

## BNP executive body

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The last National Executive Committee meeting of BNP was held in early 2001 when the party was in the opposition.

Yesterday's meeting started with grievances expressed by many leaders about the five years' delay in holding such an important meeting.

But Bhuiyan watered down any possibility of a hot debate by requesting the participants not to raise any issue other than the December 21 rally.

Criticising opposition leader Sheikh Hasina's demand for a special UN team for investigating the bomb attacks, Bhuiyan said, "They are insane. One day Awami League demands investigation by the Scotland Yard and the other day, they demand something else."

The opposition is trying to divide the people and declaring programmes to create anarchy in the country, Bhuiyan further said.

He urged the opposition to join the government's move against the militants and requested it not to politicise the issue to reap political benefit out of it.

Terming the militants the enemy of the country's independence, sovereignty and democracy, he said, "We must not be afraid of them and work together to face them. The government is determined to eradicate militancy from the country."

Party Vice president and Information Minister Tariqul Islam, Information Minister M Shamsul Islam, Communications Minister Nazmul Huda, Jute Minister Shajahan Siraj, Agriculture Minister MK Anwar, Water Resources Minister Hafiz Uddin Ahmed, Lt Gen (ret'd) Mir Shawkat Ali, State Minister for Law Shahjahan Omar and Dhaka City Corporation Mayor Sadeque Hossain Khoka, among others, spoke at the meeting.

BNP Senior Joint Secretary General Tarique Rhaman, state ministers Lutfozzaman Babar, Amanullah Aman, Alamgir Kabir, Ziaul Haque Zia, Prof Rezaul Karim and Maj (ret'd) Kamrul Islam, BNP leaders Mafiqul Hasan Tripti, Sirajul Islam Selim and Emran Saleh Prince were also present.

## Turner

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lame beggar, told Turner that he took Tk 1,000 as loan from Grameen Bank, purchased a cellphone set and quit begging as he earns Tk 1500 to Tk 1600 each month by allowing villagers to make calls in return for money.

Turner visited a folk fair and a cultural function arranged by the village children.

He will visit the Grameen Bank head office at Mirpur today. Turner will meet Prime Minister Khaleda Zia this noon and attend a press conference at Sonargaon Hotel. The CNN founder will also meet the members of the civil society today.

President of the UN Foundation Timothy E Wirth, former prime minister of Norway Dr Gro Harlem Brundtland, Special Advisor to the UN Secretary-General Nafis Sadik, founder of Grameen Bank Dr Muhammad Yunus, among others, accompanied Turner.

Ted Turner will leave for India tomorrow.

## Two JMB men

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The arrestees, Mohammad Mohiuddin and Mizanur Rahman of Kalihati in Tangail district, admitted their links to the August 17 country-wide bomb blasts to the investigation officers (IOs) during their remand period. But they denied giving confessional statements when they were produced before the Chief Metropolitan Magistrate's (CMM) Court Dhaka yesterday.

They told the court reporters that their top leaders ordered them not to disclose any names and they could not betray their leaders by exposing them.

Earlier, Monwar Hossain, another accused in a case filed with Paltan Police Station, gave a confessional statement to magistrate saying he, along with Mohiuddin, exploded bombs near the Rajuk Bhaban on August 17.

Meanwhile, three JMB members arrested from Baitul Mukarram mosque on Friday, were shown arrested in a case filed for the August 17 bomb blasts on the CMM and Judge courts premises and placed on a five-day remand yesterday.

The arrestees are Ebadullah, 23 and Awal, 22, of Chandpur and Abdul Awal, 20, of Jhalakathi.

## Robbers loot

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was returning home with his driver in a microbus, some youngsters on five motorbikes and two private cars followed them.

The bikers overtook the microbus in front of the Blue Bird High School, took its control at arms point and drove the vehicle to the Salutiok bridge.

Forcing Lutfur to hand over his shop's keys, the criminals joined by others coming in a private car, opened the shop.

After looting Tk 20 lakh in cash and 2.5 cartons of cigarettes from the shop, the gang left Lutfur and his driver Anwar on the road and fled the scene with the microbus.

Lutfur went to the Kotwali Police Station at about 9:00pm and informed the police who arrested four people from Kalighat area suspecting their links with the incident.

The firm was looted several times before.

## Suicide bombers

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His elder brother Ibrahim took part in different killing operations of Bangla Bhai in Bagmara.

Local people lynched Ibrahim and two others on January 22 when a group of JMB cadres was fleeing from a foiled attempt on the life of Awami League leader also Stripur union council chairman, Mokbul Hossain Mridha. Nazrul was also in the group but managed to flee.

