

PM accuses BNP chief of killing

BSS, Dhaka

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina yesterday called upon womenfolk of the country to be vocal and resist the heinous act of BNP chairperson Khaleda Zia.

She also accused her of burning people to death to fulfil her high political ambition.

"My question is who has given rights to her [Khaleda] to kill people by pouring petrol and hurling cocktails," she said while inaugurating a programme on the World Women's Day in the capital.

Khaleda Zia claims that she was the prime minister for three times and the opposition leader, Hasina said, adding, "But it is a matter of regret that how a former prime minister and an opposition leader could burn people to death?"

The politics is for people and their welfare, not for burning them to death. But Khaleda Zia has been doing such misdeeds for over two months, she said.

"So I urge all including womenfolk of the country to be vocal and resist such brutality... it cannot be allowed anyway. Khaleda Zia must be punished for her heinous acts," she told her audience.

The women and children affairs ministry organised the function with State Minister for Women and Children Affairs Meher Afroz Chumki in the chair.

At the programme, Hasina, also chief of the ruling Awami League, blasted the

BNP chief for enforcing hartals and blockades day after day in the name of their so-called movement.

The BNP chairperson is now not in the government or not in parliament, she said, adding, "She is now not anywhere for her wrong decision."

The PM also said Khaleda Zia had taken a decision not to participate in the January 5 polls. "And they made all out efforts to foil the election, but they could not succeed."

People irrespective of males, females and children are not being spared from the atrocities of the BNP-Jamaat nexus, Hasina said.

Stressing the need for creating social awareness about stopping anti-women propaganda, she called upon all, including males and females, to come forward and work together to this end.

"A section of people in the society wants to confine our women inside the house by misinterpreting the religion and making negative propaganda against the womenfolk," she regretted.

As women constitute the half of population, she underscored the need for taking the country ahead with men and women together overcoming all hurdles.

"Women are also shining Bangladesh's image in the international arena as they are efficiently performing their responsibilities in the UN Peacekeeping Missions," Hasina told her audience.



Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina checking out garment at the Bangabandhu International Conference Centre yesterday, where products made by women were on display on the occasion of International Women's Day.

PHOTO: BSS

Govt prepares to tackle swine flu

FROM PAGE 1 from India.

Those coming from India are asked about the origin of their travel and whether they have fever, flu or cold, he said.

Dr Mahmudur Rahman, director at the Institute of Epidemiology, Disease Control and Research (IEDCR), said more than 6,000 trained doctors and nurses are there to take care of H1N1 patients. Each district hospital has an "isolation ward" for such patients.

Three travellers were diagnosed with H1N1 last month. They were cured of the deadly virus with proper treatment, he said.

Dr Be-Nazir Ahmed, professor at the National Institute of Preventive and Social Medicine, said people have developed immunity to the virus over the years.

"It is a mystery why so many people were infected and died in India in recent months," he said, adding that the nature of the virus might have changed over time.

"If that is true, H1N1 virus might infect people in Bangladesh during the

flu season in April-May," Ahmed, former director (communicable diseases) at the DGHS, told this correspondent.

Dr Shahina Tabassum, head of virology department at Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujib Medical University, suggested vaccination for the vulnerable segments of the population -- elderly people, children, pregnant women and diabetic patients -- and those travelling to the affected country.

The H1N1 virus was first detected in pigs in Mexico in 2009, and was later found in birds and humans. Its symptoms include fever, cold and respiratory problems. It can spread easily from one person to another through sneezing and coughs.

People in the bordering districts, including Dinajpur, Joypurhat and Jessore, are worried over the deadly influenza, as 13 people died from the virus in India's West Bengal that has a porous border with Bangladesh's western districts.

Many smugglers in those areas cross into India and return home without health screening, as they travel ille-

gally. Several thousand travellers and truck drivers enter Bangladesh through Benapole land port every day, but all of them don't go through health screening, said officials at the port.

"Initially, we had little risk as the Indian states that don't have borders with Bangladesh faced H1N1 outbreak. But the risk heightened when West Bengal got affected in late February," said Shamsuzzaman.

Though the swine flu outbreak hit West Bengal in mid-February, medical teams began work at Hili land port on March 1.

Hla Mung, a BGB sector commander in Dinajpur, said three BGB battalions -- Dinajpur-2, Phulbari-29 and Joypurhat -3 -- were working round-the-clock to check illegal cross-border movement of people.

