

Conspirators

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medical equipment and manpower to the hospitals but the people are not getting optimum benefits.

"The doctor-patient relationship has to be made closer," she said expressing her belief that the sincerity of the physicians will heal the negative attitude of the people towards the hospitals to a large extent.

Appreciating the contribution of Dab branches, some of which are providing free medical checkups to local school students, the prime minister called upon them to introduce one-day free clinic under all its units which will help a large section of the poor.

She called upon them to be more sincere in raising health awareness, creating a positive attitude, intensifying and making government health programmes more worthwhile.

The prime minister in her speech listed the development programmes of the government that included setting up of a cancer hospital in Dhaka, a medical college in Bogra, 500-bed hospitals in Bogra and Dinajpur, and an Ophthalmology Institute at Agargaon.

She also spoke of her government's plans to build two more 500-bed hospitals in Dhaka and upgrade all 31-bed upazila hospitals to 50-bed ones.

AL's no-confidence day

FROM PAGE 1
head off the AL agitation politically, directing its activists in every ward of Dhaka city to control the streets till April 30.

More than 10,000 people have been arrested in the last few days and 6,000 of the arrestees have been taken to court while the rest have been released.

The government also directed the law-enforcement agencies in the districts surrounding Dhaka to be on a red alert to prevent an influx of AL workers into the capital to participate in the anti-government agitation programme.

Prime Minister Khaleda Zia yesterday discussed at her office with State Minister for Home Affairs Lutfozzaman Babar security arrangements ahead of the April 30 deadline, sources said.

Massive police deployment yesterday prevented the AL leaders and workers from gathering at possible flashpoints around the city, including Zero Point, Motijheel Shapla Chattar, Tejgaon crossing and Dhanmondi road No. 27.

Police made 27 arrests from the small number of AL leaders and workers that did gather at the four spots and kept the opposition adherents at bay.

SHAPLA CHATTAR

At 10:00am, police evicted all small tea-shops from the area and picked up seven people from around the area. The arrestees told The Daily Star that they were neither AL members nor its supporters.

At around 11:15am, former Dhaka mayor Mohammed Hanif and central committee member Asaduzzaman Noor joined other AL workers and sat on the foot-path adjoining the roundabout as some 100 policemen kept a close watch on the gathering.

The policemen dragged two Jubo Mohila League (JML) workers, Biplobi and Rina, onto the police van, prompting Noor to jostle with the police to free the workers, but the van drove away with the two activists.

Hanif and Noor condemned the 13 arrests made in the area and told journalists that 'the uncivilised government' was not even letting them stand and the workers to join a peaceful protest.

The protest fizzled out from 2:00pm and no worker was seen in the area in the afternoon.

ZERO POINT

Huge numbers of policemen and women were deployed at Zero Point from the early hours. As top AL leaders including Motia Chowdhury, Sohel Taj, Meher Afroz Chumki and Tahura Ali tried to take position on a nearby road-island, police intercepted them and an altercation between the police and AL leaders followed. It continued for a while as police insisted that they leave the area right away.

Later, senior AL leaders including Mohiuddin Khan Alamgir, Tofail Ahmed, Mostafa Jalal Mohiuddin, Amir Hossain Amu, Suranjit Sengupta, Obaidul Kader, Mukul Bose, Mofazzel Hossain Chowdhury Maya, Nazma Rahman, Sayeed Khokon, Omar Ali and Salauddin Badal positioned themselves around the area.

Police tried to arrest General Secretary of Kapasia Thana unit of AL Ruhul Amin, triggering a struggle between the police and MP Sohel Taj. At one point, when police took Sohel Taj into their custody, Motia, Ruhul Amin and Taj got on the police van and refused to budge.

The police drove them away and dropped them back at Zero Point after 15 minutes. Police however went on to arrest four people, including a woman worker named Roksana, in front of the General Post Office.

BANGABANDHU AVENUE

Apart from failing of the AL activists to form a human chain, police

Permission has been given to set up seven more private medical colleges, the prime minister informed the doctors, outlining extensive plans for the public health sector.

A Tk10617 crore plan, to be implemented in three years, has been drawn for health, nutrition and family-planning service, she said.

The prime minister assured of building a national institute of health management and organising training facilities for government as well as private doctors.

