

National broadcast act in 6 months

TV centres at 5 divisional HQs, Inu tells JS

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Information Minister Hasanul Haq Inu yesterday told parliament that the National Broadcast Act would be formulated in six months.

Replying to a query, he said the National Broadcast Commission would be formed after the enactment of the act and the commission would enforce the law after reviewing the contents aired on television channels.

In response to another query, the minister said the National Medicine Policy-2005 places restrictions on advertising illegal health products and instructions have been given to TV channels to this end.

He also told the House that initiatives have been taken to set up television centres in five divisional headquarters at a total cost of Tk 997 crore.

68 PERCENT WITH ELECTRICITY

Planning Minister AHM Mustafa Kamal in parliament said 68 percent of the country's population now have

access to electricity, and by 2021 every household would have electricity connections.

Replying to queries on behalf of State Minister for Power Nasrul Hamid Bipu, Kamal said the current government has taken initiatives to take the power generation capacity to 24,000MW by 2021. The capacity at the moment is 11,265MW.

JP URGES GOVT TO CONTAIN VIOLENCE

Opposition Leader Raushan Ershad told parliament they stand beside the government with their full strength in containing the ongoing violence in the country.

She castigated the BNP-led alliance for resorting to violence and chaos, and urged Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina to deal with the troublemakers with an iron hand.

Raushan also praised the premier for her bold stance against violence.

Thanking the opposition leader, Food Minister Qamrul Islam said that no discussion would be held with the BNP.

LAPSES IN BURDWAN BLAST PROBE

BJP chief blasts Mamata govt

OUR CORRESPONDENT, New Delhi

India's ruling BJP yesterday alleged the Mamata Banerjee government in West Bengal did not properly investigate the Burdwan blast linked to Jamaat-ul Mujahideen Bangladesh (JMB).

"Bengal is a bordering state and infiltration from Bangladesh is a problem. But here is a government which gives priority to vote-bank politics over national security. They are allowing infiltration from Bangladesh," BJP President Amit Shah told a rally in Burdwan where a bomb blast took place in last October.

He said the Burdwan blast was linked to a terror module that was working in West Bengal and claimed the incident would not have happened had the Mamata government taken action when an explosion had earlier occurred at Garden Reach in Kolkata in 2013.

Shah also reminded people that the Mamata government had opposed an NIA probe into the Burdwan blast,

throwing a question to his audience, "Will you allow such a state government which gives priority to vote-bank politics over national security?"

A number of people arrested in West Bengal and Bangladesh in connection with the Burdwan blast case are suspected to be key leaders of JMB.

Turning to the Saradha chit fund scam, the BJP president alleged Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee was more interested in trying to save her scamtainted party leaders than developing the state.

The Mamata government, he said, was taking West Bengal backward and that several big companies had closed down in the last two years.

He also accused Mamata's party Trinamool Congress of unleashing violence against BJP workers in West Bengal.

He made it clear that Bengal was very much on BJP's radar, asserting, "After Delhi and Bihar, a BJP government is going to be installed in the state."

Youth killed as fuel tank of van explodes

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Cg

A youth was killed and his brother critically injured as the fuel tank of a covered van exploded at a motor workshop in Chittagong's Halishahar yesterday.

The dead, Md Masum, 23, was the son of Khalek Munshi of Daudkandi in Comilla.

The injured, Md Masud, 20, was undergoing treatment at the burn unit of Chittagong Medical College

Hospital with around 33 percent burns, said Dr Mrinal Kanti Das, head of the unit.

Syed Abu Md Shahjahan Kabir, officer-in-charge of Halishahar Police Station, said the explosion took place around 11:00am when the two were working inside the covered van with a welding machine.

Masum died on the spot, he said.

Police were investigating the incident, the police official added.



Ambia Begum at the burn unit of Rajshahi Medical College Hospital. The 48-year-old suffered burns on her face, throat and both hands in an arson attack on a Dhaka-bound bus she was travelling on. PHOTO: COLLECTED

Innocents the main victim of violence

FROM PAGE 1

January 5 to 26.

Of the dead, 16 are ordinary people and the rest belong to different political parties.

