

US wants

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tougher anti-money laundering bill. He urged the authorities concern to formulate the bill in a way that facilitates apprehending and punishing the money-launderers and terrorist financiers.

Although the government has succeeded in nabbing some militant kingpins, it is yet to trace their sources or networks of finance, the assistant secretary pointed out.

O'Brien also conveyed the US interest in providing technical assistance to the proposed Financial Intelligence Unit (FIU) to be set up in Bangladesh Bank (BB).

After his meeting with BB Governor Salehuddin Ahmed yesterday, O'Brien did not disclose any significant information to reporters in response to their query about the purpose of his visit and the issues he had discussed.

However, the American Center in Dhaka in a press statement said O'Brien talked terrorist financing and money laundering issues with the government.

According to the statement, "The talks were constructive. The two sides discussed Bangladesh's efforts to strengthen its legal framework for dealing with terrorist financing and money laundering, which is part of a broader US Government commitment to support Bangladesh in combating terrorism and preventing terrorists from using Bangladesh as a venue or a conduit for terrorist actions."

The BB governor also told the press that their discussion was on issues related to terrorist financing and financial crimes. The central bank apprised O'Brien of what it has been doing in this regard, Salehuddin said, adding O'Brien also offered technical assistance for the proposed FIU.

Washington has been pressuring Dhaka since 2002 to amend the existing Anti-Money Laundering Act. The US government also has been offering technical and financial support for strengthening the BB activities to curb money laundering and terrorist financing. A number of US experts have already visited Bangladesh and held discussions with the central bank and government officials concerned.

Following the recent upsurge of Islamist militant activities across the country, the BB could only detect some bank accounts used for suspi-

Saarc tourism

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and eco-tourism.

The Saarc ministers will discuss tourism-related human resources development and portraying South Asia through tourism.

Prime Minister Khaleda Zia will inaugurate the meeting at Hotel Seagull on Sunday.

Officials of the Saarc member countries will meet tomorrow to set agenda for ministers' meeting.

Cox's Bazar is the heart of the country's tourism. We have decided to organise the meeting there to expose the resort to the foreign delegates", State Minister for Civil Aviation and Tourism Mirza Fakhrul Islam Alamgir said.

In and around Cox's Bazar, there is the world's longest natural sea beach, an area with Buddhist cultural heritage, the country's only coral island St Martin's and other tourism spots which will attract the foreign delegates, he told a press briefing at the Press Information Department convened on the occasion of the conference.

A two-day exhibition displaying attracting tourist spots and events will be held there while the foreign delegates will be taken to Cox's Bazar and Inani sea beaches and famous Buddhist temple Oggmedha Kevang.

The country has failed to utilise even 10 per cent tourism potential of the country due to lack of sufficient steps and entrepreneurship by the government and private sectors, said the minister.

It is not possible for the government to invest and get involved in all matters and so, the government is working to promote private entrepreneurship in this sector, he said.

A positive trend of private entrepreneurs' initiatives in recent years has already made encouraging signs, he said, adding that a concerted effort can play an important role to eradicate poverty from the country.

2 accused firm

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cohort Delwar Hossain was shown arrested in this case.

In another development, Abu Bakar Siddiq Mithu, a staff of BD Corporation, a sister concern of BD Foods, was shown arrested in the smuggling of 54kg heroin yesterday. He was placed before the Chief Metropolitan Magistrate's Court, Dhaka yesterday seeking a 10-day remand in this case. The court, however, granted seven days' remand.

Meanwhile, BD Foods Chairman Badruddoza yesterday admitted to smuggling "illegal goods" to the UK in the guise of export items as the CID-led five-member committee continued interrogating him.

Sources said during quizzing, Badruddoza divulged some significant information to the interrogators. The sources however declined to disclose the information.

BAIL PETITION REJECTED

The High Court yesterday rejected an application filed by Badruddoza for staying a lower-court order of remand for quizzing him over heroin smuggling, reports UNB.