Responding to various demands of the doctors, Khaleda said there were constraints in resource availability but the government gave emphasis on education and health.

She assured that the lost glory of the IPGMR would be revived, making it a center of excellence in medical research and practice.

Chaired by DAB president Dr AKM Azizul Huq, the conference was also addressed by Local Government and Rural Development (LGRD) Minister Abdul Mannan Bhuiyan, Health Minister AKM Mosharraf Hossain, State Minister for Health Mizanur Rahman Sinha, Chief Adviser of Dab and BMA President Dr MA Hadi, Dab Secretary General Dr AZM Zahid Hossain and Treasurer Dr Mustaq Rahim Swapan.

AL deadline

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Sources at the Prime Minister's Office and the ministry said additional security measures were taken on the basis of information that the AL might create lawlessness ahead of the deadline.

Efficient officials from across the country were brought to the capital and high officials were briefing them on the next course of action, a home ministry official said.

He said the authorities doubled the numbers of patrol police in Dhaka and asked them to search suspected vehicles even by putting up barbed-wire barricades at important road crossings.

They also activated mobile courts in city streets and asked the law-enforcers to raid sensitive spots.

The police administration in Munshiganj, Gazipur, Manikganj, Narayanganj, Narsingdi, Comilla and Chandpur were also instructed to mount a watch on political activities.

Sources said Prime Minister Khaleda Zia yesterday called out State Minister for Home Lutfozzaman Babar and inquired about the details of security arrangement.

The home ministry yesterday instructed police to exercise caution during search and raid operations so that people do not feel harassed and asked them not to arrest innocent people during raid or search.

KEPZ chief

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Chittagong Medical College Hospital and later shifted to the Combined Military Hospital in Dhaka.

As Rabbani's condition deteriorated, he was sent to Bumrungder Hospital for treatment on April 14. He breathed his last at the hospital at 11:00am yesterday.

His body will be flown into Dhaka by Thai Airways today. He will be buried at military graveyard in Banani.

Awami League President Sheikh Hasina has expressed deep shock at the death of Commodore Rabbani.

In a condolence message yesterday, Hasina conveyed sympathy to the bereaved family members and prayed for the salvation of the departed soul.

Ershad Shikder

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His confessions helped Ershad's trial leading to the death penalty.

Nur said Ershad had raped his wife several times at gunpoint and turned hostile to him as he protested this.

Superintendent of Khulna jail Mohammad Farhad Mia ruled out any possibility of appointing an under-trial prisoner (Nur) as hang-man of a convict carrying death penalty. "I am not opting for an idea like this although there is no bar to it under jail code," he said.

Meanwhile, Ershad has the wish to meet Shaad Yasmin (14), his only daughter from his first wife. The jail authorities will arrange this meet at a convenient time before his execution, sources said.

Ahmadiyya

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past attacks on members of the Ahmadiyya community and violation of their fundamental rights.

The inquiry should seek to identify those who killed Ahmadiyya mosque Imam Shah Alam of Raghunathpurk village in Jessore last October and those who beat up other Ahmadiyyas, the report said.

It stressed identifying those involved in the "excommunication" and nearly 25 days of illegal house arrest of 17 Ahmadiyya families of Kushtia's Uttar Bhabanipur village in October 2003.

The AI also asked the government to identify Islamist leaders and others who, since October 2003, have been engaged in fomenting anti-Ahmadiyya sentiments through chanting hate slogans and organising marches to occupy Ahmadiyya mosques.

"The inquiry should seek to establish if any police personnel has acted in connivance with those attacking the Ahmadi (Ahmadiyyas)," the report said.

The AI urged the government to fully implement the recommendations of the said investigation as soon as they become available.

"While the Government of Bangladesh has acted to prevent the crowds from entering Ahmadi (Ahmadiyya) mosques, it has taken no action against the perpetrators of the hate campaign. Fundamental rights of the Ahmadi (Ahmadiyyas) have been further violated by a government ban on their publications."

This action (the ban, imposed on January 8) by the government has further aggravated the plight of the Ahmadiyya community, the report said, mentioning news reports that Islamist leaders' have been putting pressure on the local administration to allow them to enter Ahmadiyya homes and remove the banned publications.

