

Some donors may quit

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"Some donor partners who are out there doing programmes on the ground may withdraw if the (security) situation in the areas where they are working becomes worse," Patel said. Patel added, however, that the World Bank and the majority of donors would remain in the country working towards poverty eradication. "There is no scenario for stopping what we are doing ... but if the situation improves the country can expect to get much more donor support," he said.

Representatives from 32 donor countries and agencies took part in the annual Bangladesh Development Forum in Dhaka. Prime Minister Khaleda Zia told the donors yesterday her government was working hard to tackle many law and order problems, which she blamed on the previous government.

She listed some of the initiatives taken as fast-track courts, rapid reaction police units and monitoring of serious crime cases by a central government cell. Our Staff Correspondent adds: Development partners yesterday called for a national consensus in the key areas of politics and governance as the government said the factors presented key barriers to faster growth in future.

The donors also called upon the political leaders to resolve the root causes that contributed to confrontational politics at a press briefing at Sonargaon Hotel. "The road to Bangladesh's economic progress will be really bumpy if we continue the politics of confrontation," Finance and Planning Minister M Saifur Rahman said. Patel said Bangladesh's growth and service delivery successes could not be sustained without resolution of the root causes of confrontational politics.

"Many of us expressed concern that Bangladesh's dysfunctional politics may be an even sharper constraint. We urged the government to build a national consensus on the reforms most critical to poverty reduction. Our message of national consensus is a message equally targeted to the opposition," he added. "We should not get involved in internal issues here. But the issues came up in the discussion like improving governance, law and order and infrastructure need to be addressed. Bangladesh's economy can grow six or seven or eight percent but these are the key factors for which the country is not getting

desired progress," he told the briefing.

"We stand by the government to provide a strong support for implementing the PRSP (Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper) programme to alleviate poverty. I was assured that different issues including security of the citizens would be looked into. No additional support will be extended if nothing is improved."

"Before the BDF meeting, an invitation to the opposition political leader was sent for a pre-consultative meeting, but we did not get any confirmation. The role of both the ruling party and the opposition political party is important. We hope all political parties will play a constructive role," he added.

On the government-NGO relations, he said in response to comments of civil society and donors, the government was re-looking into a bill that would oversee the relations.

Saifur, also a co-chair of the BDF, said: "If we don't have the confrontational politics and can internally mobilise resources, we won't have to depend on donors so much."

The donors would have got a different perception if the government and opposition party had discussed the BDF issues, he said.

There is no basic difference between the ruling party and the opposition about reforms in different areas. But it is unfortunate that when they are not in power they think nobody has the rights to be in office, Saifur said.

"We cannot reap the harvest of our economic potentials because of our political instability and law and order," he added.

Municipal elections

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Moulvibazar, Brahmanbaria and Habiganj municipalities alleging gross rigging.

In a joint statement, its Acting President Abdus Samad Azad and General Secretary Abdul Jalil accused the ruling BNP of capturing polling booths and snatching ballot papers.

The Fair Election Monitoring Alliance (Fema) in a primary report yesterday said police picked up scores of people on charge of casting false votes in Hajiganj, Gopalganj, Bagerhat and Tanore municipalities.

Another election observer organisation, Brotee, said incidents of intimidation of the voters, false voting, snatching of ballot papers, and threats were reported on the last day of polling.

Cursing, singing

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execution later in the night.

Despite being on the death row, he sings 'songs' which he has composed in his heavily-guarded condemned cell almost every day and never says his prayers unlike the other convicts. The jail officials find the songs of petty thief-turned-powerful politician funny and often talk about them.

One of his songs made way back in 1999 soon after his arrest goes like this: 'You are the puppet master. You have joint eyebrows. You live in palace and I in jail.'

Jail sources say his songs mainly parody his political godfathers of Jatiya Party, BNP and Awami League, some of whom he has killed.

