

Bangladeshi workers

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Talking about investment in different sectors, he said the Malaysian businessmen are very keen to invest in Bangladesh.

Razak wished success of Bangladesh premier in the upcoming general election and the continuation of democratic process in the country.

At the meeting, Hasina urged Malaysia to invest more in Bangladesh's various sectors including power, telecommunication and infrastructure development for mutual benefit of the people of both countries.

"I am happy that our two governments are negotiating to construct a 1,320-MW coal-based power plant in Cox's Bazar. I welcome more investment from Malaysia for this sector," she said.

She sought more Malaysian engagements for construction of bridges and highways on build, own, operate and transfer basis.

Hasina also urged the Malaysian government to recruit more workers from Bangladesh.

"We have developed a pool of semi-skilled and skilled workforce and they are ready to work in any area of the economy.

"I would request you to kindly consider them when recruiting for the development

activities (in Malaysia)," she said.

Talking about the Bangladeshi workers in Malaysia, she said these workers are contributing to the socioeconomic transformation of both the countries.

Hasina thanked the Malaysian government for regularising more than half of them under the 6P programme.

She also urged the Malaysian government to remove non-tariff barriers in importing goods from Bangladesh by the Malaysian businessmen.

Mentioning Bangladesh and Malaysia as liberal Muslim countries, she said both the countries are characterised by religious and social tolerance and cultural cohesion.

Bangladesh strongly believes in regional cooperation and is playing an important role in promoting economic integration among Saarc, D-8 and Bimstec member states, she added.

The Bangladesh side in the talks included, among others, Foreign Minister Dipu Moni, Expatriates' Welfare and Overseas Employment Minister Khandker Mosharraf Hossain and Industries Minister Dilip Barua.

Hasina's Press Secretary Abul Kalam Azad briefed reporters after the meeting.



Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina and her Malaysian counterpart Najib Razak offer prayers at the inauguration of Sheikh Fazilatunnesa Mujib Memorial KPJ Specialised Hospital and Nursing College in Gazipur yesterday.

PHOTO: BSS/ FOCUS BANGLA

Secretariat dates

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communicated with reporters and personal staff of the prime minister to know their fate as some new cabinet members took oath of office at the Bangabhaban around 3:00pm.

Unlike the other working days, a small number of visitors yesterday crowded the secretariat, the centre of the country's civil administration.

Officials also accorded farewell to some ministers, as was the case for State Minister for Science and Technology Yeafesh Osman.

Yeafesh was surprised at the fast developments regarding formation of the polls-time cabinet. "I tried my best to bear the responsibility given to me by the prime minister," he said.

He left office with his personal files after the oath-taking ceremony at Bangabhaban had been over.

Confused over their status, State Minister for Land Mostafizur Rahman Fizar came to office in the morning. "I don't have any idea about how I should say goodbye to the ministry officials," he told The Daily Star.

Some ministers, however, stayed at their offices till evening to finish off their jobs in hand. Shipping Minister Shahjan Khan is one of them. He is scheduled to accompany the prime minister to Kalapara of Pataukhali today to inaugurate the Paira seaport.

Briefing newsmen about the prepara-

tions for the primary terminal examination 2013, Minister for Primary and Mass Education Afsarul Ameen sought blessings from all.

"I'm at the final stage of my tenure. May be I'll not see you frequently from now on," he added.

Afsarul and his deputy Motahar Hossain bade farewell to the ministry officials and employees in the morning.

Disaster Management and Relief Minister Abul Hasan Mahmud Ali made a brief visit to his secretariat office around noon.

Those who did not attend office yesterday included Jute Minister Abdul Latif Siddique, Water Resources Minister Ramesh Chandra Sen, Land Minister Rezaul Karim Hira, State Minister for Energy Enamul Haque and State Minister for Liberation War Affairs AB Tajul Islam.

Tajul said he will go to secretariat today to say goodbye to all.

Some ministers have programmes scheduled for today, but the ministry officials concerned could not confirm whether the ministers would attend the programmes or not.