"Amnesty International is urging the Government of Bangladesh to ensure the safety and security of the Ahmadi (Ahmadiyya) community; uphold its members' right to practice their religion without fear of persecution; lift the ban on their publications; and ensure that those responsible for attacks against Ahmadi (Ahmadiyyas) are brought to justice," the report said.

Indian polls

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popular Bollywood actor Govinda who has been pitted against Indian Petroleum Minister Ram Naik seeking a double treble from Mumbai North constituency.

Some of the other political heavy-weights whose electoral fortune will be decided on April 26 are Defence Minister George Fernandes in Muzaffarpur constituency in Bihar, Rudy of BJP against Bihar strongman and RJD chief Laloo Prasad Yadav in Chhapra and Laloo's latest ally Ramvilas Paswan in Hajipur.

All these electoral battles are in Bihar where 17 of the total 40 seats are heading for polling in the second phase after voting was held in 11 seats in the first phase. Eminent film director Prakash Jha's maiden electoral outing will also be decided on April 26 from his home constituency of Bettiah, also in Bihar.

The second phase will complete the polling in Maharashtra in the West, Andhra Pradesh and Karnataka in the South and Jharkhand and Assam states in the East. Nationally, polling will be over in 279 constituencies after April 26.

Out of the five-phased elections for a total of 543 members in Lok Sabha, polling in the first phase held on April 20 had covered 140 constituencies and two days later two seats in north-eastern state of Tripura went to polls.

Before the deadline for publicity guns to fall silent, Vajpayee addressed rallies in different parts of the April 26 poll-bound states and so did Sonia.

Keeping the importance of Uttar Pradesh in mind, Rahul and Priyanka stepped for the first time out of Amethi and Rae Bareilly to campaign for other Congress candidates in the state, giving a boost to the party rank and file looking for revival of the moribund organisation.

Of particular significance was Rahul's road-show in the impoverished eastern part of Uttar Pradesh where he began the electioneering in the temple town of Varanasi. Mounted atop a vehicle, the 34-year-old fifth generation of Nehru-Gandhi dynasty waded through crowds of supporters who greeted him enthusiastically.

Rahul's sister Priyanka, who is looking after electioneering in her mother's constituency, too moved out and campaigned in Sultanpur constituency, where Gandhi family loyalist and Congress candidate Satish Sharma is in the fray, and she too got an enthusiastic response from the crowd.

Addressing impromptu rallies, Priyanka said those indulging in divisive politics should be defeated in the elections. In an apparent reference to BJP's stepped up bid to reach out to Muslims who constitute 17 percent of Uttar Pradesh's 17 crore electorate, she said they remember the minority community whenever elections are there.

Vajpayee addressed a rally in Mumbai yesterday sharing the dais with Shiv Sena leader Bal Thackeray and sought to find holes in Congress' alliance-building exercise. He said BJP is the only party which has proved that it can run a coalition.

He charged that Congress was opportunistic in seeking alliances without having conviction in coalition government. He said it was strange that Congress had firmed up alliances with Maharashtra's Nationalist Congress Party whose chief Sharad Pawar quit Congress raking up Sonia's foreign origin issue.

The prime minister also targeted Congress' tie-up with DMK party in Tamil Nadu, saying Congress had pulled down I K Gujral government in 1997 after accusing the DMK of having links with those involved in the assassination of Rajiv Gandhi.

Vajpayee once again sought Muslim votes for BJP saying, "We welcome Muslims to come to us and we do not look at them suspiciously. But they should debate the matter and decide for themselves."

"Not only the doors of our organisation for Muslims (are open) but also our hearts," he added.

Deputy Prime Minister LK Advani toured Assam on the final day of

campaigning yesterday to boost BJP's electioneering after the NDTV exit poll for the first phase of polling held in the state on April 20 predicted a disappointing performance by the saffron party.

Out of the six seats which went to polls in the first phase, the exit poll had given just one to BJP and the second phase will witness elections in remaining eight seats in Assam.

Congress candidate and actor Govinda's bid for maiden appearance in Lok Sabha got a fillip when Sharad Pawar campaigned for him.

The actor had been reportedly sulking that local Congressmen had not been whole-heartedly working for his electioneering. Earlier, Sonia also addressed an election meeting in Govinda's constituency.