A sombre mood hung yesterday in the Khulna District Jail that houses 2,500-plus prisoners, more than five times its capacity. At 11:00am, a doctor examined 60-kilo Ershad's health and found him fit for execution. The law stipulates that a sick convict cannot be hanged.

At midday, he met his first wife Khodeja, the sons and the daughter and asked them about the fate to his clemency petition. After they told him that the president has turned down his plea for clemency, he cried before his daughter.

Crime to be dealt

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refused to raise the issue of banning of the Ahmadiyya sect despite provocation by an alliance leader.

Nizami highly praised the government for taking a hard line against the AL and suggested the prime minister that the government intensify such measures to crush the opposition's street agitation.

"The Awami League is now morally down after the failed April 30 deadline and it should not be wise for the government to allow it to take to the street," Mujahid reportedly told the meeting.

About the April 30 deadline, Khaleda said: "We already have a clear picture about the conspiracy centring the deadline and we know who were behind it."

"The government will soon take steps against the conspirators so that no-one in future dares to conspire against an elected government through unconstitutional means," she said without elaborating.

While discussing the by-polls, the leaders of the alliance components assured the prime minister that they would extend all-out support to the BNP candidates and would not file their own candidates, as the two seats originally belonged to the BNP.

An alliance leader asked Khaleda to field a strong candidate in Munshiganj-1, which belonged to Prof AQM Badruddoza Chowdhury.

Hasina urge all to start anti-govt agitation

UNB, Dhaka

Awami League (AL) President and Leader of the Opposition Sheikh Hasina has urged the citizens at home and abroad to launch a united movement against the alliance government to free the nation from its "misrule".

"A disastrous situation is now prevailing in the country. As there is no security, we aren't sure if we can talk again with you as of today," Hasina told a meeting in Florida, USA, yesterday.

Chaired by Prof Khalid Hasan, president of the Awami League US unit, the meeting was organised to condemn the killing of Sramik League President and freedom fighter Ahsanullah Master MP at Tongi on Friday.

Recalling the contributions of Ahsanullah Master, the AL chief lamented that the hands of the criminals, "backed by the alliance government", didn't tremble in killing an honest and dedicated person like the master.

She contended that the murder of his party lawmaker was in continuity of a plot and the list prepared by the coalition government to kill popular, influential leaders and organisers of the Awami League throughout the country.

Hasina mentioned the names of other slain AL leaders such as former MP Moutaz Uddin Ahmed of Natore, Adv Monzurul Imam of Khulna and Samsul Islam Suruj of Lalmonirhat.

The former prime minister alleged that BNP leader Hasan Uddin Sarkar had threatened the AL MP with death before the pourasabha election.

Hasina said the government was now hatching conspiracy to mislead the nation, putting blame on the Awami League leaders and workers. "Such heinous act of hiding the killers encourages them to continue the misdeeds."

The leader of the opposition also highlighted a record number of "repression and torture" on women by the government, saying that the government arrested 1,000 women during the "peaceful movement" of the opposition.

AL MP's murder

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"The government is trying to convince us repeatedly that he was killed in an internal feud. But we are not convinced of that," he told journalists during session breaks at Bangladesh Development Forum (BDF) meeting.

The donors will be happy to see the government undertake a proper investigation, punishing the criminals and assuring people that such incidents will not recur, Patel noted.

Curtain down

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Of all the places where polling was held yesterday, southern state of Tamil Nadu is the most crucial to NDA's hopes of returning to power. In 1999, the BJP in the company of a host of regional allies secured 26 of the 39 seats in the state but all those allies have quit the saffron party this time and joined hands with Congress.

The reason Tamil Nadu is central to BJP's calculations now is because that NDA has little presence in the two other major states West Bengal and Kerala.

Among those who cast their votes in Delhi yesterday were President APJ Abdul Kalam, the country's first citizen, Congress chief Sonia Gandhi and her daughter Priyanka.

After casting her vote along with her husband Robert Vadra, Priyanka told reporters here that power was "not important" for her mother and other family members.

