

PM sees plot to unleash communal conflicts

UNB, Dhaka

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina yesterday said there are well-hatched conspiracies to unleash communal conflicts in the country

Such evil designs, she said, could be effectively faced with united efforts of all.

"Sometimes various incidents take place in the country ... It seems those are staged in a well-planned manner to unleash communal conflicts," she said while exchanging greetings with members of the Hindu community on the occasion of Janmashtami at the Gono Bhaban.

Hasina said some incidents occurred in the country a few days ago and the government urged all to remain united against terrorism and militancy.

"Nobody wants terrorism, conflict and militancy, everyone wants peace. Now all are united for peace. This is

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Employees of Bashundhara City shopping complex are busy cleaning up the mall yesterday. At least 11 shops there have been completely damaged by a fire that broke out on level-6 of the mall on Sunday morning. PHOTO: PRABIR DAS

FIRE AT BASHUNDHARA CITY Mall authorities hope to re-open by tomorrow

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Although a day had passed since a fire broke out at Bashundhara City shopping complex, firefighters were still carrying out with their work at the multi-storied mall yesterday.

Black marks created from toxic thick smoke were visible from the outside on the walls of at least three floors, although the authorities said only level-6 of the mall was affected by the blaze.

Meanwhile, about 100 shop owners and staff waited throughout the day yesterday in front of the mall to know the fate of their shops.

Fire service officials and the mall authorities were yet to assess the loss caused by the blaze.

Brig Gen Ali Ahmed Khan, director general of Fire Service and Civil Defence, yesterday said they were dampening the floors to determine whether any hidden fire remained inside the mall.

Synthetic and polythene objects

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Top court rules against Ashiyani City

All activities including selling plots, publishing advertisements stayed

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The Supreme Court yesterday issued an injunction barring Ashiyani City from all activities including selling plots and publishing advertisements.

It also stayed a High Court order that scrapped an earlier verdict declaring the housing project in the capital's Uttara and adjacent areas illegal.

The SC order will remain effective until a leave-to-appeal petition is filed with it against the August 16

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Abe dressed

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Tokyo down a tunnel to the Maracana stadium in Brazil, Rio.

However, as the trailer ended a clip of Mario barreling down a classic green tube was shown on screen.

Then, wearing blue overalls, a red long-sleeve T-shirt and red cap, a man dressed as Super Mario came up and out of a real green warp pipe centre stage in the arena.

The man pulled away his clothing and hat revealing none other than a suited Abe beneath the clothing.

He held up his red cap as the crowd went wild for the display inside the Rio arena. And just as the crowd roared for Abe, so did the internet.

Twitter erupted into a frenzy upon seeing the prime minister's Mario reveal.

One Twitter user said: "I'ma let you finish in a minute but the Prime Minister of Japan had the best entrance of all time."

"The Prime Minister of Japan appeared at the #Rio2016 Closing Ceremony dressed as Super Mario. I cannot wait for the Tokyo Opening Ceremony," one person wrote.

Another wrote: "Best part of tonight was watching The prime minister pop out of that green pipe dressed as Mario."

Super Mario Brothers was developed by Japanese game designers Shigeru Miyamoto, Koji Kondo, Hiroshi Yamauchi and Takashi Tezuka.

The game rose to prominence in the 1980s and has stayed prevalent in the international market. It was developed by Nintendo, which was founded in Japan.

ACC moves for hearing

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in 2004, had filed the case against Ershad with Cantonment Police Station for misappropriating Tk 1.91 crore by misusing power at different times when he was the president of the state from December 11, 1983 to December 6, 1990.

The lawyer said a Dhaka court on February 3 in 1992 convicted Ershad, also Jatiya Party chairman, and sentenced him to three years' imprisonment for misappropriating the money and ordered the authorities concerned to confiscate the money and his Toyota Land Cruiser car for committing corruption.

The same year, Ershad filed an appeal with the HC, challenging the lower court verdict.

