

## Scientists unruffled by big asteroid

REUTERS, Washington

Maybe, just maybe, a large and newly sighted asteroid could hit the Earth - but probably not, astronomers said Wednesday.

They have issued an all-points bulletin on the asteroid that at first looked like it could be on a collision course with Earth, but it will take several more weeks of observation to tell for sure.

They are calling on astronomers around the world, amateur and professional, to take a look at the mile-wide hunk of rock, so its trajectory can be calculated.

In the meantime, they say the odds of it actually hitting are one in 6 million.

"I wouldn't be sweating it," Tim Spahr, astronomer at the Minor Planets Center of the Harvard-Smithsonian Center for Astrophysics in Cambridge, Massachusetts, said in a telephone interview. "Go win the lottery first."

Scientist say a collision with a large asteroid half a mile in diameter could kill a quarter of the world's population. Statistically, every 100 million years a 6-mile-wide object hits the Earth in an impact like one that wiped out the dinosaurs 65 million years ago.

The new asteroid, called 2002 NT7, was spotted earlier this month. Now 66 million miles away, it orbits the Sun every 2.3 years at a steep angle to Earth's orbit.

It entered a new system set up by international astronomers over the past decade to look for asteroids and other objects that have the potential to hit the Earth.

**This one is big**  
"This one just popped up because it is a big object," Spahr said. "It is two kilometers in size so if it hit it would be really bad. We

have a scale called the Palermo scale that takes into account size and possible impact velocity and comes up with a rating for an object."

"2002 NT7 is the first 'positive' object on the scale system, meant to predict how much damage an asteroid would do if it just happened to hit."

"It just means you better go look at it some more," Spahr said. Don Yeomans of NASA (news - web sites)' Jet Propulsion Laboratory pointed out that the Palermo scale system is only a year old so it is not terribly significant that this is the first positive.

Because it takes a while to get enough data on any object to determine the risk, astronomers send out a public plea to get as many telescopes looking at it as possible. It is hard to pin down such a tiny object in the vastness of space.

Although plotting a trajectory of an object on Earth is fairly simple, when something is this far away and this small, things get complicated.

As it passes by planets such as Mars and Jupiter, it will get pulled by their gravitational fields, for instance.

So when calculating all the different places this asteroid could possibly end up, one scenario includes a collision with Earth in 2019.

Yeomans doubts this will actually happen and he believes the coming weeks will provide data to confirm this.

"We still have to redouble our efforts to locate these objects in the first place. This program has only been in place a decade. Before that we were blissfully unaware."

## Girl survives 7th-floor fall

UNB, Dhaka

A girl was seriously injured as she jumped off the seventh floor of a city hotel, allegedly to escape sexual abuse by a youth yesterday morning.

The 18-year-old girl luckily survived as she fell down on the rooftop of a nearby building.

Police sent her to Dhaka Medical College Hospital (DMCH) in a critical condition.

The girl, who hails from Moksdepur in Gopalganj, came to the capital on July 1 with Juli, a nurse of the Dhaka General Hospital.

Juli brought the girl to Dhaka in the name of giving her a job. She was staying with Juli.

This morning, a youth, brother of Shahana, another nurse of the same hospital, brought the victim to Hotel Don in the Motijheel area, promising her a job.

The girl newsmen that she could not recall the name of Shahana's brother who had taken her to the hotel room.

## Dacoity

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The dacoits took away Taka 10,000, 10 tolas of gold ornaments, a mobile phone, a colour television and a video cassette player (VCP) after confining the housewife, Shamsunnahar, hostage in a room at gunpoint.

They also hit her with sharp weapons and left the place within a few minutes.

She was taken to Dhaka Medical College Hospital (DMCH).

A case was filed with Sutrapur police. None, however, was arrested till 7 PM yesterday.

## Ali Ahsan

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the Jahangirnagar University campus.

Syed Ali Ahsan was the vice chancellor of Jahangirnagar University and Rajshahi University.

He was made advisor for education during the government of late President Ziaur Rahman in 1977 and Chairman of the University Grants Commission in 1991.

The government honoured him with the status of National Professor in 1989.

Syed Ali Ahsan was the head of the Bengali Department of Chittagong University during 1968-1971 and Director of the Bangla Academy during 1960-1966.

He received Bangla Academy Award in 1983 and Independence Day Award in 1987.