However, the HC division bench asked the authorities to refrain from "harassing" Badruddoza and provide him with necessary medicine and diet under police custody.

On May 15, the court of Metropolitan Magistrate, Dhaka, placed him on seven days' remand for interrogation, turning down his bail prayer.

Badruddoza was arrested on May 14 following the confessions of his two accomplices to have smuggled 75kg heroin to the UK under cover of export consignments.

Musharraf eyes another term okayed by parliament

REUTERS, Islamabad

Pakistan's President Pervez Musharraf said he could be voted in for a second five-year term by the current parliament before its dissolution for general elections due at the end of 2007 or start of 2008.

Musharraf's current term expires next year and a debate has been going on in the media over whether the president, who came to power in a military coup over six years ago, could be re-elected by the present parliament and provincial assemblies or those formed after the general elections.

"You read the constitution. It is very clear... when the tenure of the president ends, as mine will do on Nov. 15, 2007, a minimum of one month before, or a maximum two months before, an election should be held for me again," Musharraf told Avt Khyber Television in an interview, parts of which were aired on Thursday.

"It means it (the presidential election) will be held between Sept. 15 and Oct. 15. There are no ifs or buts in the constitution," Musharraf told the private Pashto language channel. The interview will be aired in full on Friday.

Musharraf did not say categorically whether he would seek re-election from the current parliament or the new one formed after the general election, but a senior government official said the time period mentioned by Musharraf for the presidential election showed that it would be done by the current parliament.

"Technically, it will be done by the existing assemblies because general elections will be held after that period," the official told Reuters on condition of anonymity.

Musharraf is widely expected to be re-elected given the majorities his allies enjoy in parliament and the provincial legislatures.

Under Pakistan's constitution, the two houses of parliament — the National Assembly and Senate — as well as four provincial legislatures elect the president.

Musharraf's remarks came as opposition parties moved to strengthen alliances in preparation for the coming general election.

Two exiled former prime ministers Benazir Bhutto and Nawaz Sharif last week vowed to work together by signing a "charter of democracy" in London and said they would return to Pakistan together before the elections.

Musharraf was first elected as president through a referendum in 2002, that his opponents say was rigged.

Later in 2003, he won parliament's endorsement, and obtained sweeping powers through amendments to the constitution as part of a deal with Islamist opposition parties in return for a pledge that he would give up his role as army chief by the end of 2004.

However, he later reneged on his pledge, saying his role in the U.S.-led war on terrorism and peace moves with rival India made it necessary to remain as head of the army.

There is now heated speculation over whether Musharraf, who has survived several assassination attempts, will give up his uniform after 2007.

Verdict

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Both were present in the court and made submissions on behalf of themselves as well as the other accused.

After completion of arguments from the prosecution and the defence, Public Prosecutor (PP) Advocate Haider Hossain yesterday made submissions on the statements of witnesses and confessional statements of the accused. He demanded capital punishment of the accused.

Abdur Rahman requested the court not to make hurry in the trial of the case and demanded formation of a jury board comprising Islamic thinkers for the trial.

Criticising the government, he said it has hired some Islamic-minded people and is 'forcing them to speak against us.'

Rahman further said a major obstacle to implementation of Islamic rule is democracy, and parties that want Islamic rule are also working for it (democracy). Instead of uniting people for 'jihad', these parties have gone for 'vote battle', he added.

Bangla Bhai said he had protested corruption of police in Bagmara in the northern part of the country. A section of police officials used to back 'extremist forces' who had created a reign of terror in the area by killing people and raping women.

Bangla Bhai said he had formed Jagrata Muslim Janata Bangladesh (JMBJ) to ensure security of people of the area and later joined the JMB.

About jail authorities, he said, "We shall wage a movement in all the jails if chains of our leader Abdur Rahman are not removed."

