

Indonesia

FROM PAGE 1
Indonesian First Lady Iriana Widodo and Foreign Minister AH Mahmood Ali, among others, were present at that time.

The Indonesian president went to Jamtali Rohingya camp in Ukhia around 2:30pm.

He interacted with a number of children and Rohingya women and listened to the horrific tales of tortures they had faced.

Earlier, the Indonesian president reiterated his country's support to safe, dignified return of the displaced people to Rakhine.

President Widodo appreciated Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina for sheltering over a million displaced persons from Rakhine State.

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina appreciated Indonesia's supportive role, including the humanitarian assistance for the displaced people sheltered in Bangladesh.

Her tumble

FROM PAGE 1
"She was looking depressed since morning and was saying that she would go to her village home," her friend added.

Sajedul Islam, a family friend from Panchagarh and also a former student of JnU, said Rubina lost her father around two years ago and was going through hard days to meet the expenses of education in the city.

She has an elder sister who is physically and mentally challenged and a younger brother who is studying at Begum Rokeya University in Rangpur.

Sajedul said Rubina was facing a financial crisis. "She used to maintain her expenses with a scholarship, awarded by a private bank, but the scholarship tenure was about to end. She used to tutor a person but that too ended recently," he added.

Rubina had surgery at the hospital yesterday. Her friends were seen trying to comfort her and gathering blood she needed.

Doctors said she was not out of danger.

On January 22, a second-year student of Dhaka University lost both his legs after being run over by a train near Shahid M Monsur Ali Railway Station in Sirajganj.

Mayor is missed

FROM PAGE 1
uncertain.

To implement the project, the city corporation needs to acquire some land owned by the Roads and Highways Department, Railway and National Housing Authority, among other government agencies. But the DNCC is yet to get permission for this.

The project is scheduled to be completed by June this year, but its fate is unclear, said a DNCC official.

Annisul would do many things on his own initiative, but that has stopped now, he added.

In many cases, quality of the ongoing development works has deteriorated.

For instance, parts of the footpath before Hotel Super Star and and People's Ceramic Industries Ltd on Kazi Nazrul Islam Avenue have already crumbled just one and a half months into its construction.

One ward councillor, asking not to be named, said poor quality materials are being used in various development works. Also, top DNCC officials are not going for field visits like before.

In other cases, encroachers have returned to occupy the roads and footpaths from where they were evicted by the Annisul-led city corporation, said Md Sazzad Hossain, councillor of ward-2 in Mirpur. He cited the example of Kalshi road in this area.

Different parts of the newly expanded road in Muslim Bazar in Pallabi have been occupied again, he added.

Md Nurul Islam Ratan, councillor of ward-29, said the pace of the city corporation's works has slowed down for a lack of leadership.

Officials also agreed there was an absence of an authoritative leadership.

Ward-21 Councillor Md Osman Gani is now discharging duties as a panel mayor. But he acknowledged he has no authority over officials and other councillors.

"If a panel mayor does not get the status of a mayor, it is really very difficult for him to do the job," he said.

The development works in the newly added 18 wards have also stopped as the government has yet to approve several projects involving Tk 2,000, he said.

"We already sent to the LGRD ministry the project proposals around a month back after conducting feasibility study, but we did not get the approval yet," he said.

There is also a fund crisis. In the current fiscal year, the DNCC had a target of collecting Tk 1,120 crore in revenue. But it will be able to earn about Tk 600 crore. This will hamper the development work, said an official.



Indonesian President Joko Widodo, 3rd from right, interacts with Rohingya children during a visit to a refugee camp in Ukhia's Palongkhali in Cox's Bazar yesterday.

PHOTO: STAR

Truly friendly

FROM PAGE 1
effectively, say political and parliamentary affairs experts.

Due to the presence of a friendly opposition party in the current 10th parliament, neither the treasury bench nor the main opposition criticises each other or holds debate on issues of public interest, they say.

Three lawmakers of the main opposition party were included in the council of ministers -- a rare instance in any parliamentary democracy. Besides, JP Chairman HM Ershad was made a special envoy to the prime minister with the status of a minister.

"We often hear that the senior members of the treasury and the opposition benches praise each other for making parliament effective through cooperation and constructive criticism of the government," said Chittagong University professor and parliamentary affairs expert Nizam Ahmed.

