

Police probing bribery over arrests

Says IGP; claims normalcy returning
STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Inspector General of Police (IGP) AKM Shahidul Hoque yesterday said the force was investigating the allegations that its personnel were arresting people and releasing them after taking money.

He made the remarks replying to a query at a programme at the Police Headquarters in the capital where about 25 police personnel were rewarded with Tk 5.5 lakh for nabbing "arsonists and bomb throwers red-handed" during the ongoing blockade.

The police chief said most of the arrested arsonists turned out to be activists of the BNP-Jamaat or persons hired by such activists.

He claimed that the country's law and order situation was getting back to normal. "Vehicular movement has increased countrywide. Normalcy is returning to life in Dhaka."

Talks without BNP possible

Says citizens' group
STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The prevailing crisis can be solved through dialogue between the government, and social organisations and political parties, excluding the BNP-led 20-party alliance, said Udbigna Nagorik Samaj, a group of citizens led by economist Dr Qazi Kholiquzzaman Ahmad, yesterday.

The parties perpetuating terrorism should be left out of dialogue, Dr Abul Kashem, general secretary of Bangladesh Peace Council, told a discussion of the group in the capital's Cirdap auditorium.

The speakers said the main cause of the conflict was not election but the ideological difference between pro- and anti-liberation forces. Editor of Bhorer Kagaj Shyamal Dutta, Chief Editor of Ekattor TV Mozammel Babu and President of Institute of Diploma Engineers AKMA Hamid also spoke.

'Stolen' Ctg baby rescued in Comilla

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Ctg

Police rescued a nine-month old baby from a Langolcoat house in Comilla yesterday, seven days after he was allegedly stolen from his Chittagong residence.

Domestic help Sweetie Begum took away the baby boy in the name of going to a shop on February 7, police said. The rescue was made on information provided by arrested Abdus Salam, Md Nasir and Shuba Dey, they added. Sweetie is yet to be held.



(Clockwise from left) Fake corpses wrapped in shrouds on the back of a truck in a demonstration organised by Awami League lawmaker MA Latif in front of the capital's Central Shaheed Minar yesterday protesting the arson attacks on civilians during the blockade and hartals of the BNP-led 20-party alliance. Assistant Sub-inspector Farida Khanam Tagor receiving an award from Inspector General of Police AKM Shahidul Hoque. Twenty five policemen were presented Tk 5.5 lakh for recently nabbing arsonists red-handed. Shushashoner Jannoy Nagorik forms a human chain before the National Museum demanding "peace, harmony and consensus".

PHOTO: STAR

Failure of citizens' move to deepen political crisis

Shakhawat Hossain tells human chain about dialogue

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The country will be in deeper crisis and its sovereignty at stake if the initiative taken by a citizens' group fails to spur dialogue between the two major political parties, ex-Election Commissioner M Shakhawat Hossain said yesterday.

"There is no alternative to talks. If any initiative taken inside our country fails, we will see more external meddling," he said. "Our politicians must understand that the situation is going out of their control. It is no good sign for them. I hope they will come to their senses."

He was addressing a human chain of Shushashoner Jannoy Nagorik (SHUJAN) before the National Museum demanding "peace, harmony and consensus".

Hossain welcomed the initiative of a 13-member citizens' committee, including seven former caretaker government advisers, which on Friday called for an immediate stop to violence to pave the way for dialogue. Former Chief Election Commissioner ATM Shamsul Huda heads the group.

SHUJAN'S KEY DEMANDS

- Stop violence, punish perps
- End extra-judicial killings
- Defend democratic rights of all

At the human chain, SHUJAN Secretary Badiul Alam Majumdar proposed formulation of a national charter of consensus, which will offer a sustainable solution to the political crisis by outlining the electoral system, election-time government, and post-poll responsibilities of political parties.

Majumdar blamed the one-sided January 5 election as a key contributor to the ongoing crisis, and said the president should intervene if the political parties fail to organise talks by themselves.

SHUJAN President M Hafizuddin Khan, eminent rights activist Hameeda Hossain, and media personality Muhammad Jahangir also spoke.

Meanwhile, former president AQM Badruddoza Chowdhury yesterday urged Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina to hold a fresh national election to end the turmoil.

He was addressing a token hunger strike at the office of his party, Bikalpadhara Bangladesh, in the capital's Kuril, demanding a dialogue between Hasina and BNP chief Khaleda Zia.

