

Double trouble

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workers and drivers. Some of them came to Dhaka to visit their relatives.

According to the latest information, around 8,000 people were arrested in the capital alone during the special drive. Of them, around 2,500 were sent to jail while police released others either after taking bribe from them or on recommendations from influential people.

Jahanara Begum, 50, came to the jail gate from Dhamrai on Tuesday morning as her only son Altaf Hossain, a rickshaw mechanic, is in jail.

She spent Wednesday night starved at the jail gate with around 200 others, hoping that her son—the lone bread earner for her five-member family—will be released by the next morning.

The police picked him up from Dhamrai on Thursday on suspicion and he was granted bail on Monday, but he is yet to be released. Jahanara told The Daily Star yesterday afternoon. "The police arrested them in masses—why do you not ask the authorities to release them in masses too?" an angry Jahanara said.

Mannan Kobiraj, a 60-year-old farmer from Chandpur, along with his brothers Abul Khair and Abdur Razzak has been wandering in front of the jail gate for the last two days. Mannan's son Mohammad Hossain, 17, an embroidery worker who was arrested in Kalsi area on Friday, got bail order on Monday but was not released yet.

MASS ARREST: BLESSINGS FOR POLICE, SUFFERINGS FOR VICTIMS

Many mass arrest victims who did not bribe the police were implicated in false cases, mainly robbery and theft. Even some 14-year-old boys were not spared.

Sub-Inspector (SI) Karim of Mohammapur Police Station allegedly picked up Murad Hossain, 14, a garage worker, and his friends Swapan and Chanchal from the College Gate area on Friday afternoon when they were returning home.

The relatives of the three alleged that the SI demanded Tk 6,000 for their release. The relatives of Swapan and Chanchal could arrange only Tk 2,000; so, the SI showed the two arrested on suspicion.

"As we did not give any money for Murad, the SI implicated him in an assault case and provided a wrong name of my father," alleged Murad's sister Parveen Akhter.

Now the jail authorities are not releasing Murad because of the different name of his father although he was granted bail on Saturday, she said.

When contacted, SI Karim, however, said he cannot remember arresting anyone named Murad and that the allegation against him is totally baseless. He also denied he had registered the names of the arrestees and their fathers.

"My mother is a patient of heart disease and further delay in Murad's release might lead to a serious situation," said a sobbing Parveen.

Garment worker Kuddus Ali, 18, of Tongi is another victim of how the police forced the victims and their relatives for bribes.

Coming out of the jail after having just got released, Kuddus said he was having tea at a local restaurant on Friday evening when an SI of the Kuria Police Station came to him

and said, "Come and follow me—I need to save my job." Later, Kuddus was picked up on a police van and shown arrested on suspicion.

Kuddus alleged that the SI took away his mobile phone and Tk 100 he was carrying. He, however, could not name the SI.

Anwara, mother of another victim Anwar Hossain, a rickshaw-puller, alleged that Demra police arrested her son at their Shonir Akhra residence on Friday and implicated him in a theft case as they did not meet an SI's demand for Tk 4,000 for his release. She also could not name the SI.

Malaysian

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between Dhaka and Chittagong.

This project of the expressway with an alignment different from the existing Dhaka-Chittagong highway is to be implemented in five years.

At the meeting with the minister, the delegation also discussed bank-financing, setting up of the project office and engineers' visit to the project site.

Communications Secretary Shaiful Islam, Chief Engineer of Roads and Highways Department A R M Anwar Hossain and other high officials of the communications ministry were present at the meeting.

The construction of Dhaka-Chittagong expressway was one of the priority projects of the present government, the meeting was told.

The project would be implemented on build, operate and transfer (BOT) basis, where the company will invest money and get return through toll collection for thirty years.

The project got approval from the Private Infrastructure Committee under Bangladesh Private Infrastructure Guideline.

The proposal is now waiting for final approval from the Cabinet Committee on Economic Affairs, the meeting was told.