On several occasions in parliament, Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina lauded the



performance of the opposition bench and termed it an ideal opposition.

"In the absence of a real opposition party, lawmakers are losing interest in taking part in the parliamentary business. Quorum crisis has become com-

mon though 274 of the 350 lawmakers are from the ruling Awami League," he told this newspaper.

Against this backdrop, the current parliament, formed through the January 2014 election amid boycott by the BNP-led alliance, steps into five years today.

The main opposition MPs didn't cast votes against any of the 130 government bills in the last four years.

They only walked out of parliament twice -- during the passage of Bank Company Amendment Act in the ongoing session, and in protest against raising the prices of gas and electricity.

Talking to The Daily Star, Opposition Leader Raushan Ershad said the present parliament is the most successful one due to the main opposition party's constructive criticism of the government and cooperation with it.

"In the present parliament, it is common that the treasury and the opposition benches jointly criticise the

BNP which has no representative in the House," said M Hafiz Uddin Khan, former adviser to a caretaker government.

In the country's history, this is the only parliament where the opposition MPs oppose a bill while participating in the discussions on it, but vote in favour of it during its passage in parliament, he said.

"People and the media have no interest in the current parliament due to the curious presence of the Jatiya Party in both the treasury and the opposition benches," he said.

Political analyst Tareq Shamshur Rahman, a professor at Jahangirnagar University, said the current parliament has gone into sessions regularly in line with the constitution. "But its effectiveness is still in question mainly due to the absence of a real opposition party."

Chief Whip ASM Feroz, however, said the present parliament is very lively as the main opposition is playing its due and effective role.

Move on

FROM PAGE 1
seats for women to be allotted to parties based on their proportional representation in parliament.

The last amendment was brought to the constitution in 2014 abolishing the chief justice-led Supreme Judicial Council system which was introduced in 1978, and empowered the parliament to impeach judges for incapacity and misconduct.

On May 5, 2016, the High Court scrapped the 16th constitutional amendment that restored the parliament's authority. The HC declared that the amendment was illegal, unconstitutional and against the principles of the separation of state powers and the independence of the judiciary.

The government appealed to the Supreme Court against the High Court verdict. The Supreme Court on July 3 last year upheld the High Court verdict.

A seven-member bench of the Appellate Division led by Chief Justice Surendra Kumar Sinha unanimously declared the amendment illegal, dismissing the government appeal.

The government on December 24 last year filed a petition with the Supreme Court seeking review of the judgment.

Bill Gates'

FROM PAGE 16
The money will also be used to develop stronger crops and research diseases which can cause huge economic losses for African farmers.

While it is currently unclear how the cow will be created, Business Insider suggests it maybe via artificial insemination.

Climate scientists have warned that cows could be bad for the environment because of the methane they produce.

However, Gates says they can help mitigate global poverty and starvation.

He said in a blog post last July: "While there are legitimate questions about whether the world can meet its appetite for animal products without destroying the environment, it's a fact that many poor people rely on cattle for both nutrition and income."

The funding was announced on Friday during a visit by Gates to Edinburgh University.

Gates said: "For over a billion people living in the world's poorest countries, agriculture and livestock are a lifeline out of poverty.

"The science and research being led by the great minds here in Edinburgh are making huge strides in improving the health and productivity of livestock.

"It's great to have the chance to visit the University of Edinburgh with Secretary of State Penny Mordaunt and to see how the UK's leadership in research and innovation doesn't just benefit Britain, but also saves and improves lives in the poorest parts of the world."

Millions of farmers in Africa, who depend on agriculture to support their families, struggle to grow enough crops to put food on the table because of natural disasters.

Now UK scientists are using their expertise to identify specific genes that help them become more nutritious, grow faster and more resilient to disease and extreme weather.

It is estimated the work will help up to 100 million African farmers lift themselves and their families out of poverty.

A glimmer of hope over local fish species

FROM PAGE 16
Many fish farmers ready their ponds by draining out all the water in the dry season and adding lime to the base, so as to kill bacteria and other fish varieties, said research officials. This also stops the natural growth of many varieties, they added.

Another key reason for endangering varieties is fishing before reaching maturity, they said.

