

Tele-tapping legalised

Section 97 (2) of the existing act said if the president declares an emergency, the government may suspend any licence or certificate or permit issued under this act, or suspend any particular activity of, or a particular service provided by an operator, but the government shall pay compensation for the suspended service.

The proposed amendment also said if the president declares an emergency or if the government feels that the state's security and law and order situation are in danger, it can suspend or amend any licence or certificate or permit issued under this act, or suspend any particular activity of, or a particular service provided by an operator, and it will not have to pay any compensation for doing so.

Barrister Rokonuddin Mahmud, vice chairman of Bangladesh Bar Council, apprehends misuse of the power. He told the Daily Star over phone last evening the power has created the opportunity to harass the people and certain political leaders.

The people will not even understand how their phones are tapped and feel harassed as a consequence, Rokon said.

Meanwhile, former law minister Abdul Matin Khansur said the government has promulgated the ordinance bypassing parliament and will harass the opposition and the people.

"This ordinance is ultra vires to the constitution being violation to the fundamental rights guaranteed

by article 43 (B)," he said, adding, privacy will be violated.

Earlier, leading jurist Dr M Zahir said, "If the government thinks it necessary on security grounds or for investigations, it might have sought court permission to tap phones." He seeks no necessity of such a law.

In a democratic society, these restrictions are very limited, he pointed out.

Outgoing President of Metropolitan Chamber of Commerce and Industry Kutubuddin Ahmed casts doubts over proper enforcement of the law. He said it should be ensured that there is no scope for the law enforcement agencies to misuse it.

President of Bangladesh Garment Manufacturers and Exporters Association (BGMEA) Tipu Munshi said the ordinance would curtail the people's fundamental rights. The government should take necessary measures so that there is no misuse for political gains, he added.

Maybe 500 subscribers are misusing cellphones but eight million others cannot be penalised for them, said a top executive of a leading cellphone operator.

Twenty-eight eminent citizens under the banner of Sammilita Samajik Andolan (united social movement) on December 6 protested against the government move to tap telephones.

Jatiya Samantantrik Dal (JSD) and Jatiya Mukti Council yesterday condemned the promulgation of the ordinance and urged the government to withdraw it.

Bangladesh

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of the competition here at the People's Sports Complex Stadium yesterday.

Rookie striker Zahid Hossain Emily struck a 77th-minute equaliser with a sublime shot to cancel India's 1-0 first-half lead, given by midfielder Climax Lawrence.

Bangladesh emerged Group B champions with a superior goal difference after they finished level with their regional rivals on seven points.

The holders will play Pakistan in the second semifinal under lights after the first between India and last year's runners-up Maldives on Wednesday.

Argentine coach Diego Cruciani showed faith in his reserve bench but the inexperienced squad, without nine first-team players, were chasing shadows against a full-strength India.

A left-wing centre by Manju helped India break the 17-minute deadlock when Mehtabuddin nodded the ball near the penalty spot and an unmarked Lawrence blasted a volley into the back of the net.

Striving to win the ball in the midfield, the Bangladesh reserves opened up the rival defence in the 39th minute for the first time but Abul, who dribbled past Manju into the box, saw his low drive partly blocked by Indian custodian Sandip Nandy before a defender cleared it.

Two minutes before half-time, centre-back Mehrajuddin, who had received his first booking on the half hour for kicking Ujjal in the face, was sent off with a second yellow card for arguing with Sri Lankan referee Hetikam Kanamge.

After the break, Cruciani's boys reassessed themselves and began to enjoy superior ball possession. Ujjal saw his low drive saved by Sandip at the near post in the 31st minute but the Indian goalkeeper had no clue a minute later when Emily, taking a pass from left full-back Parvez Babu just inside the box, turned on his heel to fool two rival defenders and lobbed an angled right footer into the far corner for his second goal of the meet.

Victory Day plans

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Different political parties, socio-cultural organisations and professional bodies have not taken up as elaborate programmes as in the past to mark the two national days in the wake of the continuing spate of bomb attacks by suicide squads of Islamist militants in different places across the country.