Muhith describes killings in arson as treason

Qamrul says vested quarter trying to provoke army

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Referring to the immolation of civilians in petrol bomb attacks, Finance Minister AMA Muhith yesterday said the acts led by BNP chief Khaleda Zia was tantamount to treason and so she should be brought to justice.

Addressing a discussion of Journey, a non-profit organisation, at Dhaka University senate building, he said there would be no dialogue with those burning people alive. Echoing him, prime minister's adviser HT Imam called on the people to resist the "terrorists".

University Grants Commission Chairman AK Azad Chowdhury and National University Vice Chancellor Prof Harun-or-Rashid backed their views.

Meanwhile, Food Minister Qamrul Islam yesterday told a programme at the Jatiya Press Club that a vested quarter was trying to grab state power by instigating the army.

But there is no scope of undemocratic takeover, he said, adding, "None will be able to mislead the army and damage its unity."



Participants at a discussion on budgetary allocation for development of people with disabilities organised by Bangladesh Visually Impaired Peoples' Society with support from Sightsavers and European Union in the capital's The Daily Star Centre yesterday. Story on Page 3.

PHOTO: STAR

BoI must simplify investment process

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Their comments came at a roundtable titled "Breaking through the Frontier" at City Bank Centre in Dhaka on Thursday.

City Bank, one of the leading private commercial banks in the country, and FinanceAsia, Asia's leading financial publishing company based in Hong Kong, jointly organised the meeting.

The roundtable was a follow-up to the Third Bangladesh Investment Summit held in Singapore in September last year. The annual event is a private sector initiative with the view to highlight Bangladesh's potential as an investment destination for global investors and pinpoint barriers that put investors at bay.

Rizvi said the extraordinary efforts and energy he saw among the organisers of the Bangladesh Investment Summit to portray the country as an investment destination must be sustained.

The government has addressed the concerns of investors and businesses soon after taking power in 2009. He gave the example of the power sector, which, he said, was in dire straits when the current government first came to power six years ago because of years of under-investment.

Major transport projects are also going on, he said. "We are in a good place, but not in a good enough place that all of us would have liked."

The adviser said some of the country's institutions, laws and regulations are not yet aligned with global practices.

"Definitely, we need some help in these areas. The government's commitment is there. It is because we often don't have the expertise and experience."

Meanwhile, Sobhan said large Indian IT firms are very interested in Bangladesh. "We need IT parks. We have been talking about IT parks for the past 20 years, but we are still waiting for an IT park to happen."

Rupert Walker, contributing editor of FinanceAsia, while moderating the meeting, said Bangladesh is an attractive venue for investment managers as well as direct investment, which will spur further economic and political development.

He said foreign investment in Bangladesh is less than one percent of the GDP, which is not acceptable for a country like Bangladesh with all its inherent attraction.

Sohail RK Hussain, managing director of City Bank, said in order to graduate to the next level of economic maturity, diversification is critical.

He said Bangladesh should look to Australia, South Korea, Japan and the BRIC countries, where there are strong growth possibilities due to the market size.

The banker said Bangladesh should also look at diversifying into other sectors such as leather, agro products, pharmaceuticals, IT and related services, shipbuilding industry, terry towel and others, if it wants to raise its export income from \$30 billion to a much higher level, he said.

He said Bangladesh may need to use broad-based policies to FDI without

imposing too many restrictions. At the same time, more specific measures aimed at attracting quality investment should be applied to meet the nation's long-term strategic needs.

However, attracting quality investment requires that Bangladesh deliver enough satisfactory rewards to make investors agree to transfer technology to local businesses and entrepreneurs.

He said if foreigners want to set up a building, they have to take permissions from 19 entities, which is completely unmanageable. "It might take 19 months to take all the approvals -- we have to pay attention to it."

Arif Khan, commissioner of Bangladesh Securities and Exchange Commission, said following the Bangladesh Investment Summit in Singapore there has been an influx of foreign investment into the country's capital market, moving up to 10 percent from 3 percent. "This is a direct effect of the summit."

Abbar Anwar, chief executive officer of Standard Chartered Bangladesh, said policy continuity is a critical area. "There has been continuity of policy but there remains always a concern whether it will be continuing."

He said Bangladesh provides fantastic opportunity for all sorts of investors such as debt, capital market and direct investors as the country has 160 million people and the per capita income is growing every year.

The SCB chief said large IT companies

such as Accenture are already in Bangladesh. Incentives have to be given to them so they expand their operations, which will ultimately give positive signal to other investors.

Anwar also added getting land has become crucial for foreign investors. For example, he said he knew five Hong Kong-based companies had to return empty-handed as they could not buy proper land in Bangladesh.