The Dhaka-Chittagong expressway will cross Narayanganj, Munshiganj, Chandpur, Sonagaji Laxmipur Sitakunda and Hathajari. The expressway will provide adequate parking, refuelling stations, restaurants and rest house facilities at certain distances for the travellers.

The Malaysian consortium will also construct two new bridges over the Shitalakkhya and Meghna rivers.

The consortium, however, sought ten years tax holiday from the year it starts collecting tolls.

Hanif

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Doctors have termed his condition 'very critical' and he has been kept on artificial life-support.

Hanif, a senior AL leader, has long been suffering from heart ailments.

Leader of the Opposition and AL Chief Sheikh Hasina and senior 14-party leaders went to the hospital to see him. AL leaders and workers of different city ward units and thousands of supporters also thronged the hospital after hearing the news.

A marriage decision

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Agajihara Police Station about the death of this young girl," Rahman said.

Biswanath, along with his neighbours and relatives rushed to Bahadurpur, two kilometres away and found a lifeless Beauty on a stretcher with her body and clothes bearing traces of blood and wounds. Madhu's family members claimed that Beauty was three months' pregnant and she died of a massive heart attack. They hurriedly prepared for cremating Beauty's body as per Hindu rituals.

A shocked Biswanath looked on without a word but villagers immediately suspected foul play. Only seven months earlier Biswanath was compelled to sell his last belongings to buy a colour television, a wristwatch and household items for the dowry demanded by Madhu and his family. A month ago, Beauty told her mother that her in-laws were constantly demanding Tk 50,000 from her father.

Asking Madhu's family not to cremate the body, Biswanath went to Agajihara Police Station with the villagers. It was not until the evening of December 23, more than 24 hours following the death of Beauty that Agajihara police agreed to bring in the body for autopsy. The body was kept overnight on a rickshaw van on the station premises before the police sent it to Barisal Sher-e-Bangla Medical College and Hospital (BMCH) on December 24. All the while Madhu's family members were present with the body not permitting anyone near it. As per Hindu religion, the husband's family then cremated the body after the autopsy. The BMCH Forensic Medicine Department sent some samples of the viscera for chemical test at Mohakhali, Dhaka. The Daily Star learnt the chemical examiner found active traces of "quinine and sodium chloride solution" in the samples.

When contacted, Sub Inspector Shamsul Alam of Agajihara Police Station said they had taken the initiative for the autopsy on the basis of written complaints by the victim's father and some villagers. There has not been any case in this regard with Agajihara Police Station, he added.

PM

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well as other regional and international issues of common concern. Several agreements and MoUs aimed at further strengthening the ties between the two countries are expected to be signed following the talks.

According to the sources, Pakistan foreign ministry spokesperson Tasneem Aslam on Monday formally announced Khaleda Zia's upcoming visit at the weekly news briefing in Islamabad. Khaleda Zia will call on President General Pervez Musharraf during her stay, the spokesperson confirmed.

The Pakistan president would host a luncheon for Khaleda Zia while the Pakistan prime minister would host a banquet in her honour, the sources added.

Khaleda Zia is also expected to visit the earthquake relief camp in Islamabad.

The PM's official visit to Islamabad is part of regular high-level exchanges between Bangladesh and Pakistan. Pakistan Prime Minister Shaikat Aziz visited Dhaka in November last year to attend the 13th Saarc Summit.

Foreign ministry officials said Bangladesh and Pakistan have traditionally enjoyed excellent fraternal relations based on the principles of sovereign equality and non-interference in each other's internal affairs and mutual respect.

Both the countries have convergence on regional and international issues. Bangladesh and Pakistan have worked closely on the bilateral level as well as in international forums like the OIC, Commonwealth, Nam, D-8 and Saarc.

Ahmadiyyas

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signboard at Ahmadiyya mosque in Dhanikhola on February 10 that came as "the latest in a series of attempts by Islamist groups to prevent the Ahmadiyyas from openly practising their beliefs."

