

PM urges scientists

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President Prof M Shamsher Ali at a function at the International Conference Centre (ICC).

Science and Information Communications Technology (ICT) Minister Abdul Moyeen Khan and acting secretary of the ministry Omar Faruk Khan also addressed the function.

Assuring all possible assistance from the government, the prime minister urged the scientists to take personal, united and institutional initiatives for the development and progress of science and technology.

Referring to the need for the endowment fund, she said it is not possible for a national institution to adopt and implement a long-term plan without an institutional guarantee.

She said Bangladesh Academy of Science is being run with the public and private donations but such an institution cannot con-

tinue its work only with donations.

A guideline has already been framed for the operation of the fund, she said and hoped that the BAS would be able to run its activities utilising the fund.

Moyeen Khan hoped that the scientists would now engage themselves in research to use science and technology for economic development as the prime minister has created the required atmosphere.

Bangladesh Public Service Commission Chairman Prof ZN Tahmidia Begum, Vice-Chancellor of BRAC University Prof Jamilur Reza Chowdhury, BAS fellows AKM Aminul Haq, Prof Mesbah Uddin Ahmed, Prof M Humayun Kabir, Prof Nayeem Uddin, Prof Hazera Mahtab, Prof Hasina Khan and vice-chancellors of all the leading public and private universities attended the function, among others.

Rumsfeld

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Earlier, the foreign ministry said Rumsfeld would separately hold talks with Prime Minister Khaleda Zia, who also holds the defence portfolio and Foreign Minister M Morshed Khan.

"Rumsfeld is expected to discuss bilateral, regional and international issues of common concern during the talks," a ministry press release said, adding, "The visit is reflective of the continued process of interaction at various levels between Bangladesh and the United States."

Rumsfeld, who will be accompanied by a 42-personnel media team and officials, is also scheduled to hold a joint press briefing with Morshed, after calling on Khaleda and Morshed.

He will leave on Sunday morning after overnight stay in Dhaka.

Although the press release did not mention Bangladesh's troops contribution to Iraq or Afghan missions would be on agenda, sources said the visit was part of an intense US-led negotiation.

On a recent visit, US Assistant Secretary of State for South Asia Christina Rocca hinted at holding talks with Morshed on probable Bangladesh troops deployment after sovereignty is returned to an Iraqi interim government on June 30.

But Prime Minister's Defence Adviser Mahbubur Rahman had earlier said Bangladesh would stick to its stand on sending peacekeepers to Iraq either after a request from the UN or, if the 'occupying forces' left Iraq and a new administration requested for Bangladeshi troops.

Some left and Islamic organisations have announced protest rallies in Dhaka for today against Rumsfeld's visit and human rights activists sent a legal notice to the government against a probable agreement to commit troops to Iraq as part of a US-led force.

Main opposition Awami League has not shown any signs to withdraw its 24-hour hartal that coincides with the visit. The AL had also enforced a hartal during Colin Powell's visit.

In separate statements yesterday, the Workers Party, Communist Party of Bangladesh (CPB), 11-party alliance, Islamic Constitution Movement and Anti-imperialist Democratic Unity, urged all to resist Rumsfeld's visit.

Samajtantrik Chhatra Front and Ektattor Ghatat Dalal Nirmla Committee in separate statements also protested the visit of the US defence secretary.

30 hurt

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Godagari Police Station Zahedur Rahman and three constables were injured during the clash that raged in Sultanganj for two hours from 11:00am, halting traffic on Rajshahi-Chapainawabganj road.

Local people claimed that BDR fired at least 25 bullets on them without provocation, but BDR officials said they fired 10 rounds of gunshots to disperse the mob that obstructed seizure of smuggled goods and damaged BDR vehicles.

Sources said Godagari BDR Company Commander Nayek Subedar Mustafa, on a tip-off, chased a Chapainawabganj-bound bus from Mohishbari and seized nine sacks of sugar smuggled in from India and arrested three women including Sajeda from the bus after it reached near Sultanganj BDR outpost.

But when the paramilitary personnel beat and stripped Sajeda while dragging her to the outpost, a local businessman, Rakib, protested. The BDR men then started beating Rafiq with rifle butt, prompting hundreds of locals to fight pitched battles with them.

BDR reinforcement was sent to the scene. Additional force from Rajshahi and Godagari police led by OC Zahedur Rahman also rushed to the spot.

Later, BDR Commanding Officer Lieutenant Colonel Selim visited the scene.