Acting President Barrister Mohammad Jamiruddin Sircar yesterday expressed deep shock at the death of National Professor Syed Ali Ahsan.

In a message of condolence, the Acting President recalled his contribution in the field of Bangla language and literature and particularly in education.

The Acting President condoled his death, conveyed his heart-felt sympathy to the members of the bereaved family and prayed for the eternal peace of the departed soul.

Prime Minister Khaleda Zia has expressed her deep shock at the death of National Professor Syed Ali Ahsan.

In a condolence message, she recalled with gratitude the contributions of Prof Ali Ahsan in protecting national unity and dignity as a strong supporter of Bangladeshi nationalism.

"He enriched the country's various sectors like education, literature, broadcasting, art and politics through his merit, creativity and vast knowledge," Khaleda said.

The prime minister said Prof Ali Ahsan also played an important role in reestablishing multiparty democracy and nation-building activities as a close associate of Shaheed President Ziaur Rahman.

She conveyed her heart-felt sympathy to the bereaved family members, relatives and prayed for salvation of the departed soul.

The vice chancellor and the pro-vice chancellor of the Chittagong University (CU) in separate condolence messages yesterday expressed their shock at the death of Syed Ali Ahsan.

Education Minister Dr Osman Faruk expressed profound shock at the death of National Professor Syed Ali Ahsan and prayed for the salvation of the departed soul.

The JU Syndicate in an emergency meeting yesterday has expressed deep shock at the death of Prof Ali Ahsan.

Meanwhile, all classes and offices of Jahangirnagar University (JU) will remain closed on Saturday as a mark of respect to the former Vice-Chancellor and National Professor Syed Ali Ahsan.

A condolence meeting will be held at the JU auditorium on July 28 to recall the contribution of the late professor, JU sources said.

## It's conspiracy

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to her the VC was under tremendous pressure to remove her, she said.

On behalf of Sultana, Prof Mezbuddin Ahmed, Prof Anwar Hossain, Prof Harun-Ar-Rashid, Prof Mizanur Rahman and Prof Dr Sharifullah were present at the conference.

## Story behind the story

FROM PAGE 1

leaders who were residing at the hall illegally for the last nine months, the VC gave them shelter and allowed them to do anything they pleased, the sources further said.

Halima Khan Luci and Noorjahan Begum Shanta are alleged to be the masterminds of the atrocities committed on Tuesday night. Originally enrolled as legitimate students of Dhaka University, the two held positions of president and general secretary of the Shamsunnahar Hall unit of the JCD.

While they initially left the campus after graduating two years ago, the two staged a comeback after the BNP came to power following the October 1 elections last year.

After occupying room No. 234 of the Shamsunnahar Hall in late October, the JCD leaders indulged in various illegal and criminal activities in the hall using their political power.

On many occasions, they told the hall authorities and the students that they would stay at the hall because their party is in power now. ("The Bangladesh) Chhatra League has stayed here for five years and now is our turn," a resident quoted Luci as saying.

When the hall authorities charged them for illegally occupying the halls, they said they had taken readmission. An investigation however proved it false. They then told the hall authorities that they had permission from the VC to stay in the hall, hall sources said.

Besides harassing general students, Luci and Shanta forced

the closure of a photostat shop inside the hall following refusal of the owner to pay them toll. This incident led to the killing of a female student at Plassy crossing a couple of months ago. She was on her way to copy some notes when a speedy bus ran over her.

The JCD leaders used to hop through TV channels excessively. This resulted in some 50 students filing a written complaint against Luci and Shanta for their excesses in the TV room. The JCD leaders then threatened the students.

Provost of the hall Prof. Sultana Shafi sent several letters to the DU authorities seeking action against the JCD leaders. But hall sources said that authorities ignored the complaints.

JCD leaders also plotted to oust the provost before she completed her tenure. A section of BNP-backed house tutors of the hall supported the JCD leaders in this effort, hall sources said.

Being a political appointee, the DU VC welcomed the gesture. The authorities who have already removed or forced other provosts to resign were unable to find a way to remove Prof. Shafi from her post due to protests from the general students at the hall and Shafi herself.

The day before the police atrocities at the Shamsunnahar Hall, Luci, Shanta and some of their accomplices put the office room of the provost under lock and key. The BNP-leaning house tutors who were desperately looking for a change of provost were also present when the

JCD leaders locked the office.

