

# 'These are absolutely terrorist acts'



A huge crowd gathers in Chandpur Stadium to hear Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina's address. Local Awami League organized the rally yesterday.

PHOTO: PID

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terrorist acts to occur again...these are absolutely terrorist acts...we want peace in the country," she said at a public rally organised by local Awami League in Chandpur Stadium.

She said Awami League wants development of the country, not the nightmare of killings anymore. "We want to make sure that the people of the country will live in a peaceful environ-

ment."

Hasina, also the Awami League chief, said destruction is the character of BNP-Jamaat nexus.

Referring to the embezzlement of money from Zia Orphanage Trust and punishment of BNP Chairperson Khaleda Zia, the prime minister said it is the character of BNP to loot others' money.

"They're involved in money laun-

dering, terrorism, militancy, bomb attacks and grenade attacks...they're experienced in these evil activities; killing people through arson attacks are their movement," she said.

Hasina also said BNP never believed in the independence of the country as they had awarded the killers of the Father of the Nation and handed over the national flag to war criminals.

## Rein in graft in civil service

Prof Jamilur asks ACC

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Vice-Chancellor of the University of Asia Pacific Prof Jamilur Reza Choudhury yesterday urged the Anti-Corruption Commission to rein in irregularities in recruitments, promotions, and transfers in civil service.

Unless the unholy alliance of politicians and bureaucrats is broken, it is not possible to prevent corruption, said the former adviser to a caretaker government.

Without a clean political environment, it is difficult to prevent corruption, he said while addressing a seminar titled "Accountable Administration System: Key Element for Corruption Prevention" organised by the ACC's Segunbagicha headquarters.

Quoting a verdict of the Supreme Court of India, Jamilur said the court made it mandatory for candidates of parliamentary elections to submit their and their family members' wealth statements.

ACC Chairman Iqbal Mahmood said forgery and money-laundering offences of individuals have been excluded from the ACC Act through amendments. This makes it difficult for the commission to probe people whose names have come up in Panama or Paradise papers'.

The ACC is still investigating these individuals in connection with illegal wealth considering public demand, he said.

"If bureaucrats carry out their responsibilities following the laws, it is not possible for anyone to commit corruption," he added.

Former caretaker government adviser M Hafizuddin Khan said to prevent corruption, there must be an accountable administration. But it is absent in the existing administration system, he added.

Former minister Mizanur Rahman Shelly said politics is the heart of the state. "If politics cannot be made filth free, it is not possible to form a corruption-free society," he added.

Lawmaker AKM Rahmatullah said if politicians and administration

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## HC for quick settlement

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The HC delivered a short verdict on November 23 last year, and its full text was released yesterday.

One Md Abdul Hye had filed the writ petition challenging the legality of the Enemy Property (Continuance of Emergency Provisions) (Repeal) Act-1974 and the Enemy Property (Continuance of Emergency Provisions) (Repeal) Amendment Ordinance-1976.

The petition also challenged all actions taken pursuant to the said ordinance, and fresh listing of "enemy property" subsequent to enactment of the 1974 act and section 6 (Ga) and (Gha) of the Vested Property Return Act-2001.

Petitioner's lawyer Mohammad Imtiaz Farooq told the HC that the concept of "enemy property" emerged from the 1965 war between Pakistan and India.

The break in the history of Pakistan and the Independence of Bangladesh in 1971 diminished the need or justification for continuance of the 1969 ordinance. Against this backdrop, the 1974 act was enacted repealing the ordinance, he added.

But successive governments, in utter disregard for the proclamation of independence and the history of struggle for the liberation, continued the process of listing "enemy property" in an independent Bangladesh, the lawyer added.

He argued that any inclusion of "enemy property" after the enactment of the 1974 act is liable to be declared to have been done illegally.

Barrister Imtiaz further said that section 6 (Ga) and (Gha) of the 2001 act makes an exception to return of the property which had been disposed of by the government without taking into consideration that such right to dispose of any property of a citizen of Bangladesh terming it "the property of enemies of Pakistan" is violation of the constitution.