"Power is not important for us - me, Rahul or my mother. My mother is doing her job (as Congress leader) to the best of her capacity. It (power) is not a priority for any of us," she told reporters when asked whether Sonia was a Prime Ministerial candidate.

Asked when she would venture into active politics, Priyanka said: "For five years I have been working in my mother's constituency (Amethi). I am seriously in politics."

Former AL

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acting principal Nek Parvin, former founding member of managing committee Fakir Shafir Uddin and Piarey Mostafa, convener of a tender committee.

In the complaint, ruling BNP lawmaker and Chairman of the institute SA Khaleq and nine others were shown as prosecution witnesses.

Quamrunnahr said in the complaint that former principal with the connivance of others misappropriated Tk 40 lakh by forged and false documents. Razia also collected Tk 4.29 lakh from students of HSC and BA (Pass) groups as coaching fees but did not deposit the sum to institute's fund.

After hearing Metropolitan Magistrate Mohammad Emdadul Haq took the case into cognisance and directed Dhaka Anti-corruption Office (Daco) authorities to take necessary action against the accused.

No extra aid if crime

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full implementation of the PRSP can be financed by three sources: increased domestic revenue, greater private investment and more donor funds, he said.

Referring to comments of the Swiss representative to the meet, Patel says the success of the PRSP depends on decentralisation. "Bringing the government closer to people through strong local government (bodies) is essential to increase accountability and service delivery."

The BDF meet that opened on Saturday described the non-economic issues such as political killings and a failure to form an independent anti-corruption commission as major roadblocks to economic growth.

No agency but the International Monetary Fund raised economic issues at the forum and donor agencies incessantly queried the government on any concrete plan of action against the non-economic hindrance to development.

Echoing the views of other speakers at the forum, Patel said Bangladesh's growth could have been higher if there had been better policy and institutions.

He said law and order improvement is central not only to people's safety but to investment climate that would reduce the cost of doing business.

Patel also touched on the speakers' concern at Bangladesh's dysfunctional politics and the low public confidence in the police and courts.

Over the three days, the development partners have expressed concern at the attacks on journalists and the religious minorities and encouraged a quick implementation of the Chittagong Hill Tracts peace accord.

"We hope that the government will tackle and resolve these obstacles with a sense of urgency and strong political will. We wish to see substantial progress achieved in investment climate by next year's BDF."

Patel commended the government for passing the Anti-Corruption Act, announcing the Energy Regulatory Commission and making important procurement, financial management and banking reforms.

On non-governmental organisations (NGOs), he said the government agreed that development partners and NGOs will be consulted before the proposed bill on NGOs is tabled in parliament.

Scientists claim

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University (ANU) have become the first on this particular planet to demonstrate the sharing of secrets via teleportation using quantum physics.

Who cares? Well, a lot of big businesses, because their discovery has moved unbreakable codes, superfast computers and communications inaccessible to cyber-criminals a step closer.

What the team's first boils down to is that, using a laser, they can teleport to a network of recipients a signal which can only be reassembled by a majority of the recipients. Any less and the signal cannot be reconstituted.

The team's leader, Chinese-born Ping Koy Lam, was building on work done by the university in 2002, when they teleported information using a laser beam.

But Ping described the latest achievement as "a much more complex form of information teleportation in the sense that it involves multiple recipients."

Teleportation is defined as the production, disembodyment and successful reconstruction of a signal, which in this case was a high frequency sound to three participants. The message in the future may be spoken or typed.

The researchers used crystals, lenses and mirrors to produce a pair of "entangled" laser beams that are then used to carry fragile information in the form of quantum states.

"These quantum states cannot be measured or copied, making eavesdropping impossible," Lance said in a statement released by the university. "The transmission of the light beams constitutes a secret communication scheme with guaranteed security."

The process of secret sharing is

"The government also confirmed that it had no intention to interfere with or fix ceilings on interest rates for microcredit."