The international rights watchdog has called on the government to ensure protection of all Ahmadiyyas of Bangladesh with the help of police and local authorities.

It has also asked the government to declare that no member of any group has the right to intimidate or persecute any members of the Ahmadiyya community, and to bring those responsible for such incidents to justice.

Expressing apprehension of a violent attack on the Ahmadiyyas, Amnesty International sent letters to the prime minister, law minister and state minister for home affairs on Tuesday, urging necessary steps to protect the members of the minority community.

The AI letter also urged the government to take strict measures to curb the use of hate speech and public rallies to incite violence against Ahmadiyyas and publicly denounce this threat as well as previous threats and attacks against the community.

Ahmadiyya leaders on February 3 reportedly called on local police authorities with request to prevent February 10 anti-Ahmadiyya rally within 10km radius of the Dhanikhola mosque and received assurances from the police superintendent of Mymensingh in this regard, it said.

But there has been no official confirmation of such assurances while a Khatme Nabuwat leader has reportedly threatened of violence if their rally is halted, the letter said, adding that the threat is part of an ongoing campaign of threats, intimidation and hate speech by Islamist groups to pressure the government into declaring the Ahmadiyyas non-Muslims by law.

"By targeting the Ahmadiyya community, Islamist groups are believed to be attempting to force the government to yield to their political demand for the introduction of more stringent Islamic law in Bangladesh," the letter said.

AL will not

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the reform proposals and give an ultimatum to the government to meet the demands. Hasina is now preparing her speech to be delivered in parliament, a party leader said.

The government side has already rejected outright any reforms in the caretaker government system, but urged the main opposition to bring any proposal regarding reforms of the electoral rules in the form of a bill.

Law, Justice and Parliamentary Affairs Minister Moudud Ahmed told newsmen that the government will consider the opposition proposals if they place those in parliament under the rules of procedure and in the form of a bill.

Chief Sheikh Hasina at yesterday's meeting said she would give a time limit to the government to meet the reform demands. She did not specify the time limit but AL policymakers said it might be 15 days to one month.

"We have decided not to place any bill on the reforms. The government will place the bill if it agrees with our proposals," an AL leader told The Daily Star wishing anonymity.

The ALCWC meeting decided that the party chief will fix the date for the AL parliamentary party meeting. Party chief Sheikh Hasina will decide when we will join parliament," AL General Secretary Abdul Jalil told reporters after the meeting.

Sources said the AL parliamentary party is likely to sit on February 12 to discuss the issue and the lawmakers may join the House on that day or the next day.

After the February 5 announcement on joining parliament, party's senior leaders hinted at returning to the House this week, but the joining delayed as the preparation on how they will place the reform proposals was not completed.

The four-hour ALCWC meeting held at AL's Dharmadhi office also decided to accelerate the ongoing antigovernment movement. Apart from the ALCWC members, party lawmakers were present in the meeting.

Hasina will lose her membership if she does not return to the House by February 14.

37.5pc factories lack

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from having no such facilities.

As regards environmental regulations, 48.6 percent industrial units and establishments comply with them and 40.2 percent do not. In agriculture sector, 84.8 percent units do not comply with the regulations while 60 percent of them in construction sector and 58.1 percent of hotels and restaurants do not follow the regulations.

The report also pointed out that only 10 percent industrial units and establishments have ISO certificates while 75 percent of them do not have. Besides, 78 percent manufacturing units lacks ISO certificates.

On environmental damage different sectors are causing, the report said crop sub-sector is almost pollution free and in the non-crop sector, particularly in fisheries and poultry establishments, pollution occurs in a small way.

Readymade garment factories are major users of environmental regulations. While some of them have dust control device, their washing plants are polluting nearby water bodies. Besides, extras and cuttings

Gas price issue finally

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has already proposed a competitive price for gas.

"We came to Bangladesh already knowing that gas price will be higher. We offered a price 60 percent higher than that in the Middle East. Now, the gap between Tata and Petrobangla (on gas price) is very significant. We hope Petrobangla will come down (on price issue)."