In the full verdict, the HC ruled that the government may set up an exclusive tribunal having no other jurisdiction but only to dispose of the applications under section 10 of the Vested Property Return Act-2001 in every district, and more than one tribunal may be set up in the district

where a huge number of petitions are pending.

The court directed the tribunals already set up under that law to dispose of the applications maintaining the timeframe strictly as provided in the act.

It said the Limitation Act-1908 should be made applicable in filing application under section 10 (1) of the 2001 act.

Section 5 of Limitation Act reads, "Any appeal or application for a revision or a review of judgment or for leave to appeal or any other application to which this section may be made applicable by or under any enactment for the time being in force may be admitted after the period of limitation prescribed therefore, when the appellant or applicant satisfies the Court that he had sufficient cause for not preferring the appeal or making the application within such period."

The HC also directed the authorities concerned to implement the decision of the appellate tribunal where no appeal has been preferred within the time of limitation.

It asked the government officials not to make any delay in executing the decree of the tribunal concerned on the plea of filing writ petition or any other plea in any way or in any other form.

The government by enacting the 2001 act decided to give back the property to the owner or successors-in-interest within shortest period of time, the court noted.

The judges said they believe the legislature should come forward in taking further legislative measures regarding the property listed under section 6 (Ga) and (Gha) of the 2011 act.

There should be a special appellate tribunal in each district as the law provides for setting it up to decide the appeal against the verdict of the tribunal concerned, the court said.

It further observed, "The property which has been lying with the government as vested property having no legal claimant should be utilised by the government for the purpose of human development only."

"The government may take necessary measures by enacting law in respect of properties which were vested

They never believed in development of the country, they never got involved in development and will never do it in the future," she said.

The prime minister requested all including parents, teachers, imams, to remain careful about the involvement of youths in terrorism, militancy, and drugs.

Hasina reiterated that the special quota for freedom fighters, their children, and grandchildren will continue.

"You have to remember one thing -- these freedom fighters brought independence for us through a war risking their lives. Many of them made the supreme sacrifice, many embraced disabilities. I think, it's our duty to show respect to them and their families. That's why we've made the arrangement," she said.

Expressing her desire to see the country in a dignified position by 2021 where there will be no hunger and poverty, she said the development activities must continue.

"Boat is your election symbol, and no one returns empty-handed casting votes in favour of Boat. To maintain the development spree, I want your votes to be cast for Boat," she urged people.

District AL President and Chandpur Municipality Mayor Nasir Uddin Ahmed, AL General Secretary Obaidul Kader, AL leaders Dipu Moni, Mofazzal Hossain Chowdhury Maya, Abdul Razzaq, Major Rafiqul Islam, Mahiuddin Khan Alamgir and Sujit Roy Nandi also spoke on the occasion.

Hasina inaugurated 23 development projects and laid the foundation stones of 24 others.

## Hasina, Modi to meet in London

DIPLOMATIC CORRESPONDENT

Even though signing of the Teesta water-sharing agreement is unlikely in the near future, the issue will dominate the talks between Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina and her Indian counterpart Narendra Modi during the Commonwealth summit in London on April 16-20.

Diplomatic sources said there were hectic efforts from Dhaka and New Delhi to hold the meeting on the sidelines of Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting (CHOOGM).

They said there was a speculation that Modi might visit Dhaka in the middle of this year to ink the Teesta deal, but in reality, "there is no such visible progress in India for signing the deal" since India is seeking time for building an internal consensus.

During Hasina's state visit to India on April 7-10 in 2017, Modi had committed to signing the treaty during this tenure of the BJP and the Awami League governments.

Diplomatic sources said officials at the foreign ministries were discussing the agenda for the Hasina-Modi London meet. It is expected that the meeting and its agenda would be fixed during Indian External Affairs Secretary Vijay Keshav Gokhale's Dhaka visit on April 8-9.

Hasina would leave for London on April 16. On April 19-20, she would take part in the main discussions along with heads of governments from 53 countries.

An official at the Prime Minister's Office said Hasina has planned bilateral engagements with the UK and other participating heads of governments. Returning home on April 23, Hasina would leave for Australia on April 26 to attend the Global Summit of Women in Sydney on April 26-28.

