

1,209 schools

FROM PAGE 1
and report it to the respective education boards.

The ministry also conducted an investigation into the allegations.

It found that 3,038 institutions under the nine education boards across the country had collected additional money, of which 830 returned, Nahid said.

Some 999 institutions informed that they had not taken extra money. The ministry has continued probing to verify the claims, the minister said.

Rajshahi board has 1,311 institutions, the highest, involved in taking higher exam fees, of which only 95 paid back the money. Some 896 institutions did not return the money, nor did they communicate with the board over the matter, according to the ministry.

Dhaka board has the second highest number of institutions, 752, facing the accusation. Of them, 233 returned the money. Some 296 institutions did not refund, nor did they inform the board of the matter.

The government fixed Tk 1,450, including Tk 300 as centre fees, for science group and Tk 1,330, including Tk 250 centre fees for humanities group. But the institutions took much higher than the fixed fees with some charging students three times the fixed rates.

Some of the best schools were involved in the illegal act, the education minister said.

"Such examples may have a negative impact on children."

Asked what actions would be taken against institutions for taking additional fees for this year's SSC exam, Nahid said action would be taken against whoever violates law.

ADDITIONAL TUITION FEES

The Directorate of Secondary and Higher Education (DSHE) and a government agency submitted reports to the ministry yesterday on the schools' charging students increased tuition fees, Nahid said.

Sources in the ministry, however, said DSHE in its report had attached income and expenditure statements of 13 schools apart from mentioning the additional money they took from the students.

Of them, two schools -- Viharunnisa Noon School and College and Willes Little Flower School and College -- gave an account in writing that they adjusted the additional money with the fees for February while the rest verbally told that they would adjust it soon, said an official, wishing not to be named.

A number of renowned private schools in Dhaka and Chittagong suddenly hiked the monthly tuition and admission fees in January, citing teachers' demand for a pay increase after the government approved the new pay scale for civil servants.

Following outrage from guardians, the education minister asked the school authorities to stop collecting increased fees and refund the money taken already.

DHSE in an investigation found that seven renowned non-government schools had hiked tuition fees between 11 percent and 100 percent.

The minister yesterday said the schools were asked to give specific reasons for hiking the fees.

"But you [schools] increased the fees suddenly breaking the rules. We'll not accept that. Give your proposal. We'll review it and then we'll take a decision on the increase, if needed."

Ershad wants Mahmud tried for '1/11 role'

UNB, Sherpur

Jatiya Party (JP) Chairman HM Ershad yesterday branded his party's senior leader and Water Resources Minister Anisul Islam Mahmud as one of the masterminds behind the 1/11 political changeover and demanded that he be tried.

Speaking at a council of Sherpur JP, Ershad alleged that Mahmud illegally became the party's acting chairman removing him from the post after the 1/11 changeover. "Isn't he a villain?"

Describing Mahmud also as a traitor and a conspirator, the JP chief said, "He is a mastermind behind the 1/11 [changeover]. I demand his trial along with the other masterminds."

Ershad said his brother GM Quader had been made JP co-chairman so that the latter could run the party in his absence.

He asked his party leaders and activists not to get confused by a group of vested leaders in the party. "Don't pay heed to them, and stay away from them."

The biennial council of Sherpur JP was held at the district Shilpakala Academy Auditorium.

During the programme, Ershad announced that Ilias Uddin was made president while Shafiqul Islam general secretary of a new committee of Sherpur JP.



Col Nazma Begum and others of a 56-member medical contingent pose for a photograph at Hazrat Shahjalal International Airport in the capital on Saturday night before leaving Bangladesh for a UN peacekeeping mission in Ivory Coast. Nazma is the first ever female contingent commander of Bangladesh Army to a UN peace mission.

PHOTO: ISPR

Tigers tame the Lions

FROM PAGE 1

The turning point of the second session was when Mahmudullah Riyad bowled a fast, short ball after seeing Dinesh Chandimal shape up to reverse-sweep. The batsman, who had gotten a life off the second ball of the innings courtesy of a drop from Soumya Sarkar at second slip, only managed to hit the ball into the safe hands of Taskin Ahmed at deep-point and departed for a run-a-ball 35 in the eleventh over.