The Tata executive said foreign investors have to make money. "That means they have to be competitive with other international competitors. And steel plants and fertiliser plants across the world have some sort of economics, which we need to match. And that means we need gas price at a certain level which is competitive."

Rosling said, "If the government rejects our proposal, we will depart as friends." Tata's relationship with Bangladesh is very old as the company markets trucks, cars, tea and telecom services here. Investment through those products will continue, he added.

At yesterday's meeting, Tata negotiators referred to Iran's gas price of 42 cents per thousand cubic feet and said while gas is very cheap in the Middle East, they are not seeking such low price in Bangladesh.

A source in the government side noted, "Iran's gas reserve is somewhere between 500 trillion cubic feet (tcf) and 950 tcf. Most of the middle-eastern countries have high gas reserves. In contrast, what we have is below 15 tcf. How can we be com-

pared to those countries?"

The government negotiators told Tata that gas price is related to sovereign guarantee. If they ease the guarantee issue, the government will reduce gas price accordingly. Again, in case of the guarantee, the price will be calculated against the international oil price. The government is also willing to provide a guarantee for a shorter period to help Tata obtain loans from international financiers.

They also told Tata it could proceed with its investment plan in phases. "Tata may start with power and steel plants, and the government will provide gas. The company may proceed with fertiliser plant later on. But Tata did not agree," one source said quoting a negotiator.

The government did not accept Tata's proposal to dedicate some gas fields exclusively for its establishments.

On April 20 last year, Tata submitted its \$2.5 billion investment proposal for setting up a 1,000 MW power station, a steel mill with an annual production capacity of 420,000 tonnes and a fertiliser unit with a production capacity of one million tonnes a year.

To run these establishments, Tata needs 200 million cubic feet per day (mmcf) of gas for 20 to 30 years.

Later on May 9, the government and Tata agreed to begin negotiation from May 25, conclude it by August 31 and sign agreements before November 30 the same year.

No election

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Mukta Khan Khaleda-Nizami government rejects the proposals, the opposition lawmakers will resign en bloc from the House, the leaders added.

The 14-party alliance organised the rally as part of a countrywide agitation programme protesting mass arrest of the opposition activists in the build-up to the long march and grand rally on February 5.

AL Secretary General Abdul Jalil said urged the countryside to intensify the ongoing movement and force the BNP-Jamaat government to implement the reforms.

He said the present government portrays itself as an Islamic government but it has not yet condemned the Danish cartoon ridiculing prophet Muhammad (Sm).

"We extremely condemn the cartoons and seek apology from the authorities of Denmark and other European countries," he added.

Jalil said the people as well as the opposition alliance will never accept a "caretaker government hand-picked by the present government".

Rab seizes bomb

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explosives, 5kg ammonium nitrate, 3kg charcoal, 2.5kg lead oxide, four electric detonators, four batteries, four switches and electric wires, said a Rab press release.

The Rab intelligence came to know that one of the most wanted JMB leaders, Reza alias Rabi alias Nizam, who is in-charge of Dhaka city, recently rented a house in Posta area of Lalbagh.

On information, a team of Rab-2 took position near the house at 69/2 Water Workshop Road at 8:00pm Tuesday night. But as Reza did not return home all night, the elite anticrime members raided the single-room flat on the second floor of the three-storeyed house yesterday morning and made the recovery.

Talking to owner of the house Shahida Begum, the Rab learnt that Reza, aged around 22, rented the house on February 2 at Tk 1,800 per month and shifted to the house on February 5 giving the landlady Tk 500 in advance. He went out of the house Tuesday noon.

Reza said he is from Chandpur, Shahida told the press.

Meanwhile, acting on a tip-off, the Rab-3 held JMB activist Milon Miah, 32, a close associate of JMB Ehsar (full-time activist) Sagir, from Kurgurdia of Uttarkhan in Uttara at 4:30pm on Tuesday.

