

Nat'l judicial confce today

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The daylong National Judicial Conference 2017 will be held today for discussing the relevant issues regarding the judiciary including backlog of cases, digitisation, effective court administration and case management.

The Supreme Court has arranged the event under the theme, "Justice for all". It will be held at Bangabandhu International Conference Center in Dhaka, Barrister Mohammad Saifur Rahman, a special officer at the SC, told The Daily Star.

President Abdul Hamid will inaugurate the conference as the chief guest.

Justice Md Abdul Wahhab Miah, who is now discharging the responsibilities of the chief justice, will preside over the inaugural programme where Law Minister Anisul Huq, Law Secretary ASSM Zahirul Haque, SC acting registrar general Md Zakir

SEE PAGE 15 COL 1

Seven killed

FROM PAGE 20

Selim Reza, officer-in-charge of Gopalganj Sadar Police Station, quoting locals.

Seven people were killed in the accident, he said.

Faruk Ahmed, senior resident medical officer at Gopalganj Sadar Hospital, told The Daily Star that five people were brought dead to the hospital and a baby boy died after being admitted to the hospital.

Thirteen of the injured were undergoing treatment at the hospital while four others took first aid, he added.

Govt keen

FROM PAGE 1

organised the programme at the Rangamati stadium.

The PM said the government was implementing various projects in the CHT which were not included in the accord.

The people of the CHT were deprived of development due to the confrontational situation in the area, Hasina said. "That's why we are implementing special projects under every ministry to develop the area."

After assuming office in 1996, the previous Awami League government had started hectic efforts to bring peace to the CHT, she told the programme.

She said the then AL government became successful in striking the accord on December 2, 1997.

"It is our responsibility to implement the accord as we have done it. We will, for sure, fully implement the accord, but we need cooperation from all. We want overall development of the area."

The PM, also the AL chief, said the government has implemented most of the clauses of the accord and a very negligible part of it remains unimplemented.

"We have implemented the most part of the accord. Implementation of the rest of the part is underway. We will gradually implement it."

According to her, the most complicated part of the accord was about the land problem.

"We have formed a land commission. I hope we will be able to implement that part also if the regional council cooperates [with the government]."

Recalling the opposition from the BNP over signing of the peace accord in 1997, Hasina said the party had called a hartal for that day (December 2, 1997).

The BNP wasted time after assuming power in 2001 as it was not sincere about the implementation of the accord, she alleged.

Citing examples of some peace pacts, she said the rebels didn't surrender all their arms after signing of those treaties, but Bangladesh was an exception.

State Minister for Chittagong Hill Tracts Affairs Bir Bahadur Ushwe Singh delivered the welcome speech from the Gono Bhaban while Cultural Affairs Minister Asaduzzaman Noor spoke from Rangamati.



Bottom, Pope Francis prays with Rohingya refugees during an interreligious meeting in Dhaka yesterday. Top row, the pontiff receives a gift from Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina, rides a rickshaw and meets a Rohingya girl.

PHOTO: REUTERS, BSS

'The presence of God today is called Rohingya'

FROM PAGE 1

walked to the dais one by one and shared their experiences in brief.

Among them was Shawkat Ara, a 12-year-old Rohingya orphan, who broke down in tears shortly after the pope spoke to her and gently touched her head.

She fled to Bangladesh after losing her entire family in an attack by the military in Myanmar.

"Your tragedy is very hard, very big. We give you space in our hearts," said the pontiff, who arrived in Bangladesh on Thursday afternoon following a three-day visit to Myanmar.

"In the name of all those who persecute you, who have persecuted you, those who have hurt you, above all for the indifference of the world, I ask for forgiveness, forgiveness." Francis said in improvised comments.

"Many of you talked to me about the great heart of Bangladesh, which offered you refuge. Now I appeal to your heart to give us the forgiveness we are asking from you," he told the group of refugees.

He also assured them of his support, saying, "We will not close our hearts for you."

Earlier this year from the Vatican, the pope twice defended the Rohingyas by name, once saying that they had been "tortured, killed simply because they wanted to live their culture and their Muslim faith".

The pope's avoidance of the word, Rohingya, in Myanmar was an issue of dismay of the rights activists who termed the atrocities of Myanmar security forces against the minority group as ethnic cleansing, genocide and crimes against humanity.