JMB operations commander Sunny and top leader Awal are also among the accused. All the accused sang their party song while walking towards the prison van after the court proceedings.

State-appointed defence counsel Siddique Hossain pleaded that one of the accused, Sultan Hossain Khan of Jhalakathi, is innocent.

Senior assistant judges Sohail Ahmed and Jagannath Pandey were killed in the November 14 bomb blasts.

Protest at non-inclusion

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some 40 people eligible for voting live at holdings No. 185/1 and 220/D, but none was registered.

Residents of Shapla Housing at West Agargaon and Kafrul-Taltala staff quarters also applied for inclusion of their names in the voter list.

Besides applications from general people, Commissioner of ward No. 41 AB Siddiqui also sent an application to the election office on January 26 requesting it to register eligible voters in his ward, sources in the district election office said.

Reviewing the applications, the election officer for Mohammadpur area asked ARO Aminul Haq Bhuiyan to initiate steps in this regard, which the ARO declined to do.

Enumerator Atiquel Islam, however, collected information of some prospective voters and submitted to the ARO, but the latter did not include the names in the draft list, sources in the district election office said.

The EC Secretariat called Aminul to its office yesterday and asked him to return the 899 voters' registration

forms given to him by the enumerators. The secretariat will examine those, sources said.

The secretariat said yesterday it has started investigating why the ARO did not list the names. "Punitive actions will be taken against the ARO if he is found guilty," the EC Secretariat press release said.

The release also protested the news published in some dailies and broadcast by a private television channel saying the EC had ordered to include fake voters in the draft list of ward No. 41. It termed the news "baseless" and "misleading".

Meanwhile, Acting Secretary to the EC Secretariat Mohammad Zakoria left Dhaka on Tuesday to attend a conference in South Korea without designating anyone to discharge the duties in his absence. Zakoria will return on June 3.

Officials at the EC Secretariat said the conference organisers had asked the secretariat to send a junior officer, but Zakoria sent his name as the participant.

Graft, factional feud

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He said over its history, Bangladesh has made great strides in building its economy and improving the well-being of its people. Much credit goes to its dynamic civil society organisations.

The US assistant secretary said beyond the accomplishments that have benefited their own society, NGOs such as the Grameen Bank have devised innovative approaches in micro-finance with worldwide applicability.

"For this reason, the US has increased its assistance to Bangladesh for promoting democracy and good governance and combating corruption to over \$ 8 million in this fiscal year."

On terrorism, Boucher said recently Bangladesh has scored some impressive victories against extremists. It has arrested the leaders of JMB, which was responsible for terrorist attacks including coordinated bombings last summer and fall.

"We encourage Bangladesh to strengthen its vigilance against violent extremists and to do so in a way that conforms to the rule of law and respects the human rights of all its citizens," he said.

On Dhaka-Washington bilateral ties, Boucher said the two countries enjoy excellent relations, share a commitment to democracy, human rights, and the rule of law.

He said in 2007, the people of Bangladesh will elect a new government, which will be their fourth

consecutive democratic election, a noteworthy accomplishment for the young country.

Boucher, reflecting his overall observations on the countries in South Asia, said with a nearly quarter of the world's population, the region can become ever more stable, free and prosperous if US can seize these opportunities in democracy, economics, education and in other areas.

He said the region also faces many challenges—religious extremism, terrorism, weapons of mass destruction, and formidable challenges in areas such as democratisation, human rights, poverty, and illiteracy.

Land ministry

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chairman said.

The parliamentary body also asked the ministry to take action against the persons involved in selling form in the name of providing people flats under the Vasantek project.

The committee members expressed concern over leasing of the state land and illegal sand lifting in different areas including Chandpur.

"We asked the ministry to take immediate action against it," the chairman said, adding that they also asked the ministry to stop the use of tea garden area for rubber plantation.

Why tele-tapping

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In a way the government is trying to manipulate the state mechanisms over others. These were the practices of military regime in the then Pakistan and martial law administrators in Bangladesh, it noted.

