

# Recover grabbed railway land

## PM asks ministry officials

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina yesterday directed the railway ministry to recover the illegally occupied land of Bangladesh Railway for expanding railway network and its services all over the country.

To reduce pressure on the capital, she also instructed the ministry to introduce commuter train service between the capital and the adjoining districts so that people can come to the city in a couple of hours and go back after finishing their works or offices.

"Carry out drives regularly to reclaim the grabbed land of railway, especially from both sides of the rail tracks so that we can construct dual gauge and double-track lines," said the PM while addressing the ministry officials at the Rail Bhaban.

Hasina said her government would build an exclusive rail bridge alongside the existing Bangabandhu Bridge over the Jamuna river for increasing train services between east and west zones of railway.

She said the World Bank has already expressed its interest to finance the rail bridge.

A new railway bridge over the Jamuna river is necessary as the Bangabandhu Bridge does not have enough capacity to take additional loads. Only 24 trains can ply over the bridge as authorities have put restrictions on load and speed of trains considering the safety of the bridge.

Hasina said rail communications with the country's southern part will start smoothly once the Padma Multipurpose Bridge is opened.

"Take steps so that different areas of the southern region come under rail communications after opening of the Padma Bridge," she asked the railway ministry.

The premier mentioned that the World Bank scrapped its promised fund for the Padma bridge project after it was politically motivated by certain quarters.

"World Bank could not even give us any proof in support of its claims of

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BNP Chairperson Khaleda Zia, inset, addresses a rally at Nilphamari High School ground yesterday.

PHOTO: STAR

## The real-life

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flooded," Huijbers, explained during an interview with the American television programme the Today Show.

"Then, the next day I get the idea to build an ark of Noah."

The gigantic wooden structure is the closest to the original ark in terms of its dimensions as Huijbers built the vessel to the specifications in the Bible, which states that Noah's Ark was 50 cubits wide, 30 cubits high and 300 cubits long.

The tourist attraction, which is so big it's classed as a building not a boat, cost an estimated \$1.6 million to build.

Huiber's began planning the structure in 1992 but construction of his ark

began only in 2009. Work was completed in 2012 by his team of 50 people.

Inside the Ark are two amphitheatres and fake animal displays as well as presentations on Noah's history.

Despite its ability to float on water and sail, Huijbers has said that, "this time the Ark is not meant to save people from a global flood as Noah did 4,000 years ago, but to tell people that there is a God who loves us, and that He has a plan for our lives".

The ark, located at Dordrecht, is now open to the public. Admission costs £5.95 for children and £9.90 for adults.

## No country endorsed this govt: Khaleda

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"We are to be blamed for the failure [to launch a movement in Dhaka last year]. But I thank the people of Nilphamari for staging a strong agitation in the district as in other parts of the country," she said.

Khaleda hoped BNP's Dhaka city leaders would succeed this time in waging a tougher movement in the capital.

The BNP-led alliance will overthrow the government if it doesn't meet the demand for a fresh election under a non-party administration, she said.

"Let me complete the ongoing mass contact programme. I will then announce the movement at the right

time. This time, we will return home after toppling this illegal and repressive government.

"Our victory is certain ... we must win," said the BNP chief.

Turning to the issues of forced disappearance and murder, Khaleda said the government is turning Rab and police into "Rakkhi Bahini", which had killed 30,000 people during the tenure of the Sheikh Mujibur Rahman-led government.

Pointing to hundreds of cases against alliance leaders and activists, Khaleda said they have to take the pains of appearing frequently before the court.

Leaders and activists of the combine are being bled for every last penny due

to the lawsuits.

If the BNP is voted to power, her government would establish rule of law and good governance, restore democracy, ensure freedom of judiciary and the media, she said.

Refuting the government's allegation that the BNP is trying to create anarchy by using religion, Khaleda said it is the Hasina-led government that is hurting the sentiments of the Muslims.

