

State offices used

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The chairperson, who is also the prime minister, goes to the BNP office to carry out party activities. "There will be some unnecessary expenditure to ensure security for the prime minister," he added.

USAGE OF THE PMO
On December 6, 2003, BNP Chairperson Khaleda Zia held a meeting at the PMO with her party's senior leaders and discussed the latest political situation. The meeting decided to organise public rallies in major cities like Dhaka, Chittagong, Sylhet and Comilla in a bid to increase the party's activities to face probable anti-government movement.

On January 14, 2004, a meeting of the four-party alliance was held that unveiled a plan to raise the number of seats in Jatiya Sangsad to 450 including the 50 reserved for women. Top leaders of the alliance were present at the meeting held at the PMO.

On December 8, 2003, Islami Oikya Jote leaders held a meeting with the BNP chairperson at the PMO and decided not to resign from the parliament following the prime minister's assurance that she would ensure their representation in the government.

On January 23, 2004, a 12 member delegation of the four-party alliance from Sylhet city and the district unit called on BNP Chairperson also Prime Minister Khaleda Zia and apprised her of political and organisational activities of the alliance in Sylhet.

At the meeting held at the PMO, Khaleda urged the leaders and workers of the alliance to work unitedly to strengthen the alliance by extending support to mayoral candidate MA Huq, also district president of Sylhet BNP.

On October 27, 2004, the BNP chairperson addressed a meeting of grassroots level party leaders at the International Conference Centre (ICC) of the PMO and urged the party leaders to hold more meetings in districts, upazilas and unions to face the opposition's 'negative activities' politically.

The meeting was addressed by more than 20 field level leaders of district, upazila and municipality units of BNP under Chittagong division.

On January 8, 2005, the BNP chairperson held a meeting at the PMO with presidents and general secretaries of upazila and municipality units of Brahmanbaria and parts of Comilla.

On April 4, 2005, a function was arranged at the ICC of the PMO to hand over the recommendations from the BNP's union representatives' meetings held between January 4 and March 29 of that year. BNP's Senior Joint Secretary General also Chief Co-ordinator of the Central Committee for Union Representatives' Meetings Tarique Rahman handed over to the BNP chairperson a set of recommendations. The meeting was attended by a number of BNP senior leaders.

Besides, BNP's Parliamentary Board has on several occasions used the PMO to hold its meetings to pick candidates to contest in by-elections to the parliament's vacant seats.

PRODHANMONTRI BHABAN
The ruling BNP last year held a two-day meeting with the party's grassroots level leaders at Prodhonmontri Bhaban, which is an official residence of the prime minister, where she does not live.

BNP Senior Joint Secretary General Tarique Rahman organised

the meeting in a bid to gear up the party's grassroots level leaders ahead of the next parliamentary election. About 3000 grassroots level leaders from across the country attended the meeting held on October 15 and 16.

A number of BNP senior leaders including Finance and Planning Minister M Saifur Rahman, LGRD and Cooperatives Minister Abdul Mannan Bhuiyan, and Health Minister Khandaker Mosharrar Hossain also attended the meeting.

Last year, BNP also used Prodhonmontri Bhaban to hold a meeting to pick party candidates for the election to reserved seats for women in the parliament. BNP Parliamentary Board headed by BNP Chairperson Khaleda Zia sat two days there to interview the party's nomination aspirants.

Interestingly, BNP sold application forms for the nominations at its central office in Nayapalitan, but used Prodhonmontri Bhaban to interview the aspirant candidates.

PRIME MINISTER'S TOURS
Prime Minister also BNP Chairperson Khaleda Zia has started extensive tours across the country and has launched an unofficial election campaign. She is using helicopters to visit different places and inaugurating some development works at the same time, making the visits official.

But in each visit, the BNP chairperson addresses public rallies organised by the party's local units and seeks votes for the BNP-led alliance in the upcoming election.