Of 24,661 people infected with H1N1 in India, around 200 were in West Bengal. Most of the deaths from the virus -- around 900 -- occurred in Gujarat, Rajasthan and Madhya Pradesh.

Our Dinajpur and Benapole correspondents contributed to this report.

NORTH KOREAN DIPLOMAT Dhaka ponders on 3 options

DIPLOMATIC CORRESPONDENT

Dhaka seeks action against the North Korean diplomat who was found in possession of 27 kg gold worth about Tk 14 crore at Hazrat Shahjalal International Airport on March 6.

"We are considering three options -- asking the North Korean government to withdraw its first secretary Son Young Nam immediately, or withdraw his diplomatic immunity and prosecute him under the country's harsh anti-smuggling laws or declare him persona-non-grata," said a senior official at the foreign ministry.

Dhaka is most likely to communicate with Pyongyang today, and ask it to withdraw the diplomat within 72 hours to seven days as his crime is not covered by any provision of the Vienna Convention on Diplomatic Immunity, said the official.

The process of taking steps against the North Korean diplomat was delayed by a day as the foreign minister was abroad and the foreign secretary was recovering from a surgery, said foreign ministry sources.

Both the minister and the secretary are expected to join office today and decide on the matter, said the sources.

A senior official at the ministry said the foreign minister might take up the matter with the prime minister for her advice.

11 held

FROM PAGE 1 communications and service quality of Brac Bank, said the gang came to the bank's Gulshan-1 branch at 11:00am yesterday to encash the FDRs. They came up with documents including the power of attorney to receive the money.

"Bank officials found that the signature in the power of attorney doesn't match with the one in the original documents. Then they [officials] immediately contacted the head office [located at Gulshan-1]," Zara said.

Later, the bank informed Gulshan police who rushed there and picked up the persons, she said.

Police said Saiful Islam, a non-resident Bangladeshi, owns the money against nine FDRs, each worth Tk 10 crore. Currently, Islam is the vice chairman of Brac EPL Investments, a subsidiary of Brac Bank, according to the company's website. He is also a former senior vice president of the Dhaka Stock Exchange (DSE).

"They were well dressed and smart and none will suspect them at first sight," said an official of the bank's Gulshan-1 branch.

Tariq Aziz, an officer at the branch, filed a case against all 11 of the gang for fraud and forgery yesterday night, said sub-inspector Abdul Barik.

This is the biggest ever FDR forgery attempt in Bangladesh. Bankers with over 30 years of experience could not remember any fraud attempt bigger than this one.

In 2013 and 2014 some forgeries were detected in some banks. But those forgeries involved credit and debit cards and bank officials were involved in those scams.

Bankers, however, said cash withdrawal attempts with forged cheques take place quite frequently.

Police yet to trace Avijit killers

Raid Farabi's Sylhet house

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Ten days after the killing of blogger-writer Avijit Roy, the investigators are yet to know who actually killed Avijit.

However, on the basis of their probe and interrogation of arrested Shafiqur Rahman Farabi, prime suspect in the Avijit murder, they believe that an extremist group was behind the gruesome killing.

"It's an act of a fanatic organisation," said Monirul Islam, joint commissioner of Dhaka Metropolitan Police, while briefing the media on the investigation at the DMP media centre yesterday.

He could not specify the name of the organisation, but said it may be Ansarullah Bangla Team and Jama'at ul Mujahideen Bangladesh (JMB). "There are also supporters of the Islamic State (ISIS) in Bangladesh. Any one of them has done the job."

Meanwhile, detectives raided the house of Farabi in Sylhet city early yesterday and seized a laptop, a desktop computer and some papers.

With the assistance of Sylhet Kotwali police, a three-member team of Detective Branch of police from Dhaka conducted the drive in his house at Munshipara.

The visiting US Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) team met the Criminal Investigation Department officials yesterday and talked about the evidence collected from the crime scene.

"Preliminary, the FBI officials expressed satisfaction about the way the investigation is going on, claimed Monirul, adding that the FBI officials might stay for a few more days for helping out with the probe.

On February 26, the Bangladesh-born US citizen was hacked to death by unknown assailants on Dhaka University campus. His wife Rafida Ahmed Bonya was seriously injured in the attack.

Farabi, who had issued repeated death threats to Avijit, was arrested in the capital's Jatrabari on March 2. Known in the social media and blogosphere for his vitriolic campaigns against progressive and free-thinking bloggers, Farabi is the key suspect in the Avijit killing.