Rezaul Karim Hira and his deputy are scheduled to attend a meeting on the vested property act at the law ministry at 11:30am today.

Razakars were for peace!

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house of Allah."

To the surprise of most in the courtroom, defence counsel Tajul Islam made the comment about the Razakar force, historically known as one of the vicious auxiliary forces of the Pakistani army.

His statement was in response to the prosecution argument that Nizami's speech on September 10, 1971, incited Razakars to commit war crimes.

Tajul also said Jamaat chief Nizami was a "patriot" who had called upon his follower to restore peace in the country.

One of the charges against Nizami was that he incited people to commit war crimes through a speech he delivered at the Muslim Institute of Chittagong on August 3, 1971 during a meeting of the Chittagong City unit of the Islami Chhatra Sangha, then student wing of Jamaat-e-Islami.

Nizami in the speech had said, "Pakistan is the house of Allah."

Tajul yesterday argued that "Pakistan is the house of Allah" was a rhetoric and it revealed Nizami's love for the country. "He did not incite people to commit crimes with his speech."

He then went on to compare Bangabandhu's March 7 speech with Nizami's. He said Bangabandhu's speech caused a national upsurge and he had made the speech against his own country but we do not call it incitement.

Tajul yesterday claimed that the charge against Nizami that he used religion to incite

Razakars and young men to commit war crimes was vague.

Tajul said the prosecution had not brought in any witnesses to prove the four charges of inciting people to commit crimes against humanity, rather it relied solely upon four documents.

The defence counsel claimed that incitement to commit crimes against humanity was not an offence under customary international law and that incitement to commit genocide was an offence.

If the prosecution could prove that Nizami's was an incitement to commit genocide then it would be an offence but it did not mention that.

He claimed that to consider an incident an act of genocide, the victims have to be of one of four groups, based on religion, nationality, ethnicity and race.

He said, "There is no mention of the said four groups in the documents upon which the prosecution relied."

According to historical documents, three million people were killed and nearly a quarter of a million women were raped by the Pakistan army and its auxiliary forces, including the Razakar and Al-Badr forces, during the nine-month-long Liberation War.

Nizami is facing 16 war crimes charges for his alleged involvement in crimes against humanity and genocide during the Liberation War in 1971.

5,000-yr-old

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Despite its incredible age the mine is still in use today and produces more than 500 tonnes of salt each year which is used in cooking and for a range of souvenirs.

According to a 1971-79 survey there is still more than 1 billion tonnes of ore left in the mine, which is extracted using machines and underground blasting.

This picture was taken by Melih Sular, 32, who was guided through the caves by Murat Danaci as part of the National Geographic photography contest.

He said: "When I first entered the salt cave I was afraid. I thought to myself: 'What happens if it collapses?'"

"The cave is cool and scentless, which is because it is a very old salt cave. The walls are all made of rock salt and the texture is varied because of the digging machines used."

While temperatures in the city regularly reach 92 Fahrenheit, the mercury never strays much above 59 degrees inside the ancient caves.

The Hitties were an ancient race who built an empire in the Middle East which covered most of modern-day central Turkey, northern Syria and Iraq and flourished between 1,400 and 1,200BC.

All the ore extracted from the mine, which measures in at around 90 percent purity, is taken by diggers to nearby railway tracks where it is transported to a factory for processing.

2 killed in Gazipur

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When the news spread around, over 10,000 workers started demonstrations outside the factory. At one stage, the authorities opened the main entrance to the factory.

As the protesters resorted to vandalism and pelted brickbats at police, law enforcers retaliated with bullets and tear gas to disperse the trouble-makers.

Of the 50 injured, 16 received treatment at Enam Medical College Hospital in Savar.

Badsha, who received a bullet in head, succumbed to his wounds on way to the hospital, said hospital sources.

However, it could not be confirmed how Ruma, whose body bore several injury marks, died.

Police, however, claimed that the workers were

injured as they hit walls while trying to come out of the factory.

Both the bodies were sent to Gazipur Sadar Hospital for autopsies.

Alongside police, members of Border Guard Bangladesh were patrolling the area to avoid any deterioration in law and order.

