



A delegation of the European Parliament's Subcommittee on Human Rights met BNP Chairperson Khaleda Zia at the latter's Gulshan office yesterday evening.

BASIC Bank

FROM PAGE 16
One of them, Md Azizul Haq, was heading the loan recovery division of the bank as its deputy general manager. Sources said Haq is the brother-in-law of Sheikh Abdul Hye Bacchu who stepped down in July last year after a central bank investigation unearthed financial irregularities that cost the bank Tk 4,500 crore during his chairmanship.

Haq's appointment highlighted the interference of Bacchu, a government-blessed appointee, in the day-to-day running of the bank. Haq joined the bank as an assistant general manager, but his job was regularised as a deputy general manager. He went into retirement after six months. Later, he was appointed for three years on a contractual basis. The rest seven were employed at different branches as assistant cash officer. They were fired for getting the job on fake certificates.

Although they have been fired now, the bank unearthed the anomalies two years ago that they had submitted fake certificates to get the job, which led to their termination.

But they got admitted to private universities and passed, and used the certificates to get back their job. The board, which was dissolved last year and then recast, cancelled their appointments after concluding that they should not have been given the job for the second time as they were terminated before, said an official of the bank.

The central bank inspection in 2012 detected scams involving over Tk 4,000 crore in some of the bank's branches.

The Office of the Comptroller and Auditor General in the same year found 17 instances of financial irregularities at the bank's headquarters.

Ready for

FROM PAGE 16
political stalemate. So, we have made it clear that we want to resolve the political deadlock through talks. We are ready to sit with the government anytime," BNP Standing Committee Member Nazrul Islam Khan, who was present at the meeting, told The Daily Star over the phone.

Apart from Nazrul, newly appointed EU Ambassador to Bangladesh Pierre Mayaudon and BNP chief's adviser Abdul Quayum were present at the meeting.

Though neither of the sides made any official briefing, Nazrul Islam Khan claimed a range of issues, including the country's political and human rights situation, extrajudicial killings and law enforcer's activities, were discussed in the meeting.

The BNP also told the delegation, which arrived in Dhaka on Monday night, that its movement was democratic and justified, he said.

At least 70 people have been killed, mostly in arson attacks, many more injured and hundreds of vehicles vandalised since the BNP and its allies enforced an indefinite country-wide blockade from January 6 demanding resignation of the government and a fresh election under a non-partisan government.

The BNP told the EU team that all the acts of violence were being carried out by government agents and that the BNP chief had repeatedly called for an investigation into the incidents, Nazrul told this paper.

"But the government is not doing so as those involved in the subversive acts are actually ruling party men," he added.

Another implicates

FROM PAGE 5
the incident from his aunts and an uncle who was also wounded in the firing.

Hasan, an alleged Razakar commander of Tarail upazila, is facing six charges, including mass killing. He has been tried in absentia.

State-appointed defence counsel Abdus Shukur Khan completed cross-examination before the tribunal that adjourned the case proceeding till tomorrow.

2 more killed

FROM PAGE 1
According to the Rab, he was the regional leader of Purb Banglar Communist Party (PBCP-Janajuddah).

But his family claims he was an activist of Jubo League, a pro-ruling Awami League youth organisation, and Rab men picked him up the day before. Two villagers said they saw a Rab team detain him on Monday morning.

Including Mostafa and Tareque, 29 people were known to have been killed in such incidents -- 18 in "shootouts" or "gunfights" with police and 11 with the Rab -- since the BNP-led alliance called the nationwide blockade on January 5.

In Gaibandha, a patrol team of Rab-13 while returning to Gaibandha camp from a joint operation stopped in Burirghar area around 5:00am yesterday, noticing suspicious movement of five to six persons on Gaibandha-Palashbari road.

Those unidentified men threw petrol bombs and fired shots at the Rab team, triggering a gunfight that left Mostafa injured, said Ashraf Hossain Siddique, assistant director of Rab-13.

His accomplices fled away and Mostafa was rushed to Gaibandha Sadar Hospital where doctors declared him dead. The Rab recovered eight petrol bombs, two pistols and a motorcycle from the spot.

Mostafa was the prime accused of petrol bomb attack on a night coach at Tulsighat in the district on February 6, said Raziur Rahman, officer-in-charge of Gaibandha Sadar Police Station. The arson left eight people burnt to death.

Visiting Mostafa's village home at Bishnupur, our Gaibandha correspondent found no relatives for comments. Even the villagers kept mum.

Majedur Rahman, acting general secretary of district Jamaat, alleged Rab

men in the name of encounter shot Mostafa.