Brac

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The Gates Foundation, presented the \$1 million award to Fazle Hasan Abed, founder and chairman of Brac, at the Foundation's 31st annual international conference in Washington yesterday.

"Brac has done what few others have -- they have achieved success on a massive scale, bringing life-saving health programmes to millions of the world's poorest people," said Bill Gates.

"They remind us that even the most intractable health problems are solvable, and inspire us to match their success throughout the developing world."

"Health, like social equality and freedom from poverty, is a basic human right, and is at the core of our vision for a just and enlightened Bangladesh," said Abed.

"My colleagues and I are honoured to receive this recognition, and we are pleased to announce that the award money will be used to support the new James P. Grant School of Public Health at Brac University."

A jury of international public health leaders, including the Global Health Council's board of directors and other experts from around the world, selected Brac from more than 50 other organisations nominated for the award.

Bid to insert

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without their merits being tested, sources explained.

After the finance minister came across the 113 unauthorised projects, he directed the planning ministry to drop all of them from the main ADP and keep them without any budgetary allocation.

Planning ministry sources said the malpractice has its root in the personal interests of some bigwigs of the ministry as well as some ministers and parliamentarians.

Some of these projects did not even come from the ministries concerned. The planning ministry itself adopted them.

For instance, a project titled 'Upgrading Jagannath College into an University' was not placed by the education ministry, whose concern it is. Instead, the planning ministry went out of the way in putting it in the ADP against an allocation of Tk 50 crore and showing an expenditure of Tk 1 crore for the next fiscal year.

The project wants to allow the future Jagannath University also to operate privately at night.

Sources said the project was incorporated in the ADP because the wife of a planning ministry high official is a management committee member of Jagannath College.

When asked to verify whether the education ministry was involved in the project or not, an official of the ministry said, "It may have been incorporated as a priority project identified by the Prime Minister's Office."

Sources said the printed ADP document for next fiscal year now shows 972 projects. But after revision, the number of projects would come down to 872.

Among the irregularly inserted projects are 'management efficiency enhancement programme for civil services of Bangladesh,' 'construction of various sports complexes, jails, buildings, etc,' and 'initiating the Rup Pur Atomic Power Centre'.

Sources said some of these projects do have apparent good values, while a good many are construction oriented and many do not have any positive significance at all.

Business leaders

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representatives from five other chambers attended the meeting and decided to discuss the issue with the commerce minister as soon as possible," Abul Kashem Ahmed, general secretary of the CCP, told The Daily Star yesterday.

The meeting, with Federation of Bangladesh Chambers of Commerce and Industry (FBCCI) first vice-president Kamaluddin Ahmed in the chair, was held at the FBCCI conference room in Dhaka. FBCCI President Abdul Awal Mintoo however did not show up in the meeting.

The chamber leaders also felt the commerce ministry move will clear the way for government interference in the affairs of the trade bodies. "If the ministry order is implemented, a business leader will be removed from his position unless he acts in line with government desire in future," said a president of a chamber who attended the meeting.

The ministry on May 17 sent a letter to the FBCCI president asking him to take measures to incorporate a clause in Articles 14 of its Memorandum of Articles of Association that would enable the members of its board to remove the president or the vice-president for their conduct deemed detrimental to the interest of the apex trade body.

The meeting was held a day after some leading chambers and trade associations urged Commerce Minister Altaf Hossain Choudhury to rescind the government order as it created widespread dissatisfaction among the business community.

The associations are Dhaka Chamber of Commerce and Industry (DCCI), Metropolitan Chamber of Commerce and Industry (MCCI), Bangladesh Chamber of Industries (BCI), Chittagong Chamber of Commerce and Industry (CCCI), Foreign Investors Chamber of Commerce and Industry (FICCI), American Chamber of Commerce in Bangladesh (AmCham),

Bangladesh Garment Manufacturers and Exporters Association (BGMEA), International Chamber of Commerce, Bangladesh and Bangladesh Association of Banks (BAB).

The government order came after the FBCCI president at a press conference on April 26 came up with a set of proposals to reform key areas including politics, now in a confrontational state. The proposals called for increasing the power of the president, reducing the number of ministries to 20, strengthening the Supreme Judicial Council, creation of two posts of deputy speaker -- one each from the treasury and opposition benches -- and formation of citizens' committees to curb corruption of police.

The business leaders at yesterday's meeting also viewed that frequent hartals and deteriorating law and order situation have made it difficult for them to survive. "It is the businesspeople who bear most of the negative impacts of hartals," another president of a chamber was quoted as telling the meeting.