"Development partners also urged the government to quickly complete the investigations of specific NGOs," a World Bank press release said.

On the progress in aid governance, Patel quoted the Asian Development Bank representative as saying: "Simple is beautiful."

Finance and Planning Minister Saifur Rahman said in his closing statement that Bangladesh's goal is to become self-reliant and the government is committed to increasingly financing the PRSP with domestic resources.

On reaching the Millennium Development Goals, Saifur said, "Bangladesh will require more than 7 percent GDP growth a year, which requires substantial investment." He welcomed the donors' intention to meet the financial gap.

On the donors' concern on law and order downside and weak governance, the minister said the government is "doing its best" to form a consensus of all to implement reform to solve the problems. "The results of reform are visible everywhere."

HSC exams

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wards.

The OMR sheets are to be sent by 5:00 in the afternoon if the exam takes place in the morning and by 8:00pm in case of afternoon exams. Post offices will remain open extra hours for this purpose, board officials said.

The exams will be held at over a thousand centres under Dhaka, Comilla, Jessore, Rajshahi, Chittagong, Sylhet and Barisal boards in addition to five centres abroad in Doha, Abu Dhabi, Jeddah, Riyadh and Tripoli.

Examination centres found to be indulging in massive copying will be cancelled, a board official said.

The board officials with assistance of the education ministry have already launched a massive public awareness campaign through publishing advertisement in the print media and posters against copying.

Earlier, the ministry had asked board officials to take effective measures to curb copying. Stern action will be taken against the teachers found to be assisting copying.

Santu Larma

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Khaleda Zia.

"The PM did not allow me to go there. I don't want to make any comment on it right now," Larma, also chairman of Chittagong Hill Tracts Regional Council (CHTRC), told The Daily Star last evening.

The UNPFII secretariat invited him to attend the international conference, which is likely to discuss problems related to indigenous people.

After the PM restricted Santu Larma's trip abroad, representatives of donor agencies at Bangladesh Development Forum's meeting last Sunday asked the government the reason behind the ban. No government response on the issue was available.

On May 5, the secretary of CHT affairs ministry acknowledged Larma, who requires PM's authorisation to fly abroad, was denied the privilege. The secretary said the PM does not want any VIP or MP to go out of the country now, sources said.

In a statement, Parbatya Chattagram Janga Sanghati Samity, a forum of indigenous people, condemned the government's refusal to allow Shantu Larma to join the UNPFII conference in the US.

The government has violated fundamental rights granted by the constitution and also denied the right of a national leader with ethnic background to attend a UN conference, it added.

The statement also criticised the government for denying a citizen's rights to go abroad.

Babar tells

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Babar when asked whether they were trying to arrest the accused including leaders of ruling BNP's youth front Jatiyatobadi Jubo Dal.

On the home ministry press note on the assassination, Babar said as a conference of the Awami Sechcha-sebak League was on-going and as the shootout took place just after the declaration of its committee by Ahsanullah, it may be said that an intra-party feud led to the lawmaker's murder.

He also said police gathered information from the people present on the spot after the killing and the press note was issued on the basis of some evidence. "The press note said it is primarily suspected that the killing might be a result of an intra-party feud," he said, dismissing the BBC question on whether the press note may lead the investigation to different directions.

Ahsanullah

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three-day countrywide mourning programmes.

Beginning from the AL headquarters on Bangabandhu Avenue, the procession meandered through Noor Hossain Square, Paltan intersection, Bijoynagar, Kakrail, Matsya Bhaban roundabout, Shahbagh and Elephant Road before it ended at Russell Square in Dhanmondi.

Opposition leaders and activists from different parts of the capital poured onto the road in front of the AL headquarters -- shouting anti-government slogans and carrying photographs of the slain leader -- before the procession began at about 4:45pm. The procession led to a gridlock, leaving vehicles stranded in clogged streets.

