

Basu sees rise in terrorist activities in West Bengal

PTI, New Delhi

Veteran Marxist Jyoti Basu Saturday said terrorist activities were on the rise in West Bengal due to the growing presence of fundamentalist elements in Bangladesh, even as Chief Minister Buddhadeb Bhattacharjee sought additional federal forces to combat the menace.

"This (rise in terrorist activities in the state) is bound to happen when so many fundamentalist elements are operating across the border," Basu said when asked why terrorist groups were becoming increasingly active in West Bengal.

Basu, the former chief minister who along with Bhattacharjee is here to attend the CPI (M) Central Committee meeting, said "we have arrested some people" but refused to elaborate any further.

Earlier in the day, Bhattacharjee met Deputy Prime Minister L K Advani and demanded additional paramilitary forces from the centre to deal with the various terrorist groups operating in the state.

Bhattacharjee, who had a 30-minute meeting with Advani, said he briefed him about "the activities of various terrorist groups operating in our state, including Kamtapuri Liberation Organisation in North Bengal and People's War Group in the south."

"Without federal assistance, it will be difficult for us to check these activities", he said.

Asked whether he had raised the issue of terrorist camps operating in Bangladesh, Bhattacharjee said "whatever I don't want to say, I will not".

Govt yet to give official count on arms deposited

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The government could not specify the count of licensed arms deposited even three days after expiry of the extended deadline on November 21.

At his regular briefing yesterday, Principal Information Officer (PIO) Khondker Manirul Alam gave a partial data on the deposited arms but failed to give a total figure.

Deposited were 11,522 arms with the 22 police stations in the capital and 1,055 with the Office of Deputy Commissioner (DC), Dhaka until November 21.

In Chittagong, 2,119 arms were deposited with its 12 police stations and 1,790 with the DC office.

In Khulna, 798 arms were deposited with the five police stations. Six hundred and fifty-nine arms were deposited with four police stations in Rajshahi and 1,855 were deposited with the 13 police stations of Sylhet, according to the data provided by the PIO.

The government in an order on November 5 asked all licensed firearms holders to surrender their weapons to the nearby police station or DC office and fixed November 15 as the deadline.

With less than 20 per cent of the licensed arms deposited within November 15, the government extended the deadline until November 21. This time round, an insignificant number of arms have been deposited.

According to district administration and police sources, fewer than 200 arms were deposited with different police stations in the city in five days of the extended time.

The government has cancelled licences of the arms, which were not deposited and declared them illegal.

The government will also issue warrant against those who did not deposit their arms, sources said.

Uncle beaten to death by nephews

OUR CORRESPONDENT, N'ganj

One person was beaten to death by his nephews at village Kamarpara in Arahazar upazila on Saturday night.

The victim, Rafique Mollah, 40, went into hiding after killing his brother Safaruddin in 2002. A case was filed with Arahazar thana accusing him.

Rafiq Mollah returned home few days ago. On Friday night, three sons of Safaruddin -- Mostafa, Amar Ali and Musa -- beat their uncle Rafiq Mollah mercilessly. He died on way to hospital.

A case was filed with Arahazar thana.

18 listed criminals, 32 firearms rounded up

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The army hauled up 118 people including 18 listed criminals across the country as part of the ongoing anti-crime crackdown during the last 24 hours ending at 8:00am yesterday.

They also recovered 32 firearms, including three pistols, six revolvers, 14 pipe-guns and four shotguns along with 31 rounds of ammunition.

The army has arrested 6,892 people including 1,651 listed criminals across the country during the crackdown styled 'Operation Clean Heart' till yesterday. They also seized 1,167 firearms and 26,276 rounds of ammunition.

The army arrested "Chikna" Monir, a listed criminal in the city's Mohakhali area. He was absconding since the start of the clampdown.

In Bhola, Chairman of the Purba Elisha Union Parishad of Sadar upazila Mohammad Siraj was arrested at the TNO office yesterday. Turned over to police later on, Siraj was allegedly involved in criminal

activities.

