

Devote yourself to the welfare of the nation

Hasina urges AL men on its founding anniversary

UNB, Dhaka

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina yesterday urged her party leaders and activists to work with devotion for the welfare of the nation and strengthen it with the ideals of Father of the Nation Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman.

Hasina, also the chief of the ruling Awami League, was addressing a discussion marking the 67th founding anniversary of the AL held at the Bangabandhu International Conference Centre in the city.

She said it was only the AL which has taken the country ahead through bringing economic emancipation of people. "In sha Allah, we'll bring much more economic emancipation." She said it is also the AL which has been working relentlessly to ensure the basic rights of the people of Bangladesh.

Hasina called upon her party leaders and workers to work tirelessly rising above personal interests.

She said, "If a political leader can work with honesty, then it is his or her biggest strength through which he or she could face any disaster or calamity."

Reiterating her vow to turn Bangladesh into a mid-income country by 2021 and a prosperous developed country by 2041, the PM said to attain these goals, each and every leader and worker of the AL would have to work with honesty imbued with the ideals of Bangabandhu.

SEE PAGE 17 COL 4



Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina, also chief of Awami League, releasing a pigeon at Bangabandhu Memorial Museum at Dhanmondi on the 67th founding anniversary of the party yesterday.

PHOTO: BSS

No extrajudicial killings by cops

FROM PAGE 20

under attack and our life is at risk, we will exercise our right to self defence and open fire in retaliation as per sections 99 to 106 of Bangladesh Penal Code.

"In the shootings, our men or the criminals can be hurt or killed. You cannot call it crossfire."

If one or two such incident takes place anywhere, he added, that's "encounter" in self defence.

The comments of the DMP chief came in the wake of criticism of law enforcers for extrajudicial killings in the name of "crossfire", "shootout" or "gunfight."

At least 20 people, including seven suspected militants, were killed in such incidents after law enforcement agen-

cies began a special crackdown following the brutal murder of a top police official's wife in Chittagong on June 5.

The trend drew criticism even from a minister.

"Militants are being killed every day in crossfire. But crossfire is not the solution to the militancy problem. Rather, killing in crossfire shows the failure and weakness of law enforcement agencies," Civil Aviation and Tourism Minister Rashed Khan Menon said in parliament on Tuesday.

Talking to this newspaper yesterday, Nur Khan Liton, acting executive director of rights body Ain o Salish Kendra, said around 1,700 "crossfire" killings had taken place since 2004 and according to information and photo-

graphs available, many of the bodies were found handcuffed.

"Some of the 1,700 victims were picked up by uniformed or plainclothes policemen and there were general diaries filed in these connections. They became victims of crossfire 10 to 15 days or a month later."

There is also public perception that those men were held by law enforcers and after a certain time they were killed in crossfire, said the rights activist. "That means extrajudicial killings have taken place in the name of crossfire."

He added the government should say how many law enforcers were killed or hurt in those 1,700 incidents.

ACTION AGAINST MUGGING Before talking to journalists, the DMP

commissioner in his speech at the meeting said uniformed and plainclothes policemen have been deployed to prevent mugging and stealing in the capital ahead of the Eid.

"They will go for action immediately in case of any mugging incident. They will open fire, if needed," he said.

Bangladesh Bus-Truck Owners' association arranged the meeting on law and order and traffic management in Gabtoli area.

The commissioner said police will beef up surveillance by deploying additional force from June 29 at all bus terminals.

He urged bus owners and transport workers to help police ensure smooth traffic management ahead of Eid.

Help govt fight militancy

FROM PAGE 1

record of achieving success in every major mass movement for ensuring political, economic, social and cultural emancipation for the people.

The AL began its journey on June 23, 1949 for fulfilling the hopes and aspirations of the country's oppressed people. The party had always been with people in the past and would remain so in future, he told the House.

The minister said the AL has been

representing the progressive, secular and democratic politics of the country.

The AL is the country's only political party which fought against four armed governments, he mentioned, adding that the party has a glorious history of waging movements against autocracy, communalism and political and economic domination.

"Good times return when Awami League assumes power, but the party never enjoys its benefits," Amu said.

Rajshahi suffers

FROM PAGE 20

Wednesday's incessant rain," Chief Engineer Hazrat Ali of PDB Rajshahi told The Daily Star.