Following the appeal, the HC stayed the lower court verdict, he said, adding that on February 26, 2012, the ACC

became a party of the case under the HC's permission, as the Bac was not functional.

The ACC lawyer said Ershad had got bail from the HC in the case.

He, however, could not say how long Ershad had served in jail in the case.

Advocate Khurshid said they had earlier tried to get the appeal of Ershad moved before the HC, but there was no single-judge HC bench that has jurisdiction to hear such an appeal relating to corruption.

Meanwhile, wishing anonymity, a JP presidium member yesterday said the government was displeased with the party chief after his younger brother GM Quader attended a meeting on the formation of a new citizens' platform which would work to forge unity over national fundamental issues.

In the meeting held on Saturday, Quader, also co-chairman of JP, hailed the initiative, terming it a "pressure group".

He also called upon the new platform to work so that the government would govern the country as per the constitution.

"His comments might irk the government's high-ups as they thought Quader didn't make such comment without getting permission from his brother [Ershad]," said the JP leader, adding that, "But this is not true."

"Actually, sir [Ershad] wasn't aware of Quader's remarks. He strongly criticised Quader bhai [brother] for his irresponsible remarks that apparently went against the government," he added.

Quader was being treated at the National Heart Foundation. He couldn't be contacted as his mobile phone

Draft Digital Security Act

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cabinet sources told The Daily Star.

"The aim of the new law is to check cybercrime," Cabinet Secretary Mohammad Shafiqul Alam told reporters after the meeting at the secretariat.

Talking to The Daily Star, former law minister Shafiqul Ahmed said a law must define what actions would be considered as offences.

He also said the law (Digital Security Act 2016) should have been enacted much earlier.

Nur Khan Liton, acting executive director of rights body Ain o Salish Kendra, said a law must clearly state its purview, otherwise there would be scope for misuse of the law.

"We hope the government will specify the law's jurisdiction before

It includes another provision of a maximum penalty of 14 years and a minimum of two years in prison and also a fine of up to Tk 1 crore or both for cyber terrorism.

Actions that may affect Bangladesh's unity and hinder other countries' security or help and encourage someone to commit terrorist activities would be considered as cyber terrorism, he said.

According to the proposed law, if anyone commits crimes using a computer, a mobile or any digital device, the person would face a maximum punishment of five years and a minimum of two years in jail and Tk 3 lakh fine or both.

For cheating or committing a forgery through computers, mobile phones or other electronic devices, an offender could face a maximum penalty of five years and a minimum of three years in prison and a fine of Tk 3 lakh or both.

The proposed law has provisions for two year's imprisonment and Tk 2 lakh fine or both for violating secrecy, a maximum sentence of 10 years and a minimum of two years in prison or Tk 10 lakh fine for circulating pornographic materials on the internet.

Besides, one could face a maximum punishment of two years' imprisonment and a minimum of two months in jail and Tk 2 lakh fine or both for defamation and hurting religious sentiment.

For creating enmity and causing deterioration of law and order, a person could face a maximum penalty of seven years and a minimum of one year in jail and Tk 7 lakh in fine or both.

All crimes under the law will be bailable, and law enforcers will need a warrant before searching or confiscating any electronic devices. But, in special cases, law enforcers can search, confiscate or even arrest someone without a warrant in presence of an executive magistrate, it said.

The draft law proposes constituting a digital security agency to be headed by a director general with powers to direct any law enforcement agency to stop broadcast of information through electronic devices.

If necessary, the DG would order an immediate stop to any transmission, said the cabinet secretary.

The cabinet yesterday also okayed in principle the drafts of the Metrology Act 2016, the Hindu Religious Welfare Trust Act 2016, the Buddhist Religion Welfare Trust Act 2016 and the Christian Religion Welfare Trust Act 2016.

It also approved a proposal for continuing the ban on cutting of trees at reserve and natural forests till 2022 to protect biodiversity in the country.