MANIPUR REBELS ATTACK CONGRESS MINISTERS' HOMES

AFF, meanwhile, reports quoting police from Assam's capital Guwahati that rebels opened fire on the homes of three top politicians in India's state of Manipur yesterday.

Police described the attack as an attempt to trigger panic ahead of elections next week. There were no casualties when the rebels sprayed the homes of three ministers in the revolt-hit northeastern state with automatic weapons fire late Friday, police said.

"The attacks were an attempt to create panic," a police official said.

Some 19 rebel groups are battling in the far-flung state for demands ranging from secession to greater autonomy.

At least three of them have called for a boycott of Monday's election, which is part of the third phase of India's five-stage general elections.

One group has declared a general strike starting Sunday at midnight.

Police said they suspected the Revolutionary People's Front was behind the attacks on the homes of the ministers, who were all from India's opposition Congress party in power in Manipur.

"There's complete panic and chaos with most of us unable to venture out of our homes for fear of rebel attacks," said M. Singh, a member of Prime Minister Atal Behari Vajpayee's Bharatiya Janata Party, in the state capital Imphal.

Two parliamentary seats are up for grabs in Manipur. Last Tuesday, attacks by militants and the kidnapping of poll officials marred voting for the first seat. Monday's poll will be for the second seat.

More than 10,000 people have died in rebel-related violence in Manipur over the past two decades.

On Thursday militants killed three security officers in a remote area in Bishenpur district, 120km from Imphal, police said.

OIC chief

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He said Malaysia wanted the post because it felt it was time for the country to put forward its own candidate.

"This will also help as Malaysia is currently the OIC chair," Abdullah said after chairing an Umno supreme council meeting yesterday.

He said Malaysia's candidate was an experienced diplomat skilled in multilateral diplomacy and the workings of politics and was also well-connected with other organisations.

The OIC secretary-general post is a four-year tenure.

The term of the present OIC secretary-general, Dr Abdelouahed Belkeiz, expires next year.

Malaysia's first Prime Minister Tunku Abdul Rahman was OIC's first secretary-general from 1971 to 1973.

Some countries are using this to argue against a Malaysian secretary-general, citing that other countries should be given a chance instead.

50 hurt

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to Haragach leading a police team and was seriously injured in attacks by the workers. He was admitted to Rangpur Medical College Hospital, police said.

About 50,000 workers of 30 bidi factories of Haragach are on an indefinite strike to realise their eight-point demand that includes enhanced wages, festival bonus, and medical allowance. They have enforced the strike under the banners of Haragach Bidi Mojdur Union, and Haragach Bidi Sramik Union.

The situation has become tense since Friday when a section of workers from a procession attacked two bidi factories. Police brought the situation under control.

Witnesses said clashes started yesterday morning as some unidentified people fired blank shots when a procession of around 30,000 bidi workers was brought out by Amin, president of Haragach Bidi Sramik Union, and Khalequzzaman.

Agitated workers then went on the rampage in five bidi factories and allegedly looted cash and valuables.

This created tension in the area, resulting in closure of shops, markets and commercial banks and suspension of movement of vehicles.

President of Bidi Factory Owners' Association Karim Uddin Bharsa said they would not sit with the workers until they withdrew their strike.

But leaders of the striking workers warned that the strike would continue until their demands were met.

Land allocated

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power substation, uninterrupted power supply, ISDN telephone exchange, wide bandwidth data communication connectivity, fibre optic LAN for high speed data transfer, conference facilities including video conferencing system, housing, hotel and amusement facilities, transport, water supply and sanitation, education and training institutions and medical facilities.

Chief guest of the function Land Minister M Shamsul Islam said the project will give a tremendous boost to the development of IT and greatly improve the country's position in the world IT market.

Land Secretary Azad Ruhul Amin, ruling Bangladesh Nationalist Party's standing committee member Chowdhury Tanvir Ahmed Siddique and Bangladesh Association of Software and Information Services (BASIS) President Sarwar Alam also spoke.

The Bureau of Research, Testing and Consultation of the Bangladesh University of Engineering and Technology has divided the IT park into five blocks.

The blocks will hold administrative facilities including high-tech tower buildings, electronics, IT material science and garments research and development affairs establishments, telecom and IT enabling service structures, biotechnology, medical and pharmaceutical structures and establishments for the high-tech university.