In Narayanganj, troops arrested 10 people and seized 13 rounds of ammunition from different areas of Fatulla, our correspondent said. Police said the army personnel arrested Sumon Khan Bitu, 23, and Farruk Khan Pantha, 23, from Chanmari area with 12 rounds of bullet. Six others were also arrested in the same area. All the arrestees were handed over to the Fatulla Police Station.

In Munshiganj, army picked up a hoodlum in Louhajang upazila on Friday and recovered firearms and ammunition from his possession. The arrestee was identified as Mamun alias Miraj, 20, of Kajirpagla area of the upazila. An army team also raided Kajirpagla area and recovered three foreign-made pistols, seven magazines and two sharp weapons from a graveyard.

Another team arrested alleged criminal Mohammad Yunus alias Liton, 35, in Bara Guherkandi village and recovered a pipe-gun and five lethal weapons from his possession. They also picked up another alleged criminal

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DCC probe smells rats in tender for seven zones

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The five-member inquiry committee, probing allegations of manipulation of tenders of road development works of Dhaka City Corporation (DCC), worth over Tk 93 crore, submitted its report to the government on Saturday last.

It has recommended cancellation of the tenders of at least seven out of the 10 DCC zones.

The committee handed over the report to the secretary of the LGRD ministry, AYBI Siddiqui.

A copy of the report was also sent to the DCC chief executive officer, AZM Shafiqul Islam, said the sources.

The official sources further said

that the committee headed by the joint secretary of the local government division, Fazlul Haque, recommended that all tenders of most of the 10 zones of the DCC be cancelled, as they found 'gross irregularities' in the bidding.

Sources, however, confirmed that the committee found that at least three zones were free from manipulation, where the number of bidders was comparatively high. Apart from these three zones, tenders of the other zones of the DCC have to be cancelled to ensure transparency in the DCC.

Earlier on November 13 the

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Four bills tabled in JS

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The government introduced four bills, including one seeking amendments to the Vested Property Return Act, 2001, in the Jatiya Sangsad yesterday.

Three other bills seek amendments to the Arms Act, 1878, the Explosive Substance Act, 1908 and the Narcotics Control Act, 1990.

Land Minister M Shamsul Islam tabled the Vested Property Return (Amendment) Bill, 2002 and Law Minister Moudud Ahmed the other bills after the House rejected objections by the opposition lawmakers to their introduction.

The vested property bill provides that the government would determine the timeframe for gazette notification on district-wise lists of

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PHOTO: STAR

A man tries on a second-hand blazer at a sidewalk shop near the General Post Office (GPO) in the city yesterday. With winter setting in, people switch to warm clothes and those of the low-income bracket settle for the cheapest.

Uphill battle awaits 'all the king's men' in Pakistan

AFP, Islamabad

Pakistan's first post-military cabinet is a coalition of richly-rewarded defectors from the parties of President Pervez Musharraf's arch-rivals who face an uphill battle to maintain his pro-US policy, defend his reshaped constitution, and woo foreign investors, analysts said.

"All the king's men have been put together in a government of defectors," political analyst Imtiaz Alam said of the 14 federal ministers and seven ministers of state sworn-in Saturday under Musharraf ally, Prime Minister Zafarullah Jamali of the army-backed Pakistan Muslim League-Quaid (PML-Q).

NEWS ANALYSIS

"The new cabinet will be looking towards the president for guidance.

"But it will not be sustainable since it is based on horse-trading and a narrow margin of one vote," as Jamali earned only 172 votes in the 342-seat house, Alam said.

Among those heading the restored civilian administration -- promised by Musharraf since his bloodless coup three years ago -- are six floor-crossers from the Pakistan People's Party (PPP) of ex-premier Benazir Bhutto and 12 MPs from PML-Q -- once former

loyalists of the prime minister Musharraf deposed, Nawaz Sharif. Rebel PPP leaders Makhdoom Faisal Saleh Hayat and Rao Sikandar Iqbal were rewarded with the prize posts of Interior Affairs and Defence. Iqbal also scored the mantle of senior minister.

The foreign affairs, commerce and information portfolios went to PML-Q men.