Ashulia and Savar

Six people, including nine-year-old Jony, received bullets and at least 46 others were injured as garment workers clashed with the law enforcers in Ashulia and Savar yesterday over the minimum wage.

The workers have been pressing for a minimum wage of Tk8,114 instead of Tk5,300 as announced by the government following recommendations by the garment workers wage board.

Critically injured Babul, 28, of AM Design Ltd

was receiving treatment at Dhaka Medical College Hospital.

Witnesses said about 12,000 workers of Envoy Group, Palmal Group, and Rose Dresses in Ashulia and Standard Group in Savar gathered in front of their units around 9:00am and started demonstrations.

The trouble began when the protesters hurled brickbats at their factories and also at law enforcers.

At one stage, the agitating workers tried to block the Dhaka-Tangail highway. Law enforcers charged batons, lobbed teargas canisters and fired rubber bullets to disperse the protesters.

Clashes were also reported at Jamgarh, Shimultola, Gorat, Pukurpar, Ghoshbagh and Narshinghpur in Ashulia and Hemayetpur of Savar.

Ershad now asks BNP to follow suit

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the election-time government and contest the election.

Though Ershad on several previous occasions had advocated forming a caretaker government to oversee polls, yesterday he claimed that he never supported the concept of caretaker government.

On October 20, he rejected the idea of an all-party election-time government led by Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina.

"We have said it earlier and are repeating that we won't participate in the election if Sheikh Hasina heads the interim government. The election wouldn't be free and fair in that situation," he

mentioned.

On that day, Ershad also declared that his party would not contest the polls if BNP boycotted it.

Even a couple of days ago, he promised to his party leaders and activists that he does not want to die as a traitor by participating in an election, not contested by all parties.

But yesterday, his stance was quite the opposite. "The prime minister has already moved one step forward to resolve the ongoing crisis. We have also moved one step forward. You [BNP] should also come forward and participate in the all-party government. Make it public if you have any proposal to this end."

"If we notice that the government is not sincere [in holding a free and fair election] and trying to rig the election, we will boycott the polls," added Ershad.

He claimed that he took the decision of joining the "all-party" government "for the sake of the country and its people."

The JP had joined the AL-led 14-party alliance before the 2008 parliamentary polls. Since 2011, its chairman had been saying that he would pull out of the grand alliance.

The BNP has been pressing for a non-party polls-time government since parliament abolished the caretaker government system in June, 2011.

Govt's authority remains as it is

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anyone to resign or else ask the president to fire the cabinet member. Nothing will restrict prevent her from staying as an all-powerful prime minister in the coming days.

So, there is a huge difference between the powers and functions of the prime minister and her "polls-time cabinet" and those of the chief adviser and advisers of the caretaker government system that has been abolished in June 2011.

The chief adviser did not have the authority of hiring and firing advisers. Moreover, the chief adviser used to act on the advice of the council of advisers. But the premier does not need any advice from her cabinet members in order to act.

The caretaker government had limited constitutional jurisdiction. It used to discharge its functions as an interim government and carry out the routine functions of such a government and was not empowered to make any policy decisions. It gave the Election Commission all possible assistance that might be required for holding the parliamentary polls.

During the caretaker government regime, the president emerged as a powerful head of state as he could perform his functions without the

advice of the chief adviser. Moreover, he would ensure the accountability of the caretaker government. He also held the portfolio of the defence ministry.

But in this polls-time government, the president will need to perform all his functions on the advice of the prime minister, except for the appointment of the chief justice. This means the premier in fact will retain the authority to exercise the powers in the name of advising the president.

Only the electoral code of conduct will impose some restrictions on functions of the prime minister and her ministers.

According to the proposed changes in the electoral code of conduct, the prime minister, the leader of the opposition, ministers, lawmakers and other very important people will not get any government facilities during their campaign for the next parliamentary polls.

They will not be able to allocate money or make donations from any government, non-government or autonomous funds during the pre-election period, said the changes proposed by the EC.

But the code of conduct will take effect after the announcement of the election schedule and

this will only prevent individuals from using government facilities in their electioneering.