When the prime minister visits any area, she uses all government facilities and protocols. Even during visits to different districts, the prime minister has on several occasions held meetings with local BNP leaders at circuit houses.

BNP OFFICE REMAINS UNUSED
As the party's activities like holding meetings with grassroots level leaders and nominating party candidates for parliamentary by-elections are usually carried out at the prime minister's offices, the BNP central office at Nayapalitan remains mostly unused for purposes of the organisation.

BNP's senior leaders who are also ministers do not visit the party central office as they meet with party high ups at their official residences.

After BNP had come to power in 2001, the BNP chairperson asked party senior leaders to sit in the party central office regularly in rotations to keep communications with the party's field level leaders smooth.

Some senior leaders who are also holding ministers' portfolios started visiting the party's central office. But after some months, they stopped.

EC turns away

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EC while the opposition combine has been demanding reconstitution of the EC. The opposition line-up did not respond to the EC's invitation last year for a dialogue on preparation of the voter list.

If the EC sends reform proposals to the government and invites political parties for dialogue on the proposals, the opposition combine might reject the invitation, sources said.

Besides, the EC is not sure whether the government will consider its reform proposals since the opposition combine is demanding reforms. EC officials pointed out.

Aug 17 bombings

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persons whose names have come out in the investigation. One can give others' names for personal grudge," Babar said yesterday.

The state minister was talking to reporters at his office on the progress of investigation into the cases filed for bomb attacks by Jama'atul Mujahideen Bangladesh (JMB) since August 17 last year.

A total of 698 people have been arrested so far in connection with 154 cases filed for the blasts on August 17 and 87 cases for the blasts that took place later. Police submitted charge-sheet in 183 cases while 56 cases are under investigation. Trial of 17 cases has been completed, trial of 81 cases is going on and final report has been submitted in another case, according to Babar.

The state minister expressed satisfaction over the role of police, Rapid Action Battalion (Rab) and intelligence agencies in tracking down the militants.

"Although all the seven members of JMB's Majlish-e-Shura (top policy-making body) have been captured, we're not complacent. Dedicated teams are working to root out the menace from the country," he said.

Asked if the government has successfully fought militancy as it claimed on different occasions, he replied, "We're not complacent that many top militants leaders have been arrested. Fighting militancy is a continuous process and it is going on. That is why we have succeeded in seizing explosives from Bhaluka and Chittagong."

He claimed to have successfully destroyed the militants ideologically through motivational programmes across the country.

On blocking militants' explosive supply line, he said they have succeeded a lot but not 100 percent. "We've identified where the explosives

were coming from and officially informed the authorities concerned," he said referring to smuggling of explosives from India.

The government has also identified the militants' local and foreign financial sources, he added.

"Now the process of bringing them (militants) to trial and awarding them punishment is on."

Babar emphasised executing the death penalty of the militants and mentioned that hearing of the Jhalakathi judges murder case is going on at the death reference bench of the High Court. "It will take a little time when it goes to the Appellate Division (of the Supreme Court) later," he said.

BSF abducts 3

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Birampur upazila.

Bangladesh Rifles 15 battalion sources said quoting the students' family members that at least 8 to 10 BSF personnel from 57 BSF battalion entered into Bangladesh territory in Hakimpur upazila and picked up the two Bangladeshi school-going students.

Meanwhile, in Birampur upazila, BSF opened fire at the villagers of Mahmudpara as they tried to resist the abduction of farmer Masud Rana. Masud went to irrigate his paddy field in the morning.

Following these incidents, tension escalated between the two border guards.

In Thakurgaon, BSF is yet to return the bodies whom they had gunned down on Monday near the bordering areas of Pirganj.

Bangladesh Rifles official sources said BSF killed at least four Bangladeshi citizens within the last 48 hours in Dinajpur and Thakurgaon.

6-hr hartal

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BNP-led coalition government cancelled the status of the day decreed by the previous AL government.