Leaders of these organisations said they have cut their programmes considering the mounting public insecurity with the government failing to ensure of safety of lives of people in the face of attacks by the militants.

Every year, varieties of programmes including discussion, film show and exhibition of documentaries on the Liberation War, musical soiree, drama, dance and recitation at the Central Shaheed Minar in the capital and elsewhere in the country used to begin on the first day of December. These programmes highlighted the spirit of the war and recalled the supreme sacrifice of the matyrs for liberating the motherland.

But this year, such programmes are not being held as yet. Sammilita Sangskritik Jote (SSJ), a leading cultural body, has taken up a three-day programme this time, instead of a 15-day one in the past, due to the rising militancy in the country.

SSJ General Secretary Golam Kuddus told The Daily Star that they have decided to hold their programmes at only three places in the capital -- the Central Shaheed Minar, Dhanmondi Rabindra Sorobor and the TSC of Dhaka University -- in lieu of eight places in the previous years.

Bangabandhu Sangskritik jote, Projanna Akattar, Amra Mutijuddha Santan, Bulbulkala Lalita Academy and Pragatishil Chhatra Jote also

Asian Highway

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Dhaka also failed to persuade some neighbouring countries to propose amendment to the route before the next ESCAP meeting.

The proposed Asian Highway map shows two roads entering Bangladesh from two points on the Indian border -- Benapole and Banglabandha. The roads then run over Dhaka to exit through Tamabil to India. Bangladesh wants an additional route to Yangon via Tenknaf to be part of the Asian Highway.

Dhaka has been hesitating to sign the agreement with the existing road map because of its political stand against giving transit to India.

At last night's cabinet meeting, some ministers opposed the idea of joining the road network without getting assurance of changing the existing road map.

They observed that joining the current network would mean giving transit to India because both the proposed routes are coming from India and also exit to that country.

Experts, however, observed that joining the highway network under the current plan does not mean giving transit to any particular country.

The Asian Highway is just a road network and separate agreements will be required to transport people and goods through the network. If Bangladesh does not want to give transit to India it can refuse to sign such agreements and yet it can join the network and upgrade its roads to the Asian Highway standards, they pointed out.

Speedy Trial

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concerned were present.

The government enacted The Speedy Trial Act on April 9, 2002, for a two-year term. Upon its expiry on April 10, 2004, the act was extended for two years.

The Speedy Trial Act deals with offences like extortion, manipulation of tender bidding, obstructing the movement of vehicles, ransacking, mugging, creating untoward situation and obstructing any public servant in his/her duties.

The meeting also approved the proposed list of holidays for 2006 for the government, semi-government and autonomous organisations.

Yadav's father,

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Das said the family could not perform the religious ritual due on the fourth day of her brother's death.

Central leaders of Bangladesh Puja Udjapan Parishad and Hindu Buddha Christian Oikya Parishad visited Yadav's home and expressed concern and sympathy to the family.

They also expressed dismay at the state minister's claim that Yadav was a 'Hindu militant'.

BNP MPs

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should quickly be implemented in Rajshahi, Natore, Naogaon and other areas where Bangla Bhai established a reign of terror last year.

Besides, the government should keep keen watch on the constituencies along the border and belonging to Jamaat, they added.

A lawmaker from Pabna yesterday told The Daily Star if the government keeps surveillance on Jamaat's constituencies, the origin of militancy may be found.

Speaking anonymously, the MP said he believes Islami Chhatra Shibir, NGOs and some organisations run by Jamaat have direct links with militants.

The areas where Jamaat has strong organisational network like Khulna, Jessore, Chittagong, Cox's Bazar, Pirajpur, Pabna, Dinajpur and Barisal should also be given immediate attention.

FRESH COMMITTEES
Party sources said 75 zilla committees have recently been asked to form the fresh committees as soon as possible and also to include locally respected persons and professionals in consultation with the lawmakers.

As many as 47 such committees have already been formed in the Jessore-3 constituency, the sources added.

Tariqul Islam, minister for environment and forest and lawmaker from Jessore-3, told The Daily Star yesterday they have already formed a number of new committees.