The proposed code of conduct will in no way prevent the polls-time government from making any major policy decisions.

Whether the prime minister's "polls-time government" would refrain from making any policy decision will depend largely on the wishes of the prime minister even though she had earlier announced that the election-time government will stay away from making such decisions.

The newly formed cabinet, popularly known as the government, cannot be termed an interim government since the parliament still exists. Existence of parliament allows the present government to enjoy the status of a regular government.

A regular government turns into an interim government only after the dissolution of a parliament in a country where the parliamentary form of government is practised. And that interim government's only function is to carry out routine work and extend support to the EC to hold the polls.

But the polls-time government led by Hasina is not like that.

Target free polls



RUHUL AMIN HAWLADER

Ensuring a free and fair election is the main challenge of the newly-appointed ministers and state ministers, said Jatiya Party Secretary General Ruhul Amin Hawlader.

They also aim to ensure participation of all political parties in the polls, he added.

"If we [the new ministers and state ministers] fail to create a congenial atmosphere for a free and fair election, our [party] Chairman HM Ershad told us, Jatiya Party will boycott the polls."

RASHED KHAN MENON

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ministers] will be successful," said Rashed Khan Menon, president of the Workers Party of Bangladesh.

Menon had also refused to be on the Sheikh Hasina-led cabinet in September, 2012.

He urged BNP, which rejected the newly-formed cabinet and said it would not participate in the election unless a non-party caretaker government was formed to oversee the polls, to resolve the crisis through talks.



SALMA ISLAM

JP leader and editor of Bangla daily Jugantor, Salma Islam said, "Ensuring a free and fair election is the main challenge of the [polls-time] government and as part of the government it's also my challenge.

"We all have to take the challenge for the sake of the country's democracy."

ANISUL ISLAM MAHMUD

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foreign minister during the Ershad-led government, said the main challenge of the cabinet would be to create a congenial atmosphere for the next parliamentary election and also to assist the Election Commission in holding it within the deadline.

He expressed the hope that BNP would come forward to resolve the ongoing political impasse through talks.

AMIR HOSSAIN AMU

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Awami League.

"I am taking my responsibility as a challenge. I will try to assist the prime minister in running the nation in the right way," said Amu who was in the 1996 cabinet led by Awami League.



MUJIBUL HAQUE CHUNNU

"Our main target is to oversee a free and fair election," Jatiya Party presidium member Mujibul Haque Chunnun told reporters.

"We have just taken an oath. Now let's see what we can do in this regard," said Chunnun, who had been deputy minister for land during the Ershad-led government.

TOFAIL AHMED

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an advisory council member of Awami League.

Tofail, who was in the 1996 cabinet, said the national polls must be held by January 24, 2014, the deadline of the polls-time government, under any circumstances.

Responding to a query, he said the PM's offer to the main opposition BNP to take part in the election-time cabinet was still open.

Earlier in September 2012, he refused to be inducted into the Sheikh Hasina-led grand alliance cabinet.

Dhaka-Ctg highway

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road for two hours, said Md Shahin, sub-inspector of highway police at Bara Awlia outpost.

Locals said Jamaat-Shibir men might have carried out the attacks following a local Jamaat leader's arrest in Comilla.

Shedding light on recent incidents, Monir Ahmed, president of Inter-District Goods-carrying Truck, Covered Van Owners' Association, said around 250 trucks, covered vans and prime movers had come under attack in the last few months.

Around 30 buses were vandalised and 10 burnt down in the last one week, added Kafil Uddin Ahmed.

He said they had no choice but to call for the two-day strike to draw the attention of the authorities concerned.

Transport leaders of Inter-District Goods-carrying Truck, Covered Van Owners' Association, Chittagong Port Truck Owners' Association, Chittagong-Shuvapur Bus Owners' Association, Tank-Lorry Owners' Association, Prime Movers Owners' Association, Bangladesh Road Transport Workers' Federation were present in the meeting.

Besides providing security for vehicular movement, the transport leaders also demanded compensations from the government.