The petitioners said it was quite undesirable that a democratically elected government would frame such an abusive and ill-motivated legislation.

Speaking on behalf of the petitioners, senior lawyer AF Hassan Arif told the press that this act has infringed the freedom of press and individuals and has brought the people of the country under suspicion.

Section 97 (a) in the amendment act says the home ministry can authorise an official of intelligence agency, national security intelligence, investigating organisation or person to tap phones and collect conversation, and to resist the phone service operators from sending messages and conversations in the interest of national security.

The service providers would be obliged to carry out the orders of authorised official.

If the president declares an

River vessel

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vessels leaving hundreds of workers dead or injured every year.

Terming the waterways insecure they demanded the deployment of river-police in the high-risk waterways to protect vessel workers, people and goods from the pirates.

They also urged the government to deploy coastguards at the pirate-prone areas like Chittagong river port.

"Waterways are important as goods and people are transported by these, but the government is yet to take effective steps to put an end to extortion and robbery in this sector," said Chowdhury Ashikul Alam, general secretary of the federation.

He also said around 100 workers were killed by pirates in 2004-2005 but the government is turning a blind eye to all this.

He said they would go for stern programmes if the government failed to do anything about the matter by the May 23 deadline.

Federation Vice-president Shah Alam presided over the conference where Joint Secretary Abu Taher and Organising Secretary Zinnat Ali were also present.

Proctor, provost of SUST quit

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Sylhet

Proctor of the crisis-stricken Shahjalal University of Science & Technology (SUST) Dr Abdul Hai Chowdhury and provost of its female students' dormitory Dr Mahfuza Ahmed resigned from their posts yesterday showing personal grounds.

They handed over the resignation letters to the registrar of the university.

On the other hand, members of the Proctorial Committee, who had been on a strike since 20 April called off the strike yesterday, official sources said.

The deans and heads of the department have meanwhile submitted a memorandum to the president, also chancellor of the university, urging him to appoint an honest, sincere and capable vice-chancellor for the university.

They called for immediate steps to end the stalemate in the university arising from the resignation of its VC on May 13 following massive violence and student protests on the campus. They also demanded probe into the incidents.

The pre-scheduled summer vacation of the SUST will begin on May 21 and the university will reopen on June 11, said the registrar.

Worker killed, 8 hurt in dying plant accident

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Gazipur

At least one worker was killed and eight others were injured when a cotton-drying machine exploded at a factory in Baraipara area of Gazipur yesterday evening.

The deceased identified as Jainal Abedin, 22, was a worker of Hachong Corporation. He had been working there for two years.

Reason behind the machine's blow up could not be known. Police barricaded the spot for further investigation.

Kuwait emir

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not confirm the exact date. It is expected that the Emir may arrive in Dhaka some time between June 9 to June 11.

A delegation of the Kuwait Fund would come to Dhaka on May 27 to finalise the financing of the Karnaphuli Bridge as per the commitment given to the prime minister during her visit, the foreign minister said.

The Kuwait Fund is to provide \$52 million for the construction of the bridge.

The Kuwaiti Emir would be here on the first leg of his 4-nation tour that would take him to India, Pakistan and Thailand.

Foreign Ministry officials considered Khaleda Zia's Kuwait visit very successful as the Kuwaiti government agreed to sale oil to Bangladesh on credit at a favourable price and withdrew restrictions to recruit manpower from Bangladesh.

Meanwhile, Foreign Ministry officials said newly elected Sri Lankan President Mahindra Rajapakse will also be visiting Bangladesh in July.

Defamation case

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Gazi, Anwarul Kabir Babul, Ashraf UI Alam, Prasanta Kumar Karmakar and Chaitanya Chandra Halder submitted the petition saying Matiar Rahman has been suffering from acute disease and was admitted to a clinic where the doctors advised him bed rest at that clinic for over 10 days.