Students of the hall however were averse to the idea and chased the JCD leaders out of the hall. The JCD leaders then went to the VC's office and had a lengthy discussion with the VC. They pressed for their re-entry at the hall and VC allowed them back in.

Such a folly of the VC was enough to enrage the general students who were demanding ouster of the JCD leaders from the hall. Instead of addressing the illegal activities, the DU authorities opt for having the students smacked by police rather than ousting the JCD leaders, according to the hall sources.

VC Prof. Anwarullah Chowdhury is trying to make the government happy through his action and activities. The ruling BNP made him VC after firing his predecessor Prof. AK Azad Chowdhury, who was picked by the Awami League, early this year. After that the brought changes to the important posts and had ruling party supporters installed in those posts, the sources added.

All the student organisations including the JCD are very fed up with the activities of the VC. All except the JCD supporters had initially demanded that the VC resign for his failure to run the university. After the Shamsunnahar Hall incident, the JCD also favoured the removal of the VC.

## Outcry all around

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University campus.

Communist Party of Bangladesh (CPB) demanded immediate trial of and punishment to those responsible for the barbaric attack on the residents of the women's dormitory. CPB General secretary Mujahidul Islam Selim in a statement said the attack was engineered by a quarter engaged in the conspiracy to ban student politics.

He called upon the countrymen including the conscientious section of the society to resist the undemocratic move to ban student politics.

Severely criticising the role of DU VC, Selim said the VC did not feel any regret for his failure to ensure the safety of his students but rather made a false statement to satisfy a quarter in order to ensure his job.

He demanded immediate withdrawal of the 'false cases' filed against the students.

CPB had also brought out a procession and held a protest rally on Wednesday.

Sheikh Shahidul Islam and Sadek Siddique, secretary general and additional secretary general respectively of Jatiya Party in a statement condemned the police action.

The leaders said such open aggression would hinder the democratic process, and demanded exemplary punishment to the culprits.

Thirty-three former student leaders in a statement denounced the police excess on the female students of Dhaka University as brutal and unprecedented, and criticised the VC for his "silly explanation in a bid to conceal the truth."

The signatories to the statement include Obaidul Kader, Bahalul Majnun Churnu, Mostofa Jalal Mohiuddin, KM Jahangir, Abdul Mannan, Akhtaruzzaman, Fazle Hossain Badshah, Shirin Akhter and Jahangir Kabir Nanok.

Sammito Sangskritik Jole (SSJ) yesterday strongly condemned the police action on a section of female students of Shamsunnahar Hall and demanded formation of a judicial probe committee to investigate into

the incident. The SSJ leaders also called upon all concerned to put up united resistance against such incidents of repression.

Terming the incident unexpected and sad, noted educationist Prof. Sirajul Islam Chowdhury said it is unacceptable that police should enter a women's dormitory in the middle of the night and take residents away to the police station as prisoners.

Prof. Anisuzzaman said, "I was deeply shocked over the matter ... the police excess and the role of the university administration is uncalled for."

Prof. Kabir Chowdhury, president of the advisory council of Ektattor Ghatok Dalal Nirmul Committee and Shahrir Kabir, president of executive committee of the same organisation strongly condemned the police raid. They said the barbaric incident took place right in front of the proctor of the university, adding that police turned the campus into a battlefield when general students tried to protest the police excess on the female students of Shamsunnahar Hall.

The committee demanded punitive measures against those involved in the attack.

Ain O Salish Kendro (ASK) in a statement termed the police raid barbaric and unprecedented in the history of the country and demanded punishment to those responsible for the attack including police and the authorities concerned.

Meanwhile, Bangladesh Chhatra Union (BCU) congratulated the DU students for observing the strike on campus to protest the police action.

The BCU will organise a human chain at Muktangan today at 12 noon to protest against the police raid.

Dhaka City Unit of Awami League, Joy Bangla Sangskritik Jote, Bangabandhu Parishad, Jatiya Sramik, Sofa Institute, Women for Women, Bangladesh Nari Sangbadik, Nagorik Samaj, Nagorik Uddyoj, Odhikar, Jatiya Chhatra Samaj, Biplobi Chhatra Maitree, Bangladesh Chhatra Federation, and Forum of Five

Student Organisation also issued statements condemning the police raid on the female students of Shamsunnahar Hall.