Private news agency UNB adds: SM Nazrul Islam of Khulna, who is also a FBCCI director, blamed former president Yussuf Abdullah Haroon and Mohammad Ali, who was a vice-president at that time, for allowing the reforms, curtailing the right of general members to fill up the top posts through direct election.

"If you could have resisted it strongly at that time, the black indirect voting system would not have come. But you had moved in a way that enabled you to remain in the chair for three years instead of two years and the government took the advantage," he said.

As the government order awaits approval of the EGM (extraordinary general meeting) of the FBCCI on June 12, CCP President and FBCCI Vice-President Kamaluddin Ahmed urged the chamber presidents to express their sentiment unitedly.

Security upped

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Afghanistan."

The DIG said, "All incidents of killing and tortures between April 1 and May 31 by JMB cadres will be investigated just as we are hunting down the underground operatives."

He reiterated Bangla Bhai will be arrested at any cost.

"All police stations, particularly those in Rajshahi Division, have been notified for arresting Bangla Bhai at sight," said the divisional police chief.

But he admitted police have no information about Bangla Bhai till now.

Sources said the JMB leaders police picked up on Monday -- Hemayet Uddin Himu and Abul Master -- were released yesterday.

On allegations that police were not recording cases on JMB torture, the DIG said he would take action if the victims of torture informed him about this.

He told reporters police superintendents of Naogaon, Rajshahi and Natore were asked to probe all incidents of JMB atrocities in Atrai, Ramnagar, Bagmara, Puthia, Durgapur and Naldanga. "If the victims' families do not dare to file cases, police will file cases," he added.

The DIG had earlier declared an award of Tk 50,000 for information about Bangla Bhai.

Talking to The Daily Star, the DIG who took charge when JMB

operated across Bangladesh, the Islam outfit leaders said.

A string of bomb attacks on cultural and political gatherings that left more than 140 dead between 1997 and 2004 also indicates strong presence of Islamic militants.

A bomb blast at Hazrat Shahjalal Shrine in Sylhet on May 21 is the latest attack that injured British High Commissioner to Bangladesh Anwar Choudhury and killed three other people.

Some Islamic leaders operating from madrasas are also campaigning for the Taliban concept and motivating young students to destroy the democratic system.

Despite a host of newspaper reports, the government apparently cloaked all terror episodes in mystification.

US-SAUDI ANNOUNCEMENT
Reuters reports from Washington that US and Saudi officials believe transferring Al-Haramain's concerns to the Saudi National Commission for Relief and Charity Work Abroad would help keep charitable donations out of wrong hands.

"We do this in order to ensure that the charity of our citizens goes to those who need it and that we know where funds go when they leave Saudi Arabia," Al-Jubeir told the press conference.

Jubeir said the new entity would operate with transparency and provide quarterly reports on how funds are spent.

"This is very important," said Dennis Lormel, until recently the head of the Federal Bureau of Investigation's terror financing section. "It's significant because all along previously the Saudis were dragging their heels on Haramain."

"The symbolism that the Saudis have finally stood up and are joining in some type of action speaks volumes," he said.

The announcements followed the weekend killing by suspected al-Qaeda gunmen of 22 people in a hostage-taking and shooting spree in the eastern Saudi city of Khobar. It was the second attack in a month on the Saudi oil industry.

American officials added Al-Haramain's former head -- Aqil al-Aqil -- to the US list. Saudi Arabia has dismissed Aqil from Al-Haramain, frozen his assets and is investigating his activities.

Al-Haramain was first added to the US list on March 11, 2002, when its Bosnian and Somali branches were designated. On January 22, Washington and Riyadh announced they added its branches in Indonesia, Kenya, Tanzania and Pakistan.

SP held

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efforts to capture a ruling BNP man in connection with Ahsanullah Master MP murder case.

Baten refuted the allegations of bribing and told some reporters that it was a conspiracy against him.

Police sources said Baten led the recent raids in Gazipur to nab Nurul Islam Sarker, a leader of ruling BNP's youth front Jatiyatabadi Jubo Dal, over the killing of the Awami League lawmaker. Anonymous callers threatened him with dire consequences after the raids, the sources added.

Police said Baten, who received the transfer order just two days ago, entered Babar's office at the Secretariat on the plea of having a talk with him. He then put a packet containing money on the table, requested Babar to accept it and cancel his transfer order. He also told the minister that he wanted to remain posted in Dhaka since he is due to retire in about 16 months' time.

Babar informed Home Secretary Omar Farooq and Inspector General of Police Shahudul Haque about the incident. Baten was sent to Ramna Police Station after arrest and suspended.

