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Trade leaders for all-out action against militants

Place 9-point proposal; PM says bombing started in AL regime

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A delegation of the country's top trade bodies at a meeting with Prime Minister Khaleda Zia yesterday demanded of the government immediate all-out measures to eradicate militant activities, particularly terror bombings that they identified as a major threat to the economy.

The terror strikes are panicking the people and scaring off local and foreign investors, the business magnates observed. They stressed the need for a national consensus and asked the government to take initiatives to hold dialogues with all political parties to reach such a consensus on how to rout out the

militants.

At the two and a half hour meeting at the Prime Minister's Office (PMO), the country's apex business association, the Federation of Bangladesh Chambers of Commerce and Industry (FBCCI), submitted a nine-point proposal on combating terrorism to the premier.

A number of business leaders also demanded army deployment, which the prime minister did not agree to, meeting sources said.

She told the business delegation that her government, too, is worried over the prevailing situation, but not afraid. "The bombings are but desperate acts by some derailed and misguided people,

who are alienated from the masses, to destabilise the country's present peaceful situation... We will soon solve it," a source quoted her as telling the meet.

The prime minister alleged the bomb terrorism originated during the previous Awami League (AL) government. She said, "The incidents then were not investigated into properly. As a result, bomb attacks have been going on."

She came down heavily on the main opposition and its allies for calling hartals instead of helping the government contain militancy. In an oblique reference to the AL, she told the business leaders that those who enforce hartal frequently and tarnish the country's

image abroad by anti-state propaganda are instigating the militants.

Sounding a note of caution against those involved in militancy, the PM said, "These are not political incidents... the bombers are terrorists... they have no political identity... Nobody involved in the bombings will be spared, whoever he may be."

LGRD and Cooperatives Minister Abdul Mannan Bhuiyan, who was also present on the occasion, said, "The government is going to enact a rigorous law with provisions for speedy trial of those who are killing people in the name of Islam."

"The law is under process and SEE PAGE 15 COL 7



Law enforcers frisk each of the people waiting in a queue at the entrance to the Chittagong Court building yesterday in the wake of attacks on the judiciary by Islamist militants.

ATTACK ON COURTS SC rejects govt petition, upholds HC order with minor changes

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The Supreme Court (SC) yesterday upheld with minor modifications the High Court (HC) order that asked the government to submit progress reports on investigations into the militant attacks across the country.

A three-member Appellate Division bench of SC headed by Chief Justice Syed JR Mudassir Husain made the ruling, rejecting the government's appeal for a stay on the HC order.

The bench, however, deleted the portion of the order that had asked for the statements made by some ruling BNP lawmakers about harbouring the militants allegedly by a section of the alliance government.

In response to a writ petition SEE PAGE 4 COL 3

3 cops bullet-hit in gunfight with JMB militants in Tangail

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Tangail

Three policemen were bullet-hit in a gunfight with the operatives of banned Jama'at ul Mujahideen Bangladesh (JMB) at militant-infested Habla Dakshin Para village in Basail upazila early yesterday.

Tipped off that some JMB cadres had assembled at Probbati Club near Habla Government Primary School, a contingent of Basail police raided the area at around 4:00am.

Sensing the presence of police, some 25 militants sheltering in the club opened fire on them. Police returned fire, leading to a 15-

minute shootout, police said. Scare gripped the locals as the gunshots echoed through the village in the still of the night.

Sub-inspector (SI) Abdul Haque, Constable Abul Bashar and Mohammad Humayun received bullet wounds during the gun battle while the militants escaped unhurt from the scene.

The injured policemen were undergoing treatment at Tangail Police Lines Hospital.

Police said they had fired 30 bullets during the gunfight, which left the upazila simmering with tension.

Nine rounds of ammunition for SEE PAGE 15 COL 4

Govt may take move beyond constitution Hasina fears

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Leader of the Opposition Sheikh Hasina yesterday said the government may resort to any unconstitutional way to escape public wrath.

"Having failed to govern the country, the government has patronised militants to hang on to power and they can take any step which is against the constitution, the country and its people," Hasina said at a press conference.

Asked if she fears any possibility of unconstitutional change of power, the Awami League (AL) chief said, "Yes, we do."

Hasina was addressing the press conference at her Dhanmondi office on the recent activities of the Islamist militants across the country.



Earlier on Friday, a meeting of the AL Central Working Committee took the resolution that "the party is against any change of power by unconstitutional means". SEE PAGE 15 COL 7

Govt okays release of fund to 'terror funder'

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Rajshahi

Just days before the November 29 carnage on two court premises, the government gave consent to release a fund of about Tk 2 crore to the Bangladesh branch of a Kuwaiti NGO, Revival of Islamic Heritage Society (RIHS), which is at the top of the list of suspected donors to Islamic militants in the country.

The funds are for training Imams, and for building mosques and madrasas, said sources in the Bureau of NGO Affairs.

Earlier an intelligence report suggested the government to ban the RIHS, and suspected Ahle Hadith Andolon Bangladesh (Ahab) of channelling the NGO's funds to the banned Jamaat ul Mujahideen Bangladesh (JMB). According to the US Treasury

Department's web site, as part of the US government's financial war on terror it added the RIHS to its list of "Specially Designated Global Terrorists", in January 2002. In addition, the group's directors were added to the terrorist list.

The same organisation was also added to the "Terrorist Exclusion List" of the US government. Any person known to have association with a listed organisation such as the RIHS is currently barred from entering the US.

According to Islami Bank Bangladesh Ltd (IBBL) sources however, RIHS started distributing the freshly released fund on November 29 among its contractors. It is being disbursed through bearer cheques instead of account payee ones, which makes it easier SEE PAGE 15 COL 4

JMB threat continues

STAR REPORT

Arrests of activists of the banned militant Islamist organisation Jamaat ul Mujahideen Bangladesh (JMB), and relentless death and bomb threats from the outfit continues at equal pace throughout the country.

The JMB yesterday threatened to kill an Assistant Commissioner (Land) of Satkhira and the journalists of Faridpur, and threatened to explode bombs at nine different points in Satkhira town.

It also threatened to kill by December 14, eminent journalists, cultural personalities, social workers and political leaders of Barisal.

A private art college received a letter yesterday, which contained a bomb threat and claimed that the meaning of JMB is Jamaat-e-Islami Bangladesh.

Different educational institutions in Chittagong city including a number of schools, whose medium of teaching is English, received bomb threats from JMB, reports BDNEWS.

Meanwhile, law enforcers on Saturday night and yesterday arrested 33 persons including Moulana Muniruddin, one of the top 17 in the law enforcers' list of suspected JMB militants, from across the country in suspicion of SEE PAGE 15 COL 1

Bill Gates arrives today

STAFF CORRESPONDENT



Bill Gates, the richest man in the world and chairman and chief software architect of Microsoft Corporation, arrives at Dhaka today on a one-day visit amid unprecedented security.

Gates will call on Prime Minister Khaleda Zia and other ministers including finance and planning minister, education minister, science and information & SEE PAGE 15 COL 6

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