In Jhenidah, a group of PBCP men were holding a meeting near Chutlia intersection under Sadar upazila around 3:00am yesterday. After a tip-off, a team of Rab-6 went there and cordoned off the area, said Squadron Leader Foysal Ahmed of the battalion.

Sensing presence of law enforcers, the "outlaws" opened fire. The Rab members retaliated by shooting and at one stage, found a body lying on the ground, he said.

The Rab official claimed that they recovered four pistols, two shutter guns, 10 bullets and six petrol bombs from the spot.

Tareque was accused in eight cases, including four for murder, he claimed.

But two villagers -- Sujan Hossain and Sarwar Hossain -- said Tareque was chatting with them while they were working in a field by Dhaka-Khulna highway around 11:00am on Monday.

Three men on a motorbike appeared from nowhere. Within moments, a Rab van came, picked up Tareque and left, they said.

Talking to our Jhenidah correspondent, Tareque's mother Nabirun Nessa said Rab men shot him dead after detaining him from roadside on Monday morning. "My son is innocent," she said in tears.

Father of a five-year-old daughter, Tareque was a sharecropper, according to the family. His wife Lovely Begum said she wants the administration to find out the real fact behind the murder through a proper investigation.

Maharajpur union AL President Abdur Rashid claimed Tareque was a vice-president of the union's Jubo League. He had been a PBCP leader a long ago. In 1989, he got involved in AL politics and started a "normal life", Rashid said.

The body was sent to Jhenidah Sadar Hospital for an autopsy.

Verdict today

FROM PAGE 16
The prosecution claimed that they have been able to prove all the nine charges against the 79-year-old politician and sought death penalty for him. They also prayed for adequate compensation for the victims.

The most serious of the charges is killing of 300-400 people by the Pakistan army and its local collaborators allegedly under his leadership in several villages of Satbaria union under Sujanagar upazila on May 12, 1971.

Subhan's lawyers, however, said the allegations brought against their client were "totally false and baseless" and hoped the tribunal would acquit him of the charges.

The trial in the case had completed on December 4 last year. Yesterday, the three-member tribunal led by Justice Obaidul Hassan fixed today for delivering the verdict. The other members of the court are Justice Md Mozibur Rahman Miah and Justice Md Shahinur Islam.

Two war crimes tribunals have so far delivered 15 verdicts, while the judgment in another case has been pending with the ICT-1.

Son of Sheikh Naimuddin and Nurani Begum of Tailakundi village in Sujanagar upazila of Pabna, Subhan was the general secretary of Peace Committee, a collaborating force of the Pakistan occupation army, in Pabna in 1971, according to the prosecution.

Later, he was made vice-president of the committee.

He was the founding ameer of Jamaat-e-Islami's Pabna unit and a Majlish-e-Sura member of the party's central unit during the war, said the prosecution.

Subhan was elected unopposed a member of the National Assembly of Pakistan in 1971. He fled to Pakistan when the war was

nearing its end. He rejoined politics after the assassination of Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman in 1975.

He was elected lawmaker from Jamaat in 1996 and 2001, according to a defence counsel.

Law enforcers arrested Subhan on September 20, 2012. After probing the allegations against him for 17 months, the war crimes investigation agency submitted its report to the prosecution on September 12, 2013.

Three days later, the prosecution submitted formal charges to the ICT-1. The court on December 31 last year framed nine charges against Subhan. Later, the case was transferred to ICT-2 for quick disposal.

The other charges brought against Subhan are: killing of five people and injuring three others at Juktalia village of Ishwardi on April 13; abduction and killing of three named people and several unnamed on April 17-18 in Ishwardi; killing of five people and looting and torching of several houses in Sahapur village in Ishwardi on May 2; abduction and torture of two people from Arankhola cattle market in Ishwardi on May 16; killings and torching of houses at Fulunia and Dogachhi villages in Pabna on May 11; abduction and killing of at least 18 villagers at Varara of Pabna in May; abduction and killing of two people of Dublia Bazar of Pabna in the first week of September; and abduction and killing of four people at Betbaria village in Ishwardi.

The prosecution produced 31 witnesses, including two investigating officers, and documents before the court to prove the charges. The defence did not produce any witnesses saying that they did not see any necessity to do so.

Khaleda among

FROM PAGE 16
Special Assistant Shimul Biswas, Khaleda's Press Secretary Maruf Kamal Khan Sohel, BNP Joint Secretary General Salauddin Ahmed, and BNP chairperson's adviser and Bar Council Vice-chairman Khandaker Mahbub Hossain.

In the case statement, Ismail, also chairman of Alkara Union Parishad in Comilla's Chouddagram, said the accused along with leaders of 20-party alliance instigated some unknown criminals to carry out the attack.