Rab also arrested Hasan Ali alias Ikhwana and Newton alias Pintu from Puthia in Rajshahi on the same day. Police took them to a 5-day remand.

The two suspected militants rented a house of Shamsun Nahar at Gondagohali of Puthia, from where they carried out their activities, the police said.

They had planned to explode bombs in Rajshahi city within a day or two, said intelligence sources.

The police are interrogating another suspected suicide bomber, Shahjahan, who was arrested in Thakurgaon and confessed to being involved in the August 17 blast at Halbagan in the city.

## US multinational

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The minister, Matur Rahman Nizami, said many big foreign entrepreneurs like Tata and Dhab Group have shown interest in investing in Bangladesh considering the bright prospect of investment in the country.

"Bangladesh government is determined to protect the interests of the foreign entrepreneurs," he told the American company executives.

William Gast said: "Due to the investment-friendly environment of the country, entrepreneurs from different countries, including the USA, have shown interest in making investment in Bangladesh."

He appreciated education system, agriculture-development programmes, women empowerment and manpower of the country.

The company president sought overall cooperation of the minister in their investment in gas and refinery sectors.

Technical Adviser of WG Petroleum in Bangladesh MI Bhuiyan, MA Jabbar Mollah and representative of Madina Gas Company Zillur Rahim were present.

## UK to provide

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Minister M Morshed Khan and British High Commissioner Anwar Choudhury were present.

The DFID also announced to provide £250 million in the current and next fiscal years without applying any commercial conditions.

The grant will be disbursed for implementation of Bangladesh's Rural Electrification Development Programme (REDP) and UK-Bangladesh Remittance and Payments Partnership Programme (RPP).

The total contribution of the grant includes £50 million for rural electrification and £7.5 million for remittances partnership project, says a British High Commission news release.

The objective of the RPP is to improve access and reduce costs of transferring remittance flow into Bangladesh.

Under the three-year remittance project, four million people will be benefited by saving at least \$25 million, resulting in an additional income of \$84 per poor household.

"Remittance is very important source for a country's economy which is now also a part of the global economy," said Hilary Benn.

He said it is very expensive for the expatriates to send money to their families. The RPP will cut the costs of sending money as well as other difficulties, he added.

Of the £161 million REDP cost, the Bangladesh government will contribute £122 million through Annual Development Programme (ADP) and DFID the rest.

Of the £50 million DFID contribution, £38 million will be disbursed for expanding power distribution system and connecting new consumers, £10 million for new power connection under microcredit programmes through Palli Karma Sohaya Foundation, and £2 million for monitoring and training programmes through the USAID, the news release added.

## Haji flights

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the same number of flights.

The Biman started its haji flights with the chartered 576-seater Boeing 747 of the Corsair, a Corsican airline, which returned on Friday. Another chartered aircraft of the Air Luxor, Airbus 330 capable of carrying 387 people, is expected to arrive at Dhaka today.

However, the Biman authorities could not confirm when the third chartered aircraft, another Boeing 747, would reach Dhaka.

Mirza Fakhru said, "We are trying heart and soul to hire airlines." If the hiring of aircraft does not go as planned, Biman would operate its own Haji flights trimming down several flights on international routes to accommodate the Jeddah-bound haji pilgrims, he added.

In reply to a query, Biman Managing Director Mahmudur admitted that those two airliners were not chartered as per the rules because they had to hire them on emergency basis but the board of directors of Biman has given permission.

The ballottee pilgrims deposited \$950 each while the non-ballottee pilgrims paid \$1050 each.

## SAFF Championship

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reached the last four from this group and the holders need a draw to finish group champions as they are ahead in goal difference. Bangladesh have beaten Bhutan 3-0 and Nepal 2-0 while India go into the final group game with a 2-1 win over Nepal and a 3-0 defeat of Bhutan.

The two sides last met in the semifinals of the Third SAFF Championship in Dhaka in 2003 with the hosts winning that 2-1, thanks to a spectacular golden goal by Matur Munna.

India, however, have a more impressive head-to-head record between the two with nine victories against three losses in their previous 19 internationals.

Bangladesh's other wins against their neighbours came in the 1999 SAFF Games semifinal in Kathmandu when they won 1-0 and in the 1991 SAF Games in Colombo when they beat India 2-1. Previously, the two had met on Pakistani soil in the 1989 SAF Games and the match ended in a 1-1 draw.