Eleven people were burnt as bomb and arson attacks and vandalism continued in different places of the country on the 15th day of the nonstop blockade enforced by the BNP-led 20-party alliance.

Though commuters to and from the capital faced difficulties, the Border Guard Bangladesh claimed approximately 50,507 vehicles, including buses, trucks and covered vans, plied different routes under special security measures between 6:00pm on Monday and 6:00am yesterday.

And in an act of utter indifference to public sufferings, the BNP-led combine is enforcing hartal in Dhaka and Khulna divisions for 48 hours and in Sylhet district for 12 hours from this morning, protesting arrest and killing of its leaders.

BNP's student wing Jatiyatabadi Chhatra Dal too called a 36-hour shutdown from this morning in Dhaka division, to protest the killing of its leader Nuruzzaman Jonny in an alleged gunfight with law enforcers. It also called strikes at all educational institutions for today and tomorrow.

Monwara Begum, 35, who suffered 63 percent burns in a petrol bomb attack on a bus in Rangpur on January 14, died around 3:00am at the Combined Military Hospital in Dhaka, said Golam Rabbani, nephew of the dead.

With Monwara, six people have so far been killed from the attack allegedly by Jamaat-Shibir men at Jaigirhat in Mithapukur upazila.

In Rajshahi, a woman was burnt after alleged blockaders hurled a petrol bomb at a Dhaka-bound bus she was riding around 12:30am yesterday, reports our Rajshahi correspondent.

Ambia Begum, 48, wife of Israil Hoque of Moharajpur in Chapainawabganj Sadar upazila, was sent to Dhaka with burn injuries on her face, throat and hands.

Police said the Shishir Paribahan bus carrying 35 passengers left

ARSON ATTACK WHAT TO DO FOR SAFETY

Keep the windows of your vehicle closed

Don't run if your cloths catch fire. Cover your face and roll on the ground

Wrap the person on fire with wet clothes. Keep a jar of water in vehicle. When needed, pour adequate water on burnt parts of the body. Arrange quick treatment for burn patients

Keep first aid box in vehicle

Keep 2 dry powder fire extinguishers in vehicle and get training from Fire Service and Civil Defence

Attach a pictorial chart of rules on using fire extinguishers in vehicle

Don't sleep in vehicles parked by the road or any unprotected site

Don't stop vehicle at any risky spot

KEEP THE FIRE SERVICE CONTROL ROOM NUMBERS IN VEHICLE

9555-555 or 01730-336699

Don't panic in any emergency. Stay calm and call Fire Service whenever needed

SOURCE: FIRE SERVICE

Chapainawabganj Monday night in a convoy under police protection and stopped at Shiroil Bus Stand in Rajshahi.

As it started again, the bus fell behind the convoy. When it was heading towards the Silk Bhaban area, blockade supporters waylaid it and set it on fire with a petrol bomb, burning Ambia. Three more passengers were injured while jumping off the bus.

Her husband Israil, a retired banker, who narrowly escaped the attack, said the couple were going to Dhaka to visit their doctor son Ashrafu Hoque.

"I had no idea that I would have to take her to our son as a patient," he said.

A police constable was injured in Chuadanga after alleged blockaders hurled two crude bombs on a police van carrying supplies for law enforcers on duty at Kedarganj intersection of the town around 8:45pm, said Officer-in-Charge (investigation) AHM Kamruzzaman of Chuadanga Sadar Police Station.

Injured constable Zinnat Ali, 40, was undergoing treatment at

Chuadanga Sadar Hospital.

In Dhaka, two passengers were burnt as pro-blockade pickets threw a petrol bomb on their bus at Baraipara of Ashulia around 7:30pm yesterday, police said.

Injured Abdur Rashid of Gazipur's Kaliakair and Nitai Chandra Sarker of Manikganj were rushed to Dhaka Medical College Hospital, Sentu Chandra Das, assistant sub-inspector of DMCH police camp told The Daily Star last night.

On Dhaka University campus, suspected blockaders exploded two crude bombs at Doyel Chattar around 7:15pm, injuring rickshaw puller Abdul Mannan.

In a similar attack, shoe trader Helal Uddin was injured at Siddique Bazar around the same time.