The authorities in Myanmar reject the term Rohingya. Many in the Buddhist-dominated country regard them as illegal immigrants from Bangladesh.

Fleeing widespread persecution, over 636,000 Rohingyas crossed over from Myanmar into Bangladesh since August 25. Another four lakh had arrived in the previous years.

'OPENNESS OF HEART'
Pope Francis arrived at the programme venue of the Kakrail Catholic Church on a rickshaw at 4:30pm amid huge applause and a Bangla song welcoming a

religious leader who is known for championing the rights of refugee.

As the pope took his seat on the dais, wearing a white cassock, the programme began with the national anthem of Bangladesh.

Addressing the unique function that was featured by musical and dance performances by artists from Banglee as well as Khasia, Santal, Oraon and Mandi communities, Pope Francis said it was a "highly significant moment in my visit to Bangladesh".

"For we have gathered to deepen our friendship and to express our shared desire for the gift of genuine and lasting peace."

He told the gathering of some six thousand people that the meeting is a clear sign of the efforts of religious leaders and followers to live together with mutual respect and good will.

In Bangladesh, where the right to religious freedom is a founding principle, this commitment stands as a subtle yet firm rebuke to those who would seek to foment division, hatred and violence in the name of religion, he added.

"It is a particularly gratifying sign of our times that believers and all people of good will feel increasingly called to cooperate in shaping a culture of encounter, dialogue and cooperation in the service of our human family."

However, it entails more than mere tolerance, he said.

"It challenges us to cultivate an openness of heart that views others as an avenue, not a barrier."

He said "openness of heart" is the condition for a culture of encounter and compared it to a door, which enables communities to embark on a dialogue of life, not a mere exchange of ideas.

Openness is engaging fruitfully with another and sharing distinct religious and cultural identity, but always with humility, honesty and respect, he added.

The pope said openness of heart is likewise a path that leads to the pursuit of goodness, justice and solidarity. It leads to seeking the good of our neighbours.

"Religious concern for the welfare of our neighbour, streaming from an open heart, flows outward like a vast river, to quench the dry and parched wastelands of hatred, corruption, poverty and

violence that so damage human lives, tear families apart, and disfigure the gift of creation."

He said Bangladesh's different religious communities have embraced this path in a particular way by their commitment to the care of the earth and by their response to the natural disasters that have beset the nation in recent years.

He said he too thinks of the common outpouring of grief, prayer and solidarity that accompanied the tragic collapse of Rana Plaza, which remains fresh in the minds of all.

"In this these various ways, we see a clear confirmation that how the path of goodness leads to cooperation in the service of others."

The 80-year-old Roman Catholic leader has frequently sought to influence a world he sees as indifferent to the plight of refugees forced to leave their homelands, whether through poverty or conflict.

Last year he took three Syrian families, all Muslim, back to the Vatican after visiting them on the Greek island of Lesbos, a hotspot for asylum seekers.

He has praised Bangladesh for giving refuge to the Rohingyas, who have brought with them stories of horrific abuse at the hands of the Myanmar military and local Buddhist mobs, including rape, arson and murder.

Earlier in the day, the pope led a giant open-air mass in Dhaka attended by around 100,000 Bangladeshi Catholics who sang hymns in Bengali and chanted "viva il papa" ("long live the pope") as he was driven through the crowd in an open-sided popemobile.

There he ordained 16 priests.

"I feel like I am blessed to join the pope's prayers," said 60-year-old widow Pronita Mra, who had travelled from her village in northeastern Bangladesh.

"I hope the pope will pray for peace and harmony among all communities in Bangladesh."

THE MESSAGE OF PEACE
Addressing the interfaith gathering on behalf of the civil society, Professor Emeritus Anisuzzaman said Bangladesh was founded based on the principle of equality for all, but unfortunately religious and ethnic minorities sometimes face oppression.

The veteran educationalist thanked

Pope Francis for supporting Rohingyas, and expected that this support would facilitate a solution so that the refugees can return home.

Speaking on behalf of the Muslim community, Maulana Farid Uddin Masud said the whole world is now plagued by violence and clashes among religious groups and nations.

