

NGOs may face

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Briefing reporters at the Jatiya Sangsad Media Centre, Suranjit yesterday said the TIB had not offered an apology as suggested by him. "Every NGO will have to honour constitutional bodies of the country, including parliament, election commission, attorney general and judiciary."

The government will be able to cease any NGO's activities if it humiliates parliament or any other constitutional body according to the recommendations, Suranjit said, adding that the state might get into trouble if derogatory remarks were made against the constitutional bodies. Lambasting the TIB for its "audacious" remarks on MPs and parliament, he also said such criticism would not be acceptable.

However replying to a query, he said the constitutional bodies could be criticised but not using bad language.

Earlier in November last year, the JS body said it would recommend cancelling the registration of the TIB for not apologising for making "derogatory comments" on parliament. Amid such reactions to its study, the TIB Board of Trustees in a statement said, "TIB's work is not in any manner intended to undermine the institutional dignity and credibility of the National Parliament."

Talking to The Daily Star, M Hafiz Uddin Khan, president of Shushasoner Jonno Nagorik (Shujan), a civil society platform working for good governance, said this would be a "black law" whose formulation reflected the government's "dictatorial" attitude.

"No organisation which works as watchdog on parliament and other constitutional bodies will be able to do its job in fear of action if the proposed law is passed in parliament keeping such provision," he said.

"It is clear that the government's aim is to gag those watchdog bodies so that they cannot criticise it," added Hafiz Uddin, also former adviser to a caretaker government.

Educationalist and a development worker Rasheda K Chowdhury who was present at several meetings of the JS body, including that held yesterday, to discuss the bill with the committee members told The Daily Star that while meeting with the chiefs of different NGOs, the committee had not mentioned any such provision for inclusion.

She added that she would come up with a reaction after knowing about the matter from the parliamentary watchdog.

Equip women

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He stressed higher investments on nutrition of young girls, who often face serious malnutrition - something that has intergenerational health impacts as programmes in the developing world were not enough to reach the disadvantaged and youths.

Danish Foreign Minister Kristian Jensen said he is a "technological optimistic".

Denmark, which has been ranked the best place for women in 2016, has health clinics for pregnant women who can call round the clock for help in pregnancy-related problems and it has developed apps which have handy information for the midwives, he said. "...connected via technology, farmers know prices of their products and are not cheated," Jensen said, adding, "We cannot imagine what is going to happen with technology. We have to best utilise it for social transformation."

Ericsson CEO Hans Vestberg suggested making higher public investments to enhance rural telecom coverage to enhance the quality of secondary education.

DR YUNUS AWARDED

Women Deliver, meanwhile, presented Muhammad Yunus "The Women Deliver Award for Innovation" for his contribution to the empowerment of women and children education in innovative ways.

Sandra Pelletier, CEO of non-profit organisation WomenCare Global, handed over a crest to the Nobel Laureate at a plenary in Copenhagen, moderated by Chris Elias, president of the Global Development Program, Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation.

"I am incredibly honored to have the award," said Dr Yunus.

Man beaten

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"There were injury marks on different parts of the body," he said.

Police did not know that the victim was taken away from his house by some people, said the OC, adding that, "Had we been informed, we would have conducted a drive to rescue him."

Police detained five people in this connection, he said.

The police official added that Rifat Chowdhury, owner of the factory, and Azam went into hiding.

POWER PLANT PROTEST

Raids spark panic in Gondamara

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Ctg

Panic has gripped the locals of Gondamara union in Banshkhali upazila as police continued to raid the area for the third consecutive day since Monday.

Locals claimed that the raids were being conducted to foil their movement against the move to install a coal-fired power plant there.

Police, however, claimed that they were conducting the drives to arrest the accused in different cases and recover illegal arms in the upazila.

Villagers alleged that a good number of police vehicles patrolled Gondamara union yesterday.

Besides, police checkpoints were being set up at Time Bazar in Shil Kup, Harun Bazar in Saral and Bangla Bazar in Chambal, virtually confining the villagers, they claimed.

Other than children and very elderly people, most male members in the area are now on the run fearing arrest. The villagers are also avoiding the main roads to go to the upazila Sadar or Chittagong city, claimed villagers.

"No one is paying heed to our problems. What is going on in the union? They [police] have turned the whole union into a jail. Now, no one can go outside the union," claimed Abu Ahmed, a close aide of Liakat Ali, convener of the Committee to Protect Habitat and Graveyard.

"Police are raiding the area because the people are against the power plant," he added.

Wishing anonymity, a teacher in Gondamara said, "Now we are living in fear. Police are conducting drives in our villages. Failing to arrest the male members, they [police] arrested a 75-year-old man [Liakat's father]. They are also filing new cases against us."