The problem began sometime after the rain began Wednesday afternoon.

Power supply to the entire city went out at 6.57pm. Local experts managed to recover power two hours later, he added.

The power failure occurred again at 1:55am yesterday when the system protection of the national grid at a substation failed. They called for experts of Power Grid Company of Bangladesh (PGCB) from Ishwardi who restored

power supply to some 95 percent area of the city 14 hours later, he said.

"We managed to restore power supply to most of the city areas. Supply to other areas will be restored soon," said the Rajshahi PDB chief engineer.

Authorities of Rajshahi Medical College Hospital managed with backup generators but patients suffered at different private hospitals and clinics.

Al Amin, a businessman of Shaheb Bazar, said, "My family members could not sleep well in the night as there was no power and it was hot. In the morning, we did not get any water supply. It was unbearable."

Flash floods hit veg fields

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Kurigram

Around five hectares of vegetable land have gone under water in Rajarhat and Sadar upazilas of Kurigram in the last two days as sudden floods hit the two upazilas.

Heavy downpours and the onrushing water from hills have contributed to the rise of water level in the Dharla and Teesta rivers, damaging the vegetable fields along the rivers.

The Dharla was flowing 25 centimetres below its danger level at Dharla Bridge point in Kurigram Sadar, while the Teesta 178cm below its danger level at Chilmari Ghat point in Kaunia upazila of Rangpur yesterday morning, sources at Water Development Board said.

Local agricultural office sources said water of the Teesta has entered about two hectares of vegetable fields under Gharialdanga union of Rajarhat. Water of the Dharla has flooded about three hectares of vegetable fields under Pachgachhi and Jatrapur unions of Kurigram Sadar.

Amjad Hossain, a vegetable farmer in Kadomtala village under

SEE PAGE 17 COL 1



A couple collecting pointed gourds from an inundated field in Kadomtala village in Kurigram Sadar yesterday. Torrential rains and onrush of water from upstream have flooded the area.

PHOTO: ABDUL WAHED

Safe haven for wanted MP

FROM PAGE 1

According to a constitutional provision, a lawmaker will lose his membership in parliament if he remains absent from the House for 90 consecutive sittings.

This time Rana turned up at the parliament's lobby on Monday after remaining absent from 67 consecutive sittings of parliament.

He knew that his parliament membership would be at risk in the current session, which will continue till July 28 with more than 20 sittings. And he managed to eliminate the risk through his adventurous trip to parliament, where stringent security measures were put in place.

Rana did the same last year. He entered the parliament lobby on July 5 and signed the attendance book after remaining absent for 65 consecutive sittings.

This is all because of our parliamentary system in which an MP does not need to work for retaining his MP status; he can easily save his membership only by signing the attendance book.

In the past, opposition MPs, who boycotted the parliamentary business at will, took the opportunity to save their membership.

Now, Rana, wanted by police in a murder case, is taking the benefit of the same system.

Interestingly, on both occasions -- on Monday and on July 5 last year -- he signed the attendance book and left the parliament building unnoticed. The parliament whips and security chiefs expressed their ignorance of it on both occasions.

One whip last year said it was not Jatiya Sangsad's duty to help police arrest Rana. "But, if the police had

informed parliament of the matter earlier, the Speaker could have made a decision."

Police needs the Speaker's permission to arrest an MP at the parliament building precinct.

Rana has been absconding for the last 19 months following the murder of freedom fighter and Tangail AL leader Faruk Ahmed on January 18, 2013. Faruk was Rana's political rival.

Rana and his three younger brothers went into hiding after they found out that police had evidence of their complicity in the killing.

Police pressed charges against the four in February this year.

In early April, a Tangail court accepted the charge sheet and issued arrest warrant for Rana and his brothers.

But police could not arrest any of

them.

On May 16, the court ordered confiscation of moveable assets of Rana and his three brothers as well as other accused in the case.

They were again summoned to appear before the court by June 16. But Rana ignored it.

On June 16, the court ordered the authorities concerned to publish advertisements in newspapers asking MP Rana and others to appear before it.

In its order, the court mentioned that the fugitive accused would be tried in absentia if they don't appear before it even after the publication of the advertisement.

Earlier on July 14 last year, the High Court also directed Rana and one of his brothers to surrender before a Tangail court in two weeks in connection with the murder case.