Rubel Aziz, chairman of City Bank, said the government has done some fantastic jobs. "Now, it needs to focus on issues such as transparency and political stability. If we can have these two things, we will do much better."

Salehuddin Ahmed, managing editor of The Daily Star, said Bangladesh is a promising country and has all the ingredients to attract investment.

He said the current political crisis has effect on both local and foreign investors, so the crisis has to be sorted out. "Otherwise the country will not have the future many thought of."

Reaz Islam, managing partner of LR Global, said Bangladesh cannot grow at 8 percent without investment, both foreign and domestic.

"So, both the public and private sector and all other entities that touch an investor will have to change their mentality and policy."

He said there are reforms happening but they are not fast enough. "The BoI has to be a real one-stop service provider."

NEWSIN brief

Rail link with C'nawabganj resumes

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Rajshahi

Rail communications resumed between Chapainawabganj and the rest of the country about 15 hours after it was snapped when a train derailed in Godagari of Rajshahi Friday midnight.

The locomotive and two coaches of an Ishwardi-bound train veered off the track at Godagari as miscreants removed fishplates from the rail tracks there, said Mosharrar Hossain, divisional manager of Bangladesh Railway (West Zone). Rail communications resumed around 3:00pm yesterday, he said.

Missing boy found dead in Rangpur

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Rangpur

The body of an 11-year-old boy, who had been missing since January 30, was found with his throat slit in a puddle at Sathmatha in Rangpur city on Friday afternoon.

Tauhidul Islam Pranta, son of Manik Mian, a Bangladeshi expatriate living in Dubai, went to play near their house in Ambari area and did not return, said his mother who filed a general diary the next day.

FFs' wards get Indian scholarships

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Barisal

The Indian High Commission yesterday in Barisal city distributed scholarships worth Tk 12.02 lakh to 60 wards of freedom fighters who are studying at different levels from higher secondary to graduation.

At a ceremony in Ashwini Kumar Hall, 17 HSC candidates were given Tk 10,000 each while the others Tk 24,000 each. Industries Minister Amir Hossain Amu and Sidhartha Chattopadhyay, first secretary, Press, Information & Cultural Centre of the commission also spoke.

'Sundarbans Day' observed

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Khulna

The Sundarbans Academy and Bangladesh Forest Department yesterday for the second year in a row observed "The Sundarbans Day" at Khulna district's Shilpakala Academy, demanding state recognition of the day.

Discussions and cultural competitions were held in Khulna, Satkhira, Bagerhat, Barguna and in the nearby areas of the Sundarbans, the largest mangrove forest in the world, with the slogan "Love the Sundarbans on Valentine's Day".



Sundarban Rokkha Jatiya Committee (committee to protect the Sundarbans) forms a human chain in front of Jatiya Press Club in the capital yesterday demanding that the day be declared "Sundarbans Protection Day".

Stolen child's body found

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

An 11-month-old strangled baby girl found near Suhawardy Udyan's Ramna Kali Mandir in the capital yesterday afternoon might have been a victim of a vindictive woman whom the child's mother had thrown out three days after taking her in around a week ago.

Sultana Akter, who was arrested in Mirpur along with her "husband" Saiful Islam in the udyan, is accused of stealing the baby on Friday morning while the couple Billal Hossain and Setu Akter were out of their Mirpur-1 residence.

Sub-inspector Sohel Rana of Shahbagh Police Station said people in the udyan stated of seeing a woman carrying the baby.

He said Saiful, a rag picker, claims to have married Sultana four days ago at Shah Ali Mazar and they started living at the udyan.

Billal has filed a murder case with Shahbagh police.

Love in the air

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Rangpur," he said.

On e-books, Hoque opined that Bangladeshis still preferred hard copies. "Even in America when a new book is published, 70 percent comes out in hard copy and about 30 percent in e-book form."

About translation, Hoque opined that literature works of a certain country get translated because of the importance of the country in the global political and economical scenario rather than of the significance of that state's literature.

"For example now Afghanistan, Pakistan, India and China are of interest to foreigners. At one time we had witnessed that Japan suddenly became the centre of all attention when America started helping Japan after World War II," he said, adding how Japanese and later Chinese writers were getting Nobel Prizes then.

Keeping pace with the Valentine's Day crowd, 147 new books arrived at the fair out of which 36 were fictions and another 36 were on poetry.

Besides, 12 new books along with a poetry volume "J Sur Baje Prane" by poet Anindita Mukta were launched at the fair yesterday.

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