Locals fear that the proposed power plant would displace them, cause immense environmental damage and hurt their livelihood.

One Abdur Rahim alleged that the administration had kept the villagers confined to their houses. Except for those working in favour of S Alam Group, which is setting up the power

plant, no one was going to the upazila Sadar from the union, he claimed.

Contacted, Additional Superintendent of Police (Special Branch) Abdul Awal said, "We are not conducting the drives only in Gondamara. We are conducting the raids in all unions of the upazila to recover illegal arms."

"Police already conducted drives in Saral and other places. The checkpoints have been set up on other unions as well to arrest the accused in different cases. Why are they [villagers] afraid of going to the upazila?" he asked.

Meanwhile, Liakat's father Hazi Dudu Miah, who was picked up from his house at Gondamara on Monday, was yet to be produced before court although 24 hours had passed.

Dudu Miah was undergoing treatment at Banshkhali Upazila Health Complex, said medical sources.

After his treatment, he would be shown arrested in a case, said a police source.

Banshkhali Police Station's Officer-in-Charge Md Alamgir said everything would be done as per rules.

On Monday, locals barricaded a road leading to Liakat's house in Pashchim Gondamara as his father was being taken to Banshkhali Police Station.

Later, police dispersed the locals by using sound grenades and tear gas canisters that left four people injured. Police claimed to have recovered two firearms from Liakat's house during the drive.

Following the incident, an arms case was lodged against Liakat with Banshkhali Police Station.

On May 9, a probe committee formed by the Chittagong district administration to investigate the April 4 incident mentioned in its report that Liakat instigated the locals against the coal-based power plant.

On April 4, four people were killed and 30 others wounded during a clash between locals and law enforcers over installation of the power plant.

Following the incident, over 3,000 people, including Liakat Ali, were sued in three cases -- two over murder and

SRI LANKA

150 feared buried in landslides

REUTERS, Colombo

Around 150 people are feared dead after more than three days of heavy rain triggered two landslides in central Sri Lanka, disaster officials said yesterday as rescuers stopped work after recovering more than a dozen bodies.

Torrential rains have forced more than 223,000 people from their homes across the South Asian country, the latest official data showed. Seventeen bodies have been recovered, bringing the official death toll to 37, although that figure is likely to rise sharply.

Rescue efforts have focused on the town of Aranyaka, 100 km northeast of the capital, Colombo, where three villages were buried late on Tuesday in the central district of Kegalle.

"As at 1800 hours, 134 are still missing and 14 bodies recovered so far from the landslide site in Aranyaka," Major General Sudantha Ranasinghe, officer in charge of rescue operation told Reuters.

"We have stopped the operations for the day since it's dark and the operation continued for over 20 hours.

We will start again tomorrow morning."

More than 350 people were plucked to safety during rescue operations in landslide-affected areas early yesterday, officials said.

A Red Cross official who attended a disaster meeting at the Aranyaka landslide site said earlier it was feared the death toll would be "around 300-400".

Police said another landslide at Bulathkoptiya, also in Kegalle district, had buried at least 16 people. Only three bodies were found from this site. In Kegalle district alone, 20 people were killed, disaster management centre data showed.

Military Spokesman Jayanath Jayaweera said 150 people who were rescued from Aranyaka had been sent to six camps set up for displaced people in the area.

Troops using boats and helicopters also pulled to safety more than 200 people trapped in the northwestern coastal district of Puttalam, Jayaweera said.

Flooding and drought are cyclical in

24/7 watch on online

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that the project will be useful for law enforcement agencies to prevent such chaos," he told The Daily Star by phone yesterday.

The network will prevent users from browsing any unauthorised or prohibited websites in the country, and also block all the contents that are not "suitable" for Bangladesh or take them down in a minute, documents show.

"It will also be helpful to the law enforcement agencies to monitor internet activities of identified criminals and thus prevent crimes."

On the other side, it will intrude on people's private life.

"This will also create chances for abuse. So the government needs to put in place some tools to monitor the situation," said Mostafa Jabbar, former president of Bangladesh Computer Samity.

Jabbar, also a member of the Digital Bangladesh Taskforce headed by the prime minister, said even the recruitment of militant group Islamic State was now done online.

"So the system should be put in place. It is important to have technology that can detect the spread of militancy, fundamentalism and radical ideas through online.

"But at the same time, we need to uphold people's right to freedom of

Chinese defence minister likely to arrive in Dhaka May 28

DIPLOMATIC CORRESPONDENT

Chinese Defence Minister Chang Wanquan is likely to be here on a three-day visit from May 28 to further strengthen defence cooperation between the two countries.

Although there is no official announcement yet about the visit, diplomatic sources said Wanquan, also state councillor and member of the Central Military Commission (CMC) of the Communist Party of China (CPC), would be in Dhaka along with a high-level 15-member delegation.