The lawyers also prayed time extension for Mahfuz Anam as he was very busy with urgent matters.

The lawyers for Abbas opposed the petition saying the statements in it are "false" and "baseless". So, the petition should be rejected, they argued.

After hearing both sides, the court rejected the petition, framed charges and set June 28 for trial of the case.

Abbas had filed the case against the two on February 2 for running a news item on January 5.

In his complaint, Abbas said the news item headlined "Public works minister has objection to a police complex being built at Rajarbagh" run by the national daily was false, baseless and concocted.

The news has tarnished his image and status in the society and created a bad impression of him among the people of the country as well as of his constituency, Abbas said. The news also led to a misunderstanding between him and the police department, he added.

Besides, the daily did not properly publish the rejoinder sent by the complainant.

The defendants appear to have connived to publish the report with an intention of bringing him into disrepute, Abbas said.

Following the hearing, the court took the case into cognisance and issued summons against Matiar Rahman and Mahfuz Anam asking them to appear before the court on February 16.

Lower court judges irked as demands not met

COURT CORRESPONDENT

Judges of the lower courts across the country are disappointed as their 11-point demand is yet to be fulfilled even after the assurance of the government.

The Bangladesh Judicial Service Association (BJSJA) has called an extended meeting in the Judges Conference Room of Dhaka District Court at 5:00pm on May 21, to be attended by judges from districts across the country to give their opinions on pressing home their demands.

The meeting will be presided over by BJSJA President Mohammad Rafiqul Islam, also Dhaka District and Sessions Judge, while its Secretary General Ataur Rahman will also be present.

The BJSJA's demands include providing personal gunmen, tax-free vehicles and firearms for all the judges, guards at judges' residences across the country and compensation of Tk 50 lakh to each of the families of the slain judges in Jhalakati bomb attack on November 14 last year.

A senior assistant judge of lower court preferring anonymity yesterday told The Daily Star that most of their demands were not met.

Nepal parliament

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Nepalese Army renamed Nepali Army, and the army chief would be appointed by the cabinet.

Besides, parliament will have the power to make laws on the heir to the throne, decide on the perks and expenses of the king and be responsible for his security while his secretariat is placed under the national civil service.

Analysts have expressed doubts over the effectiveness of the proclamation, as under the current constitution no parliamentary bill can become law until the head of state -- the king -- signs it.

But politicians say the proclamation overrides the constitution and reflects the will of the people and therefore cannot be challenged.

They also say the king would have no powers and the proclamation would not need his approval.

"If anyone tries to dishonour this, they will be digging their own grave," former Prime Minister Sher Bahadur Deuba told parliament.

While parliament debated the resolution, hundreds of demonstrators gathered outside its gates holding placards and shouting slogans supporting democracy.

King Gyanendra plunged Nepal into political turmoil when he sacked the government and assumed power last year, saying the government had failed to quell an anti-monarchy Maoist revolt that has killed more than 13,000 people.

The new government has reciprocated a rebel truce, and the Maoists have agreed to talks ahead of elections to a new assembly to draft a constitution and decide the future of the monarchy.

India, Myanmar

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The acting foreign secretary handed over two separate notes to the envoys drawing attention of their respective governments to the news items published regarding allocation of undermarked areas to conduct survey for exploration of oil and gas in the Bay of Bengal, the sources said.

The sources quoted the notes as saying that in the interest of good neighbourly relations Bangladesh "seeks cooperation of both India and Myanmar for more details about allocation of undermarked blocks in the Bay of Bengal."

100 killed in Afghan

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interior ministry spokesman Yousuf Stanizai said.

Thirteen police were killed, seven were wounded and two are missing after the hours-long fighting in Musa Qala district, Stanizai said.

"Around 40 Taliban were killed and they have left behind the bodies of 10," he said. The militants often take the bodies of their dead away with them.

Ten Taliban were captured, he said.