Both Mannan and Helal were admitted to the DMCH.

A crude bomb went off in the corridor between the History and the Mass Communication and Journalism departments inside the arts faculty building of Dhaka University around 12:00noon. However, none was

injured.

In Feni, a CNG-run auto-rickshaw driver and two passengers were burnt in a petrol bomb attack on the vehicle near Dudmukha Bazar of Dagonbhuiyan upazila last night. The injured were admitted to local hospitals.

In Sylhet, a trucker and his assistant were burnt in a petrol bomb attack on their sand-laden truck in Bagher Sarak area on Sylhet-Tamabil highway early yesterday, reports our Sylhet correspondent. The duo were admitted to Sylhet MAG Osmani Medical College Hospital.

In Chittagong, two crude bombs were exploded at the village home of Jatiya Samajtantrik Dal leader and lawmaker Moyeen Uddin Khan Badal at Boalkhali upazila.

The MP was not at the home during the attack. Window panes and a wall of the house in Saroyatali were damaged after two men came riding on a motorcycle and hurled the bombs around 2:30am, said Assistant Superintendent Shamim Hossain of Chittagong police.

Meanwhile, fire erupted in two cabins of the Dhaka-bound MV Sundarban-7 launch soon after it started from Barisal terminal around 8:00pm. Some pieces of furniture were burnt before the crew on board doused it.

A cabin of MV Parabat-10 was partly damaged in another fire around the same time. None was hurt in the incidents.

Barisal Kotwali police suspect blockade supporters impersonating passengers tried to burn down the launch.

In Comilla, 14 shops owned by BNP adherents were torched allegedly by some Awami League activists at Dadghor Bazar of Monohorganj upazila on Monday night, reports UNB.

Five homemade bombs were recovered from Jahangirnagar University campus around 9:30pm.

In Chapainawabganj, alleged Shibir activists vandalised two trucks and blasted crude bombs at Sonarmore at 9:20am.

All-out steps to contain violence

FROM PAGE 1

tomorrow [today]," Md Mozammel Haq Khan, senior secretary at the home ministry, told The Daily Star at his office yesterday.

Mindless arson attacks and killings cannot continue. "The government will do whatever necessary to stop it," he said.

The special meeting has been convened against the backdrop of a spate of violence that left at least 26 people dead and several hundred injured since January 5.

The committee is headed by Industries Minister and Awami League leader Amir Hossain Amu.

Commerce Minister Tofail Ahmed, Shipping Minister Shahjahan Khan, Information Minister Hasanul Haq Inu, Civil Aviation Minister Rashed Khan Menon, the inspector general of police, directors general of Rab and BGB, heads of all intelligence agencies and senior police officials are expected to attend today's meeting.

At a meeting on Monday, the Core Committee comprising home ministry officials and heads of law enforcement and intelligence agencies discussed possible steps to contain violence.

The government has already taken a hard line for tackling violence. Law enforcers have intensified drives to arrest attackers and increased their presence in different parts of the coun-

try.

In the capital, a JCD leader and a Narail Jamaat-e-Islami leader were killed in separate "shootouts" with detectives in Khilgaon and Motijheel areas in the last two days. Their family members alleged that they had been murdered in a planned way.

Speaking at separate programmes in the city yesterday, ministers and ruling party leaders stated that acts of violence would be dealt with an iron hand.

At his Secretariat office, State Minister for Home Asaduzzaman Khan told reporters that the government would reward those giving information which leads to arrest of arsonists.

Social Welfare Minister Syed Mohsin Ali said, "We are going to decide on giving orders to shoot [arsonists] on sight as in wartime."

The government can no longer remain silent. "We will identify them and hand down punishment," he said while visiting arson victims at the burn unit of Dhaka Medical College Hospital yesterday.

At a press briefing at the Secretariat, the information minister hinted that murder cases might be filed against Khaleda Zia and her son Tarique Rahman for instigating violence.

"Why can't they be sued for murdering people through instigation if a

Wasa official can be sued for the death of a child who fell into a well shaft in the city? asked Inu.

The administration is looking into the matter, he added.