## Hall attack

FROM PAGE 1

They also felt that it would have been wise for the home minister and the vice chancellor of the DU to resign immediately after the incident. They wondered that instead of doing so, both of them rather tried to justify their position.

Talking to The Daily Star yesterday, several ministers and policymakers of the ruling party noted that the incident has caused a big humiliation to the government.

They said they have suggested the prime minister to sack the home minister, if he does not resign voluntarily, to keep up the image of the government and to prove that it has taken a serious view of the attack at a female hall at night. Besides removing the ministers concerned, police officials responsible for this must also be sacked, they felt.

Some senior ministers strongly resented that the cabinet subcommittee on law and order at its meeting on Wednesday was not informed of the incident at Shamsunnahar Hall. A member of the sub-committee said the ministers concerned deliberately hid this.

Meanwhile, a high level meeting attended by the home minister, the education minister and top police officials yesterday reviewed the situation at the DU and sternly warned police against any such action in future.

Home Minister Altaf Hossain Chowdhury, Education Minister Osman Farruk, State Minister for Home Lutfuzzaman Babar, State Minister for Education Ehsanul Haq, the Inspector General of Police and other top officials were present at the meeting.

## Day of fury at DU

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Justice Tafazzal Islam yesterday to investigate the police entry into the Shamsunnahar Hall and arrest of female students. The committee is to submit a report within a week.

Inspector General of Police (IGP) Modabbir Hossain Chowdhury also formed a three-member departmental probe committee to investigate the role of police at the Shamsunnahar Hall. Headed by Masdul Haq, additional IGP, the two other members of the committee are Kazi Bazlur Rahman, special superintendent of police (CID) and Lutfar Rahman, deputy police commissioner, DMP Headquarters.

On the campus, the students locked all the entrance to the Arts Faculty and pasted black posters there with various slogans in favour of the strike. But the JCD activists and police broke the keys.

After parading the Arts Faculty area, the procession marched toward the Teacher and Student Centre (TSC). Students were seen spontaneously joining the procession, making it the biggest of its kind in recent days.

Police intercepted the procession at the Doel Chattr, but in the teeth of strong protests by the students, police gave in and let the processionists proceed towards the Curzon Hall.

At the time, a large number of students joined in. The procession ended at the Aparajeyo Bangla. The agitating students announced that they would demonstrate at all the residential halls today and bring out a 'grand' procession on the campus tomorrow. They demanded resignation of the VC and the proctor by Saturday. Otherwise, they warned of a tougher agitation.

They said they (the VC and Proctor) have no right to stay in office since they are responsible for Wednesday's brutality at the Shamsunnahar Hall.

The students also demanded immediate withdrawal of the police forces from campus. They alleged that police are friends of attackers, not of general students, which is why the police presence make them feel rather insecure.

At least 100 students were injured when police swooped on the female students of the Shamsunnahar Hall on Wednesday night. Another 150 students were injured when police clubbed and teargassed protesters on the campus throughout Wednesday.

A huge contingent of police has been deployed at all entrance to the DU and other strategic points of the campus.

## Dhaka, Islamabad

FROM PAGE 1

ters and a business delegation. The visit will be rounded off by separate press briefings by the two sides.

Musharraf will be the fourth head of government to come to Bangladesh on a visit after the alliance government, led by the Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP), took office.

Earlier, British, Chinese and Thai prime ministers visited Bangladesh. Former prime minister Sheikh Hasina was the last Bangladesh head of government to have undertaken a trip to Islamabad in 1998.

The Pakistan president will also lay wreaths at the Savar National Memorial.

Two memorandums of understanding will be signed between Dhaka and Islamabad on cultural cooperation and regular consultations on bilateral issues respectively during Musharraf's visit.

"Bangladesh believes in close cooperation with its neighbours," the foreign secretary told newsmen yesterday.

Chowdhury brushed aside the suggestion that Musharraf's visit had any special political undertone. "Why would his trip hint at a special alignment when he has visited the largest democracy in the world, India, and several other countries in Asia?"

He also dismissed the suggestion that the visit might eventually lead to creation of an anti-Delhi axis by Islamabad, Beijing and Dhaka.

"The very word axis is reminiscent of Second World War or Cold War days and an anachronism," Chowdhury said. "Our policy is not in favour of or against anyone. We do not have a policy of malice."

The foreign secretary also dismissed reports in a section of the media, suggesting Pakistani intelligence agency ISI was engineering infiltration to India through Bangladesh.