13 Proshika staff

FROM PAGE 12
Shukhkriti Adhikari, Field Officers Ruhul Amin and Samir Kumar.

Police also raided Khulna, Khalishpur, Phultala and Rupsha offices of Proshika on Friday night. But no-one was arrested.

Police said they have seized some objectionable documents from Mongla Proshika office which are enough to conclude that the NGO is involved in anti-state activities in the name of voluntary work.

The arrestees were sent to Khulna and Jessore jails.

In Kishoreganj, four Proshika men were arrested in Hossainpur and Bhairab upazilas on Thursday night, according to the UNB.

They are Prodip Kumar Roy, coordinator of Bhairab area, development workers Safir Uddin and Mofakkarul Islam and office assistant of Hossainpur Bazlur Rashid. The arrestees were sent to jail hajat on Friday.

Municipal polls

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municipalities heading for polls were 'quite normal' and 'under control' and underlined the importance of stepping up security during polls.

"Security measures have to be taken to enable people to cast their votes without fear," Khoda Box Chowdhury, DIG of Dhaka, told the meeting.

"During the polls, police patrols should be strengthened," Kazi Fazlul Karim, assistant superintendent of police in Pabna, said.

Home Secretary Omar Faruk assured the Election Commission of taking steps to ensure peaceful polls.

But Director General of the DGF, Major General Sadek Hasan Rumi, said his office put four municipalities in Dhaka division, 13 in Rajshahi, six in Khulna, 13 in Barisal, three in Sylhet and four in Chittagong divisions as vulnerable.

"The figure might increase," he said.

Distraught they return

FROM PAGE 1
"Walking like men possessed in that night, we suddenly met two Bangladeshis. They sent us to a transport office," recalled Azizul of Bogra. "We pleaded with the office owner to give us two cars for \$240 so that we can travel to Amman."

The owner finally obliged them. Spending the night inside a battered house, they set out for Amman the next morning. Much to their horror, they saw the two compatriots lying dead in rubble on their way out of the city.

"Hearts lunged to our throats when US soldiers stopped us on the road and searched us thoroughly," said Imam Hossain of Feni.

They heaved a huge sigh of relief when they were cleared to go. "But as soon as we reached the border, we faced a new problem. Jordan's immigration officials refused to let us enter and pushed us back to Iraq. Then the Iraqi immigration did the same."

They remained stranded at the border for two days with no authorities willing to accept them. Their sordid story could hardly reach the hearts of immigration officials of the two countries because of the language barrier.

"We could neither sleep nor did we have anything to eat for two long days," said Narayanganj's Mustafizur Rahman with tears rolling down his cheeks. "Finally, the Jordanian authorities allowed us to sit under the open

US eases sanctions

FROM PAGE 12
press secretary Scott McClellan said.

Last year, Libya removed a major obstacle to more normal relations with the United States by meeting US demands stemming from the bombing of Pan Am flight 103 in 1988. Libya accepted responsibility for the bombing and promised to pay \$10 million in compensation to each family of the 270 victims.

In addition to the economic steps the White House announced, fledgling diplomatic ties will be upgraded to permit the opening of liaison offices in Washington and Tripoli. This would be a prelude to the eventual establishment of normal diplomatic relations.

The easing of sanctions imposed in 1986 and those called for under a 1996 Libya sanctions law will allow a resumption of oil imports from Libya and permit most commercial activities, financial transactions and investments.

The 1996 measure also carried the threat of penalties against foreign companies that made significant investments in Libya's energy sector. No penalties have been applied.

1,000 more

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fundamental rights to punish one without allowing him the scope of self-defence," he added.

Special Public Prosecutor of the Public Safety Tribunal AFM Golam Fattah also expressed similar views.

Our Staff Correspondent in Khulna reports: Police raided the houses of local leaders of the AL and its front organisations on Friday night.

They raided the houses of district Jubo League President Kamruzzaman Jamal and Sheikh Abu Hanif, president of district unit of Bangladesh Chhatra League (BCL). They were not at their houses during the raids.

Police arrested Dakop upazila AL leader Achintya Kumar Saha, Joint Secretary of district BCL Mirza Saiful Islam Tutul and general secretaries of Terokhada and Chitalmari upazila units of the BCL.