## Tangail turns

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district. At least 30 of them were trained in suicide attacks. Twelve of the trained 30 are from Delduar upazila, six from Kalihati, six from Sakhipur, three from Basail, two from Nagapur, and one is from Ghatail upazila.

Earlier, Faisal Ahmed, a member of a suicide squad who had been arrested from his village home at Balla in Kalihati for planting a bomb on August 17 near the Razabag Police Line in Dhaka, told the police that militant activities and training at Kalihati were supervised by his cousins Shoeb and Russel.

Faisal also told the police that JMB trained the militants in the forests at Kalian under Sakhipur, and that Ataur Rahman Sunny, younger brother of Shaikh Abdur Rahman also the chief of the military wing of the banned outfit, used to visit the training camp.

JMB cadre Mamunur Rashid, arrested from Gazipur, in his confessional statement before a magistrate court in Gazipur said JMB trained the militants at Lawhati Jame-mosque in Delduar. Two hours physical training exercises used to be carried out after two hours of theoretical classes on 'Jihad' in the mosque at midnight.

JMB cadre Mohammad Zafar Alam, arrested from Khagrachari, in his confessional statement before a magistrate court said JMB cadres Bellal and Shaheed were in charge of the Baropakhia training camp in

Delduar.

According to different intelligence officials in Tangail, JMB started its organising activities in Tangail in 2000. It established its operational bases at Ahle Hadith mosques at Balla and Rampur under Kalihati upazila, and at Delduar upazila sadar and its adjacent areas.

Later, JMB recruited minor boys from mostly poor families of different villages and from the madrasas in the upazilas as its members. Recruitments were directly supervised by JMB chief Shaikh Abdur Rahman and his younger brother Ataur Rahman Sunny, also chief of the military wing of JMB. The militant network later spread across the district encompassing Basail, Sakhipur, Mirzapur and the Sadar upazila.

Enayet Ullah alias Jewel, who was arrested from Joydevpur in Gazipur early Monday morning for masterminding the recent Gazipur blasts and also for being one of the important leaders of JMB, had been sent to the area earlier to supervise militant activities in the region as a fulltime operative.

Faisal Ahmed told the police that Jewel had played a vital role in establishing strong militant bases at Habla in Basail and at Baropakhia and Lawhati in Delduar.

## Loan defaults rate

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Sonali Bank source said there is no improvement in the recovery of the state-owned enterprises' loans.

The loan default of the NCBs stood at Tk 10,713 crore in September, which was Tk 9,955 crore in December 2004. The amount of classified loan was 24.47 percent of the total outstanding loans at the end of last September.

The loan default of the PCBs stood at Tk 4,169 crore in September, which was Tk 4,194 crore nine months ago. The amount was 7.02 percent of the total outstanding loans, down by 1.51 percentage point from December 2004.

Loan default in most of the PCBs has decreased. Again, due to the close watch of the central bank as well as efforts of the private banks' management, things are improving in the problem banks as far as loan default is concerned.

Pubali and City Bank have recently come out of the problem bank status while United Commercial Bank has managed to cut down its bad loan by half.

Al Arafah Bank has come under close monitoring of the central bank

recently due to some internal problems and its conditions have been improving since then.

In September this year, the total loan default of the FCBs was Tk 110 crore or 1.41 percent of their total outstanding loan of Tk 7,040 crore. In December 04, the volume of default loan was Tk 108 crore in the FCBs.

Loan default in the DFIs have decreased by 8.24 percentage points to stand at Tk 3,663 crore in September. The reason is Bangladesh Shilpa Bank and Shilpa Rin Sangstha are hardly giving any new loans. Besides, they are writing off some old loans.

However in September 05, when the gross loan default was 16.34 percent, the net loan default was rather low at 8.07 percent. Since the banks' provisioning has risen against the loan default, the net loan default has decreased, a BB source said.

Net loan default is considered as the standard of determining bad assets internationally, the source added.

## JP to declare

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politically ready to face the next election."

JP, the second largest opposition in parliament, arranged the meeting to know the district-level leaders' views on forming an electoral alliance as well as strengthen the organisational activities of the party.

Some 16 leaders, presidents and secretaries of different district units of the party, spoke at the meeting and most of them expressed opinion against allying with the BNP-Jamaat-led ruling coalition.

They said the ruling coalition has lost its popularity and the public have become utterly frustrated with the present government's performance, particularly for its 'sheer failure' to contain the bomb terrorism and price hike of essentials. They also alleged the government is trying to exploit the pending cases against Ershad and use him as a political pawn.

