

Work for people, shun red tape culture

PM asks officials

UNB, Dhaka

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina yesterday asked the public servants to shun the “red tape” culture and take up projects which would yield benefits for the country and its people.

“Once there was a red tape culture; now we are using white tape [in public office files], but it doesn’t imply that the work will be quicker for using the white tape as the red tape [culture] still exists,” she said.

The PM was addressing a programme marking the inauguration of National Public Service Day 2018 and distribution of Public Administration Award 2018 in the city’s Osmani Memorial Auditorium.

She asked the public servants to eliminate the “red tape” culture and not to put government works on hold. “Make sure that no work remains stuck, no work should be kept aside. It happens at times that a public servant doesn’t show much interest in a particular file and it is kept on the table. Sometimes the public servant forgets about that file or loses it.”

She mentioned that government officials come up with some projects to spend public money unnecessarily which will have less impact or effectiveness; or the people are unlikely to get any benefit from it.

Hasina directed the public servants to think first about what results and benefits their works would bring in for the country and its people. “You have to think those first...you have to work in that manner and think about the welfare of the grassroots people.”

She said there was a time when the public servants used to think they would get their salaries, no matter they worked or not as theirs are government jobs. “Such thinking is not acceptable at all.”

The premier reminded public servants that they receive salaries and wages from the money that the people, including farmers and labourers, pay the government in taxes. “You always have to think about how you can provide service to them [people].”

She called upon the government officials to work with innovative ideas

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Public administration award winners pose for photographs with Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina at the Osmani Memorial Auditorium in the capital yesterday. They were given the awards for contribution to public welfare.

PHOTO: BSS

No Qaeda, IS links found

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month back,” said Monirul Islam, chief of Counter Terrorism and Transnational Crime (CTTC) unit of DMP, in a briefing.

The militants receded several places and finally selected the Holey Artisan as it had no internal security arrangements and they found it easy to escape, he added.

Another reason for choosing the café was that a large number of foreigners would be found at the posh and popular eatery, located in Gulshan’s diplomatic zone.

The militants thought if they could kill a big number of foreigners, they would be under local and international spotlight, alongside drawing attention of global terrorist groups, said the CTTC chief.

Seventeen foreigners were among the 20 hostages massacred in the café attack -- nine Italians, seven Japanese, one Indian. Two police officers also lost their lives as they responded immediately.

The militants shot and hacked all the victims, except for a Japanese national, within 20 to 25 minutes of their entry. The Japanese, who hid inside a refrigerator, was killed later on, Monirul said.

The slain hostages also include two Bangladeshis and a Bangladesh-born US citizen.

Five of the 21 militants were killed inside the bakery in a commando operation launched to end the siege while eight others, including mastermind Tamim Ahmed Chowdhury, were killed later in different pre-emptive anti-militancy drives.

Among the eight charge-sheeted accused, six are now in jail. They are Jahangir Alam alias Rajib Gandhi, recruiter of the café attackers; Rashed alias Rash, one of the planners; Sohail Mahfuz, grenade supplier; arms suppliers Mizanur Rahman alias Boro Mizan and Hadisur Rahman Sagor, and Rakibul Islam, so-called religious trainer.

Six in jail



Rashed

Rakibul



Mizan

Mahfuz



Sagor

Rajib

Two absconders



Khaled

Ripon

The other two -- Shahriful Islam Khaled and Mamunur Rashid Ripon -- are fugitives and have fled the country, police say. Investigation Officer of the case, Inspector Humayun Kabir of CTTC unit, pleaded with the court to issue arrest warrant against them and order attachment of their property.

The five gunmen, who held the diners hostage and got killed, are Nibrash Islam, Mir Sabeh Mubashir and Rohan Imtiaz, Khairul Islam Payel and Shafiqul Islam Uzazal.

The eight killed in other operations are Tamim Chowdhury; Sarwar Jahan, a top operative of mainstream JMB and financier; Nurul Islam Marzan, a Chittagong University student and café attack coordinator; Jahidul Islam, a retired major and trainer, Basharuzzaman Chocolate, a software engineer; Abu Raihan Tarik, a top operative, Tanvir Kaderi, a banker and financier; and Mizanur Rahman alias Chhoto Mizan, grenade supplier.

HASNAT NOT IN CHARGE SHEET

The investigators, however, didn’t name former private university teacher Hasnat Reza Karim in the charge sheet as they found no evidence against him after analysing accounts from witnesses and arrested militants.

Hasnat, who along with his family members went to the café to have his daughter’s birthday dinner, was arrested on August 3, 2016 and later made an accused in the case. He has been in custody since then.

To get released, he has to wait until the court accepts the charge sheet in the next hearing or to seek bail beforehand.

During the siege, the attackers allowed him to leave the café with other hostages before the commandos stormed it.

Later, two photographs of Hasnat and another hostage, Canadian university student Tahmid Hasib Khan, surfaced on August 7, 2016. In the photos, the two appeared to be talking with one of the gunmen, Rohan.