"We are inspired by the way Pope Francis is working for peace," he said and vowed to fight against extremism and all other ills.

He hoped that with the support of pope, who is both a spiritual and a political leader, there will be a peaceful solution to the Rohingya crisis.

Swami Drubeshananda, who spoke on behalf of Hindus, said different religions originated in different times, but all of them speak for human welfare.

He thanked the pope for visiting Bangladesh with the message of peace.

Buddhist community leader Shanganayak Shuddhananda Mohathero prayed for a stronger fraternity among religious and ethnic groups in Bangladesh.

Besides, he demanded Myanmar take back the Rohingyas protecting their dignity and rights.

Cardinal Patrick D' Rozario, archbishop of Dhaka, said Bangladesh is one of the best examples of religious harmony.

He called for continuing efforts to foster dialogues among all religious and ethnic groups to build a prosperous and peaceful Bangladesh.

Theophil Nisharan Nokrek, from the Catholic community, said people of all religions and ethnicities in Bangladesh live peacefully, but sometimes "bad politics" leads to violence.

He called for more dialogue among different communities.

Bishop Paul Shishir Sarker, from the protestant church, prayed for peace on the occasion. "There is corruption, immorality and poverty among us. Lord, please give us strength so that we can fight these menaces."

Foreign diplomats, including US Ambassador Marcia Bernicat and Indian High Commissioner Harsh Vardhan Shringla, were present at the programme.

[With inputs from CNN, AFP and Reuters]

PIROJPUR SCHOOL Authorities won't allow political activities

Decision comes as leader of BCL school unit assaults teacher

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Pirojpur

The authorities of a school in Pirojpur decided not to allow any politics in the educational institution yesterday, two days after a Chhatra League leader of the school beat up one of the teachers at his home.

The managing committee of Sreeramkathi UJK High School in Nazirpur made the decision in a meeting with local union parishad chairman and other influential people.

On Wednesday night, five boys, led by class-X student Shah Amanat Shanto, president of Chhatra League in the school, assaulted Assistant Teacher Santosh Dewry while he was giving accounting tuition to some students at his home in Sreeramkathi, said locals and other teachers of the school.

A few days ago, Santosh had caught the SSC examinee from business group red-handed cheating in a test exam, they added.

Shanto is a son of Ali Haidar Mridha, former president of Sreeramkathi union unit Awami League.

Yesterday, Sunil Kumar Mistry, president of the school managing committee, said they decided that they would not anymore permit any political activity on the school premises as it hampers academic activities.

"What happened to a teacher by a student is very sad," he said, adding that "Shanto probably did that after

SEE PAGE 15 COL 6

Taliban attack

FROM PAGE 20

Blood smeared the corridor of the dormitory where the gunmen fired at cornered students and lobbed hand grenades, with several victims said to be teenagers, according to an AFP reporter at the scene.

"Some students got out to watch the gun-battle and they were shot by the militants," student Zahid Ullah, 16, told AFP.

Police said six students, a security guard and two civilians were killed in the attack by the militants.

"All of them were wearing suicide vests but they were killed before they could blow themselves up," said Salahuddin Khan Mehsood, police chief of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province.

"All three terrorists are dead while we are trying to identify a fourth body," he added, following earlier reports there had been an additional gunman.

Spokeswomen from two hospitals in the city said they had received a total of nine bodies and were treating some 38 injured, including several in critical condition.

During the onslaught on the training centre, a spokesman for the Tehreek-e-Taliban Pakistan, Muhammad Khurasani, claimed responsibility for the attack in a telephone call to AFP.

"Our mujahids have attacked the building because it was used as office for ISI, God willing our fighters will fight till the last drop of blood," he said, referring to Pakistan's Inter Services Intelligence agency.

STUDENTS HIDING
Noor Wali, a 19-year-old student at the institute, described a terrifying ordeal that began when he was woken by gunshots.

"I rushed to the door and saw a fountain of blood pumping out of the shoulder of my roommate who was standing outside the room," he told AFP.

He and another student rushed to his aid, and hid from the gunmen for almost an hour before they were rescued by security forces.

"The other student was pressing the wound with his hands to stop the blood and I had to put my hand on his mouth so that he cannot scream," he said.

