

Forge unity for a developed Bangladesh

Urges president in speech at New Year's inaugural session of JS

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Bangladesh will soon emerge as a developed country as it has already secured a dignified position in the global arena through economic, commercial and social advancement, President Abdul Hamid said yesterday.

People hope Bangladesh will become a middle-income country during the golden jubilee of independence in 2021 and a developed one by 2041.

"This dream of the nation will definitely come true through the achievement of Vision 2021," Hamid said at the New Year's inaugural session of the current parliament.

He also urged people to forge unwavering unity once again to build an

exploitation-free "Sonar Bangla", uprooting terrorism and militancy from the society.

Lawmakers from both the treasury and the opposition benches welcomed his speech by thumping desks repeatedly.

This is Hamid's last speech in the 10th parliament as his five-year stint as president will expire on April 23, said sources at the parliament secretariat.

But if he is re-elected as president, he will address the next year's inaugural session of parliament.

According to the constitution, the president addresses the first sitting of the New Year's session of the House.

He read out a 65-page summary of his 185-page scripted speech and



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Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina meets visiting French Special Envoy Pascal Lamy at her office. He sought her support for France's bid for hosting World Expo 2025. Related story on B1.

PHOTO: PTID

No processions, rallies in city on workdays

Says Quader

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Citing traffic congestion as a major problem of the capital, Road Transport and Bridges Minister Obaidul Quader yesterday said no rallies or processions would be allowed anywhere in the city on weekdays.

He also directed the Dhaka Transport Coordination Authority (DTCA) to formulate a policy in this regard.

Quader, also general secretary of the ruling Awami League, was speaking in a meeting of the DTCA at the Nagar Bhaban.

He said political parties would hold rallies and processions ahead of the upcoming general election, which would create traffic jams on the streets.

No social, cultural and political organisations will be allowed to hold rallies or bring out processions blocking the streets, Quader said.

Apart from this, government and non-government organisations will not be permitted to bring out processions to mark their founding anniversaries on working days, the minister went on to say.

"We have announced that we would not hold any programme in

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HC stays tests at 3 state-run banks

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The High Court yesterday stayed the January 12 recruitment tests for senior officers, officers and cash officers in three state-run banks -- Sonali, Rupali and Janata.

In response to a writ petition, the court also halted the process for recruitment in these posts on the basis of the circular issued by Bangladesh Bank in 2017.

It also issued a rule asking the respondents to explain within four weeks why they should not be directed to hold the recruitment exams for the three banks as per the 2016 circulars, which were separately issued by the BB, before holding the recruitment tests based on the 2017 circular.

Finance secretary, BB governor and chairman and secretary of Bank Recruitment Selection Committee have been made respondents.

Preliminary tests of the three banks were scheduled to be held on January 12.

The bench of Justice Moyeenul Islam Chowdhury and Justice JBM Hassan came up with the order and rule after hearing a writ petition filed by 28 candidates who applied for the recruitment after circulars had been issued in 2016.

Rashedul Haque Khokon and Tanzim Al Islam appeared for the writ petitioners.

Citing the writ petition, Tanzim told The Daily Star that the BB had issued three separate circulars in 2016 for recruiting senior officers, officers and cash officers in Sonali, Rupali and Janata banks.

Without holding the recruitment

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Dhaka's mass transport to see overhaul

FROM PAGE 1

The meeting, held at the Nagar Bhaban, also formed a committee, led by DTCA Executive Director Syed Ahmed, for laying out the plan after consulting all stakeholders.

Representatives of the two city corporations (DNCC and DSCC), Rajuk, Dhaka Metropolitan Police, bus owners and transport workers associations would be included in the committee, Syed Ahmed told The Daily Star after the meeting.

The company will sign contacts with bus operators, and fix fares, bus service intervals, and other issues, according to the working paper of the meeting.

The move comes as the city's traffic congestion continues to cost Bangladesh billions of dollars and thousands of wasted manhours.

In the last 10 years, average traffic speed in Dhaka has dropped from 21kmph to 7kmph, which is slightly above the average walking speed, said a

World Bank analysis. The speed may drop to 4kmph by 2035, slower than walking speed, it added.

"Congestion in Dhaka eats up 3.2 million workhours per day. This cost the economy billions of dollars every year," said the analysis shared at a high-level international conference in Dhaka in July last.

The working paper of the meeting yesterday said traffic jams would be reduced once the service was introduced on the two routes, touted pilot corridor. The speed of the buses would also increase to 15-17kmph from the current 5-7kmph.

As per the proposed pilot corridor, two groups of bus operators would be created from the bus operators who run their buses on the two routes.

Operators uninterested in getting connected to the system could be allowed on other routes, it said.

Syed Ahmed said they would discuss with all stakeholders and hope to

complete preliminary work within two-three months.