On April 16 last year, a Dhaka court acquitted Tahmid of the charges and he was freed.

“I am waiting for my husband,” Hasnat’s wife Sharmina Parvin told

JULY 2
▶ Banani OC Salauddin declared dead at 12:14am
▶ DB AC Robiul Islam declared dead at 1:08am
▶ SITE Intelligence reports at 1:26am that IS claimed responsibility
▶ Meeting held at the Gonobhaban among the PM, chiefs of three services and top officials of law enforcement agencies around 3:00am
▶ Army, navy, police, BGB, Rab and Swat take preparations for commando operation around 5:00am
▶ Army-led “Operation Thunderbolt” begins at 7:40am
▶ Operation ends at 8:30am ; 5 militants, one chef killed
WHAT FOLLOWS
▶ Three AK-22 rifles, 79 bullets, 7 magazines, 5 pistols, 50 bullets, one machete, three knives, 200 bullet shells recovered
▶ Investigation finds 21 people involved -- five of them were killed on the spot, eight others in anti-militancy drives; six are in Jail, two absconding
▶ Around 360 people interrogated; 211 shown as witnesses
▶ 75 pieces of evidence submitted to court

The Daily Star yesterday.

Asked about the ordeal she has undergone since the café attack, Sharmina said, “What’s the point in talking about it now?”

Metropolitan Magistrate Nurunnahar Yasmin received the 68-page charge sheet along with other relevant documents and evidence at 4:00pm yesterday.

The IO appealed to the court to relieve Hasnat of the charges and drop the names of 13 militants killed in different raids although charges against them were proved.

Police also didn’t find involvement of Saiful Chowkidar, 34, a pizza chef, and Zakir Hossain Shaon, 19, a kitchen help, previously named as suspects.

Saiful died during the commando operation launched on the morning of July 2. Shaon, under police cus-

tody, died of wounds at Dhaka Medical College Hospital on July 8, 2016 after being detained by the law enforcers.

Hospital and morgue sources had said he suffered splinter wounds and there were “marks of beating” on his body.

Talking to The Daily Star yesterday, Shaon’s father Abdus Sattar said they had been demanding justice for his son since he was killed in custody.

“But we have been deprived...” Sattar said, adding that Shaon was his eldest son and an earning member of the family. But they didn’t get any compensation for the loss.

Saiful’s sister Moina Begum said people refuse to believe that Saiful was not a militant. “They ask me if he were not a militant, why police didn’t hand over his body to us,” she said in tears.

“Now it is a matter of consolation that we can at least say he is innocent.”

At the briefing, asked if the death of the two were “collateral damage”, Monirul said the investigators could not ascertain how they were killed -- being attackers or being victims. Because all the attackers and victims were killed at the bakery, he added.

The CTTC boss said they didn’t find any previous links of Saiful and Shaon with the attackers.

In the charge sheet, 211 persons were made witnesses, and 149 of them witnessed the attack or had information about it.

Besides, the court recorded statements of 17 survivors who were inside the eatery during the attack. Police produced 75 pieces of evidence before the court.

OBJECTIVES & STRATEGY

Monirul said apart from destabilising the country and turning it into a state controlled by terrorists, the militants wanted to put the government under pressure, make the investors and foreign consultants leave the country and destroy the economy.

They thought failing to arrest the real attackers, the government would harass common people in the name of anti-militancy drives, paving their way for more terrorist recruitments.

Another objective of the militants was to draw the attention of global terrorist organisations to get technological and financial support and firearms from them.

Three of the attackers were chosen from Dhaka while two from rural areas. After training at a Gaibandha char, they were sent for different experience-gathering missions.

After analysing forensic reports of seized devices of militants and statements of arrestees, the investigators found the JMB faction, known as “Neo JMB”, was not linked to international terrorist groups like Islamic State or al-Qaeda.

Scrapped

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village and planning “subversive activities for the release of arrested BNP chief Khaleda Zia”.

The case was filed the next day against 21 people, including the four, with Singair Police Station under section 16(2) of the special powers act, said Khandker Imam Hossain, officer-in-charge of the police station.

Asked, he said he was not aware whether the section still existed or not. “As far as my knowledge goes, cases are filed with other police stations under the section,” he said.

Contacted, Assistant Attorney General Md Yusuf Mahmud Morshed said the section had been incorporated in the act with a provision for five years’ imprisonment and fines for committing “prejudicial acts”.

In 1991, the then government scrapped the section while bringing amendment to the law. However, cases were still being filed and suspects arrested under the section, he said.

He said attempts were made in 2007 to revive the section but parliament did not approve it.

Supreme Court lawyers said the section was dropped from the act as other laws already had provisions to deal with the relevant offences.

Talking to The Daily Star about the issue yesterday, Prof Mizanur Rahman, a former chairman of the National Human Rights Commission, said if any law or part of the law was declared null and void, it could not be enforced.

“If a citizen is arrested or harassed under the scrapped law that very action

becomes an offence. Whoever has resorted to it must be prosecuted,” he said.