Addressing a peace rally at Gabtoli, AL leaders Mohammad Nasim, Mofazzal Hossain Chowdhury Maya and Jahangir Kabir Nanak slated the BNP for the ongoing violence, and warned troublemakers of stern action.

Nanak said the hands of those who indulged in arson attacks and vandalism would be crushed.

Accusing Khaleda Zia of instigating violence, Maya demanded that the BNP chief be arrested.

Meanwhile, police sources said a large number of plainclothes policemen have been deployed at many points in the city to catch arsonists.

"More than 10,000 law enforcers, who had been busy providing security for Biswa Ijtema, are now tasked with checking arson attacks," said a senior police official, seeking anonymity.

"Our first target is to check attacks and ensure free movement of people. We are also working to arrest those involved in the recent arson attacks and killings."

All police stations in the capital have been asked to conduct drives to arrest suspected arsonists and attackers, said the official.

Another JCD leader killed

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"Police cooked up the shootout story to cover up the murder," his father Yakub Ali told The Daily Star.

On Monday, a ward-level Jamaat leader from Narail was killed in a "gunfight" with detectives at Motijheel in the capital. Family of the victim, Imrul Qayes, claimed detectives had picked him up on Saturday.

Earlier on January 16, Motiur Rahman, a union-level JCD leader, was similarly killed in Chapainawabganj.

Jonny's father said he spoke with his son for the last time on the phone around 1:15pm on Monday, after he had gone to the Dhaka Central Jail to visit his younger brother Moniruzzaman Hira.

Police picked up Hira on Friday from near their house at Khilgaon.

Jonny's wife Munia Parveen Monisha found all his four cell phones off about an hour after the conversation, Yakub said, adding that they looked for him at all possible places.

He then contacted the Khilgaon police and the Detective Branch of Police, but they denied arresting him.

"The detectives who denied arresting my son on Monday night killed him just hours later," he said, and alleged that detectives also arrested another JCD activist named Moim along with Jonny.

Jonny's wife is seven-month pregnant. For his son's death, Yakub blamed the recent provocative statements of ministers, lawmakers and top officials of law

enforcers who said arsonists should be shot at sight.

In a statement, the BNP said the "repressive and cruel" government started killing opposition leaders as part of its blueprint for silencing the opposition's voice.

Party Standing Committee Member Lt Gen (ret'd) Mahbubur Rahman visited Jonny's house in the afternoon.

POLICE VERSION
Detectives said they picked up Jonny from Nazim Uddin Road area on Monday, and during primary interrogation he confessed to his involvement in Saturday's arson attack on a police van near Matsya Bhaban.

On information gleaned from him, they launched a drive at Jorpukur playground at Khilgaon around 3:00am yesterday to recover petrol bombs, crude bombs and other arms and ammunition.

Sensing police presence, his cohorts opened fire on police, prompting them to fire back. Jonny was bullet-hit as he came in the line of fire, said a detective official, preferring anonymity.

He was taken to Dhaka Medical College Hospital where doctors declared him dead, said Alauddin, sub-inspector of Khilgaon police.

Mustafiz Bhuiyan, officer-in-charge of the station, said Jonny was a charge-sheeted accused in six cases -- four under explosive substance act and two for assault on police.

Talking to reporters at the DMCH, Jonny's mother Mariam Akhter said, "Even if my son were a criminal, they could have tried him in a court. Why have they killed him?"

It was not clear why the DB initially denied arresting him, only to admit it after his death.

Syria regime air strikes kill 39

AFP, Beirut

Syrian government air strikes yesterday killed at least 39 people, more than half of them civilians, in two main battlegrounds in the north of the country, a monitor said.

"The Syrian Observatory for Human Rights has documented the deaths of at least 27 people... in air strikes targeting the outskirts of Tal Hamis," said the Britain-based organisation.

Speaking to AFP, Observatory director Rami Abdel Rahman said nine of those killed had been identified by his group as civilians.

Yesterday's bombing was especially deadly because it struck a cattle market.

Earlier yesterday, the Observatory reported a string of air strikes against the town of Saraqeb and the village of Sheikh Mustafa in the northwestern province of Idlib.