BFRI has developed breeding and culture technologies to help conserve 16 endangered species, said Md Moshir Rahman, a scientific officer for indigenous varieties at the institute.

The varieties are -- pabda, guls, tengra, local koi, shingi, magur, foli, ayir, bata, gania, puti, chital, beda, mohashol, shorputi, titputi.

"We are currently working on the

kholisa and shalbaim varieties; research is a continuous process," said Rahman.

Apart from research, the institute that was established in 1984 also focuses on farmers' training programmes and supply of juvenile fish for rearing.

Dr Subhash Chandra Chakraborty, a professor at the Fisheries Technology Department at Bangladesh Agricultural University, said natural breeding spots are destroyed by the indiscriminate use of chemical fertilisers and insecticides on agricultural lands near the river banks.

These are washed out by rainwater into the rivers, killing many fish, he added.

The native fish varieties are nutritionally dense and more flavoursome, said Dr Yahia Mahmud, the institute's director general.

"The budgetary allocation in recent years will ensure extensive research through artificial breeding."

Farmers' training programmes to breed these fish varieties are also ongoing, added the scientist.

Over 1,000 farmers from Mymensingh, Comilla, Moulavibazar, Narayanganj, Sirajganj, Gaibanda, Sunamganj, Narsingdi and other districts are involved in fish rearing, officials of BFRI said.

Shafiqul Islam, owner of Satota Hatchery in Tarakanda upazila in Mymensingh, said he saved up a bit of money in the last couple of years by breeding native fish varieties.

"I collect juvenile fish from the institute and then breed the variety in my own pond."

The institute has so far developed 57

aquaculture and management technologies and most of them have already been transferred to the field level that helped overall fish production to rise.

Fish farmers Qudrat-e-Elahi of Trishal upazila and Shahina Parvin and Liton Khan of Muktagacha upazila said they have seen a marked rise in fish production after adopting these modern techniques from the institute.

The government developed the 'Hilsa Management Action Plan' based on the research findings of BFRI scientists, increasing hilsa production by eight to ten percent every year.

The institute has also successfully researched Thai pangas, GIFT tilapia, native and exotic carp and non-carp species, and mud eel (kuchia) for commercial production, said a BFRI official.

Khaleda focuses on party

FROM PAGE 1
one can stay in a party committee if he or she is convicted by a court.

The amendment was made to foil any attempt to split the BNP if the party chief is convicted, said party sources.

Upon approval by the party's highest policymaking body -- the standing committee --, a BNP delegation led by committee member Nazrul Islam submitted the amended charter to the Election Commission yesterday afternoon, they added.

Earlier on Saturday, Khaleda held a meeting with the party's standing committee members, and also sat with the alliance leaders last night. At both the meetings, she repeatedly urged her party men as well as alliance leaders to remain united at any cost in the coming days.

"Madam [Khaleda] listened to us but did not say anything about waging an anti-government movement. She rather stressed the need for maintaining unity at any cost," a BNP standing committee member told this correspondent, seeking anonymity.

Moudud Ahmed, member of the party's standing committee, said, "There may be an attempt to split our party, but that attempt will surely fail..."

Referring to past events, the former law minister said those who had made attempts to split the party were later dubbed government agents, and their political careers abruptly came to an end.

Earlier on Thursday, the Dhaka Special Court-5 fixed February 8 for pronouncing the verdict in the Zia Orphanage Trust graft case against Khaleda and five others.

Apart from the BNP chief, many

other leaders of the party have been accused in scores of cases.

At Saturday's meeting, the BNP leaders said they would not contest any polls if Khaleda is kept out of the electoral race. At the same time, they also advised against going for any tough programmes like hartal right now.

The leaders discussed strategies and steps like voluntary imprisonment, boycott of the national polls and agitation if Khaleda is convicted.

The party will finalise its strategy after holding a series of meetings with its leaders at different tiers as well as the alliance partners.

Ruhul Kabir Rizvi, senior joint secretary general of the BNP, said the party's national executive committee will hold a meeting on February 3 and the venue would be finalised soon.

Khaleda would take opinions of the grassroots leaders on the future course of action as this year is very crucial because of the upcoming national election.