"India is giving priority to gain more confidence of Bangladesh government and Modi will ask Hasina to put her trust in him and India will not frustrate Bangladesh in signing of the Teesta deal in future," said a diplomatic source in New Delhi.

The source said India was fully aware of the political situation in Bangladesh and sensitivity of Teesta deal, which might help Hasina in the upcoming general election, but India has already conveyed the message that it would not give any specific timeframe for signing the agreement.

However, Modi will discuss with Hasina a host of bilateral, regional, and international issues, including India's sincerity to address the Rohingya crisis, regional security, and cooperate Bangladesh in the fight against violent

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## Pvt banks given more

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AMA Muhith yesterday said this would help banks address their ongoing liquidity crisis within a short time.

"We have made the decision, considering the proposals of different quarters, including directors of private commercial banks," he told reporters after a closed-door meeting with directors of various private banks at the capital's Pan Pacific Sonargaon Hotel.

BB Governor Fazle Kabir and Bangladesh Association of Banks Chairman Nazrul Islam Mazumder, among others, were present.

Earlier at a meeting with directors and managing directors of different banks on Friday, Muhith had agreed to double the government deposits for private banks to 50 percent.

In January this year, the government amended the banking law to allow private banks to have four directors from a family instead of two, a move many analysts believe will establish family control over operation of the banks.

All these benefits are being given to the banks without making any move to reform the ailing banking sector. And no visible step has been taken yet to punish the wilful loan defaulters.

At yesterday's briefing, Muhith said the responsibility of reducing the CRR lies with the BB as it is the regulator, and that he can only influence the BB to do so.

"Directors demanded slashing the CRR by 3 percentage points, but we decided to cut it by 1 percentage point."

Muhith further said, "We will review the impacts of the CRR cut in June." This review proposal came from Salman F Rahman, IFIC Bank chairman and private sector affairs adviser to Awami League President Sheikh Hasina.

"I think this is a very good suggestion. We will review it and see how it works. If we find that something further needs to be done, we will do that."

Asked whether the CRR cut would fuel inflation, Muhith said it will not create any inflationary pressure.

"Impossible, [inflation] won't increase for sure," the finance minister said.

Earlier at a programme yesterday morning, Muhith said directors of different banks had promised to bring down the interest rate to a single digit within a month.

Muhith made the comment referring to his Friday's meeting with directors of various banks.

When reporters at yesterday's briefing drew the BAB chairman's attention to Muhith's comment on lending rate, he said nobody could say for sure when it would come down to a single digit.

He said the CRR cut would help banks get an additional Tk 10,000 crore in investible funds, and it would mitigate the liquidity crunch.

"This is our money that we deposit with the central bank in the form of CRR. The fund cannot be invested, and it doesn't play any role in containing inflation. We also don't get any interest from the funds," he said.

A private bank recently ran into trouble. This is just "an accident" but many state organisations withdrew deposits from other private banks, he

mentioned.

"The lending rate has increased significantly in recent months. No businessman can run a business, paying interest at a rate of 14-15 percent."

The state banks now have excess funds of over Tk 1 lakh crore, but they charge private banks more than 10 percent in interest on loans, Nazrul said.

"The finance minister has assured us that he will talk to the state banks about it," he added.

Premier Bank Chairman HBM Iqbal, Standard Bank Chairman Kazi Akram Uddin Ahmed, Chairman of the Association of Bankers Bangladesh Syed Mahbubur Rahman, and Mutual Trust Bank Managing Director Anis Khan were present at yesterday's meeting.

A number of economists and experts have criticised the decision to slash the CRR, saying this is an unprecedented move as the BB has never set the CRR upon discussions with directors of banks and the finance ministry.

The decision will have an adverse impact on the depositors' interest and also fuel inflation. The banks may go for an aggressive lending policy which will subsequently push up defaulted loans, they believe.

Salehuddin Ahmed, ex-governor of the BB, said the finance minister's announcement about the CRR cut was illogical as the BB is the sole authority for restructuring the CRR.

The BB announced a tightened monetary policy two months ago with a view to containing inflation, he said.

"Now the banks may adopt an aggressive lending policy because of the latest move that may also increase defaulted loans further."