While Saturday's swearing-in of Jamali and his cabinet was presented as the conclusion of Musharraf's much-avowed transfer of power, the uniformed president has ascribed himself the ability to sack parliament and heads a mili

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PHOTO: PID

Prime Minister Khaleda Zia addresses a ceremony to mark the 10th anniversary and University Day 2002 of the Khulna University.

Another storm brewing in Bay

AFP, New Delhi

Indian meteorologists yesterday warned of another cyclone brewing in the Bay of Bengal.

The meteorological department said the cyclone was some 700 kilometres off the coast of Madras and warned the depression was likely to intensify.

"The depression over southeast bay now has intensified into a cyclonic storm," the department said, adding the coastal states of Orissa and Andhra Pradesh were likely to be hit by torrential rains within the next 48 hours.

The department advised the two states to warn deep-sea fishermen to take precautions.

On November 12 a cyclone hit the Bay of Bengal, killing 49 Indian fishermen and at least five Bangladeshis.

BSS adds: The depression over southeast Bay and adjoining central Bay moved northwards into west central Bay and adjoining east central Bay and South Bay and was centered at 6 pm yesterday about 1015 kms southwest of Chittagong Port 945 kms southwest of Cox's Bazar Port and 915 kms south-southwest of Mongla Port.

It is likely to intensify further and move into a northerly direction, a Met office special weather bulletin said yesterday.

Maximum sustained wind speed within 44 kms of the depression centre is about 40 KPH and rising to 50 KPH in gusts aid squalls. Sea will remain moderate.

Maritime ports of Chittagong, Cox's Bazar and Mongla have been advised to keep hoisted distant cautionary Signal No One.

All fishing boats and trawler over North Bay and deep sea have been advised to come close to the coast and proceed with caution.

Fake currency notes seized, 2 arrested

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Police recovered fake notes of Taka and Indian Rupee and counterfeit court fees worth a total of Tk 16 lakh from Karwan Bazar and East Rajabazar in the city on Saturday night and arrested two persons.

Tipped-off, a team of detective branch (DB) police arrested one Shahidul from Karwan Bazar and recovered ten 500 taka notes from his possession, police said yesterday.

As per Shahidul's confession, the team arrested his accomplice Zakir Hossain from Panchpath area.

Acting on their disclosure, the team raided a house at East Rajabazar and recovered the fake currency notes and court fees along with machines for making such things.

Fake notes of Taka 500, 100, 50 and 20, 89,000 Indian currencies and court fees of Tk 100, 40, 20 and 10 were recovered in the haul.

But leader of the gang, Sagir Master, reportedly a former assistant sub-inspector of police, could not be arrested, police said.

They said the three are members of an organised gang engaged in making fake currency notes for long. A manhunt is on to arrest the gang.

On November 21, DB police recovered fake non-judicial stamps, revenue stamps and bandrols of bidi worth a total of 3.20 crore from different parts of the city.

Smear campaigners put students at risk: PM

Expatriates urged to foil 'suicidal conspiracy'

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Khulna

Prime Minister Khaleda Zia yesterday blasted a section of political leaders for carrying out a smear campaign at home and abroad creating complications for Bangladeshis, especially students willing to go abroad for higher studies.

"The global scenario has radically changed after last year's terrorist attacks in the US. It has become difficult for our students to go abroad for higher studies. The situation has been worsened by a section of our political leaders.

"They are deviously propagating that we are extremists; we are fundamentalists," Khaleda said at a ceremony marking the 10th anniversary

and University Day 2002 of Khulna University at Khulna.

The prime minister urged all including expatriate Bangladeshis to be vocal against the "suicidal conspiracy to push the country and the people towards risks".

Otherwise, she said, the road to higher education abroad for Bangladeshi students would be closed, and the expatriates would also be affected.

She announced that the government was making arrangements for vacation jobs for students to help them learn and earn during long holidays, a facility available in developed countries.

Khaleda said her government introduced time-befitting, multipur-

pose programmes to standardise and modernise the education system and make it free from corruption.

During her previous stint in office Khaleda had launched the academic activities of Khulna University on November 25, 1991.

She observed that alternative arrangements have to be made at home for students who cannot afford to go abroad for higher education. "World class education and research facilities and environment must be ensured at our universities. And it is not difficult at all," she asserted.