SOME OF THE EXISTING ARTICLE/LAWS

ARTICLE 39 OF THE CONSTITUTION

(1) Freedom of thought and conscience is guaranteed.

(2) Subject to any reasonable restrictions imposed by law in the interests of the security of the State, friendly relations with foreign states, public order, decency or morality, or in relation to contempt of court, defamation or incitement to an offence -- (a) the right of every citizen to freedom of speech and expression and (b) freedom of the press are guaranteed.

SECTION 57 OF INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY ACT

If any person deliberately publishes or transmits or causes to be published or transmitted in the website or in electronic form any material which is fake and obscene or its effect is such as to tend to deprave and corrupt persons who are likely, having regard to all relevant circumstances, to read, see or hear the matter contained or embodied in it, or causes to deteriorate or creates possibility to deteriorate law and order, prejudice the image of the state or person or causes to hurt or may hurt religious belief or instigate against any person or organisation, then this activity of his will be regarded as an offence.

Maximum 14 years' jail

PENAL CODE

295A. Whoever, with deliberate and malicious intention of outraging the religious feelings of any class of the citizens of Bangladesh, by words, either spoken or written, or by visible representations insults or attempts to insult the religion or the religious beliefs of that class, shall be punished with imprisonment of either description for a term which may extend to two years, or with fine, or with both.

501. Whoever prints or engraves any matter, knowing or having good reason to believe that such matter is defamatory of any person, shall be punished with simple imprisonment for a term which may extend to two years, or with fine, or with both.

SC stays bail of 'top militant'

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primary interrogation after his arrest on June 7 last year from the capital's Banani DOHS, Saker said he recruited activists through internet and trained them at his house, according to police.

Officials said Saker was allegedly a coordinator of Ansarullah Bangla Team (ABT). The banned militant outfit has been renamed Ansar al Islam, which is said to be the Bangladesh chapter of al-Qaeda in Indian Subcontinent (AQIS).

Son of retired navy commander Md Saker, he also launched a new militant organisation called "Jund At-Tawheed Wal Khilafah".

He had been collecting fund and firearms and recruiting activists to establish caliphate as desired by global terror outfit IS through toppling the government, detectives said after his arrest.

They seized a CPU, three laptops, three mobile phones, two hard disks, one passport, 21 different types of books, three leaflets and a notebook from his possession.

They also collected screenshots of his Facebook friend list and cover pages of different IS-related e-books from his e-mail account.

On June 18 and July 12 last year, Saker was shown arrested in two cases filed last year under the Anti Terrorism Act, 2009, on charges of planning subversive activities against the state.

One of the cases was filed with Uttara West Police Station on May 24 while the other with Cantonment Police Station on May 31.

Following two separate bail petitions filed by Saker, also a software engineer, the HC on June 16 this year granted him six months' bail as his

name was not mentioned in the first information reports of the cases, Additional Attorney General M Momtaz Uddin Fakir told The Daily Star yesterday.

A five-member bench of the Appellate Division of the SC, headed by Chief Justice Surendra Kumar Sinha, yesterday stayed Saker's bail for the next three months after hearing two petitions filed by the government seeking stay on the HC orders.

Attorney General Mahbubey Alam told The Daily Star that his office moves appeal before the apex court to halt the release of any militant suspect or alleged terrorist from jail immediately after it notices any such accused had got bail from the HC in any case.

Replying to a question, he said no such appeal is now pending with his office.

Earlier on June 13 this year, the SC cancelled an HC order that granted bail to suspected militant Abul Khair Rashid Ahammed in blogger Ananta Bijoy Das killing case.

Ananta was hacked to death by a group of masked men in Sylhet on May 12 last year.

The Appellate Division also ordered Abul Khair to surrender before the lower court concerned in a week.

It stayed another HC order that granted bail to alleged militant Golam Sarwar Rahat in a case filed for snatching away three convicted militants from a prison van in Mymensingh in 2014.