This would be the first visit of any Chinese defence minister to Bangladesh in the last eight years.

Apart from meeting Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina, he is likely to hold meetings with the chiefs of the three services to discuss future defence cooperation, the sources added.

On May 12, 2014, Bangladesh and China signed four agreements on military cooperation, aimed at improving professionalism and other capacities of the Bangladesh armed forces officials.

Strong aftershock of deadly quake rattles Ecuador

AFP, Quito

A strong earthquake measuring 6.7 on the Moment magnitude scale struck Ecuador early yesterday, one month after a much larger quake killed some 660 people, the US Geological Survey said.

Ecuador's national geological institute, which measured the quake at 6.8, said it struck at 2:57 am local time in the South American country's western Manabi region.

President Rafael Correa, writing on Twitter, reassured a public still jittery after last month's quake that "there is no tsunami alert" following this latest earthquake.

Correa, who said he was tweeting from the offices of the national emergency operations bureau, also told the public there was no need for alarm.

"Everyone remain calm," he tweeted, adding that inhabitants of Quito can safely go back inside their homes.

Sri Lanka

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BMS. Batagoda, the energy ministry secretary said the switch to LNG was proposed after ten years of opposition to a coal-fired power plant by the residents of Sampur, a village near Trincomalee, where India has already proposed to build South Asia's largest petroleum hub.

Area residents and environmental groups have resisted the coal power plant ever since it was originally proposed in 2006 due to worries about land clearance and pollution.

Plans for the \$500 million coal power plant project were finalised in 2011, when state-run Ceylon Electricity Board (CEB) and India's state-run National Thermal Power Corporation Ltd (NTPC) agreed to form a joint venture for its construction.

It is not clear which Indian companies would be considered as partners on the proposal to build a gas-fired power plant. Natural gas is a cleaner burning fuel than coal, but there would be the added hurdle that Sri Lanka has no LNG import infrastructure.

Sri Lanka's only coal-fired power plant with 900 MW capacity was built with a \$1.4 billion loan from China in two phases. However, the Chinese plant has faced frequent repairs.

India and China have been increasingly loaning funds to Sri Lanka over the last few years, mainly for infrastructure projects. Since the island's civil war ended in 2009, the two rivals have been competing for influence in Sri Lanka, which sits right off one of the world's busiest shipping routes.

More support

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support in developing the skills of Bangladeshi police members for curbing militancy and other crimes, according to meeting sources.

DIG (operations) Mahbubur Rahman, DIG (crime) Humayun Kabir, Additional DIG (special crime) Zahurul Islam Bhuiyan, among others, were present at the meeting at the Police headquarters.

The US team is also expected to meet high officials of the home ministry and representatives of the civil society before wrapping up its visit.

Work together

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and economic and social self-reliance of women," she said.

Hasina said her government spends over 2 percent of GDP for social protection coverage and the most of the beneficiaries of social protection are the less fortunate and destitute women.

Despite significant advancement, the prime minister said, "We also have challenges. We're yet to fully succeed in stopping the incidents of violence against women, child marriage or trafficking of women and girls."

She told her audience that her government took strong steps to end these social evils through a number of strict laws and administrative measures.

Elaborating the government measures for the development of female education, the PM said her government had made education free for girls up to Grade 12 and has plans to make it free up to the tertiary level.

She said that nearly 17.2 million students from primary to post-graduate levels have been brought under various stipend programmes.

Besides, she said women represent nearly 85 percent of around 4.5 million workforce in the RMG sector and their participation was also growing in other sectors and professions like the civil service, the judiciary, armed

forces, elite security force and other technical professions.

She said the print and electronic media are now vibrant with the presence of many women journalists, sportswomen excelling in cricket, football and even in mountaineering and they are serving in UN peace-keeping operations.

"Bangladesh is perhaps the only country in the world today that has got women as its Prime Minister and Leader of the House, Deputy Leader of House, Leader of the Opposition, and the Speaker," Hasina said.

She also expressed her personal gratitude to Unesco for honouring her with the Unesco "Tree of Peace Award, which was given for promoting girls' education and empowerment.

Bulgarian President Rosen Plevneliev, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Labour and Social Policy Iwaylo Kalfin, Minister of Energy Temenuzka Petkova, Minister of Regional Development and Public Works Lilyana Pavlova, UNESCO Director-General Irina Bokova, Bulgaria's National Assembly Chairwoman Tsetska Tsacheva and CEO of Siemens Bulgaria and Chairperson of Council of Women in Business in Bulgaria Boriana Manolova also spoke at the event.

Huge task ahead

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class-IX to XII.

The meeting also decided that the academic activities up to class-VIII will be conducted using the existing infrastructure.