Illegal int'l calls

FROM PAGE 1

them were either illegal or had fake registrations.

The people making illegal international calls have apparently not been affected at all by the biometric re-registration of SIMs.

In the second half of May, when carriers had not blocked unregistered SIMs, as many as 28,894 connections were detected making illegal calls and of them an astounding 28,442 were from Teletalk, according to the information of SIGOS, a Germany-based telecommunications company that specialises in developing telecommunications testing solutions.

The BTRC has been using SIGOS solutions since 2008 to detect SIMs that are carrying international calls illegally.

"It is true we failed to block unregistered SIMs but institutionally we are not supporting illegal call termination," said Gias Uddin Ahmed, managing director of Teletalk.

Gias on Monday claimed that they had been able to block four to five lakh connections. He said, "We disconnect detected numbers within 10 minutes of the BTRC informing us and we are complying with all the regulations regarding it..." He said compliance should not be the same for the top players and the bottom players who are fighting to survive.

Every day more than 1,800 SIMs, detected by the SIGOS technology, make illegal calls through six mobile carriers.

Despite various measures taken by the government, the huge number of SIMs being used for this illegal activity raises questions about the biometric re-registration.

Senior officials of different carriers said even though they blocked their unregistered SIMs, Teletalk was not doing so and that it was discrimination.

"We found most of the unregistered SIMs are being used in illegal call termination, which causes us as well as the government to lose revenue," said a senior executive of a carrier.

Another top official of a carrier said Teletalk's technology was not so backed that it needed this much time to block unregistered connections. If the illegal SIMs were blocked, the legal call volume would go up, increasing government's earnings.

Teletalk had been opposing the regulator's move against this illegal activity. It had even written to the posts and telecommunications ministry to intervene in the SIM detection process.

The Daily Star obtained a 2010 letter on the issue in which Teletalk said if this was taken away from Teletalk, then the government would earn only 5.5 percent as revenue share, and that the majority share of the money would go to foreign carriers and eventually taken out of the country.

"It doesn't necessarily mean that Teletalk desires the continuation of this

unauthorised traffic but it strongly protests hankering after the fulfilment of a malign and baneful conspiracy which might result in reduction in government revenue," read the letter, signed by Md Mujibur Rahman, the then Teletalk managing director.

When contacted, Mujibur acknowledged that he wrote the letter and that he had raised the concern several times. "As a government company Teletalk deserved some privilege," he said.

When Teletalk wrote the letter, the rate for every minute of incoming international call was \$.03 and of that 57.25 percent went to the government exchequer.

Later, the rate was cut to \$.015 per minute.

As of June 15, average incoming call minutes were around 7.73 crore a day. It was around 7.74 crore minutes in May, 7.88 crore minutes in April, 7.99 crore minutes in March, 8.06 crore minutes in February and 8.05 crore minute in a day in January, according to the telecom regulator.

If a nexus could bypass the regular channel of international calls, it could bag a huge amount of money every day.

Before going through the biometric re-registration, State Minister Tarana Halim had said the re-registration would improve the situation regarding illegal calls, but statistics showed a different story.

When contacted on Tuesday, Tarana said she needs to go through the information again. "But BTRC tells me legal calls were increasing which will secure governments revenue."

About the Teletalk's issue, LIRNEasia's Senior Policy Fellow Abu Saeed Khan said Teletalk's licence was illegally granted and lawlessness remained in its core since then.

"Political and bureaucratic nexus have initially siphoned off millions of dollars from Teletalk's hardware procurement. Once the shopping slowed due to budgetary constraints, the syndicate moved to illegal termination of international calls," said Saeed, a former secretary general of the Association of Mobile Telecom Operators of Bangladesh.

Referring to the telecoms secretary's de facto chairmanship at the Teletalk's board, Saeed said the current and previous bureaucrats should clarify their position on the state-owned mobile provider's gross misconducts.

"Otherwise, the illegal termination of overseas calls will multiply at an uncontrollable rate."

Recently, the BTRC fined Teletalk Tk 50 lakh for not adhering to the commission's instructions over illegal calls but the lone state owned operator is yet to pay the fine.

At that time, the BTRC had detected 1,256 Teletalk SIMs being used in illegal VoIPs. As per the rule, Teletalk was supposed to block the connections but it took no steps in this regard.

PHOTO: ABDUL WAHED