The criminals threw several cock-tails at the procession to kill people after it reached near Gulshan-2 intersection, the statement added.

The processionists were marching towards Khaleda's Gulshan office to lay siege to it on Monday noon, protesting the ongoing blockade and hartals enforced by the BNP-led combine. Khaleda has been staying at the office since January 3.

On January 25, Chouddagram police of Comilla filed a case against the BNP chief and 31 other BNP-Jamaat leaders for torching a covered van in Chouddagram. Khaleda was named as the mastermind in the case.

On January 24, Jatrabari police in Dhaka lodged another case against 68 BNP-Jamaat leaders for the Jatrabari arson attack, which left 28 people burnt.

Though the BNP chief was not accused in the case, the first information report filed with Jatrabari Police Station mentioned that the accused carried out the attack on instructions by Khaleda to enforce a nationwide indefinite blockade from January 6.

Govt may sign

FROM PAGE 16
PSC, which the government turned down. "When they started exploring the blocks, they knew about the terms and conditions. It was not possible for us to change the PSC," Prime Minister's Energy Adviser Dr Tawfiq-e-Elahi Chowdhury notes.

Following this, ConocoPhillips abandoned the exploration last year.

However, signing of the new PSCs with Statoil and ConocoPhillips would bring back exploration activities to the Bay of Bengal from next winter when the sea is calm.

Penguins lost

FROM PAGE 16
were missing.

A closer look at the DNA of penguins revealed that all species lack functioning genes for the receptors of sweet, umami, and bitter tastes.

"Based on genetic data, penguins are believed to have sour and salty tastes, but have lost sweet, umami, and bitter tastes," lead researcher Prof Jianzhi Zhang, of the University of Michigan, US, and Wuhan University, China, told the BBC.

The umami taste gives food the strong, savoury flavour associated with meat.

Lacking this sense is surprising for a carnivorous animal, but does not matter that much in the penguin, which swallows fish without chewing.

"Their behaviour of swallowing food whole, and their tongue structure and function, suggest that penguins need no taste perception," said Prof Zhang.

"Although it is unclear whether these traits are a cause or a consequence of their major taste loss."

The findings, published in Current Biology journal, were a puzzle, he added.

One clue comes from the bird's evolution on the frozen ice sheets of Antarctica.

Sending signals from sweet, umami, and bitter (but not sour or salty) taste receptors to the brain does not work at very low temperatures.

This may have led to the penguin gradually losing its sense of taste, say the researchers.

Intriguingly, the sweet taste is missing in almost all birds. The hummingbird, which feeds on sweet nectar, is an exception.

'Bangladeshi fugitives would be returned'

New Delhi assures Dhaka

OUR CORRESPONDENT, New Delhi

India is understood to have assured Bangladesh that fugitives wanted in the neighbouring country would be deported to it as early as possible.

The assurance came at a home secretary-level meeting between the two countries at the Taj Palace Hotel yesterday, according to sources.

Bangladesh has been pressing India to trace and hand over wanted persons including two killers of Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman -- Risaldar Mosleuddin and Captain Majed -- and a number of other criminals.

Dhaka has also been asking New Delhi to hand over wanted

Bangladeshi criminals Subrata Bain and Sajjad Hossain who were arrested in 2012. Both have been handed down death sentence in Bangladesh for murder and grenade attack on an Awami League rally in Dhaka.

Bain was arrested in Kolkata after his escape from prison in Nepal. His name features on a 23 most wanted list handed over to India by Bangladesh.

Sajjad was arrested in Amritsar in the Indian state of Punjab while trying to escape to Pakistan.

A joint declaration about the outcome of the meeting is expected today. Earlier, a joint working group of both sides met on Monday and framed the broad parameters for yesterday's meeting.

Egypt calls for UN action

FROM PAGE 16
of the beginning of the 2011 NATO-backed Libyan revolt that ousted dictator Muammar Gaddafi.

The air raids were ordered hours after IS militants in Libya released a gruesome video showing the beheadings of 21 Egyptian Christians who had travelled there seeking work.

Hundreds of thousands of Egyptians remain in Libya and their government was encouraging them to leave the country, foreign ministry spokesman Badr Abdelatty told reporters.

Libya has been gripped by turmoil since the revolt and Egyptian officials

have long said that the NATO intervention to help the anti-Gaddafi rebels left Egypt to contend with chaos on its western border.

"The mission was not finished," Abdelatty said.

France, which on Monday agreed to sell Egypt advanced Rafale fighter jets, has called with Cairo on the United Nations to adopt "measures" to confront the jihadists in Libya.