Some leaders, however, spoke against the AL-led 14-party opposition, accusing it of splitting the party while some others advised the party chief not to join any alliance at this moment.

"The BNP already knows it will not be able to return to power with Jamaat on board. So it is desperate to get Jatiya Party as its ally to clear the election hurdle," Abdus Salam Chakladar, president of Tangail district unit JP, said.

"You [Ershad] know very well what the people want. You'd better take the decision, considering all aspects," he noted.

Referring to forming alliance with the ruling coalition, President of Bagerhat district JP Sheikh Mahbubur Rahman questioned, "Why should Jatiya Party take the responsibility of the government's failure to run the country?"

"People are fed up with the ruling coalition for its prolonged indifference to militant activities," observed Mahbub Alam Bachchu, JP secretary general of Jessore JP.

Referring to the pending cases against the party chairman, Khandakar Habibur Rahman, general secretary of Rajbari district JP, suggested Ershad begin discussion with the ruling coalition only after withdrawal of the cases.

The president of Moulvibazar district unit JP Nabab Ali Abbas said.

## Imam leader

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Mufti Abul Kashem pronounced the threat at a rally of the Imam Parishad held yesterday at 10:30am at the Duckbungalow Square in the city to protest against the country-wide bomb attacks by Islamist militants and suicide bombers.

He further threatened to demolish the newspaper offices that will publish any story implicating the Jamaat and other Islamist parties with the outlawed Jama'atul Mujahideen Bangladesh and its destructive activities.

Hearing the threat, the journalists present at the rally moved to safer places.

The speakers at the rally demanded that the government find out the real Islamist militants and suicide bombers and their godfathers, and give them exemplary punishment by enacting a new law, if necessary.

They also called upon the suicide bombers and the masterminds of the attacks to stop killing people and committing suicide in the name of Islam as the religion does not approve of these activities.

The speakers reiterated that none of the Imam Parishad members, no matter which Islamist party he belongs to, is involved in militancy.

Presided over by the organisation's President and Principal of Khulna Alia Madrasa Moulana Muhammad Abu Saleh, the rally was also addressed by Moulana Golam Kibria, Moulana Rafiqur Rahman, Moulana Nasiruddin, Moulana Osman Gani, Moulana Mosharef Hossain, Moulana Abdullah and Moulana Humayun Kabir.

## ACC

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declared illegal.

The rule came upon a public interest litigation writ filed by Supreme Court Advocate Saidur Rahman Khan.

Respondents cabinet secretary, the selection committee that selected the ACC commissioners represented by its Chairman Justice MA Aziz, secretary to the president, principal secretary to the prime minister, Maniruddin Ahmed and the joint secretary of the cabinet division will have to reply in three weeks.

Moving the petition before a HC division bench, the petitioner's counsel MK Rahman submitted that the commission was formed ignoring the prescribed list of eligible persons recommended by a selection committee for the appointment of commissioners.

He told the court that the name of Maniruddin, a chartered accountant, was not on the list.

Maniruddin's appointment was a violation of the rule as he did not meet the requirement of at least 20 years of experience in the fields of law, education, administration, judiciary or disciplined forces, and thus was not eligible for the appointment as commissioner of the ACC, the petitioner said. During his career, Maniruddin mostly served in accounts and finance departments in different statutory corporations, he added.

Advocates Ruhul Quddus Babu, Abdul Mannan, Nazneen Nahar and Alpna Das assisted MK Rahman in the court.

The government formed the three-member ACC on November 21 last year with former HC judge Justice Sultan Hossain Khan as the chairman.

The two other members of the commission are Prof M Maniruzzaman Miah, former Dhaka University vice-chancellor, and Maniruddin Ahmed, a member of the Pay Commission and former chairman of the Securities and Exchange Commission.

## 3 suspected

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reports our Kishoreganj correspondent.

The three people got down at Gochihata bus stop from a Korga-bound bus from Dhaka around 4:30pm and were heading for a village called Bhatta. Locals being suspicious about their movement caught them and informed Kotiadi police.

Assistant Superintendent of Police (Circle) Shamsul Kabir interrogated them but he declined to talk to reporters. He did not let journalists meet or near the three people and misbehaved with them as they went on insisting.

Duty officer of the police station told The Daily Star yesterday evening that all the three live in Mymensingh. Of them, Hamidur collects money for a mosque. Hanifur is a madrasa student while Alamgir is waiting to go to Dubai soon.

The duty officer said the arrestees went to Kishoreganj to meet a man to buy some dirham. "But police are still interrogating them to be sure that there is nothing suspicious about them," said a source.