In the next over Shakib Al Hasan, who provided the first breakthrough by removing Tillakaratne Dilshan with the help of Soumya's brilliant running catch, bowled it shorter and wide of off-stump, after seeing Shehan Jayasuriya leave his crease early. Keeper Nurul Hasan did the rest.

Then another intelligent delivery from Mustafizur Rahman virtually killed the Lankans' hope. Taskin had earlier failed to hold a high catch at fine-leg to reprieve danger man Thisara Perera -- who snatched away a victory batting at number eight

when the two teams met in Chittagong two years back -- to deprive Mashrafe Bin Mortaza from another wicket in the last ball of the thirteenth over. But Mustafizur, in the next over, brilliantly changed his length and trapped the batsman in front.

From 85 for four in 13.2 overs, Sri Lanka required a miracle but Bangladesh's bowlers made sure that did not happen.

Earlier Shakib chipped in with a 34-ball 32 and Mahmudullah Riyad's clean hits during his unbeaten 12-ball 23 took them to a decent total of 147-7. But Bangladesh's innings was the story of in-form Sabir Rahman, who played with a mixture of sensibility and aggression. When the right-hander walked back to the dressing room, his contribution to the team's total of 108 was 80.

Mashrafe won the toss and decided to bat first on a wicket which was all together different than the previous ones as the green-tops

were dispensed with. The other advantage was that Sri Lanka skipper Lasith Malinga missed the crucial game due to injury.

The Tigers however made a terrible start, losing three wickets for 26 runs inside five overs. In the second ball of the innings, stand-in Sri Lanka skipper Angelo Mathews pitched short of a length outside off and got it to jag back in a fair bit which beat Mohammad Mithun completely in front, while in the second over Soumya Sarkar dove lazily on the up against Nuwan Kulasekara and got a leading edge to land at the safe hands of Mathews at mid-off.

Bangladesh were 2 for 2 in 2 overs but Sabir launched a counter-attack as a lofted shot for six over long-on, a cracking drive and another well-placed shot between point and third man earned 18 runs from the fourth over. The momentum was lost in the next over as a yes-no Mushfiqur Rahim went for a tricky single only to have a mix-up with his partner. The diminutive

batsman returned to the dressing room with 4 off 9 balls.

Sabbir however continued his leather hunt in the next over by smashing three boundaries; a slog to the third man boundary, a drive with full power and a magnificent pull. Sri Lanka introduced spin in ace left-arm Rangaana Henth and he along with off-spinner Shehan Jayasuriya kept the two Bangladesh batsmen in check as the hosts completed 10 overs with 57 runs.

Sabbir however took charge against Jayasuriya in the 13th over as he swept from the middle of the bat for six before hitting two consecutive boundaries.

A clean hit from Sabbir saw the ball flying over the deep midwicket fence and a first century by a Bangladeshi batsman in the T20 format seemed to be on the cards. But the last ball of the 16th over saw the right-hander's slog sweep against pacer Dushmantha Chameera find Jayasuriya at midwicket and thus ended a magnificent knock.

Toiling away childhood

FROM PAGE 1

machine for a moment.

Barkat Ali, deputy director (legal) of Bangladesh Legal Aid and Services Trust, said the way children are exploited in the sweatshops is a punishable offence according to the country's labour laws and the children act.

In the absence of monitoring, a culture of engaging children in risky work has become a norm in the apparel hub of Keraniganj. The money-mongers are not only exploiting children but also putting their future at risk, as many kids complain about physical problems from long working hours in a hazardous condition.

There are about 500 buildings in Keraniganj, where at least 1.5 lakh people work in numerous sweatshops, said Abdul Aziz, president of Keraniganj Garment Traders and Shop Owners' Association.

However, General Secretary of

Keraniganj Readymade Garment Dorji Sramik League SM Khalil said the actual number of workers was much higher and about half of them were children.

The first two floors of Selim Super Market, where Mizan and Raihan worked, are used as markets while the six upper floors house sweatshops. The stairs to the upper floors lead to corridors, and there are sweatshops on the both sides of the corridors. At least 10-25 people, mostly children, work at every sweatshop. Only the second and sixth floors of the building have toilets.

Inside most sweatshops, piles of fabrics and denim trousers were kept. Tangles of electric wires, power outlets and switches protruded from walls.

A fire caused by an electrical short-circuit or any other means would certainly lead to a disaster, as there are no fire extinguishers in the rows of sweatshops in the building. Only a few fire extinguishers were seen

along the front side corridor.