"The attack was very strong," said Moheedin Khan, a spokesman for the Helmand governor. "But we resisted."

Britain will have stationed some 3,000 troops by July in Helmand to help maintain security.

Afghan security forces backed by Canadian troops and artillery and British helicopters fought Taliban insurgents for most of the day Wednesday in neighbouring Kandahar province.

"Eighteen Taliban have been killed and 35 are detained" in the fighting centring on Panjway district 24 kilometres (15 miles) west of Kandahar city, coalition spokesman Major Quentin Innis said Thursday.

A Canadian soldier was killed when her unit came under fire from small arms and rocket-propelled grenades. She became the first Canadian woman to die in combat

Earlier, in a token protest against the government's delay in meeting their 11-point demand, the judges wore black badges during the court proceedings on January 15-17.

On February 12, the BJSJA had postponed its scheduled agitation following a long discussion with Law, Justice and Parliamentary Affairs Minister Moudud Ahmed.

The law minister had assured them that the government would take necessary steps to meet the rest of the demands as the government had earlier met some of their demands, BJSJA sources said.

In addition to their 11-point demand, the BJSJA also placed a three-point demand to the prime minister on December 21 at their 55th annual conference. These include appointing assistant judges to the vacant posts, giving the district and sessions judges the status of joint secretary and appointing 50 per cent of the High Court judges from the lower courts.

The government had earlier appointed 162 assistant judges to the vacant posts while no vehicles for the judges of the Special Tribunal for Women and Children Repression were provided, sources said.

Woman killed

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the door for them with his key and they found Momena's body lying on the toilet floor. Her neck was tied with a scarf while the legs with another scarf.

Ekhlash said nothing was missing in the flat although all drawers and steel cupboards were found open.

The guard Jagannath Rabi Das and the neighbouring residents said they neither heard any noise nor did they see anyone entering or leaving the flat during the time.

Ekhlash, who married his cousin Momena 11 months ago, claimed he does not have any enmity with anyone. Police however picked up Soma and Jagannath for quizzing.

Body suggests

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incident at Chittagong Stadium on April 16.

Committee Chairman and Joint Secretary of the Ministry of Information Mir Mosharraf Hossain submitted the report to Information Minister M Shamsul Islam at his secretariat office yesterday.

The information minister thanked the committee for submitting its report within a short time.

Terming the Chittagong incident unwarranted, the minister said everybody will have to play a responsible role to avoid recurrence of such incidents in future.

"We should refrain from any acts that may tarnish our image in the outside world... all should work together for the country," he said.

Deputy Minister for Information Abdus Salam Pintu, Information Secretary Muhammad Haider Ali, Committee Member and General Secretary of DUJ Omar Faruk, President of Bangladesh Sports Journalists Association (BSJA) Manzurul Haque, General Secretary of Bangladesh Photo Journalists Association Mir Ahmed Miru, sports editor of daily Inquilab, and member-secretary of the committee and Deputy Secretary of Sports and Youth Ministry Bhuiyan Shafiqul Islam were present.

since World War II.

Kandahar is the birthplace of the Taliban movement that rose to control most of war-weary Afghanistan by 1996. It was toppled by a US-led coalition in late 2001 when it refused to hand over al-Qaeda leader Osama bin Laden.

A US anti-narcotics adviser was killed in the western city of Herat on Thursday when a suicide bomber rammed an explosives-packed car into his Land Cruiser, the US embassy said. An Afghan interpreter was wounded.

A second suicide bomber struck hours later in the southern city of Ghazni, killing an Afghan passer-by. The attacker tried to slam his car into an Afghan army convoy but the bombs exploded before he could reach the troops.

The Taliban claimed responsibility for both bombings.

Taliban insurgents have intensified their attacks in recent months, including suicide bombings that were almost unheard of in Afghanistan before September last year.

There have been 22 suicide attacks in the country this year, most of them in the south. The blasts have killed 49