"However, it will take time to go for implementation [of the project] as it involves finance and several other issues," Syed Ahmed said.

Khandaker Enayetullah, secretary general of Bangladesh Sarak Paribahan Samity, who was at the meeting, told The Daily Star that they would take part in the discussions.

According to the DTCA, people of Dhaka and its suburbs generate 30 million trips every day and buses are used for 47 percent of these trips.

When five Mass Rapid Transit (MRT) and two Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) projects come into effect by 2035, it would reduce 17 percent demand but the rest 40 percent has to be mitigated by buses.

For this reason, Strategic Transport Plan (STP) and the revised STP recommended reorganising the bus management and rationalising bus routes.

More investment was needed for restructuring of the bus transport sector and to bring discipline, it said.

The Bus Network Study-2016, which was carried out under a project financed by the World Bank, also recommended a separate government company to monitor bus companies in the capital.

Cities like New Delhi, Singapore and Seoul have such companies.

At yesterday's meeting, Obaidul Quader directed the DTCA to carry forward the initiatives of late DNCC mayor Anisul Huq. At a meeting on transportation and communication in Dhaka city on June 1 last year with the prime minister in the chair, Anisul had placed a proposal for rationalisation of bus routes and running private buses under six companies.

On several occasions, Anisul had said buses in the capital would be brought under a few companies, each to be provided with permits for respec-

tive routes and made responsible for proper public transport management and minimising congestion.

Asked, Kazi Md Shifun Newaz, assistant professor of the Accident Research Institute at Bangladesh University of Engineering and Technology (Buet) said yesterday's move was a "good initiative".

He said that after taking route permits from Regional Transport Committee, the buses go to Bangladesh Road Transport Authority just once a year. "There is no single authority to look into the sector. I think this [forming a government company] will be good for bringing discipline in this sector."

The DTCA was established on September 2, 2012, to prepare strategic transport plan, provide regular supervision, and coordinate all possible planning for transportation infrastructure development within Dhaka city and nearby districts.

Liton, Kamran get AL chief's green signal

FROM PAGE 1

unit AL, were the mayors, but were defeated by BNP candidates in the last polls.

The party had another bitter experience in Gazipur City Corporation polls held on July 6 that year. The tenure of those city corporation mayors will end in mid-2018.

The DNCC mayoral post became vacant after Mayor Anisul Huq passed away on November 30 last year. By-elections to the DNCC mayoral post are slated for February 26, and the Election Commission will announce the polls schedule tomorrow.

At Saturday's meeting, Hasina asked Liton and Kamran, who were present at that meeting, to return to their cities and start campaigning, said sources. She also directed them to highlight the government's development activities



Liton Kamran

during door-to-door campaigns.

Hasina told the meeting that she would monitor their activities in the coming days. If they failed to increase the party's popularity, she would reconsider her decision, said one of the AL leaders who was present at the meeting.

Contacted, Liton admitted that the AL chief gave him the green signal. "I have already started my campaign and now I will expedite it as I have got the signal from our leader."

At the meeting, when an AL Central Committee member wanted to know from Hasina about the party's mayoral candidate in the DNCC by-polls, she replied that she already signalled the candidate and he started campaigning. But she did not mention his name, said sources.

Atiqul Islam, former president of Bangladesh Garment Manufacturers and Exporters Association, has started campaigning, claiming several times that he got the nod from the AL high command.

Asked, Atiqul told The Daily Star that he met the AL president on December 23 and she asked him to start campaigning. "I am carrying out the campaign on the Awami League chief's directives."

Contacted, Kamran declined to comment.

According to AL insiders, the ruling party has taken the elections to seven city corporations seriously as, by winning those, it wants to boost the morale of party activists ahead of the 11th national polls.

But after the party's election debacle in Rangpur City Corporation, the AL wants to give its best efforts for rest of the city polls to demonstrate its popularity.

The AL suffered a humiliating defeat in the Rangpur City Corporation election on December 21 as its mayoral candidate Sharfuddin Ahmed Jhantu lost to Jatiya Party candidate Mostafizur Rahman Mostafa by a margin of around one lakh votes.

At Saturday's meeting, Hasina asked her party colleagues to give their best efforts to win the city corporations elections, said sources.

7 Bangladeshis

FROM PAGE 1

years ago and was the sole wage earner of the family. He left behind his 70-year old mother, wife Shahana Begum, son Rabiul, 17, two daughters -- Shamsunnahar, 14, and Sabina, 10.

"We were completely dependent on him for the treatment cost of my mother-in-law, my children's education, our food etc. I am devastated. I don't know how this family will be run now," Shahana, 46, told The Daily Star. Amir had told her that he would be visiting home on February 5. "But he is never coming back now."