AL leaders blamed the killing of their party colleague on government high-ups, but the ruling coalition linked it to an intra-party conflict.

In a pre-procession rally, AL General Secretary Abdul Jalil said the AL would organise a mourning rally at Paltan Maidan at 3:00pm on May 15, where Leader of the Opposition Sheikh Hasina will announce a programme repeating midterm polls. Another mourning procession and a rally will be arranged in Tongi tomorrow, Jalil said.

Acting President of the AL Abdus Samad Azad, addressing the rally, said the nation was shocked at the killing of Ahsanullah, also a popular labour leader who led many anti-government movements in the last two and a half years.

"He led demonstrations against the misuse of the BNP-Jamaat alliance -- the reason the Khaleda-Nizami government killed him," Azad alleged.

He also alleged the attack was premeditated, as the killers threatened Ahsanullah and Tongi Pourasabha Chairman Ajmatullah with death by phone before Friday's mayhem at a rally in the lawmaker's hometown.

5 killed

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According to witnesses, all the dead are Tempo passengers. Their identity could not be known. The injured are now undergoing treatment at the hospital.

Police sent the bodies to Narsingdi General Hospital for autopsy.

Mannan, Mahi

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the former president's political platform. They also resigned from the BNP the same day accusing the ruling alliance of its failure to govern the country properly.

The ruling BNP today finalises its candidates for the by-elections at a party standing committee meeting with Prime Minister and party Chairperson Khaleda Zia in the chair.

A faction of Jatiya Party led by Anwar Hossain Manju nominated its presidium member Azam Khan for the by-polls of Dhaka-10 constituency.

The main opposition Awami League has so far been sticking to the idea of not contesting the polls, apprehending rigging by the government.

30 lakh people

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fight addiction," said Manas founder President Dr Arup Ratan Chowdhury.

He said Bangladesh is not a drug-producing country but drug traffickers have long been using it as a transit route and big market. He said proximity to two major drug-producing zones -- the golden triangle and the golden crescent is responsible for it.

"Allowing our youths to be addicts means making them worthless, endangering the country's future," said Dhaka University's former vice-chancellor Prof M Maniruzzaman Mian.

Maniruzzaman said parents, teachers and doctors may play a vital role in preventing children from taking drugs, adding, consensus among the politicians is imperative in redressing any social evil like addiction.

Noted economist Dr Atiur Rahman said flawed economic strategies led to unemployed and frustrated youths falling pray to the godfathers and socially influential people.

Rise and doom

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terror. He killed, kidnapped and did whatever needed to exterminate the enemies who stood between him and the jetty.

In the last 20 years, Ershad made about Tk 550 crore. He built "Swarokomol", a palatial house in Sonadanga in Khulna, with about Tk 4 crore in a parade of property in the southwestern city.

He began to widen his horizon in Khulna underworld, taking to every area of crime including smuggling in drugs, gold, border pillars, gems, arms, counterfeit banknote, women and children and basking in unbridled truck robbery and extortion.

He owned an ice mill, a flourmill, shrimp farms and imposing shopping centres with his black money.

Ershad entered into politics during the regime of deposed president Hussein Muhammad Ershad. Using his close ties with top ruling echelons craftily in crimes, he built an empire.

He was elected commissioner of ward No. 21 of Khulna City Corporation, also under the Jatiya Party rule.

After the fall of the Ershad government, the byword for notoriety joined the BNP in 1991.

He was re-elected ward commissioner during the BNP rule and held the post until his arrest.

After the BNP was voted down in 1996, Ershad joined the new ruling party, Awami League, on December 27, 1997 allegedly by bribing some top leaders of the party's local units.

Ershad's empire began to crumble when his crimes began to hit newspaper headlines. Then prime minister Sheikh Hasina asked Khulna AL to expel him and home minister Mohammad Nasim asked the local police to arrest him at any cost.