The Rab claimed Milon and Sagir were actively involved in subversive activities.

3 new envoys

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has been appointed Bangladesh ambassador to United Arab Emirates. He was given a two-year contract.

Maj Gen AIM Mostafa Reza Nur, principal staff officer, Armed Forces Division, has been made ambassador to Kuwait on a two-year contract. He is replacing former BNP office secretary and Sramik Dal President Nazrul Islam Khan.

Salma Khan has been made ambassador to Indonesia on a two-year contract. Her earlier posting as a member of the UN Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women was cancelled.

Besides, Ambassador to Morocco Md AI Harun's contract has been extended by another year.

AL lawmakers

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Babar defended the law saying that since its enactment there has been a marked improvement in law and order.

Political persecution has risen to absurd heights due to the act being grossly abused to harass the opposition men, Mohammad Nasim, also former home minister, told the meeting.

He said whenever the opposition takes up a programme to protest the 'ill deeds' of the BNP-Jamaat regime, the government starts mass arrest to suppress the opposition movement.

For instance, he said, the recent mass arrest was to foil the opposition alliance's long march towards Dhaka on February 5.

He said thousands of people were arrested for nothing and many are still behind bars.

Jamaat lawmaker Riasat Ali Biswas said a police official in his constituency told him that the mass arrest was necessary to avoid acts of sabotage against the long march programme.

"If it was the case, then I will urge the government to go for more such arrest, if necessary," a meeting source quoted him as saying.

When Nasim asked for Justice Joynt Commission's report on the August 21 grenade attacks, the committee Chairman M Shahjahan said the rules do not permit the commission to make the report public.

Meanwhile, senior AL lawmaker Saranjit Sengupta at a meeting of the parliamentary standing committee on the law ministry demanded the government take departmental action against District Judge Reazul Karim Khan Chunnun who had recently announced that he will contest the next election on BNP ticket.

"Despite being a sitting judge, Reazul Karim Khan has violated the service rule and government should frame charge against him," Saranjit was quoted by a source.

On the current status of separation of the judiciary, Law Minister Moudud Ahmed said the process is going on in line with the High Court directives.

Saranjit also raised question about the appointment of two new commissioners in the Election Commission. But the law minister said the issues will be discussed at the next meeting.

Saranjit, also member of standing committee meeting on the LGRD and Co-operatives ministry, at its meeting yesterday said it is unprecedented that the government has piloted a bill regarding amendment to the Birth-Death Registration Act 2004, when the law has yet to take effect.

Much-hyped

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Ahmed Abdul Quader, secretary general of another faction of IOJ, told The Daily Star that the PMO asked them to contact for the date. "We contacted them, but have not received any date for the meeting yet," he said. **IMPORTANT SUGGESTIONS IGNORED**

Three political parties—two factions of the Jatya Party led by HM Ershad and Anwar Hossain Manju and the Krishak Sramik Jananta League—placed some vital recommendations for combating Islamist militants during the dialogue.

The Krishak League on the first day of the dialogue on December 12 asked the government to expel Jamaat from the cabinet on charges of patronising militancy in the country.

Ershad-led Jatya Party, the second largest opposition in parliament, on December 13 proposed a judicial commission headed by the chief justice to be formed to probe the allegations of militant links against some quarters, be they inside or outside the government.

It also suggested that the PM form a national advisory committee drawing representatives from all political parties, professional bodies and civil society for suggestions on tackling militancy. According to the suggestion,

the PM will lead the committee while the leader of the opposition or any opposition leader will be the coordinator of the national body.

The Jatya Party led by Anwar Hossain Manju suggested resignation of those accused of harbouring militants from the government and the administration for the sake of fair probe.

The Bangladesh Medical Association in its nine-point proposal observed that the government will have to get to the root of militancy and unearth the reasons why the persons and agencies concerned failed to identify the militants before the bomb attacks.