"Those who are bombing and killing innocent people in the name of Islam are people's enemy. We must fight these elements. BNP will have to find out where these militants are hiding," he said.

A number of senior ministers said besides administrative actions, the government is initiating a social movement to suppress militancy. The decision of forming the new committees at the grassroots level is part of that social movement, they told The Daily Star yesterday.

The ministers also emphasised that the opposition parties including the Awami League should also be involved in the government attempt to resist the militants.

"If a unity among all the political parties can be forged, the country will be able to get rid of these Islamist militants," a minister said asking not to be named.

One dies a week

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organisations Greenpeace and FIDH (International Federation for Human Rights) in cooperation with Chittagong-based non-government organisation YPSA (Young Power in Social Action).

The survey by the three organisations estimated that the total death toll in ship-breaking yards worldwide in last twenty years might be several thousand while in Bangladesh the figure would be at least 1,000.

"Such official or estimated figures, however, do not include casualties as a result of diseases related to the toxic fumes and materials the workers are exposed to the whole day work," the report mentioned.

It cited manifold difficulties in obtaining accurate data about casualties.

Most of the workers at ship-breaking yards, especially in Bangladesh and India, have little education and come from poorest areas of their countries and they fall easy victims of exploitation by the yard owners, the report said.

"The workers are being provided neither with the adequate training nor with the equipment to work in such a dangerous and toxic environment, although ship-breaking is considered by the International Labour Organisation as one of the heaviest and most hazardous occupations," it added.

Besides, almost all of the vessels condemned for breaking contain hazardous substances such as asbestos, oil sludge, paints containing lead, other heavy metal like cadmium and arsenic, poisonous biocides and even radioactive substances, the report stated.

In Bangladesh yard owners or authorities do not keep records of data about the ship-breaking workers and the only sources of information about those workers are the reports of local media, the report said.

The report suggested for an urgent enforcement of the environmental justice and human rights principles by the authorities concerned in the ship-breaking industries.

YPSA Advisor AMM Toha, Prof Dr Shafiq Haider Chowdhury of Chittagong University Zoology Department, Dr Afroza Begum of Public Administration Department, Chief Reporter of daily Suprobat Bangladesh M Nasirul Haque, Bhorer Kagoj Bureau Chief Omar Kaiser and Staff Reporter of daily Independent Nazimuddin Shyamol discussed the report presented by YPSA Project Official Mohammad Ali Shahin.

WB to fund

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will assist the government in any way to ensure that the courts remain a safe place," the organisation said in a statement, which came in the wake of growing militant bomb attacks across the country, including on court premises, judges and lawyers.

The World Bank would consider proposals from the government on security enhancements for under-construction buildings and security upgrades in existing court buildings under the current Legal and Judicial Capacity Building Project.

It also invited proposals from the government on assistance for construction of high security courtrooms with high profile and high security cases.

"We are confident that the authorities will take a strong stand against these actions and take steps towards bringing the perpetrators to justice," said the World Bank, regretting the recent bomb attacks and sympathising with the families of the victims.

Fresh voter list

FROM PAGE 1
Asaduzzaman Noor and Barrister Amir-Ul Islam for Abdul Jalil.

Both the petitions term the unilateral decision by the chief election commissioner (CEC) to go for a fresh electoral register illegal and a violation of the constitution. They seek a stay order on the EC activities in preparation for a fresh roll.

The Election Commission (EC), EC Secretariat, CEC, Election Commissioner M Munsef Ali and AK Mohammad Ali, and Secretary to the EC secretariat SM Zakaria were made respondents in the petitions.

The petitioners in their pleas described as illegal the appointment of 2,40,000 enumerators, 70,000 supervisors, 6,235 assistant registration officers and 83 registration officers.

The one filed by Jail challenges also the legality of the recruitment of some 300 upazila election officers.

CEC MA Aziz on August 6 decided on his own to have a fresh roll, ignoring the opinion of the two other election commissioners who were in favour of revising the existing one. On his orders, the EC secretariat has completed all works preparatory to the task, ignoring the objections from the two election commissioners.