Ershad Shikder

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meet his first wife Khodeja, three sons, daughter and other relatives at noon. They informed Ershad that the president has rejected his mercy petition. Later in a rare display of emotion, he wept before his daughter but at the same time called his wife and sons names, blaming them for his woes.

Later, he had heavy lunch and took a nap. In the evening, he asked authorities to let him meet his family again and upon refusal, he went back to bed.

US bombs Sadr's HQ

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British Prime Minister Tony Blair apologised Sunday for any abuses committed by British soldiers, and said those responsible would be punished.

As the government acknowledged it had known for months about claims that its troops abused Iraqi prisoners, lawmakers called for the publication of an International Committee of the Red Cross report detailing many of the allegations.

Human rights group Amnesty International said it told British officials about reports of violence and torture a year ago.

"We apologise deeply to anyone who has been mistreated by any of our soldiers," Blair told French television during a visit to Paris.

Meanwhile, US officials are struggling over how best to release the next wave of disturbing photographs, and possibly video films, depicting the US and British troops' catalogue of sex crimes -- beatings, sexual abuse and rape against Iraqi men, women and teenage prisoners.

US President George W Bush is to visit the Pentagon late in last night to try to secure the position of his embattled defence secretary Donald Rumsfeld, who is facing mounting calls for his resignation in the wake of Iraq prisoner abuse scandal in Iraq.

Quoting Pentagon sources different news agencies reported the new graphical evidence includes US soldiers raping a woman prisoner, beating a detainee to within an inch of his life, acting inappropriately with a dead body and others.

A video is expected to emerge - taken by US soldiers - showing young boys being raped by Iraqi guards.

One accused, Sabrina Harman, is said to be posing with a decomposing corpse with her thumbs up. Pentagon sources warned that the abuse of dead bodies - possibly murder victims - is a recurring feature in the

Of the addicts, 3 lakh are in the capital and 45 percent of them are jobless, 17 percent drivers, 49 percent unmarried, 36.5 percent illiterate and 70 percent belong to 15 to 35 age group, the study says. Forty-four percent of the addicts are involved in crimes, it adds.

The study traces seven causes that draw the youths to addiction. Those are crisis in family, social degradation, failure in love, social frustration, aggression of foreign culture, influence of video films and pornography, and lack of saner recreational means.

ATN advisor Saiful Bari, Ananya editor Tasmia Hossain, Dhaka University Prof Rokeya Begum, Justice Habibur Rahman Khan and Amanullah Chowdhury of Bulbul Lalitkala Academy, among other speakers, stressed family role and concerted efforts of social groups for drug abuse prevention.

State Minister for Land Ruhul Kuddus Talukder, BNP Chief Whip Khondaker Delwar Hossain and Manas Genera Secretary film actor Ilias Kanchan were present.

Police filed a number of cases against him and after a clash with an AL-backed group in Khulna jetty No. 4, he went into hiding.

Khulna Metropolitan Police announced a bounty of Tk one lakh on his head.

Ershad's long criminal past had links with about 50 killings, including the sensational murder of Jubo League leader Khalil on May 16, 1999, police say.

An edgy Ershad began negotiations with his patrons in the ruling party, but found nobody to help him against the will of the prime minister.

Relatives say some Khulna-based AL leaders advised Ershad to surrender to law with the promise of help for his early release. Ershad gave in to their wish and surrendered to Sonadanga police on August 11, 1999.

His trial began and local courts convicted him in seven murder cases. After the highest court upheld the lower court verdict of death sentence in Khalid murder case and President Iajuddin Ahmed turned down his mercy petition, Ershad walked to gallows early today.

400 industries

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patrol police and Bangladesh Rifles turned up there.

AL supporters also tried to bring out processions and stage demonstrations in a number of areas but police and BDR personnel foiled their bids.

Meanwhile, at least 11 people including two police constables were injured when a tempo hit three rickshaws when chased by pro-rhatal demonstrators at Bastu Hara Colony (Ershad Nagar) at Tongi.