This will be the first meeting of the 502-member committee since its formation in 2016. It, however, was supposed to sit twice a year.

The committee is comprised of the standing committee members, advisers to the party chief, vice-chairmen, organising secretaries, joint secretaries and district-level senior leaders.

At the meeting with 20-party alliance leaders last night, Khaleda asked them to remain united in the coming days to deal with any situation.

Seeking anonymity, an alliance leader said they had assured the BNP chief that they would not leave the alliance regardless of the situation.

Several other combine leaders told this correspondent that Khaleda urged them to get prepared for anti-government programmes, and that they will be informed about it at the right time.

On July 3, 2008, the Anti-Corruption Commission filed the graft case with Ramna police accusing Khaleda, her elder son Tarique Rahman, now in the UK, and four others for misappropriating over Tk 2.1 crore that came as grants for orphans from Kuwait through a foreign bank.

"We would like to say if any unjustified verdict is given against Khaleda Zia, we will initiate a movement to ensure the fall of the government," BNP standing committee member Khandaker Mosharraf Hossain said at a discussion at Dhaka Reporter's Unity.

"All senior leaders are ready to get arrested voluntarily if the chairperson is sent to jail unlawfully," he added.

Issuing a note of warning, Gayeshwar Chandra Roy, another BNP standing committee member, said, "Do you [the government] think we will only shed tears if you send Khaleda Zia to jail? We will not weep, rather we will ensure your fall."

On the other hand, Awami League General Secretary Obaidul Quader came down heavily on his BNP counterpart Mirza Fakhrul Islam Alamgir for his comments on the case against Khaleda.

He alleged that Fakhrul has already committed contempt of court by issuing a threat of not accepting the verdict in the case.

"The court should take the issue into cognisance," Quader said.

Shock gives way

FROM PAGE 16
The attack in one of the most heavily protected parts of the city, close to foreign embassies and government buildings, was the worst seen in the Afghan capital since a truck bomb near the German embassy killed 150 people in May.

"People were running everywhere to escape, there were wounded people lying on the ground, people with wounds to their arms, legs, heads," Hanif said.

Despite a major tightening in checks following the May 31 attack, the ambulance was able to get through the checkpoints, apparently without difficulty.

"People don't have work. There's no life for people in Afghanistan. People have to look for a life somewhere else, there's nowhere," said shopkeeper Sameem.

With Ghani embroiled in confrontation with provincial powerbrokers defying central rule, pressure is mounting on the government to set aside political divisions and focus on security.

"The situation is absolutely unacceptable to the people," said a former government minister, Abdul Hadi Arghandwal.

"The government spends a lot of time and energy in political rivalry and infighting at a time when it has to pay more attention to security."

TERRORIST WAR
Former US ambassador to Afghanistan Zalmay Khalilzad called for Ghani's government and its main political rival, powerful northern leader Atta Mohammad Noor, to "come together and resolve their differences."

"Fighting terrorism and protecting the people is job one. I hope they rise to the occasion," Khalilzad said on Twitter.

Saturday's attack, described as "an

atrocious" by the head of the UN mission in Afghanistan, drew universal condemnation from neighbouring countries and allies who had expressed confidence that the new US strategy was producing results.

Following a recent visit to Kabul, the US ambassador to the United Nations, Nikki Haley, said the strategy was working and pushing the insurgents closer to peace talks.

However, the Taliban have dismissed any suggestion that they have been weakened by the US approach and say they will only agree to talks when international forces leave Afghanistan.

The United States, which has accused Pakistan of helping the Taliban and has cut off some aid, urged all countries to take "decisive action" to stop the violence.

Afghan officials also say the insurgency is being directed from outside their country.

"This is not a civil war, this is a terrorist war imposed on the Afghan people," said Masoom Stanekzai, head of Afghanistan's main intelligence agency.

"This is a war in which the Afghan people are being used as tools and burned like firewood every day."

Pakistan, which denies accusations it fosters the Afghan war to undermine old rival India's growing influence there, condemned the attack and called for "concerted efforts and effective cooperation ... to eradicate the scourge of terrorism."

Afghanistan yesterday declared a day of mourning. Joko Widodo, president of Indonesia, which has the world's biggest Muslim population, was due to visit Kabul today, Ghani's office said.