The petition by the opposition lawmakers argues that the CEC's decision to prepare a fresh electoral roll without authorisation of two of the three commissioners was taken illegally while the actions taken by the secretary without lawful authorisation of the EC, namely the appointment of about three lakh individuals for the purpose of pre-

paring a fresh electoral roll are impugned.

It submits that the CEC has no authority to exercise the powers conferred upon the EC without authorisation or consent of at least the majority view of the election commissioners. As such the decision of the CEC to prepare a fresh list without the authorisation of the EC is an exercise of power which exceeds the jurisdiction of the respondent CEC and is ultra vires, they added.

"The impugned decision to prepare a fresh roll and consequent recruitment of three lakh staff are without lawful authority and of no legal effect inasmuch as they have been taken in violation of Article 118 of the Constitution," said the petitioners.

The EC secretariat has recruited some three lakh staff and printed about nine crore forms and manuals. It has even timetable the preparation of the voter list to be done between January 1 and June 1.

Election Commissioners Munsef Ali and AK Mohammad Ali, however, did not approve the recruitment of the manpower. They gave note of dissent against the appointment and said the manpower can be appointed only for revising the existing list.

The two also have expressed their ignorance about the timetable.

From university

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Rapid Action Battalion 7 (Rab-7) for being suspected as a suicide bomber of the banned Jama'atul Mujahideen Bangladesh (JMB).

The JU authorities sealed off his dorm room the same night.

He disappeared from his home about 7-8 months ago. He used to be full of life and took part in all academic activities until he completed the first semester of his second year in the university. He suddenly stopped attending classes and taking examinations in 2004 and started to talk about Ahle Hadith Andolon to fellow students. One day he disappeared. After several months in last September he returned home sporting a long beard.

His parents tried their best to bring him back to normal life. Since his return he started to live a routine life both on campus and at home and preached to stay away from anything that goes against Islam.

He took Tk 3,500 to fill up some forms 7-8 months ago and since then he never asked for money. We did not know that he abandoned his studies," said wailing Jameela Khatun, mother of Wahid. His father Abdus Salam is vice-president of Kaliakoir unit of the ruling BNP.

According to local residents, Md Ilias Hossain, son of a Sonali Bank official Abdus Subhan, who was known as a leader of JMB in Kaliakoir, used to help Wahid in recruiting new members into JMB from schools, colleges, madrasas and even from kindergartens. Ilias is a resident of College Road in Kaliakoir who also had disappeared more than a year ago and returned after allegedly getting JMB training in Chittagong. Detective Branch of the police said they had arrested him a month ago, but local residents alleged that he was released in exchange of a considerable amount of money paid to the authorities.

Local journalists said 'heavenly

rewards' for a shaheed (martyr), promises of establishing Islamic rule and of uprooting all anti-Islamic activities across the country, and above all financial benefits are being used to lure these young men in joining the JMB.

Ziaur Rahman, brother-in-law of Wahid, is also a JMB leader in Kaliakoir and in the adjacent area.

A number of newly established kindergartens and schools in the area are suspected to have links with the banned organisation and are allegedly tempting students to join it.

Local residents and journalists said Julhas, Pakhi, Shafique, Abu Zar Gifar, Imam of Baidali Mosque are absconding since the August 17 countrywide series of bomb blasts. Shamsuddin, Shahadat, Zahir and Moulana Delwar Hossain are the organisers of JMB activities in the area while Md Farid Miah alias Kankata Farid also Jamaat-e-Islami activist, Amirul Islam, Sirajul Huq and Sirajul Islam were the trainers, who are on the run since August 17.

Noapara, Gachhbari, Medi Der Chala, Purba Kamal Para, Kathachura Dakshin Para, Kot Bari, Shaldaha Para 1 & 2 and Fulbaria of Kaliakoir are places where alleged training of JMB cadres used to take place in the forests while the Ahle Hadith mosques in the area were the meeting and recruiting places for the militant organisation.

Vaoman Namapara, Meida Ashulai, Boroi Chhuti, Gabtoli, Bagchala, and Shohagir Tek are also known as JMB infested areas.

Lutfur Rahman, officer-in-charge of Kaliakoir police station however said, "We do not have any information regarding existence of JMB in the area."