**JAMAAT LEADER ANNOYED**

When Nilphamari BNP leader Samsuzzaman Zaman, requested Jamaat Naye-e-Ameer Mujibir Rahman to conclude his speech within a minute, the Jamaat leader refused to comply.

Jamaat is a party, and one minute is not enough, said an annoyed Mujibur.

Hundreds of activists of the Jamaat, a key ally of the BNP, started shouting as Mujibur got locked in an argument with Zaman, the coordinator of the rally.

The Jamaat leader spoke for nearly eight minutes. He warned the government of dire consequences if the arrested leaders of his party are made victims of the government's political vengeance.

This was Khaleda's seventh rally after the January 5 election. She will attend rallies in Natore on October 30, Comilla on November 7 and Kishoreganj on November 12.

## No world leaders

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demonstrating their myopia.

"Representatives of some countries are speaking against the election. But when I met the heads of different states and governments and the chancellor of a country, none of them raised any question about the election," she said at the briefing on the outcome of her attending the 10th Asia-Europe Meeting (ASEM) in Italy.

The PM said the election of Speaker Shirin Sharmin Chaudhury and Saber Hossain Chowdhury MP as presidents of the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association and the Inter-Parliamentary Union respectively proved there was no question about the January polls.

Hasina, also president of the ruling Awami League, warned of dire consequences if the BNP resorted to violence and tried to kill people in the name of anti-government agitation.

"You have to understand this is an unelected government, not an interim one. They [BNP] cannot do what they did before the January 5 election and will face consequences if they touch people of my country now," she said.

The premier called upon people to resist anyone trying to create anarchy and disrupt peace and economic development. "We are with you. I can assure the people that they [BNP] will not be able to unleash such destructive activities now."

On BNP's threat of waging a movement, Hasina said she heard about such movements many times in the past. "Whenever the date for Khaleda Zia's appearance in court nears, she starts issuing threats."

Replying to a question, she said the hartal called (for Sunday) by some Islamist parties might be linked with Khaleda's court appearance, as she indulged in corruption and is afraid to face court.

"Election will take place in time and people's confidence [in the AL] will be evaluated then," she said when a journalist drew her attention to the BNP chairperson's statement that the government should hold polls to test its popularity.

"We have won elections of the international bodies. Those who voted our candidates are parliamentarians and she [Khaleda] should learn a lesson from this," Hasina said.

The PM termed late president Ziaur Rahman and Khaleda killers, and ruled out any possibility of dialogues with the BNP over its demand for holding general elections.

She said Zia was involved in the murder of Bangabandhu on August 15, 1975, and Khaleda was involved

in the August 21, 2004, grenade attacks while their son Tarique Rahman was following their footsteps.

Zia and Khaleda also rewarded killers, Hasina added.

"They tried to kill me....they do not believe in the sovereignty of the country but you are telling me to sit with them," she said, responding to a question about talks with the BNP.

"Why do you ask me again and again to sit with the people who wanted to kill me? If anyone of your family is killed, will you hold discussions with the killers or seek justice?"

"You cannot tell me to sit for a dialogue when you are demanding trial of war criminals and elimination of extremism from the country."

She claimed that the country's media were enjoying total freedom. "The media in no other country enjoy this much freedom."

The premier also criticised the Islamist parties for calling a shutdown demanding the arrest of former posts and telecommunications minister Latif Siddique.

She rejected allegations by the Islamist parties that no action was taken against Latif.

"We have acted instantly. We have removed him from the cabinet. We have suspended him from the party."

"How can we arrest him when he is not in the country? So, there is no logic for calling a hartal demanding his arrest."

Turning to the issues of terrorism and militancy, Hasina said it was a global problem now. Still, Bangladesh has been successful in dealing with the threat.

"We are alert and are taking instant steps for combating the menace," she said.

On alleged involvement of Bangladeshi militants in the recent explosion in West Bengal, the PM said Jamaat had links with it.

