrests down on a temporary basis. It is time we set up institutional mechanism to address the workers' issue," observed Bakht.

In June 2010, garment workers agitated for two weeks for an increase in the then monthly minimum wage of Tk 1,662. Before that the industry's monthly minimum wage was last raised in 2006, after a mass revolt.

After lengthy negotiations since 2006, the mini-

mum pay scale was finally set at Tk 3,000 and was implemented from November 2010. But workers found their wage package inadequate by the time and took to the streets again.

Other than wage and overtime payment, lack of proper fire security has also created some sort of dissatisfaction among the workers.

In February 2010, a total of 21 workers died in a fire at Garib and Garib sweater factory in Gazipur, adjacent to the capital. The fire started around 8:45pm on the second floor of the seven-storey building and spread quickly to the other floors containing inflammable materials. The incident created a sense of insecurity among the workers of other factories.

All these incidents harmed the garment industry as well as the country. But the latest unrest in the industry would not only decrease export competitiveness or lead to losing of buyers but also deepen the ongoing domestic economic crisis, analysts say.

Export grew only by 7 percent, to \$ 21.98 billion, in July-May compared to that of the same period last year while the month-wise

exports in May declined by 4.13 percent to stand at \$ 2.2 billion from that of the same month last year.

In the last three years, export grew 21.2 percent on an average.

So, a further plunge in exports could hit the economy, said Salehuddin Ahmed, former adviser of the central bank.

"The garment industry is a major contributor to foreign exchange and is already in pressure. If exports go down, foreign exchange reserve will be affected," said Ahmed.

He feared frequent unrests in the RMG industry could force buyers to look for other markets such as Sri Lanka, Vietnam and India.

"It is unfortunate that there were no reforms in the manpower and labour industry in Bangladesh," said the former governor. He said labourers have poor rights, benefits and protection here.

The BIDS director said if the government doesn't initiate to form some kind permanent platform to address the labour issues, this sort of unrests would continue to occur.

JUNE 12 SHOOTING

Three RHD officials suspended

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Three officials of Roads and Highways Department were suspended yesterday for their involvement in the June 12 Sarak Bhaban shooting.

At least five people were bullet-hit in the gun attack following a feud over establishing supremacy in tender business.

RHD Chief Engineer Aminur Rahman Laskar told The Daily Star that the officials -- chairman Fazlur Rahman, office assistant Kamal Uddin Khandokar and storekeeper Abul Kalam Azad -- were suspended as the department found their involvement in the incident.

Further action will be taken after getting the full investigation report.

Abul Kamal Azad was detained on the June 12 night in a case filed in this connection with Shahbagh Police Station.

Golam Azam Mamun, proprietor of Three M Enterprise and a listed contractor of RHD, had filed the case, accusing at least 18 people including Azad.

Meanwhile, the communications ministry extended the deadline for investigation report submission for two days as a committee formed to probe the incident demanded.

'Bangladeshi girl'

FROM PAGE 1

river Naf.

But the girl, aged around 12, couldn't tell exactly when and with whom she went to Maungdaw as this correspondent tried to talk to her, despite repeated requests from BGB not to.

She was under BGB custody at Shah Porir Dweep border outpost.

The other intruders were kept detained till 6:00pm yesterday on the island before being sent back to Maungdaw on a boat. They were Rohingyas, the BGB said.

What the girl could tell the officials was that a few days after reaching the Myanmar village she started hearing about the sectarian violence. On Sunday evening, she fled with 18 others on a country boat.

A team of Border Guard Bangladesh (BGB) intercepted the boat near Jaliapara coast of Shah Porir Dweep around 10:30pm Sunday.

According to BGB, Saida claimed to be a class-V student of Goribe Newaz Shishu Niketon at Halishahar in the port city.

One of the other 18, Ehsanul Hoque, 24, while talking to The Daily Star yesterday afternoon, claimed the girl went to his family house at Padongcha. His family has had long-term relations with her family, he said.

"We once stayed as neighbours at Teknaf and later our family shifted to Padongcha while Saida's to Chittagong. The girl went to our house a few days before the ethnic clashes broke out [over a week ago]."

He said he had been looking for a chance to flee as miscreants started kidnapping the males of his village and adjoining areas.

Ehsanul, his two elder brothers Jobber and Hamiduijman, their uncle Md Tarek and the girl left the village Sunday evening and got on a boat around 9:00pm from a nearby coast.

As their boat was about to reach the coast at Jaliapara of Shah Porir Dweep, the BGB team intercepted them, he said.

The Daily Star on its own could not verify the claims of Saida and Ehsanul.

Lt Col Md Zahid Hasan, commanding officer of BGB 42 Battalion, said the girl gave the force the mobile phone number of one of her family members. The BGB was trying to make contact with the person.

"We didn't send the girl as she had no guardian with her. We will verify her claim and decide about her," said the BGB official, adding that Rohingyas often manufactured false stories to intrude into Bangladesh.