Sources said Baten had gone to the deputy inspector general of CID, who reportedly assured him of posting in Dhaka. But Baten received another letter asking him to join his new duties in Khagrachhari.

Army, BDR

FROM PAGE 12
date Momin Ali in the last moment campaign.

Four candidates are contesting the race, but the main battle will be fought between the BNP and the BDB candidate.

The Election Commission (EC) secretariat has already sent polling materials to the constituency.

According to EC decision, army was supposed to be deployed from yesterday evening.

BDB asks

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BDB chief B Chowdhury said his party symbol 'Kula' is a token, by which the people will reject the evil forces from the government. He asked all to start out government movement under the umbrella of the BDB.

Major (Retd) Abdul Mannan, secretary general of the BDB, said the corrupt government is afraid of his party, and that is why they are trying to deprive the BDB of its election symbol 'Kula'.

Mahi urged BDB activists not to maintain any relations with the government that steals people's money and patronises crime.

As many as 243,451 voters will select their representative in the by-elections. The Election Commission will deploy 500 military and para-military forces at 59 polling centres.

However, all the centres have been identified as vulnerable regarding law and order.

Upazila Nirbahi Officer of Srinagar Eshanul Parvez told newspapers yesterday that they have taken necessary precaution for peaceful and transparent polls.

PDB skips talks

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The PDB however argues the tendering was needed because of lack of competition.

"Nowadays we don't get small scale plant (below 100 megawatt) developers because bigger plants have become cheap and cost effective. But we have this project site ready and the first phase 95 megawatt Fenchuganj plant already running. That is why we want to build a second unit of similar size amid limited interest of the bidders," said a top PDB official requesting not to be named.

"In the first three bids, the competition was poor but we wanted to have a good deal. And now we have become impatient about getting the deal finalised. So we have gone for Sumitomo's offer."

He went on, "But we really did not violate the tender process. The additional cost was optionally there in the original offer of \$83 million. This will be required if we want to add a gas supply booster to the plant. We may not ultimately need the booster."

But another source points out the tender covered the booster and that Sumitomo's original offer should have taken that into account.

The power division of the energy ministry is now processing clearance of the Sumitomo offer. It will then be sent to the cabinet purchase committee for final clearance.

Sources said a lobby belonging to the 'alternative powerhouse' of the government has been trying since September 2002 to make the PDB sign the deal with a certain company.

Al-Haramain continues

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women and children under the veil of imparting Islamic education.

Although allegations against the members of the organisation were specific, they were released after a few days as the police said they failed to find evidence against them, Sources said they were released under external pressure.

Al-Haramain has been active in Bangladesh since it opened an office in Cox's Bazar in 1992 to help Rohingya refugees. It opened an office in Dhaka in 1995 and runs four orphanages in Uttara, Nilphamari and Gazipur and 60 mosques across the country. It spread its network to 38 districts and received a five-year grant of Tk 19.27 crore until 2001.

"The western world and its supporters who are Christians, Jews and part of the Muslims are against Islam and it is part of their long-term plan to freeze our funds," said Hasan Adam, country director of Al-Haramain Islamic Studies, Bangladesh.

Sudan-born 45-year-old Adam said Al-Haramain was targeted because of its popularity. "It is not that they won't get on others. They will target every organisation one after another and this is just the beginning. Look at them. First they captured Afghanistan, then Iraq...and next they might go for Sudan or Jordan."

He denies any links between international or local militant groups and his organisation and says: "We work in the health sector, fund mosques, give relief, set up tubewells and help orphans."

Adam, who was among the seven arrestees accused of backing terrorism, says: "The police did not find evidence against us."

With 169 staffers, including 14 foreigners, and annual allocation of Tk 3.5 crore, the Bangladesh branch of Al-Haramain looks after 400 orphans, 220 non-orphan students and 90 students of higher studies, he claimed.

RISE OF MILITANTS
Although the government denies the presence of Islamic militants in Bangladesh, the recent vigilante action of Jagrata Muslim Janata Bangladesh (JMJB), an outgrowth of Jama'at al-Mujahidin Bangladesh (JMB), underlines their rise.

The JMB is the youth front of Harqat-ul-Jihad, an al-Qaeda funded front banned in the neighbouring countries and blacklisted by the US in the wake of the September 11 incident. The JMB in its camps trains its recruits in warfare and its leaders told The Daily Star that the party wants to establish an Islamic rule in Bangladesh based on Taliban ideology.