Italy, the former colonial power in Libya and lying across the Mediterranean, ruled out an intervention without UN backing and suggested a political solution remained the best option.

JS body

FROM PAGE 16
labour and employment ministry made the recommendation at a meeting at the Jatiya Sangshad Bhaban.

"Enactment of a law with a specific provision for realising compensation from the persons responsible for arson attacks, vandalism and other subversive activities during hartal and blockade programmes has been suggested," committee member Shirin Akhter told journalists after the meeting chaired by its chairman Mannujan Sufian.

She said the country currently has no law that can ensure redress for the victims of such violence.

The compensation amount and the method of realising it would be

detailed in the law, she added.

"If any party calls hartal or blockade and any damage is done to anyone during the programme, that particular party should be held responsible for the acts and it should pay the compensation to the victims," said another member of the committee, wishing anonymity.

According to government statistics, as many as 55 lives have perished in petrol bomb attacks and 556 people injured during the nonstop blockade enforced by BNP-Jamaat alliance since January 6. Besides, at least 664 vehicles have been burnt, 410 more vandalised and 28 establishments torched while railway saw 25 attacks during this period.

Unite against

FROM PAGE 16
BNP-Jamaat, and a discussion meeting at the National Museum in the capital.

Central Publicity and Publication Sub-Committee of Awami League organised the programme where a documentary titled "BNP-Jamaat's Arson Violence-Blood Stained Bangladesh" was screened.

Hasina broke down in tears while watching the documentary and listening to the pathetic experiences of a number of burn victims.

Addressing the programme, the PM said what the BNP-Jamaat was doing now was just militant and terrorist acts, and there would be no place for militants and terrorists in Bangladesh. She reiterated her government's firm commitment to save lives and properties of people.

"In some cases, common people came forward to catch and hand over anarchists to the law-enforcement agencies... we have seen that already... I also want it from all people to act like that," she told her audience.

The BNP-Jamaat unleashed its destructive activities against people in the name of politics, Hasina said.

She asked the BNP chief to stop killing and the politics of corpses. "For whose interest you [Khaleda] are doing this, how many dead bodies you want, and where you will stop this!"

The PM criticised those who always put her and the BNP chief on the same scale. "I will request you, please do not put me with her on the same scale, do not compare me with a killer, this is very much painful for me," she said.

The AL chief said she did not have anything to make personal gains and she had already proved it in the past.

"We never believe in revenge... if the fire of revenge once breaks out it is hard to put out. We are working for the

development of the country and its people," she told her audience.

In this connection, Hasina mentioned that all of her family members were killed on August 15, 1975 and there were several attempts on her, including on August 21, 2004, to eliminate her from politics.

She also recalled the oppression of the BNP-Jamaat terrorists after the 2001 election on the AL leaders, activists and supporters as well as on the minority community.

The PM said Khaleda Zia recently lost her younger son Arafat Rahman Koko. "You have the feeling for your son in your heart, but don't you feel the pain and screams of other mothers, killing innocent people never be accepted," she said in an emotionally choked voice.

The pictures that were shown in the exhibition reminded her the days of 1971 when the Pakistani occupational forces had killed people, Hasina said, adding that the BNP-Jamaat alliance did the same thing during the 10th general election in 2014.

Prior to the election, she said, her government had tried to sit for a dialogue to hold a participatory election involving all parties, including BNP, and she herself phoned the BNP leader to this end.

The main issue that kept BNP away from participating in the election was the ineligibility of Jamaat as the Election Commission cancelled its registration, Hasina said.

A number of people also spoke on the occasion expressing their dreadful experiences on how they were attacked by BNP-Jamaat activists.

Diplomats from Russia, India, Palestine, China and other countries were present.

FBI starts probe

FROM PAGE 16
But reports say an investigation by a campaign group from Alabama has thrown new light on the issue of lynchings and suggested that they were even more commonplace than had been suspected. It uncovered up to 700 cases than had been previously reported.

At the same time, activists have passed the names of several elderly men, now aged in their 80s or 90s, who may have had a role in the killing of the two couples.

"Between the Civil War and World War II, thousands of African Americans were lynched in the United States," said the report by the Equal Justice Initiative. "Lynchings were violent and public acts of torture that

traumatised black people throughout the country and were largely tolerated by state and federal officials. These lynchings were terrorism."

The killing of the four black Americans created national outrage even at the time and spurred President Harry Truman to launch a federal investigation.

Second World War veteran George Dorsey, his wife Mae Murray, and Roger Malcom with his wife Dorothy were attacked by a gang of more than a dozen white men. They were surrounded, tied to a tree and shot up to 60 times. Mrs Malcom, who was seven months pregnant, had her unborn baby cut from her by means of a knife.