The apex body of physicians also suggested that the PM come up with the "correct statement" of the government during discussions at the party forums like BNP standing committee, executive committee and parliamentary party.

They also stressed the need for holding a meeting of the general secretaries of the ruling four parties to get the countrymen united against militancy.

None of the recommendations was, however, implemented.

Mohiuddin played

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official procedures will be completed after the strike is withdrawn."

Pleading the remand prayer, Court Inspector Mahbul Kuddus Siddiki told the court that the police already detected the motive behind the murder and Mohiuddin played the principal role.

"His remand is necessary for the national interest. Police now need to know if there are more persons involved and why a man of a noble profession and a conscious citizen like him would indulge in a heinous crime like murder," Siddiki told the court.

Advocate Saiful Alam Shelly argued for the defence and said the RU vice-chancellor (VC) had ordered to process Mohiuddin's promotion last month and it had already begun. "And so, his promotion could not be a motive for the murder."

Mohiuddin was taken to the court in a bulletproof jacket. He was looking pale wearing a shirt and a lungi, but was seen consoling his wife who was often breaking down in tears.

Answering to questions, Salam said Mohiuddin was desperate for his promotion.

Explaining the VC's order to begin processing Mohiuddin's promotion, Salam said it was done following Mohiuddin's complaint that he was being deprived by the planning committee and his claim that he fulfilled the conditions for a promotion.

In a parallel development in the case yesterday evening, Nazmul, one of the arrested five, in a confessional statement to Metropolitan Magistrate Zobeda Khatun said an RU unit (Islami Chhatra Shibir (ICS) leader named Shalehi and Mohiuddin planned the murder to gain control over the geology and mining department.

Both Mohiuddin and Shalehi were present during the killing and confirmed Taher's death by personally touching his body in Taher's house-keeper Jahangir's room, Nazmul said in his confession.

Jahangir's confessional statement was recorded on Tuesday where he confessed his involvement with the killing and implicated Mohiuddin as the mastermind.

The RU campus was volatile with protest marches and rallies yesterday as the geology and mining department students enforced a strike on the campus demanding speedy trial of the case.

US investors offer

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(CEO) Norbert Von Boode, met BRTC Chairman Advocate Taimur Alam Khandaker and Bol Executive Chairman Mahmudur Rahman.

"We want to invest in transport sector on joint venture with BRTC," Norbert Von Boode told the news agency after the meeting with BRTC.

"Timeframe to go for investment is largely depending on how fast your government completes formalities," he said, replying to a query.

The ATSC team in the meeting expressed its interest to invest on build-operate and transfer (BOT) system. The BRTC authorities, however, agreed in principle on the ATSC proposal if there is no objection from the government, meeting sources said.

"You have shortage of hard currency. But we can somehow manage the money and financing is not difficult at all," he said, adding that his organisation itself wants to operate the buses until repatriation of the invested money.

He said they would hand over the buses to BRTC forever after the expiry of the BOT period if they were allowed

PM sees more

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carried out in all sectors for people's welfare.

The prime minister said when the country was advancing on all fronts, a party resorted to destructive activities and cooked up various conspiracies to obstruct the country's development and push the country backward.

She said communal harmony is prevailing in Bangladesh with people of all faiths living peacefully, performing their religious rituals and festivals. She cited Ramadan and puja observed simultaneously without any unwanted happenings along the communal line.

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Protesters marched covering their faces with black bandanas; no class or examination was held. The departments were closed as the students locked the offices.

The students also covered the faces of the statues of the liberation war memorial, Sabas Bangladesh.

RU Teachers' Association (RUTA) held a two-hour token hunger strike in front of the senate building. It also held a rally with its president Prof Nazrul Islam in the chair.

The speakers at the rally said they were feeling ashamed to find a teacher arrested for the killing.

Bangladesh Chhatra League (BCL) also continued its protest demanding removal of the VC for ordering Mohiuddin's promotion. "The VC lost his moral right to stay in the post because of assisting a killer," said Ibrahim H