He also termed "totally baseless" the claims "that visas were being denied to Indian nationals on the eve of Musharraf's visit".

**Pak-India stand-off**  
Asked whether tension in the subcontinent would be discussed in the official talks, the foreign secretary said, "Our position has already been spelled out clearly to both (India and Pakistan) on the issue. We are for reduction of tension through dialogue. Once again during the visit we will reiterate our position. It (Indo-Pak tension) impacts the entire region."

**\$4.5 billion claim**  
Chowdhury also said the country's claim of some \$4.5 billion could be raised in the talks. "The figure was calculated a long time back and is being constantly put forward by Bangladesh."

The issue of taking back some 237,000 stranded Pakistanis staying at some 70 camps across the country will also be discussed, he said.

**Question of apology**  
When asked whether Dhaka will ask for Islamabad's apology for the

The campus was tense since morning due to the strike called by the general students at the university protesting the police atrocities on female students and demanding resignation of the VC and the proctor.

Police intercepted vehicles and commuters on the campus and did not let the opposition student activists in the campus in the morning. Police also put a moratorium on processions and rallies on the campus yesterday.

Most of the student organisations protested the police atrocities by bringing out processions and holding rallies. Left-leaning Ganatantrik Chhatra Oikya, Jatiya Samajtantrik Dal-backed Bangladesh Chhatra League, Samajtantrik Chhatra Front and some other student bodies brought out procession to enforce the strike at the DU.

Activists of the ruling BNP's student front Jatiyatibadi Chhatra Dal (JCD) allegedly attacked a rally at the Institute of Fine Arts at about 1:15pm, leaving several students injured. They also ransacked a 'protest exhibition' by the students there.

Police arrested seven persons yesterday on the campus. Of them, Jonardon Datta Nantu, Nazimuddin, Zannatul Islam Dalim and Shahiduzzaman of the Samajtantrik Chhatra Front. Police also arrested three outsiders, namely Helal, Prince and Mannan. Helal and Mannan were arrested while slapping posters in favour of the strike.

Meanwhile, 17 students arrested during Wednesday's protest on the campus were released on bail yesterday.

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crimes it committed during the War of Independence in 1971, the foreign secretary said, "This has been discussed earlier. I am sure it is in the mind of the Pakistanis."

When asked if Dhaka would press for an apology as was done by the previous government, he replied, "We do not recall any demand for apology from Pakistan by the previous government. This issue may have been raised (in various circles), but never has a demand for apology been made."

Asked about implementation of the Hamoodur Rahman Commission report, he said, "It is their report. It is only a partial version of what happened. They have published it. It is for them to implement it."

Musharraf will be accompanied by Commerce Minister Abdur Razzak Daud, Information Minister Nisar Memon, Local Government and Environment Minister Shaheda Jamil, State Minister for Foreign Affairs Enamul Haq and 12 senior officials.

Musharraf, who will stay at Sonargaon Hotel, will call on acting president Jamiruddin Sircar.

Asked to comment on the Left Democratic Front's demand to call off Musharraf's visit, the foreign secretary said, "It is a free country. Everyone is entitled to his opinion."

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## Still no action

FROM PAGE 1

phone for comments. Phoned at about 6:45pm yesterday, his personal secretary told The Daily Star that the VC was taking a stroll on the lawn.

The VC will not do anything to book the culprits because of his political affiliation with the ruling BNP, sources said.

"How can he take action when he himself is an appointee by the ruling party?" said a JCD leader on condition of anonymity.

Luci and Shanta regularly visit the Secretariat, lobby with the Secretariat officials and broker for money, said JCD insiders.

A few days ago, Luci sought help from a journalist in moving a file for transfer of a police officer and the officer agreed to give her Tk 30,000 in kickbacks, sources said.

Luci capitalises on the influence of State Minister for Home Lutfuzzaman Babar.

Two months ago, Luci threatened a university correspondent with dire consequences for reporting on her involvement in the forced closure of a Xerox shop.

Asked if the JCD would go for any action against the two girls, its DU unit President Monir Hossain kept mum.

Meanwhile, a group of journalists was refused appointment with the newly appointed provost of the Shamsunnahar Hall yesterday. The JCD leaders asked her not to talk with journalists, the sources said.

Women police are on guard inside the hall and policemen outside.