At the briefing, the PM also highlighted various achievements and development activities of her government.

About the ASEM conference, Hasina said she spoke about climate change and extremism in the conference. "I told the world leaders that Bangladesh will never support extremism and allow its land to use for terrorist activities against other countries."

She said she also called on them not to sell weapons to extremist organisations so that extremism could not spread.

"I thanked the Italian prime minister for creating job opportunity for 1.5 lakh Bangladeshis," said the PM.

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SI Anwar of Sher-e-Bangla Nagar Police Station filed the case against Alam on Monday for "possessing" an illegal firearm and three rounds of bullet.

The case statement says the SI around 11:50pm on Sunday learnt that an armed gang of seven to eight gathered at Taltola to commit crimes. He informed his superiors about the matter before going to the spot.

But Abdul Momen, then officer-in-charge of Sher-e-Bangla Nagar Police Station, said the sub-inspector around 9:00pm on Sunday informed him about "a raid to be conducted to nab a criminal". He was not told about any gang.

Later around midnight, he learnt from Anwar that a "gunfight had taken place at Taltola and a firearm had been recovered from a mugger".

Momen was transferred to the Detective Branch of police on Wednesday.

Biplob Kumar Sarkar, deputy commissioner of Dhaka Metropolitan Police (DMP), came to know about "a gunfight, recovery of a firearm and bullets and arrest of a criminal accused in several cases" about one and a half hours after the victim was taken to the hospital.

Bullet-hit Alam was admitted to Nitor at 12:40am on Monday, accord-

ing to the hospital's record book. He was detained and under police custody when he was taken to the hospital.

Biplob said the SI informed him about the events around 1:30am on Monday.

Sher-e-Bangla Nagar Police Station is under his division.

In the case statement, Anwar also said he took along his four colleagues - SI Shahjahan Mondol, ASI Abdur Rashid and constables Matiur Rahman and Imam Hossain -- to conduct the raid.

During the "gunfight", Matiur and Imam fired respectively two and three rounds from their shotguns, he added.

Contacted, SI Shahjahan Mondol said he was not present at the time of the "gunfight". He declined to make any further comments.

Rashid, Matiur and Imam could not be contacted.

Wahidul Islam, additional deputy commissioner (Tejgaon division) of DMP and head of the committee formed by police to investigate the shooting, said they were interrogating the policemen named in the case statement to verify Anwar's claim.

The case statement mentions that Shah Alam was injured in a gunfight but doctors at Nitor say he was shot from close range.

Shah Alam claims he was picked up by SI Anwar from Mohammadpur

Krishi Market area around 10:00pm Sunday. The SI and his men then blindfolded and tied him up, before forcing him into a microbus.

Taking him to Taltola area, Anwar shot him in both legs and later falsely portrayed him as a mugger and a gunfight victim.

Anwar was reportedly having an extramarital affair with Shah Alam's wife. Alam had threatened to disclose the matter to the police officer's wife.

DC Biplob Kumar Sarkar on Wednesday said their preliminary probe found Anwar shot Alam over personal enmity.

"He [Anwar] shot Alam after picking him up," he told The Daily Star over the phone.

**NHRC CHAIRMAN VISITS ALAM**

Visiting Alam at the hospital yesterday morning, National Human Rights Commission Chairman Mizanur Rahman said policemen before receiving firearms need to undergo psychological tests.

"They should be tested to determine their mental fitness before they receive firearms," said the NHRC boss.

He spoke with the victim and then briefed journalists on rights violation by law enforcers.

"We earlier had come to the hospital to visit Limon," he told reporters referring to the youth who was shot

and maimed by a Rab team in Jhalakathi 2011. "Today, we came to visit another such victim."

Mizanur also criticised Asaduzzaman Khan, the state minister for home, for terming the shooting of Limon an accident.

Dr Golam Faruque, associate professor at Nitor, said the victim's condition was improving, and hopefully, amputation could be avoided.