The depositors' interest will be at stake as the clients' obligatory demand is fulfilled by taking funds from the CRR when a bank faces crisis, he added.

Zahid Hussain, lead economist at the World Bank's Dhaka office, said most analysts agree that the underlying cause of liquidity crisis is deficit in corporate governance in these banks, particularly in the areas of loan risk management and collection of non-performing loans.

"Banks who have done badly in these areas are the ones having the most difficulty in complying with the CRR. The CRR reduction will help them avoid the penalties for non-compliance, but it does little to incentivise improvements in corporate governance."

Khondkar Ibrahim Khaled, ex-deputy governor of the BB, said it was an exception that the CRR was cut following pressure from directors of private banks and businesspeople.

It's not possible for the BB governor to resist the CRR freely if the finance minister intervenes in decision-making, he said.

"If this trend continues, the very existence of the central bank will be at stake."

He opposed the decision to slash the CRR, and said if it is done, a large amount of funds might be diverted to fictitious firms.

The banking sector will face a risky situation as the CRR cut will harm the depositors' interest, he added.

## All you need is love

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In 2007, the United Nations declared April 2 as World Autism Awareness Day, aiming at improving the quality of life of those with autism. In Bangladesh, different programmes have been organised to mark the day.

Blue lights will be lit outside important government establishments across the country from Monday to Wednesday. The Department of Social Services under the Ministry of Social Welfare will have blue lights on for 15 days, says a press release from the ministry.

The government has formulated two laws for the wellbeing of people with disabilities including those with autism, said Social Welfare Minister Rashed Khan Menon at a press briefing held in the ministry yesterday.

The laws highlight the government's commitment to ensure constitutional rights of people with disabilities, he added.

At present, the country has 44,675 people with autism, according to the ministry.

Autism welfare workers said that those with autism can make their mark in

society if they are given the due opportunity. They said that the government needs to reach the grass-roots level to identify people with autism and respond with appropriate intervention.

Doctors have also suggested providing them with proper therapy and training.

In 2013, Alfat's parents were fortunate enough to find the Institute of Paediatric and Neurodisorder and Autism (IPNA) in Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujib Medical University. Alfat has been a student there since.

An initiative supported by the government, IPNA provides necessary care including therapy and training for autistic children.

At IPNA, teacher Shoma Rani Nandi said they try to provide the children with proper care so that they can lead their daily lives without facing difficulties.

Non-government organisation Society for the Welfare of Autistic Children (SWAC) also provides basic education and counselling for children aged 15 or below. Older children have the opportunity to get vocational training there.

While awareness is slowly increasing,

intervention is still limited in society, especially outside Dhaka, believes Mofijul Islam, deputy director of SWAC, adding policymakers have to come up with initiatives that can help identify autism at an early age, with the inclusion of those who live in rural areas. "Late detection may not give expected result," he said.

He suggested engaging local government bodies, community clinics, and upazila health complexes to provide services in this regard.

According to Helal Uddin Ahmed, associate professor of National Institute of Mental Health, a person with autism faces difficulties in communication, social interaction, and also shows repetitive behaviour.

Some people can be found with mild to moderate forms of autism, while some with a more severe form. Those with severe autism need medication.

Whereas, every person with autism, whether mild or severe, will need lifelong control, care, and of course love.

International Classification of Diseases associated autism with mental health, but a multi-disciplinary team is

required to provide treatment for those with autism, said doctor Helal, who is a teacher of child adolescence and family psychiatry.

"Autism is a disorder that needs care and control, not a cure," he added.

Alfat's father Niamul said that people sometimes misunderstand his son's behaviour and get easily disturbed. There are times when they speak harshly and tell them to "teach him manners".

Like Alfat, Shazia Jahan, now a student at SWAC, also has autism.

Her father SM Shah Alam said people used to say "bad things" about 11-year old Shazia when she would have difficulty communicating with family members or others.

It wasn't until later that her parents learned from the doctor that she has autism.

Upon the doctor's suggestion, she was enrolled into SWAC. She has been improving since, her father said.

With the gradual spreading of awareness about the disorder, like IPNA and SWAC, a number of organisations are now working to provide care for children with autism.