Educational institutions, shopping malls and roadside shops remained closed during the hartal hours from 6:00am to 12:00noon. Most vehicles except a few rickshaws and CNG-run three-wheelers stayed off the streets.

AL activists were seen busy organising programmes to observe the death anniversary of Bangabandhu.

Contingents of police and members of other law enforcement agencies were on hand to maintain law and order at different key points in the capital. A large number of law enforcers were deployed around Russell Square where the main mourning day programmes were held.

The police put up barricades in front of the AL office on Bangabandhu Avenue and the GPO.

The AL and its front organisations took out processions in different parts of the capital. Matia Chowdhury and Mofazzal Hossain Chowdhury Maya led a procession from Paltan area to Bangabandhu Avenue.

Frontline organisations of the AL brought out processions around the Bangabandhu Museum.

Former home minister Mohammed Nasim along with other AL leaders held a protest rally at Russell Square around 9:00am.

Our Chittagong correspondent reports: The six-hour hartal was observed in the port city peacefully.

The AL and its front organisations brought out processions in different parts of the city during hartal hours.

Shamsur Rahman

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remained unchanged.

Shamsur Rahman has been fighting for life over a week at the intensive care unit of BSMMUH.

The nine-member medical board monitoring the poet's health held a meeting and informed the family members of the latest health condition of the poet yesterday.

Tia Rahman, daughter-in-law of Rahman, told The Daily Star over telephone that the condition of the poet remained unchanged.

The poet sometimes gives blank look, said the poet's sister Salma Hossain, who stayed at the hospital until 5:00pm yesterday. She said all close relatives of the poet except elder daughter Fousia and younger brother Washiur Rahman who live abroad are in Dhaka now.

She alleged that the government is not active to send the poet abroad for better treatment.

Relatives, family members and admirers as usually visited the BSMMUH yesterday to get the latest information about the poet.

There was no further initiative from the government to send him abroad.

Shamsur Rahman has been a prolific writer for over half a century. His poetry reflects the urban theme while he has also been very critical about oppression and communalism. Rahman has authored more than 100 books. He has also composed some patriotic songs that have earned immense popularity.

3 JMB men

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All the convicts were in the dock during the judgment delivered by District and Sessions Judge AK Roy in a crowded courtroom.

After hearing the verdict, the convicts said they do not accept it and they want justice under the law of Allah. While coming out of the court, the JMB men started singing Islamic songs.

According to the prosecution, the eight Islamist militants were involved in the August 17 serial blasts at seven points in the district town. They were also involved in a bomb attack on the court in October the same year.

Earlier, Ataur Rahman Sunny along with JMB chief Abdur Rahman and operation commander Siddiqui Islam alias Bangla Bhai was sentenced to death for killing two assistant judges in Jhalakati.

SA Games soccer

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Islamabad two years ago. The Afghans also lost 3-2 to a Bangladesh XI in the President's Gold Cup in Dhaka in the late 70s.

Argentine Cruciani, who was sweating over the team's only playmaker Ujjal's fitness after he was taken off against Nepal with a cramp, hinted at at least two changes. He said that he would give international debut to striker Robin in place of Topu, who was not 'satisfactory'. He will also bring in Rintu. Zahid Hossain will play only if Ujjal is unavailable. It means Bangladesh will return to a more conventional 4-4-2 formation with two holding midfielders in Arman Aziz and Rintu.

In today's other matches, India play Nepal and Bhutan take on Maldives.

PROBABLE SQUAD
Shakil, Siraji, Wali, Arifull, Titu, Arman, Rintu, Faisal, Ujjal/Zahid Hossain, Emily and Robin.

Community primary

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programmes from a rally held at the Central Shaheed Minar. Afterwards, they marched through different streets in the capital.

As many as 10,565 community primary school teachers from 3778 community primary schools for around 10 lakh students are paid only Tk 750 a month each. All community primary schools have been closed after the teachers went on strike.