“Section 16 (2) of the Special Powers Act, 1974 is no longer a part of the act and cannot be enforced by any authorities, be it the executive or the judiciary ... ignorance of law is not an excuse for anyone. This is a minimum requirement for rule of law and democratic governance.”

Khurshid Alam Khan, a Supreme Court lawyer and also the editor of Dhaka Law Reports that compiles and publishes SC verdicts, said it was very unfortunate that law enforcement agencies did not even know that the section has been dropped.

It casts a serious doubt about the competence of the law enforcers, he said adding that many innocent could have been harassed and arrested under the section.

He also said police should be provided with proper academic training on the laws they follow.

Contacted, Attorney General Mahbubey Alam declined to make any comment on the issue. He said he could not say anything without reading the HC order that granted bail to two of the accused in connection with the case filed in Singair.

Meanwhile, Mantu Ghosh, lawyer for Sajedul and Habibur, alleged that six other suspects in the case had sought bail from a court in Manikganj but the pleas were rejected.

The Daily Star, however, could not verify this claim.

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The ACC officials in Dhaka would talk to mine officials who had been removed, he said, adding that the probe would take time.

The ACC had formed the three-member committee in Dhaka, with its Deputy Director Shamsul Alam as its chief, and asked it to complete the enquiry within 15 working days, said ACC’s Public Relations Officer Pranab Kumar Bhattacharya.

The probe body formed Thursday by state-run Petrobangla, parent company of the mine, is yet to visit the site, said a mine official. Md Kamruzzaman, a director of the company, leads the committee.

The managing director and a general manager of the mine had been withdrawn on Thursday. Petrobangla also suspended another general manager and a deputy general manager in this connection.

The disappearance of coal triggered a crisis for the 525MW Barapukuria power plant, the single largest buyer of the mine’s coal. The plant had to be shut down indefinitely Sunday night as it did not have any fuel.

The plants contribution to the national grid was lost and many in the northern region were getting poor power supply.

PM FOR PROPER PROBE
State Minister for Power, Energy and

Mineral Resource Nasrul Hamid yesterday said the prime minister directed the authorities concerned to probe the entire incident at the mine, reports BSS.

Talking to reporters at his ministry office yesterday, he said, “The investigation will find all the people involved ... The prime minister urges all to be patient for a short time.”

Replying to a question, he said Petrobangla failed to play its role in monitoring Barapukuria coalmine and its stock.

Nasrul said BCMCL has been directed to file a case against the people involved in the coal going missing, reports BSS.

He said steps had been taken to ensure that the northern region, especially Rangpur, got smooth power supply within a month.

“We have enough electricity. Power is being supplied to Rangpur from Sirajganj. Due to the unexpected incident, the northern region of Bangladesh may experience low voltage issue,” he said.

NORTH SUFFERING

Apart from power cuts, people of Panchagarh, Lalmonirhat, Thakurgaon and Nilphamari were experiencing voltage fluctuations, a direct result of the Barapukuria Coal Fired Thermal Power Plant going offline, said Abdul Hakim Sarkar, the

plants chief engineer.

Khalid Mahmud, chairman of Bangladesh Power Development Board (PDB), echoed his statement at a press briefing at his office in Dhaka yesterday.

PBD is trying to handle the crisis by producing more power, said the chairman.

“We have been experiencing voltage fluctuations and frequent power cuts for the last couple of days,” said Kudrat E Khuda, a college teacher and a resident of Masjidpara in Panchagarh town.

Mine’s coal going missing affected the power plant and now the power plant going offline could affect the mine.

Officials of the coalmine and of Petrobangla’s Maddyapara Granite Mining Company Ltd said their operations were likely to suffer due to voltage fluctuations.

The coalmine suspended production on June 29 to relocate equipment to a new coalface. Production is expected to resume at the end of August, a general manager of the mine had said.

But Barapukuria power plant’s chief engineer Hakim was hopeful that electricity generation could resume “from the 3rd week of August”.

ing coal production,” said a source.

After the coal was found missing, the government formed a six-member committee to assess coal production, sale and current stock at the 17-acre yard of the mine.

According to its findings, 1,01,66,000 tonnes of coal was produced between 2005 and June 29 this year. Of that, 66,87,000 tonnes were supplied to the PDB since 2006 for generating power, said Jubaer Ahmed, deputy general manager (operations) of the mine who led the probe committee.

Besides, 33.19 lakh tonnes were sold to different organisations and brickkilns. The mine authorities took another 12,000 tonnes for their own use, such as for running their air conditioners and heating systems, he added.

So, there should have been a stock of 1,48,000 tonnes of coal at the yard. But the committee found around 3,000 tonnes, Jubaer told The Daily Star.

Coalmine officials tried to downplay the findings, saying the shortage was a result of a system loss that had not been recorded over the years.

Since production started at the mine in 2005, some coal might have been lost due to system loss, such as washout in rainwater and spontaneous combustion, a mine official said on Sunday asking not to be named.