The apex court passed the orders after hearing two petitions filed by the government challenging the HC orders.

On February 23, 2014, an armed gang ambushed a prison van and

snatched away three convicted Jama'atul Mujahideen Bangladesh (JMB) militants -- Rakib Hasan Russell alias Hafez Mahmud, Salauddin Ahmed alias Salehin and Zahidul Islam alias "Boma" Mizan.

Rakib and Salauddin were sentenced to death and "Boma" Mizan to 37 years in prison in different cases.

The ambush left a police constable killed.

According to the police, prosecution and Dhaka Chief Metropolitan Magistrate's Court, around 500 militant suspects got out on bail in the last few years, prompting the prime minister and some government ministers to urge the judges to be more circumspect in granting bail to militant suspects.

For example, Toriqul Islam, a leader of the banned Jama'atul Mujahidin Bangladesh (JMB), was arrested from Chittagong in connection with the 2005 countrywide bomb blasts. He was released on bail in 2013.

Toriquel was arrested again on October 5, 2014 over the killing of former PDB chairman and so-called pir Khijir Khan in the capital's Badda. On October 25 last year, he confessed before a court that he murdered Khijir.

Police blame the public prosecutors and the prosecutors blame police. The judges blame both; while hearing bail petitions, they often express annoyance at poor performance of both the investigators and the prosecutors.

Independent analysts, however, say flawed investigation, faulty legal process in filing cases and delayed judicial process are to blame for the failure to keep militants behind bars.

giving the final nod," he added.

The country already has Information and Communication Technology (ICT) Act 2006 that deals with cyber offences with stringent punishment.

Besides, the Liberation War Crimes Denial Act 2016 has been drafted to check distortion and denial of established historical facts related to the 1971 war.

The cabinet secretary said four provisions -- 54 to 57 -- would be omitted from the ICT Act and then included in the Digital Security Act 2016.

There was inadequacy in the ICT Act, and for this the new law has been framed with a wider perspective for ensuring digital security, he said.

The proposed law provides for a maximum sentence of 14 years' imprisonment and Tk 1 crore fine or both for hacking or attacking any important cyber establishments or infrastructure such as Biman Cyber Management.

Years of investment

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smoke from the fire and the water used to tame the flames.

The flames could not be fully doused before early hours yesterday, some 15 hours after the fire broke out around 11:00am on Sunday.

Firefighters said it took so long to extinguish the fire because many shops were closed and the flames seeped into the false ceilings, which made it difficult for the firemen to spray water.

Firemen and Bashundhara City's own staff were cleaning the market yesterday. The mall is expected to open tomorrow.

About the loss, however, many shop owners were still in the dark.

Yesterday, most shop owners and their sales assistants were waiting in front of the mall. They were not allowed in, and were getting informa-

tion about their shops from security guards, fire service members and officials of the shopping complex.

"We have nothing left. Everything has turned into ashes and garbage," said Monir Hossain, owner of three footwear stores on level-6.

"Ceilings are falling down due to heat. Firefighters broke open the shutters of the shops to douse the fire. Piles of burnt shoes are scattered here and there," said Enamul Haque, who owns Green Leather Craft.

The Daily Star has spoken with over a dozen shop owners who sought financial assistance from the mall authorities and the government to restart their business.

The owners, who have bank loan, are in a double trouble.

Kamrul Islam, proprietor of Feet Fair on level-6, is one of them.

"We started our business a couple of years ago selling land at our village home and taking loans from bank. Our loans are yet to be repaid. By this time, our whole investment is burned down," said Kamrul, who along with his brother had six footwear shops.

They invested around Tk 1.15 crore.

Talking to reporters, Jasim Uddin, head of marketing of the shopping mall, said the authorities were not supposed to provide any financial support. But a final decision in this regard would be made later.

MA Hannan Azad, president of Bashundhara Shop Owners Association, told The Daily Star that the market authorities might only arrange for the repair of affected stores to help resume business.

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