**HC DIRECTIVES**

In response to a writ petition filed by rights body Ain o Salish Kendra (ASK), the HC yesterday directed the DMP commissioner to inform the court on November 18 about the steps taken against the persons responsible for the shooting.

It ordered the authorities concerned to allow Alam's family members to visit him at the hospital, petitioner's lawyer ZI Khan Panna told The Daily Star.

Police earlier obstructed the family to visit the victim.

The court also issued a rule as to why the government should not be directed to compensate Alam and to take legal action against the persons responsible for the incident under the Code of Criminal Procedure.

The HC bench of Justice Quazi Reza-Ul Hoque and Justice Abu Taher Md Saifur Rahman came up with the order.

## Almost all secondary schools on track

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Around 83 percent of over 2.6 lakh aspirants failed to obtain even pass marks in the entrance exams.

The survey report titled "Performance based institutional self assessment summary 2014," widely known as ISAS report, was released at a national workshop at the National Academy for Educational Management (Naem) in the capital yesterday.

It was prepared by the Planning and Development Wing of the Directorate of Secondary and Higher Education (DSHE) on the basis of seven main indicators.

The report says 988 schools are either performing poorly or not at all.

"We are constantly working and extending support to the schools so that they can make some progress on the indicators," said Prof Fahima Khatun, director general of DSHE that oversees secondary education in the country.

One of the indicators is students' performance, under which the number of students, their results and attendance rates are calculated.

"Students are gradually doing well in the examinations and that is what makes

the difference," Prof Fahima told The Daily Star.

The six other criteria are teaching-learning environment, leadership of the institution heads, effectiveness of school managing committee, teachers' professionalism, co-curricular activities and guardian-teacher relationships. There are some 45 sub-criteria.

The heads of 18,425 schools filled up the ISAS forms, which were crosschecked by upazila secondary education officers, district education officers and other officials concerned before the authorities made the final report, listing the institutions in five categories.

This is the fourth time the government has carried out the survey.

The top performing schools are graded under 'A' category, schools performing well under 'B', those moderately performing under 'C' and performing poorly or not performing at all under 'D' and 'E' categories.

This year's report shows that the number of top performing and well performing schools increased by 1.9 percentage point from last year while poor performing and non-performing schools came down significantly.

Such an improvement in a year, how-

ever, raises questions since the assessment is being done by the institution heads themselves.

Since it is self-assessment, the heads often provide inflated data, sources in DSHE said.

Prof Fahima also admitted the fact partially. "It is true teachers may provide inflated data, yet those were checked by our officials."

Government efforts like providing training to the teachers, distributing free textbooks and widening the stipend coverage for students have had an impact, she said.

Education Minister Nurul Islam Nahid said the report was not completely free of errors. "It is difficult to remain neutral when you assess yourself. Besides, we lack efficiency."

Yet, the minister noted, an improvement in the quality of education has taken place, which many people tend to ignore: the enrolment rate has increased, dropout rate decreased and a gender parity achieved in the secondary level education.

"Isn't it a qualitative change?" Nahid said.

The report, however, gives a dismal picture in one of the indicators -- teach-

ing-learning environment of the institutions.

Around 31 percent schools have done poorly in the criterion that covers areas like average number of students per classroom, safe drinking water facilities, availability of furniture for students, library facilities and others.

The evaluation report divided the country's schools into nine zones, with Rangpur having the highest number of schools (315 out of total 3,038) performing poorly or not at all followed by Barisal (248 out of 1,639).

Dhaka has the highest number of top performing schools (243 out of 2,417).

The ISAS report also named the top 11 government and non-government schools in the capital.

Among the government schools, Dhanmondi Government Girls' High School topped the list followed by Government Laboratory High School, and Khilgaon Government High School.

Rajuk Uttara Model School and College is the top performing non-government school. Ideal School and College and Vigarunnisa Noon School were ranked second and third among non-government schools.