Waterlogging

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one water retention point with a pump house at Shimrail area to jettison all the waste water generated inside the area heavily fortified with dykes against flooding by the River Buriganga. The retention pond was originally created to hold rainwater for irrigation in the mid sixties when the DND area was earmarked as a farming area to provide fresh vegetables for the city.

The old pump has a capacity of jettling out 14.5 cubic metres of water per second out of the protected area, but unplanned growth of the area has been so rapid that nowadays waste water generated in parts of the area cannot roll on to the retention pond, creating pockets of water logging.

According to officials, one of the biggest blows to the area came with the construction of Jatrabari-Kanchpur Road and Narayanganj Diversion Road, which instantly created three sub-divisions within the DND area, cutting off drainage in one third of the area.

The Water Development Board

(WDB) has now proposed to immediately restore some drainage system by recovering the canals and by setting up a pump with a capacity of jettling out 50 cubic metres of water a second.

"Each of the canals has been filled with rubbish, and roads have been paved on natural canals vital for draining water up to the pump's retention point," said an engineer.

The engineer however said there is still time to recover the canals as there are not that many concrete structures on those lands yet.

In 2004, heavy rainfall caused unprecedented water logging in the DND area that lasted for over 24 days with local people, Wasa officials and the army personnel working frantically day and night to pump out the water. The rise in the level of water in the river nearby also threatened to breach the dyke, as thousands of people worked day and night to protect the dyke and avert a catastrophe.

Ctg Wasa plant

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bidder, smelling foul play, lodged a formal complaint on July 10 with the Implementation, Monitoring, and Evaluation Department (IMED) of the planning ministry. In response, the IMED formed the three-member review panel.

The review panel in its report also slammed the project director of the work, chairman of Chittagong Wasa and secretary of local government for 'their wilful negligence' in disposing of the complaints.

"The three entity mentioned above are personally liable for the wilful violation of mandatory provisions of the PPR," the report said adding that finally the complaint has to be referred to the review panel after failing to get response from the authorities concerned.

This is not the first time that a review panel has given a verdict on a tender process.

Last year, another review panel gave a report against selection of Chinese company Harbin for the Chandpur 150-MW power project. The cabinet committee, however, had trashed the review panel's recommendations and upheld the selection.

This time, the review panel headed by AFM Nazmul Hossain Choudhury, ex-chairman of BTB, has scanned the tender documents and found that DCL & Associates had deviated much in certain areas in the second-stage bid from those of the opening stage in gross violation of the PPR regulations.

"The minimum [value of] construction experience for a foreign firm in a single work within last five years was Tk 50 crore while the value shown by DCL-SBA was Rs [rupees] 18.06 crore which was much below the required Tk 50 crore when converted. This was later corrected by submitting a new document," the panel report reads.

The panel found wide discrepancies in pile work between the first stage and second stage by the DCL and Associates, but such variations are not permissible during the second stage where only price is to be quoted.

Besides, spares/equipment having financial implications have

been drastically reduced in the second stage, which too is not permissible.

Similar deviations were rectified in about 100 items through a series of clarifications which amounts to giving the bidder undue opportunity to make correction. In the process, substantial and material changes took place in the offer of DCL-SBA.

Regulation 31 (5) of PPR may interpret this as a negotiation with the bidder, the panel observed.

The review panel then recommended that the authorities expedite the entire process from evaluation to awarding the contract, taking into consideration the extreme urgency for increased water supply in the port city. The work has yet to begin although about three years have passed since the prime minister laid foundation for the plant.

It also asked the procuring entity to submit its recommendation to the approving authorities within two weeks from the date of receipt of the review panel's decision.

Earlier, a two-stage tender was invited for a 90 MLD (million litres of water daily) surface water treatment plant at Mohara on a turn-key basis. Out of 13 pre-qualified bidders, eight submitted first-stage tender in September last year. Of them, four were evaluated responsive.