The prime minister mentioned various steps taken by her government

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Tale of two worlds

NICOLE MEIER

Bangladesh has one of the world's lowest incomes per capita, a fact that keeps prices of essentials low.

This is not exactly true of every item, though. The prices of certain things are even higher than those in the western world. On the contrary, many Bangladeshis enjoy the services an average person in the west can never afford. It is a world in reverse.

All over the world people seem very fond of fast food. Nothing special, you might say. But if you have a closer look, it is amazing indeed. In the United States, it is the cheapest food, whereas it is a luxury in Bangladesh. This is only one example, but it symbolically shows the relation between values and equivalents that often work in an illogical and incalculable way.

An average Bangladeshi earns only about US\$350 a year. And the so-called income per capita, if compared, reaches astronomical amounts in the western world. According to the World Bank, it is about \$30,000 in the United States, \$20,000 in Australia and \$40,000 in Switzerland. Let us pick out Switzerland to get an in-depth comparison. An average Swiss earns about \$3300 a month and an average Bangladeshi \$30.

The fact is well reflected in basic requirements. For instance, a kilogram of beef in Bangladesh sells at about \$1.4, while the same in Switzerland costs about \$34.

Thus an Asian spends about 4.6 per cent of monthly income on it and a European pays a little more than one per cent. Although this means the European can afford more, the relations are more or less logical. It is about the same with clothes (depending on standard and brand) and rents for flats and houses.

The stark contrast between Bangladesh and the

west arises as soon as it comes to luxury goods like electronic items. To buy an ordinary television set (\$120), a Dhaka dweller may have to work four months while his counterpart from Geneva or Zurich works only one to two weeks for it (\$1300). The same is about computers.

A cell phone costs a Bangladeshi more than an eight-month salary (\$250). A Swiss is likely to get one for free. It is the strategy of the several Swiss mobile companies in competition to attract and keep good customers (whose bill reaches a certain monthly amount) by providing them with free phones if they do not change the company within next year.

There is one luxury item even more expensive in Bangladesh: the car. The price range for a second-hand car starts somewhere at \$7000 due to very high import duty, car vendors say.

In Europe it is possible to become a car owner spending only \$2000 for the cheapest and oldest kind of second hand cars. Moreover, if one does not have enough money to buy the car he wants, he can just lease it or get a credit from his bank. Therefore, there are many youths driving posh cars they could never acquire with their own money.

Interesting enough, even a middle-class Bangladeshi can afford a maid for \$8 or \$10 a month. But mostly due to high labour cost, an average Swiss can never employ a housemaid or even a chauffeur. A Swiss pays a cleaner about \$15 for every hour. Employing her full time (five days a week, eight hours a day) means spending more than two thirds of a monthly salary on her. The same applies to a chauffeur.

However, hamburgers in fast food restaurants remain symbolical. Spending the entire month's

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CID seeks fresh remand for Piyal and Bina

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

In a petition to the First Class Magistrate's Court, Dhaka, the Criminal Investigation Department (CID) sought fresh remand for interrogating Piyal and his domestic help Bina.

The CID also sought permission to exhume the body of Tinni for another post-mortem.

In the petition, CID Inspector Fazlur Rahman requested that Piyal and Bina be remanded for five and

three more days respectively.

Fresh remand would help investigators extract more information related to Tinni's killing, he maintained.

Hearing of the remand petition will be held today in presence of the accused.

The CID took over the murder case from the Keraniganj police and started investigations on Saturday.

Earlier Keraniganj police recovered the body of Tinni, a model and

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Acid attack on housewife in Barisal

BSS, Barisal

A housewife was seriously injured as some unidentified criminals threw acid on her at Baulfal upazila of Pathuakhali district Saturday night.

The criminals threw acid on Hafiza Begum, 36, while she was cooking at her residence adjacent to the girls school road at the upazila headquarters at around 9 pm.

The reason behind the attack could not be known.

The victim received serious burn injuries in her hands, necks and back.

She was admitted to Baulfal thana health complex in a critical condition, police said.

A case was lodged with Baulfal thana police.