To make things worse, men smoke in front of children in the poorly ventilated rooms.

Asked about working hours, managers of the tailoring factories said the workers get two hours break between 2:00pm and 4:00pm every day for lunch and shower.

But during the visit, this reporter saw two minor girls -- Sumaiya, 12, and 15-year-old Rabeya -- trimming threads from jeans with scissors around 2:30pm.

"We'll skip lunch today. A pile of jeans just arrived and we'll have to clear each of them of loose threads as soon as possible," said Sumaiya, looking up briefly. It means the girls would be working over 12 hours without a break.

After three years of toiling at the sewing machines and trimming threads sitting cross legged on the floor, each of the girls now earns Tk

4,000 a month.

Both of them went to a nearby primary school for a brief period of time, as their parents, hoping that they would be able to support the families, took them away from school and sent them to the sweatshop.

Like them, children in most sweatshops were seen working when they were supposed to be on their lunch break.

Asked about the treatment of children in the sweatshops, Abdul Aziz said, "They [children] are brought, employed and kept informally by the tailors. We can't control what the tailors do in the sweatshops."

He admitted that instances of employers closing sweatshops without paying the workers their dues are common.

The small factories in the area produce denim and woven items, which are sold by retailers across the country.

Constitute a commission

FROM PAGE 1

At a talk show on a private TV channel on February 3, Mahfuz Anam made an introspective comment about a lapse in his editorial judgement in publishing, following the 1/11 changeover, a few reports that the newspaper could not verify independently.

Referring to the Star editor's remark, Menon said Mahfuz Anam's "admission" also revealed how the then army-backed government confused people.

In the previous parliament, AL lawmaker Mahiuddin Khan Alamgir and AL leader Abdul Jalil had demanded trial of those in the 1/11 government who were involved in character assassination of politicians, he noted.

"But the government is yet to take any step in this regard."

Menon also said a parliamentary standing committee in 2010 identified the masterminds of 1/11 and recommended that the government take legal action against them.

But the government didn't pay any attention to the recommendations made in the probe report of the parliamentary body, he said.

Menon rejected the recent statements of international rights organisations, including Human Rights Watch and Amnesty International, on the obstruction of freedom of expression following the filing of cases against Mahfuz Anam.

"Of course there is freedom of

expression in the country, and it is reflected through newspaper reports and talk shows on TV channels," he said, adding that if any individual practises self-censorship, it is entirely his own choice.

In his speech, Nasim, also presidium member of the Awami League, urged the government to constitute a commission to know the true history of 1/11 and identify the "villains" involved in arrest and torture of political leaders, including AL President Sheikh Hasina.

Pointing to the Star editor's comment at the TV talk show, he said politicians, businesspeople, MPs and the head of the government have to go to jail if they make mistakes. But they (journalists) just say sorry if they make any mistake.

In an oblique reference to Mahfuz Anam's remark, Nasim said, "You will subject politicians to character assassination and say sorry. Who will give back the 11 months that Sheikh Hasina spent in jail?"

Nasim lambasted those who had organised seminars and other programmes in 2007 to "find competent candidates in elections".

"They actually wanted to kill democracy and banish politicians in the name of finding competent candidates. They say they want fair politics, politics of peace. They say they are gentlemen and we [politicians] are enemies of democracy. Actually, they don't have any shame."

Nasim claimed that the plotters of 1/11 have not stopped hatching conspiracies.

He lambasted the AI and the HRW for issuing statements in support of the Star editor, and asked where were these organisations after the August-21 grenade attack on an AL rally?

The AL presidium member also came down hard on Prof Muhammad Yunus.

"How an economist, who did nothing in establishing peace, got the Nobel prize in peace. It is Sheikh Hasina who established peace in the Chittagong Hill Tracts through the signing of the Chittagong Hill Tracts Peace Treaty."

Nasim alleged that bestowing of the Nobel peace prize on Prof Yunus was nothing but a conspiracy to create 1/11, and some journalists along with a section of intellectuals were involved in the political changeover.

Taking part in the thanksgiving motion on the president's speech, Information Minister Hasanul Haq Inu slated the AI, the HRW and other international organisations for speaking in favour of the Star editor.

"Following the criticism of Mahfuz Anam, these organisations said there are no democracy and freedom of media in the country. But criticism of Mahfuz Anam doesn't mean interference in the media."