More than 100,000 JMB members

CIA chief resigns

FROM PAGE 1
strong leader in the war on terror.

"I send my blessings to George and his family and look forward to working with him until he leaves the agency," Bush said.

Tenet had been under fire for months in connection with intelligence failures related to the U.S.-led war against Iraq, specifically assertions the United States made about Saddam Hussein's purported possession of weapons of mass destruction, and with respect to the threat from the al-Qaeda terrorist network.

In May, a panel investigating the Sept. 11 attacks released statements harshly criticising the CIA for failing to fully appreciate the threat posed by al-Qaeda before the terrorist hijackings. Tenet told the panel the intelligence-gathering flaws exposed by the attacks will take five years to correct.

Notwithstanding his controversial place in the history of Washington, Tenet's resignation seemed to take the city by surprise.

On Capitol Hill, House Speaker Dennis Hastert said: "He served his country a long time. History will tell what the implications of his tenure were."

"I think history will tell," the Illinois Republican said when asked how Tenet's performance would be judged. "It's too early to make that snap judgement."

Acting secy

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Nurul Islam told The Daily Star last night that he had not received any letter relating to termination of his service. He also declined to make any comment about the allegations slapped against him and said he attended office yesterday.

Sources at the Prime Minister's Office (PMO) said the acting secretary was put under virtual suspension since Wednesday.

They said Islam came under fire from the prime minister himself as he ordered investigation into a number of allegations of corruption which the anonymous letter made against Tarique.

Islam joined as private secretary to the prime minister with the rank and status of deputy secretary immediately after the BNP-led alliance government assumed office. He was promoted to the posts of joint secretary and additional secretary in a year before being made acting secretary to the PM.

Islam reportedly joined anti-BNP government platform 'Janatar Mancha' in 1996, but he still emerged as one of the most influential officials with the blessing of the head of the government. He is believed to have influenced most of the administrative decisions such as promotion, posting and appointment that the PMO took.

PMO sources said Islam received an anonymous letter addressed to him in early April and issued orders

operate across Bangladesh, the Islam outfit leaders said.

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"I think history will either vindicate him or say, 'He there was a problem there,'" Hastert said.

Retired Adm. Stansfield Turner said he thought Tenet had been "pushed out and made a scapegoat."

"I don't think he would have pulled the plug on President Bush in an election cycle without having been told to do that," Turner, a former CIA director, told CNN.

Sen. Charles Schumer, D-N.Y., called Tenet "an honourable and decent man who has served his country well in difficult times, and no one should make him a fall guy for anything."

During his seven years at the CIA, speculation at times has swirled around whether Tenet would retire or be forced out, peaking after the terror attacks of Sept. 11, 2001 and surging again after the flawed intelligence estimates about Iraq's fighting capability.

Tenet is the son of Greek immigrants who grew up in Queens, N.Y.

Some close to Tenet have said the job overseeing more than a dozen agencies that make up the intelligence community has been taxing for him. He suffered heart problems while at the National Security Council during the Clinton administration, although a CIA official said his resignation was not health related.

City-centric growth

FROM PAGE 1
Development Programme (ADP) up to a reasonable level and reaching the benefits of the macro-economic developments to the rural poor would be two major challenges the government would face in the future.

According to it, the other key challenges for the government would be: pushing GDP growth beyond 6 percent, ensuring a more equitable distribution of incremental GDP, lifting private investment share beyond 20 percent, improving domestic savings rate to 20 percent, keeping inflation rate under control and maintaining exchange rate stability.

The report suggested expansion of safety net programmes for the poor and pension scheme for elderly people, and special initiative to meet the looming power and energy crises. It also recommended increasing flow of initial public offering (IPO) and keeping a continuous watch on the exchange rate so that it does not face any sudden massive devaluation.

It listed a number of government's successes that include achieving 5.5-percent GDP growth target, buoyant remittance flow, improvement in foreign exchange reserve, stable exchange rate, low fiscal deficit, rising private investment, fresh movement in capital market, import resurgence and continued export recovery.

On the other hand, the report pointed to the government's failure in correcting the gross under-implementation of the ADP, faltering revenue generation, low off-take foreign aid, creeping inflation, 'monga' (near-famine situation) trend and paralysis of privatisation process.

Debapriya expressed his doubt over full implementation of the ADP, as only 45 percent of it was implemented in the first nine months, with 55 percent left for the remaining three months of the fiscal year.

According to his projection, the ADP implementation would face a Tk 4,000-crore deficit, as the implementation level would hardly go beyond Tk 1