"The government may not open the three extra classes in the primary schools soon," said an official wishing anonymity.

The education ministry would not give any new permission to any school for starting academic activities of classes-VI to VIII. The primary education ministry would do that, said officials.

Talking to The Daily Star, Education Minister Nurul Islam Nahid said extending the level of primary education was the biggest decision in the history of the country's education.

Education up to class-VIII will be the basic education for Bangladeshis, he added. "We want to ensure education for all up to this level so that the students can acquire skills and competence of a certain level."

The move would reduce the risk of drop out, the minister noted.

He said the primary education ministry would decide on whether it would hold primary terminal exams for class-V students.

Briefing reporters after the meeting, Primary and Mass Education Minister Mostafizur Rahman said they started working to this end and would be able to complete all the administrative formalities in June.

He hoped that the decision would be fully implemented by the end of 2018.

Nahid said the two ministries needed to complete many academic and administrative formalities to execute the decision as there were complexities in the education system.

For example, he said some schools impart education from class-I to X while others from class-I to V and class-VI to XII.

Besides, the government has to prepare a new curriculum for the primary level, create new posts of teachers and allocate additional funds, Nahid stated.

The primary education ministry would sit to form committees to devise the new curriculum and settle the issues related to different schools, he told this correspondent.

"We would give an all-out support to the primary education ministry to execute the decision."

The primary education ministry will

Nahid orders

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guilty in the probe.

Nahid said this while talking to The Daily Star yesterday.

Shariful Islam, headmaster of a high school in Meherpur's Mujibnagar upazila, allegedly raped the teacher on Friday. The victim went to Kushtia town on Thursday night with the headmaster, whom she looked upon as her guardian, to take the Teachers' Registration Examination that would make her job permanent.

The victim lodged a case with Kushtia Model Police Station on Sunday night. In the case statement, she said Shariful and she had taken two rooms at Al Amin Hotel at Barabazar in Kushtia town on Thursday night.

Shariful knocked on the door early Friday and offered to give her some tips on the exam, she alleged.

As she opened the door, Shariful entered the room, closed the door and raped her, she claimed.

Shariful went into hiding after the incident.

The minister said the DC informed him that "some progress" had been made in the investigation.

send a summary of its plan to the prime minister and then to the cabinet for approval, said Nahid.

Currently, around 63,000 government primary schools across the country provide education up to class-V while around 19,000 secondary schools up to class-X.

Of the 19,000 institutions, 2,381 junior secondary schools provide education from class VI to VIII. These schools will now go under the jurisdiction of the primary education ministry, said sources.

At the meeting yesterday, Prof Siddiqur Rahman, a former teacher of the Institute of Education and Research of Dhaka University, stressed the need for preparing new syllabuses for class-VI, VII and VIII considering those under the primary level, said meeting sources.

Eminent educationist Prof Muhammed Zafar Iqbal sent a letter to the ministry as he could not join the meeting. In the letter, he criticised the primary terminal exams saying that it brought a disaster in the education system, with private coaching taking a worse turn.

Asked about it, Mostafizur Rahman said they would make a decision on the issue later.

The primary terminal exams were introduced in 2010 as per the cabinet's decision and its approval is needed to abolish the exams, he added.

Govt to appoint

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from the panel was stopped after the government in January 2013 started nationalising the non-government primary schools.

Ten candidates, who were deprived of jobs due to the government move, from Naogaon filed a writ petition with the High Court challenging the legality of the decision and seeking its order for appointing them.

On June 18 last year, the HC gave a directive to appoint the 10 candidates.

Later, the primary and mass education ministry and other stakeholders filed a leave-to-appeal petition against the HC directives with the Supreme Court. However, the Appellate Division of the SC rejected the petition.

Jamuna losing

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"We are facing serious problems including financial crisis for being stranded here," said Rafiqul Islam, a labourer of cargo vessel Beauty of Queen, which came from Chittagong.

Md Milon, master of Queen of Feroza-1, alleged the navigation crisis is created every year due to poor and unplanned dredging by the Bangladesh Inland Water Transport Authority (BIWTA).

He alleged the BIWTA dredgers dump the removed sand near the dredging spot, allowing it to return to the dredging spot within a very short time.

He terms the dredging eyewash that makes the main channel of the river narrower every year.

The BIWTA officials have meanwhile claimed there is no navigation crisis at those points.

BIWTA Deputy Director (conservancy) at Aricha Abdus Salam said they have directed everyone concerned in writing to maintain seven feet draught.

But the vessel owners and operators violate the directive and fall into troubles. In most cases they overload their vessels beyond capacity, losing the minimum depth of water for smooth navigation, Abdus Salam added.

The goods suppliers and crewmembers urged the authorities concerned to take necessary steps to make the channel navigable for safe passage of their vessels.