Thereafter, all the responsive bidders submitted quote for the work. The DCL and Associates quoted Tk 63 crore, Singly drou-AHCO JV Tk 95 crore, EPI-BFEW Consortium Tk 95 crore and CAMCE-CNMEDRI-ABCJV Tk 190 crore.

The technical evaluation committee found DCL and Associates and EPI-BFEW responsive and the other two firms non-responsive. The ministry then recommended for the DCL and Associates to win the work as the lowest bidder.

Pvt security men

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will have to renew their licence every two years paying a Tk 50,000 renewal fee.

The agencies will have to get government approval of their uniform, which cannot resemble those of government forces like police, army, navy, air force, Rab or Ansars.

The government has decided to provide security members with a 28-day training at the Ansar Academy since private security members are not well trained and in some cases oblivious to security threats.

"We've prepared a training module for them and the training has been made mandatory to them," Babar said. The directors of security agencies will have to be citizens of Bangladesh, he added.

According to the new rules, a security member must pass at least class nine to join a security agency and will get minimum Tk 2,700 as monthly salary.

The meeting decided that punitive actions could be taken against the security agencies and their members if they commit any crimes. "There is also a provision of cancelling their licences," Babar told reporters.

On allowing members of the security agencies to carry firearms Babar said, "If they can improve their quality of service and earn people's trust, we can reconsider about arming them."

The state minister said since the security agencies may require armed protection for their clients like in banks, insurance and other financial institutes or during transferring large amount of money, they can apply for Ansars to the

New investment

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In the meeting, the prime minister appreciated the new Bepza executive chairman for successfully handling the recent unrest in some garment industries in DEPZ and hoped that his efforts would continue to accelerate the progress of the EPZs.

Finance Minister M Saifur Rahman, Industries Minister Matlur Rahman Nizami, Foreign Minister M Morshed Khan, Communications Minister Nazmul Huda, Commerce Minister Hafizuddin Ahmed, State Minister for Power Anwarul Kabir Talukder, State Minister for Shipping Kamrul Islam, State Minister for Civil Aviation Mirza Fakhrul Islam Alamgir, State Minister for Land Ukil Abdus Sattar, Advisor to the Energy Ministry Mahmudur Rahman and Prime Minister's Political Secretary Harris Chowdhury among others, attended the meeting.

Intelligence

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quizzed at TFI.

Meanwhile, curator of Bangabandhu Memorial Museum Syed Siddiqur Rahman said they have beefed up security at the museum following the Monday's incident. "We have increased the manpower to ensure proper security on our part," he said.

ARRESTEES REMANDED

The IO of the case produced the arrestees before the Chief Metropolitan Magistrate's Court, Dhaka with a prayer for a 10-day remand for each.

But the court granted three days' remand.

In the forwarding report, the IO mentioned that the detainees seem to be the members of a militant group.

Primary investigations suggest that they have been in contact with the militants across the country and had plans to carry out destructive activities. So, they need to be interrogated thoroughly.

Security guards caught Nurunnabi while he was cutting electric cable at an under-construction building of the museum. Later his cohort Abdur Rahim and parents were captured.

11 rescued

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Islam, 27, his wife Rahima Khatun, 25, and daughter Munni, 10, of Jhenidai; Montu Bala, 30, of Gournadi in Barisal; Halder Barui, 40, and Dilip Das, 50, of Madaripur; and Shibu Pal, 50, and his wife Krisna Pal, 45, of Faridpur. They were sent to jail hajat.

Pak charity

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"British intelligence smelled a foul play the moment the transfer was made in December last year," said the senior official, who like his colleague asked not to be identified due to the ongoing nature of the investigation.

The New York Times on Monday said the British authorities were investigating whether the Jamaat-ud-Dawa Charity, active in the mosques of Britain's largest cities, had provided money to some of the 23 suspects under arrest for the 2002 bombed plot. The charity, according to Pakistani and US officials cited by the Times, is believed to be the successor of Lashkar-e-Taiba, an Islamic militant group, which the Pakistani government banned in 2002.