Archer Blood

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Bangladesh during the Liberation War, who had opposed the brutal military crackdown on Bangladesh by the Pakistan government.

The new library will be called Archer K Blood American Center Library. The library dedication programme came after the United States government decided to honour Blood.

His famous 'Blood Telegram' alerted the then US President Richard Nixon and Secretary of State Henry Kissinger to the 'selective genocide' and urged them to pressure Pakistan to stop the killing.

"Honouring an American diplomat, who was a true friend to Bangladesh, shows American and Bangladeshi respect for the values of free speech, integrity and sacrifice," said an American Center press release, adding that the diplomat is also remembered for his work after the 1970 cyclones.

Blood, however, had to pay a price for being a senior signatory to a dissent cable written during the Pakistan military crackdown. "I paid a price for my dissent, but I had no choice. The line between right and wrong was just too clear-cut," he said.

About him, Joe Galloway, senior military correspondent for Knight-Rider, once wrote, "I never met a more upright and courageous diplomat."

On the occasion of naming the library, a press conference will be held at the centre at 2:00pm.

Peter Blood, son of Archer Blood, who is a senior researcher at the Library of Congress in the United States, will address the press conference. His mother Margaret and sister Shireen, who were also in Dhaka during the Liberation War, will also speak at the press conference.

The library dedication ceremony will include reading out from Peter Blood's "Personal Reflections on the Birth of Bangladesh" and comments from Mrs Blood.

Rich-poor

FROM PAGE 16
Expectations for Hong Kong are so low there are worries the gathering could collapse like the previous one in Cancun, Mexico in 2003, or dissolve into chaos like the debacle in Seattle in 1999.

The WTO gatherings, normally held every other year, tend to be a flashpoint for violence, often when activists are confronted by riot police.

Two years ago, at the WTO summit in the Mexican resort town of Cancun, protesters cut through metal barricades, battled with police and threatened to storm the meeting hall. One Korean farmer stabbed himself to death.

At the summit in Seattle, five days of riots inflicted US\$3 million in damage to the city. Police arrested 500 people.

Alarmed by the prospect of as many as 10,000 protesters on the streets, voicing opposition to the WTO and other symbols of globalization, Hong Kong authorities set up elaborate security precautions, blocking off access to roads near the conference site, setting up barricades, enclosing pedestrian walkways in nets, and even gluing bricks into the sidewalks to prevent protesters from pulling them up and throwing them.

South Korean activists, known for joining in fierce battles with riot police and for dramatic gestures including committing suicide to highlight their causes, warned they planned to escalate their protests as the WTO meeting progresses.

The Korean Struggle Mission, which represents several activist groups, warned in a statement that they were ready for "strong struggles." It gave no details about what the groups planned to do.

JMB replaces

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a regional commander of JMB mentioned it over cellphone to Bogra police, adding that the post had been vacant for the last few days as Thakurgaon police arrested AbdulAwal.

The caller further said Adnan Sunny has been given the charge of Bogra region to supervise the activities of the organisation in five districts including Sirajganj.

Bogra police sources said they know that Sunny is in Bogra, but they can't arrest him as he is not staying in any specific place for a long time.

The caller also informed that it would start abducting the family members of the VIPs to get their jailed activists released.

"We just want to see the strength of the government. JMB does what it says and the government has already realised it," he said adding that further suicide bomb attacks would be carried out in places like multi-storeyed buildings.

Answering to a question the caller also said the members of the suicide bomb squad are active across the country and the bomb blasts would continue till all the members of the squad are not dead.

SC extends

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judge of the Appellate Division Justice Amirul Kabir Chowdhury passed the order.

The High Court on September 12 asked the government to freeze all bank accounts of Niko and not to pay its dues for gas supplied to the national grid. The Appellate Division then stayed the High Court order.

Barrister Rokonuddin Mahmud moved for Niko Resources Ltd.

Kader Siddiqui

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blast incidents and stern actions would be taken against the culprits.

A 26-member delegation of Krishak Sramik Janata League including its General Secretary Fazlur Rahman joined the meeting that lasted about an hour at the prime minister's office (PMO).