Mexicans

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Mexican families eat the confection in the run-up to Epiphany on January 6 the day Christians believe the Three Wise Men brought gifts of gold, frankincense and myrrh for the baby Jesus.

They acted gallantly, beyond call of duty

FROM PAGE 1

a woman militant in burqa walked out of a building to surrender to law enforcers. But things went wrong when she blew herself up detonating the suicide vest strapped around her waist.

Soon after her death, Afif Kaderi alias Ador, son of "Neo JMB" leader Tanvir Kaderi, opened fire on police from inside a flat of the building.

Jahangir along with other members of the SWAT's Assault Team fired retaliatory shots at the flat. Later, Afif was found dead there.

The SWAT official, who joined Bangladesh Police in 2012, successfully led his team to "Operation Assault 16" in Chittagong's Sitakunda on March 16 and "Operation August Bite" in the capital's Panthapath on August 14.

The cop will be awarded with PPM this year.

SHAURITH HASAN

A constable at SWAT, Shaurith Hasan along with his team members conducted "Operation Assault 16" in Sitakunda. At one stage of the raid, SWAT members asked the militants to surrender.

But the militants hurled bombs at law enforcers, leaving four SWAT members, including Shaurith, injured. Although his left leg was broken, he did not back off. He helped other SWAT members hit the criminals hard.

The constable, now admitted to Central Police Hospital in Rajarbagh, has been undergoing treatment at differ-



Jahidul Islam

Jahangir Hasan

Parvez Mia

Golam Azam

Rasel Ahmed

Shaurith Hasan

ent hospitals since March last year.

Shaurith also showed his bravery during "Operation Ripple 24" in the capital's Ashkona. He will be attending the Police Week in a wheel chair to receive his BPM.

Apart from Jahangir and Shaurith, 104 other cops will be honoured with the awards for their role in fighting militancy.

GOLAM AZAM
Muggers stabbed Golam Azam, a constable of Hazaribagh Police Station, thrice when he tried to capture a gang in the capital's Beribadh area on October 18 last year.

The constable along with three other policemen went after the criminals immediately after three labourers complained that a gang of muggers snatched their mobile phones and Tk 2,500 on their way home around 1:00am.

One of the cops dialled the number of a robbed mobile phone to trace the gang. As the policemen tried to detain them, they stabbed Azam indiscrimi-

nately. Despite being badly injured, he held a mugger tight with all his strength. Four criminals were arrested in the incident.

Azam, a resident of Sirajganj's Kazipur upazila, needed 16 stitches in his face.

The cop, who joined the police in 2005, will be awarded PPM this year for his valour.

"This recognition will inspire me to continue to do such work," he said.

RASEL AHMED

Around three months ago, constable Rasel Ahmed of Bhaluka Police Station along with an assistant sub-inspector of police was on patrol near Meherbari area in the evening.

When they were walking along an alley, they saw two men roaming around a shop suspiciously. The shutter of the shop was down.

The cops asked the duo about their identities. As soon as Rasel pulled the shutter up, he came under attack. "I grabbed one of the criminals, but

he shot me in my left leg and left hand. Despite bleeding, I held him tight," Rasel told The Daily Star on Thursday.

The injured constable was later rushed to Mymensingh Medical College Hospital where he took treatment for about two weeks.

The cop, who joined the force in 2002, has been awarded PPM this year.

"Since childhood, I faced all the challenges in my life with bravery. This award will encourage me to serve people with courage in future," said Rasel.

JAHIDUL ISLAM

A police team led by Jahidul Islam, inspector (operations) of Ashulia Police Station, rushed to Dhaka-Aricha highway near Nabinagar around 10:30pm on November 2 last year on information that robbers held passengers hostage inside a bus heading for Nabinagar from Manikganj.

Sensing the presence of law enforcers, the robbers opened fire on the policemen. Jahidul also fired retaliatory shots.

As soon as the robbers stopped

shooting, Jahidul boarded the bus firing. The robbers attacked him with a machete.

During the drive, police rounded up 28 robbers who were posing as passengers. Cops also rescued a victim, named Asif, with his hands and legs tied.

For his courageous job, Jahidul has been awarded PPM.

The policeman from Barguna joined the force in 2006 as sub-inspector. He had won the BPM award in 2015 as a sub-inspector of Bhatara Police Station under Dhaka Metropolitan Police.

Meanwhile, three cops will be given special recognition posthumously for sacrificing their lives during the "Operation Twilight" in Sylhet last year.

Lt Col Abul Kalam Azad, intelligence wing director of Rab, Chowdhury Abu Mohammad Kaiser, inspector of court police in Sylhet, and Monirul Islam, inspector (investigation) of Jalalabad Police Station, died in a bomb blast during the drive.