These organisations didn't issue any statement after the genocide in 1971 and the assassination of Bangabandhu

in 1975, said Inu.

Journalists have the right to criticise politicians. Similarly, politicians have the right to slate journalists, he said.

A democratic system does not collapse if lawmakers are criticised. In the same way, the media is not ruined if editors and journalists face criticism, he added.

Earlier, AL lawmaker Bahauddin Nasim lambasted Prof Yunus, Mahfuz Anam and former caretaker government adviser Mainul Hossain for their "involvement in creating 1/11" and demanded that they be brought to book.

He alleged that the three were "involved in a conspiracy against the country's independence and sovereignty to give away its oil, gas and sea port."

"They realised that they will not be able to carry out their conspiracy if Sheikh Hasina remains alive and free."

"People foiled their plot to create a political party and rule the country."

The process of trying the conspirators has already started and the filing of cases against Mahfuz Anam is the start of that process, he added.

Police recover

FROM PAGE 1

looking for those," said Monwar Hossain, officer-in-charge of Laksam Police Station.

The police officer termed that death "mysterious" and said no injury marks were visible on the body.

First female

FROM PAGE 1

Infantry Division in Bogra.

She was the first female commander of 21 Field Ambulance in the history of Bangladesh Army, the press release mentioned.

Nazma is also a renowned author. She has written 26 books. Five of her books have been published in this year's Amar Ekushey Book Fair.

Bangladesh Army has been working in the UN peacekeeping mission in Ivory Coast since 2004 with reputation, efficiency, professionalism, and sincerity, according to the release.

4 kids hurt in Ctg wall collapse

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Ctg

Four children were injured when a boundary wall collapsed at Nandan Kanan in Chittagong city yesterday.

They are Sajib Mia, 10, and his brother Arif Mia, 3, sons of Khokon Mia, Mehedi Hasan, 8, son of Mohammad Hashem, and Riyad, 6, son of Mofazzal Hossain.

Five children were playing with marbles near one side of the wall. It collapsed on the kids around 12:45pm as a pile of stones were leaning on the opposite side of the old wall, said locals.

The stones were kept there for using in the construction work of a building.

Locals rescued the children and took them to Chittagong Medical College Hospital (CMCH).

Md Yahya, assistant director of fire service and civil defence, Chittagong, said the accident occurred as the stones were leaning against the weak wall.

Emergency Medical Officer of the CMCH Farid Uddin Ahmed said the condition of the children was not critical.

SAGAR-RUNI MURDER

Probe report submission deadline

now April 7

COURT CORRESPONDENT

A Dhaka court yesterday gave more time to Rapid Action Battalion to submit the probe report on the murder of journalist couple Sagar and Runi.

Metropolitan Magistrate Yunus Khan set April 7 for submitting the report after investigation officer of the case, Wares Ali Miah, a Rab official, failed to produce a progress report before the court yesterday as per the court's order.

Sagar Sarowar, news editor of Maasranga, and his wife Meherun Runi, senior reporter of ATN Bangla, were killed at their flat in the capital's West Rajabazar on February 11, 2012.

Their only son Mahir Sarowar Megh, then 5, was home at that time.

After investigation by Sher-e-Bangla Nagar police and detectives, Rab started a further probe on April 18, 2012.

At least eight people were arrested in connection with the murder.

Tamim blessed

FROM PAGE 1

his Facebook fan page.

"Our little bundle of joy has arrived! By the Grace of Almighty, we've been blessed with a baby boy earlier this morning. Though both mom and son are doing fine, doctors have kept the little one under observation for 24 hours. Please keep us in your prayers," he wrote.

At the moment, a number of Tamim's family members are in Bangkok to celebrate the occasion.

A question that was doing the rounds yesterday following the birth of the child was whether Tamim would be able to join the national team for the Asia Cup.

It seemed to be one of the more popular questions that his fans were asking him on social media.

However, chief selector Faruque Ahmed pointed out that it was highly unlikely for Tamim to join the side. "He has to stay there for a few days and our last group stage game is on the second. So at the moment it seems highly improbable," said Faruque.

In addition to that, it would be difficult for the left-hander to arrive, join training all of a sudden and perform. There's also the issue of the replacement guidelines of the Asia Cup. In order to make replacements, the tournament's general committee needs to approve the move and for that they would need to see a valid reason.