7 GLs, 4 cops killed

FROM PAGE 1
of Tikrit. Twelve policemen and four civilians were wounded in the attack, according to police.

In Sadr City, where militant Shia cleric Moqtada Sadr draws much of his support, three separate explosions killed at least eight people and wounded 33 more, many of whom were in critical condition, according to hospital staff.

The origin of the attacks remained unclear but a US military official said they may have involved mortars or missiles fired by militiamen of Sadr's Mehdi Army.

But angry residents milling around burnt and bullet-ridden cars claimed US planes fired missiles on the area.

Sadr supporters have in the past clashed with US troops in the populous neighborhood.

The firebrand Sadr, who is holed up in the southern city of Najaf and is wanted in connection with the murder of a rival cleric last year, warned Friday that his supporters would carry out suicide attacks if US troops entered Shia holy cities.

In Najaf, one of the holy cities, an Iraqi civilian was burnt alive in his vehicle after it came under fire near a coalition base early Saturday, according to hospital sources.

A coalition spokesman said he had no information about the civilian, but said the base, manned by Spanish troops under Polish command, was attacked by eight mortar bombs overnight, and that troops returned fire.

Near Karbala, another Shia holy city, five insurgents who were preparing an ambush were killed by a Polish patrol early Saturday, a coalition spokesman said.

They were all killed when the Poles returned fire after coming under attack, said Polish spokesman Major Ralph Manos.

The fresh violence came as the top US military brass mullied boosting the troop presence in Iraq.

sky inside their border. We managed to get a bread and some water from a truck driver following a lot of pleadings."

As hours wore on, the Jordanian police contacted the Gulf Air authorities and luck finally started to smile on them. The police took them to Amman by a car Friday. They boarded a Gulf Air flight from there and reached Dhaka yesterday.

"We sold out our property and borrowed money to get there and work for modest salaries," sobbed Ujjal, also from Narayanganj.

"We did no harm to anyone, why they cheat on poor people like us?" he asked

Other victims are Salam Sarkar (Rajshahi), Zahidul Islam (Narayanganj), Razzak (Chandpur), Rafiqul Islam (Pabna), Aminul Islam (Sylhet), Delwar Hossain (Sunamganj) and Almas Khan (Mymensingh).

HC summons

FROM PAGE 12
The division bench of Justice Nazmun Ara Sultana and Justice AKM Asaduzzaman passed the order after hearing the government attorney on the suo moto rule of April 17 that asked the government to explain why proceedings of the attempt to murder case against the boy should not be quashed.

Assistant Attorney General Altafur Rahman during the hearing said the First Information Report (FIR) did not mention the name of Iman Ali. It named only Ramzan Ali and his younger brother.

He further submitted that Iman's father Anwar Ali took him (Iman) to the lower court and secured his bail to tarnish the image of the government.

The Daily Star on April 14 ran a report on the surrender of the baby boy before a Dhaka court as an accused in an attempted murder case. He was granted bail upon a bond of Tk 5,000 with two guarantors including a lawyer by Metropolitan Magistrate Mohammad Towfiqul Alam.

Section 82 of Bangladesh Penal Code says implication of a child below 7 years of age in a criminal case is illegal.

Sundari trees

FROM PAGE 12
making the recommendation in favour of some officials who are only too willing to cut down the trees, "alleged a bio-diversity expert preferring anonymity.

Environment and Forest Minister Shajahan Siraj also seems to favour the proposal. At a press conference last month he said he was for felling the sick trees, as they would affect the healthy ones.

Bio-diversity expert Ainun Nishat said there is a government moratorium on felling of trees. It is up to it whether it changes its policy and decides to cut down the trees or not.

But, if the forest department finally goes for cutting down sick sundari trees, the civil society should be involved throughout the process – from selection and harvesting of sick trees to marketing the logs, Nishat asserted.

Sundari trees are the principal source of timber for the people of the districts surrounding the forest. The annual production of sundari wood is about 250,000 cubic feet, forest department sources said. The wood is very hard. It is used mostly for boat building and manufacturing of hard-board and furniture. It also yields good-quality charcoal that has a considerable demand in the market.

The top United States commander in the Middle East suggested he was likely to ask for another extension in the current troop levels in Iraq, now at 135,000, and might even ask for more troops beyond that. The New York Times reported Saturday.