A British terrorism expert consulted by The Washington Post said the chaos that followed the devastating earthquake in northern Pakistan last year allowed Pakistani intelligence agents to learn more about the militant groups operating in the area.

A spokesman for Jamaat-Ud-Dawa reached by the Post denied any funding by his group of the bomb plot in Britain, insisting that the group condemned terrorism and that it was not under investigation by the Pakistani government.

6th Expert Group

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eight inter-related goals for the vision. Similar consultation sessions on five goals were held earlier.

Nagorik Committee envisions that Bangladesh has a strong possibility of becoming an economic and commercial regional hub in the near future. It only has to be proactive and utilise all the opportunities to an optimum level.

Developing a clear marketing strategy to attract investment from regional and extra-regional companies, a mega port along Chittagong coastline serving Bangladesh, Nepal, Bhutan, Eastern India, Myanmar and Southwestern China; developing major information and communication technology driven service sector; deepening and broadening of capital markets and many more relevant issues will be deliberated and consulted upon at today's session.

The outline of the Vision 2021 has been drafted on the basis of recommendations and aspirations propagated by participants of the regional civil society dialogues held at various places of Bangladesh, which are being organised by Centre for Policy Dialogue (CPD), the Prothom Alo, The Daily Star and Channel-I.

The Nagorik Committee 2006 is now going through a process of consultation with expert groups about the draft outline.

Lanka fighting rages

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homen amid an indefinite curfew as troops tried to smoke out rebels who have landed on an islet to the west of Jaffna town. Residents were stockpiling food, and most phone lines are down.

Aid workers estimate around 100,000 people are newly displaced in Sri Lanka's north and east after the worst fighting since a 2002 truce first erupted in the east three weeks ago.

In the capital Colombo, residents feared of more attacks after two blasts in a week and the chilling threat from the suspected Tiger front organisation to start bombing civilians in the majority Sinhalese south.

The Colombo stock market fell 2.4 percent on Monday as investors worried increased attacks could hurt industries like tourism and dent growth prospects for the \$23 billion economy.

South Africa's cricket team wants to pull out of a triangular series with Sri Lanka and India and return home, team sources said.

Many foreign and local companies have put investment plans on hold until it becomes clear whether the island is sliding back into a full-scale war that has already killed around 65,000 people since 1983 and displaced hundreds of thousands.

"There are very real risks in Colombo and clients need to be aware of them," said Maria Kuusisto, South Asia Analyst for Control Risks Group in London.

"Our clients have to keep on operating in Colombo and we are not currently advising them to withdraw. The situation is escalating rapidly in the north and east and, therefore, our clients need to be flexible," she added.

UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan was "profoundly concerned" and urged the government and rebels to return to the negotiating table, allow aid agencies free access and let civilians leave contested areas, a spokesman said overnight.

Lebanese return

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Wednesday and hand over all their positions to an existing UN force, paving the way for the Lebanese army to start deploying in the area from Thursday.

Israel has said it will not withdraw fully until a beefed-up UN force and Lebanese army troops deploy in the south.

An army spokeswoman said more Israeli troops pulled out of Lebanon overnight, but she declined to give numbers. Israeli media reports said 1,000 paratroops crossed into Israel, raising to 2,000 the number of soldiers who have returned.

Hezbollah chief Sayyed Hassan Nasrallah said on Monday night his fighters had won a "strategic victory" over Israel and that it was the wrong time publicly to discuss disarming.

President Bush said Hezbollah, which is backed by Iran, had been defeated. Israeli Prime Minister Ehud Olmert said his country would hunt down Hezbollah leaders.

The "cessation of hostilities" remains fragile. The Israeli army said four Hezbollah mortar bombs had landed near troops in the south overnight, causing no casualties. It said on Monday it had killed at least one guerrilla in shootings after the truce.

But the calm has prompted a chaotic tide of Shia Muslim refugees flowing back to southern villages, despite the risk of unexploded munitions left over from the fighting