Demise of a changemaker

FROM PAGE 1

his plans. At times, he sounded unrealistically ambitious, but it was inspiring to listen to him. At least there was a man thinking about the city that was becoming increasingly difficult to live in.

"As long as the prime minister approves of what I do, I don't care how many enemies I make," he said. And yes, he did make a lot of enemies who could be the ones responsible for spreading the totally baseless, fictitious and unkind rumours and online stories about his illness as he lay in near coma condition in a London hospital. One can only imagine the pain it must have caused the family already devastated by the terrible turn of events.

Within weeks of his election, he rid Dhaka North of its obnoxious bill boards that sprang up in every nook and corner of every important intersection creating a visual monstrosity that destroyed whatever charm that was left of Dhaka. His clearing of parts of the

Sarasta intersection in Tejgaon area of the city from the clutches of truck owners exemplifies the boldness with which he approached his task. Every inch of Dhaka city translates into some form of monetary gain, and occupying a large chunk of the roads right in the city centre must have meant millions to those who occupied it. To clear these public roads, he had to face militant resistance from the vested quarters including armed mobs that besieged him, and had to be rescued by the police on one occasion. His opening up of Gabtoli Bus Terminal that caused hours of traffic delay while entering the city from Savar was another remarkable success.

Garbage disposal, a job that was neglected for decades, proved far more complex than he had bargained for. To his horror, he discovered that there did not exist any disposal centre where garbage collected from a particular locality could be gathered for final

disposal. He spent months lobbying relevant ministries and local bodies to identify sites, allocate land and build garbage collection centres. Anyone having an iota of knowledge about land allocation in Bangladesh, especially in Dhaka city, would know what a herculean task he accomplished. Much of this work has been completed, and it stands as yet another example of the dynamism of this mayor-in-a-hurry.

I feel certain that the attractive name "Dhaka Chaka" given to the special bus service within Gulshan and Banani and the adjacent area originated in his creative mind.

His achievements had a long history. Beginning as a small garment manufacturer in mid-80s, he soon became a major player in the sector and subsequently got elected to its apex body, the BGMEA. This was followed by his becoming the president of the FBCCI and then of the Saarc chamber. In all

these positions, he showed extraordinary drive and leadership.

He had a particular fascination for television where he made quite a name for himself as a presenter. His most successful shows consisted of comparing the famous pre-election question-answer programmes of leaders of both the AL and the BNP before the 1996 elections and the subsequent "Face the People" programme of Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina during the early part of her 1996-2001 tenure.

Both these programmes exhibited Anisul Huq's talent as a host and TV personality.

Nobody could ignore his presence in any gathering. Ever boisterous and always engaging and friendly. In the rare case anyone missed seeing him, he could, however, never have missed hearing his loud and booming voice. He seemed like a person with almost unending source of energy and indomitable spirit to do something. His

qualities were infectious and one could not help but be affected by his persuasive qualities to join hands to change the status quo.

He lived a good life. He had a beautiful home made more so by Rubana whose artistic qualities Anis admired. He was extremely proud of his wife's business acumen and intellectual qualities. Her columns in this paper he would proudly forward to people whose opinion he valued. Sometimes he would call me and say, "Did you read Rubana's column today?" He would often say that when Rubana would finish her novel, it would surely go on to win the Booker Prize.

His sudden illness shocked the nation and it took us all a while to truly grasp the gravity of his malady. When we were in London in November, my wife, Shaheen, and I went to see Anis at the Wellington Hospital. A tearful Rubana -- in many ways Anis' real source of strength and confidence --

sadly greeted us and told us the story of how he fell ill and what the prognosis was. She took us to the second-floor ICU room and allowed us to see him from outside the open door. She shouted out our names and tried to nudge him to some sort of response, but to no avail.

As I looked at Anis, with all those tubes and machines that kept him going, I imagined him to suddenly sit up, and say: "Ha ha, kamon apnader shobaikey ghabrey dilam. Amar to kuchuii hoy nai" (Oh, how I have fooled you all, I am just fine). This was his usual way to make light of the severest of tasks he faced and the crises that came along in his life. How I wish he had really made a fool of us all and that nothing had happened to him.

Seeing him lying helpless, I couldn't help thinking how fragile life is and how, within minutes, it can change most dramatically, and forever.