Farabi, who is now on a 10-day remand, has denied his involvement in the killing. But he admitted issuing death threats to Avijit and believed his killing was justified.

The investigators also say that they are yet to find any link of Farabi with the murder.

KOILASHTILA GAS FIELD Bapex finds gas in new layer

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Bangladesh Petroleum Exploration and Production Company Ltd (Bapex) has found commercially recoverable gas and condensate in a new layer in a well in Koilashtila gas field in Sylhet.

Officials said the new layer was found at a depth of 3,127 to 3,133 metres in the gas field's well no-7.

Once the test production is completed, Sylhet Gas Fields Ltd, the operating company of the field, will be able to produce at least 10 million cubic feet of gas a day and 80 barrel of condensate from this layer.

Condensate can be used to produce high-octane petrol, as well as jet and diesel fuels.

Officials of Bapex and SGFL termed the breakthrough a big achievement, as no gas or condensate was found at this depth in all six other wells at the gas field.

Bapex drilled the well in the last five months with high hopes of oil and gas discovery with rig Bijoy-10. It, however, did not find any oil as it had been hoping earlier.

Clinton defends foreign donations

AFP, Miami

US ex-president Bill Clinton sought to fend off criticism Saturday of his family foundation for taking money from foreign governments, some with questionable human rights records.

The former president, who spoke at a University of Miami event, was joined by his wife Hillary Clinton, who declined to discuss a separate controversy swirling around her use of private email only while working as secretary of state.

"We do get money from other countries. And some of them are in the Middle East," Bill Clinton said.

Cops want

FROM PAGE 1 police headquarters sent to the home ministry recently. They sought amendment to 14 sections and subsections and dropping of seven sections and sub-sections.

Police also proposed exclusion of the Rapid Action Battalion (Rab), Criminal Investigation Department (CID), Special Branch (SB) and Detective Branch (DB) of police from the purview of the act by changing the definition of law enforcement agencies.

As per the definition provided by the law, Bangladesh Police, Rab, BGB, Customs, Immigration, CID, SB, DB, Ansar, VDP and Coast Guard fall under the category of law enforcement agencies. Thus, the act is applicable to these agencies.

In an attachment, the police headquarters said the law has created a scope for filing false cases against all law enforcing agencies. The act makes it possible that the agencies face obstacles to take effective steps in saving people's life and property from destructive activities like political instability, hartal, blockade and arson.

The move came amid allegations of indiscriminate arrest of people, particularly BNP-Jamaat men, custodial death and torture and killing in "gun fights".

The law contains 20 sections that provide for trial and punishment for all torture and death in all government custodies, including that of law enforcement agencies.

It was passed in the line with the UN convention adopted on December 10, 1984 against torture and cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment.

The country became a signatory to the UN convention on October 5, 1998 during the previous Awami League-led government's tenure, promising effective legislation and administrative and judicial measures to prevent acts of torture.

Also, Article 35 (5) of Bangladesh constitution says, "No person shall be subjected to torture or to cruel,

inhuman, or degrading punishment or treatment."

AL MP Saber Hossain Chowdhury piloted the Torture and Custodial Death (Prevention) bill in 2009.

Contacted on Friday, he said the police proposals are totally "arbitrary and unacceptable" and tantamount to contempt of legislative process.

Now president of Inter-Parliamentary Union, Saber said the law was a result of three to four years' process and extensive deliberations with rights organisations, attorney general, noted lawyer Amir-ul Islam and a representative from the law ministry.

The act was not passed to make the job of any agency easier, but to uphold the rule of law and dignity of the country, he said. Any administrative agency cannot propose the annulment or change of the law; it must come through the legislative process.

Asked, rights activist Sultana Kamal said police should never be given unlimited power regarding such matters.

"We are not at all supporting the amendment proposals of the police as those are in direct contrast with the constitution," she said.

Police have to deal with the act more constitutionally and they have to be more alert, said the ex-caretaker government adviser. As police do not have enough orientation, capacity building and training they are still unable to take that challenge, she added.

Sultana Kamal said the proposals given by police do not need consideration.

Referring to omission of the names of Rab, DB and CID from the category of law enforcement agencies, she said it will have a dangerous impact.

Contacted, Senior Home Secretary Md Mozammel Haque Khan said they have received a proposal from the police but they are yet to work on it.