The three hailing from different districts were carrying their belongings in one bag and Alamgir was carrying a passport, which shows he visited Dubai, the source said. The police are concentrating on these people.

The three were later taken to office of Kishoreganj superintendent of police.

## Uni-track system

FROM PAGE 16

of Commerce in Bangladesh (AmCham) held in the capital.

Andrew L Fawthrop, president of AmCham presided over the meeting where Judith A Chammas, charge de affairs of the US embassy in Dhaka and AmCham Executive Director A Gafur were present.

People are criticising the introduction of uni-track education system due to lack of their knowledge on modernisation of education, the minister said adding that more than 190 countries across the world have the system.

"A student has to have a minimum level of depth of understanding on all primary knowledge such as history science, commerce and mathematics and the change in education system were planned in order to increase the level of understanding," Farruk said.

The minister in his speech on 'Need for Reforms in the Education System of Bangladesh' said the government has formed two separate commissions, one for general education and the other for madrasa education to introduce wholesale modernisation and reforms in education. He said both the commissions are preparing to place their reports soon.

He said the government has introduced computer education and vocational training for madrasa students so that they gain more concentrated need based educa-

tion.

Referring to madrasa education he said this system of education had originated long ago and no more than ten percent of students are currently enrolling in the madrasas.

He however declined to introduce uni-track education system in the madrasas immediately saying that madrasas have a lack of necessary science and commerce teachers to start teaching in the system of general education.

The minister expressed his worries over the recruitment system in privately run educational institutions saying that recruitment of staff without required qualities in those schools and colleges will be stopped after adopting the newly introduced registration system.

"Quality teachers are a must to improve overall quality of education," he said.

Expressing dissatisfaction over the existing drop out rate in the secondary level of education he said 35 percent students are still not going to grade six after completing primary education.

He mentioned his government's success in stopping cheating in examinations, reducing drop out rate, decreasing gender disparity and having text books available on time.

## Terror talks

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expressed his scepticism about the outcomes of the dialogue without the main opposition.

"It will not be fruitful without them," Ershad, also a former president, said at a party meeting yesterday.

He urged the government to ensure the participation of the opposition parties.

Finance and Planning Minister M Saifur Rahman yesterday told reporters that the government would continue its efforts to deal with the problem of militancy in unison, taking it as a national crisis.

Asked about AL's rejection of the dialogue offer, Saifur, also a standing committee member of the ruling BNP, said, "We will go ahead. We will sit down with the other political parties and professional groups and have their suggestions on how to tackle the ongoing unrest in the country."

Sticking to its guns, the 14-party opposition had declined to join the dialogue in response to the prime minister's letter.

They, however, have decided in principle that they will ask the government that if it is to discuss with the opposition the militancy issue, it would first have to discuss it at the [ruling] party forum and get rid of the ministers and lawmakers having links with the militants.

In a letter to the prime minister, the opposition camp will also explain its decision not to attend the talks.

Meanwhile, a meeting of the left leaning 11-party yesterday decided that none of its components will join the dialogue with the prime minister, rather under the banner of 14-party alliance it would send a letter to her.

Held at Gono Forum office in the city, the meeting also observed that the dialogue would not bring any good as the very patronisers of the militants exist within the government.

Sources said the 14-party leaders will sit in a day or two to finalise the draft of the letter.

President of Krishak Samik Janata League Abdul Kader Siddiqui yesterday said they would join the dialogue today to place suggestions on ways to combat the militancy.

Senior leaders of the party last

night finalised a set of proposals and also the team who will meet the premier.

Asked about the chances of success of the dialogue, Siddiqui, the lone lawmaker of the party, told The Daily Star that it depends on the mood of the discussion table.

On November 30, the prime minister urged all political parties and eminent persons of the country to sit in a national dialogue in the wake of back to back suicide blast incidents.

She started dispatching letters to the political parties and professional bodies on December 6, inviting them to her proposed dialogue.

Officials of the PMO on December 6 and 7 delivered 37 invitation letters to 27 political parties, nine of who seek to establish Islamic rule in the country, and nine are professional bodies.

Besides, they have sent letters to different professional groups this week.

Of the political parties having responded positively to the dialogue, only seven including two factions of ruling alliance partner Islami Oikya Jote (IOJ) have representation in parliament. Whereas, Bikalpa Dhara Bangladesh (BDB) was not invited despite having representation in parliament.

Two factions of another ruling coalition partner Bangladesher Jatiya Party (BJP) have