Jatiya Party (Ershad), the second largest opposition in parliament, sits in the dialogue this afternoon. A social group led by former chief election commissioner Justice Abdur Rouf will also meet the premier today.

Meanwhile, the Awami League (AL) led 14-party opposition alliance, which has yet to budge on the proposal for dialogue with the present government, will soon reply to the prime minister's letter. It will ask her to oust Jamaat from the government and the ruling alliance as an essential precondition for talks.

"A meaningful dialogue cannot be held by keeping in the government those who have long been patronising the militants," the draft of the 14-party's letter reads.

Apart from Siddiqui's party, a delegation of Bangladesh Medical Association (BMA) met the prime minister yesterday, the first day of the dialogue, and assured her of all-out support from the physicians in stopping the bomb terrorism.

The BMA in its written nine-point proposal observed, "The government will have to get to the root of the militancy and at the same time it will have to unearth the reasons why the persons and agencies concerned failed to identify the militants in advance of the bomb attacks."

The apex body of the medics suggested the prime minister come up with 'concrete statement' of the government under discussion at the party forums like BNP standing committee, executive committee and parliamentary party.

They also stressed the need for holding a meeting of secretaries general of the ruling four parties to get the countrymen united against the menace of militancy.

BMA President MA Hadi and Secretary General AZM Zahid Hossain led the delegation.

After the meeting with Krishak Sramik Janata League leaders, LGRD and Co-operatives Minister Abdul Mannan Bhuiyan, who aided the prime minister in the dialogue, said, "The talks were successful and held in a cordial atmosphere. We will tackle the problem of militancy in union."

Later Kader Siddiqui briefed the newsmen on the discussion at the Dhaka Reporters' Unity office.

He described the meeting as cordial and said his party assured the government of total support in the efforts to root out militancy.

"We don't know the grave crisis, the leaders who are supposed to lead the nation should take the correct path and help resolve the crisis," observed

Siddiqui, a breakaway leader of AL.

Expressing his support for the dialogue process, he recalled that even Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman took part in the roundtable discussion with Ayub Khan before the Liberation War.

"War is no option if the crisis can be solved through discussion," he said.

Referring to Jamaat Amir Moitaur Rahman Nizami's recent statement calling for those who accuse the party of bearing links with the military to substantiate the accusation, Siddiqui said Jamaat is definitely involved in the militant activities.

Prime Minister Khaleda Zia on November 30 urged all political parties and eminent persons of the country to sit in a national dialogue in the wake of repeated suicide blast incidents.

In line with her call, officials of the PMO delivered invitation letters to 15 professional bodies and 27 political parties on December 6 and 7.

OPPOSITION'S LETTER
The draft of the opposition's letter to the prime minister says the dialogue can be meaningful only when the alliance government comes clean about its policy and stance on the militancy issue.

"None of the 14-party alliance will join the dialogue with the government until Jamaat, the patroniser of Islamic militancy, and the ministers and lawmakers who had voiced their support for militant activities in public in Rajshahi region are in the government and the alliance," the letter reads.

Workers Party President Rashed Khan Menon and Gono Forum leader Pankaj Bhattacharya drafted the letter, which will be finalised in a day or two at a meeting of 14-party leaders, opposition sources said.

An opposition source speaking about the draft said it explains the opposition's decision to reject the dialogue offer.

The letter will also ask the government to clarify its position on communal politics as it says encouraging fundamentalism won't help stop the terrorism of religious militants.

"Identity and political goals of this group are not unknown to you as well as to the countrymen. But, you don't specify their identity when you say that a derailed group is doing the planned terrorism," the draft reads.

The draft says the rise of militancy in Bangladesh is not merely the sinful acts of some adolescents or youths, neither is it an adventure of Abdur Rahman and Bangla Bhai. It is a long-term conspiracy to avenge the defeat in the Liberation War of 1971.

UK minister

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conference yesterday prior to his departure for Hong Kong after a two-day visit to Bangladesh.

Benn faced a series of questions on terrorism, corruption and future general elections at the news conference held at the residence of the British high commissioner.