

# Thai minister warns of 'more serious' attacks

AFP, Bangkok

Thai Defence Minister Boonrawd Somtas warned yesterday that the bombers behind the deadly New Year blasts in Bangkok are likely to organise even more daring attacks over the next two months.

"Those who are behind the attacks have the ability to do something even more serious," he said in an interview with AFP and a leading Thai daily, The Nation.

"The information that we have received indicates that political movements would grow and intensify their efforts to discredit the government by trying to show that we are unable to maintain domestic security," Boonrawd said.

The defence minister said he believed the masterminds of the attacks wanted to incite popular protests against the military government.

"They are trying to bring down the government with power of the people, not the gun," he said.

"They have not stopped their movements, and more actions (like the bombings) could happen again from January to March," he said without revealing why the months were considered a high-risk period.

"Political movements will intensify, not only in Bangkok. They will expand to the provinces, but I could not say in exactly what form,"

Boonrawd added.

Three people were killed and 42 wounded in eight coordinated bombings across Bangkok on New Year's Eve.

Army-installed Prime Minister Surayud Chulanont has said that he believed the attacks were committed by people linked to ousted premier Thaksin Shinawatra, whose government was toppled by the military in September.

But Boonrawd repeated his accusation that the bombers were "men in uniform". He said while he was certain that the bombers would eventually be arrested, he was not sure if the mastermind of the attacks would ever be found.

"I am confident that we can arrest the individual bombers, but as for the person behind the attacks, that will be difficult," Boonrawd said.

The government has ruled out the possibility that the Bangkok bombings were committed by insurgents from Muslim-majority provinces in southern Thailand.

Violence in the region along the Malaysian border, where more than 1,800 people have been killed in three years of conflict, has spiked since the coup despite a number of olive branches offered by the new government.

Boonrawd said he believed the violence would ease within six

months, once the government's initiatives began to bear fruit.

The military has revived a key mediation centre credited with ending earlier outbreaks of separatist violence, which have erupted periodically since the region was annexed by Thailand in 1902.

Twenty new paramilitary companies are also being recruited from the local population to help police the region, which officials hope will end complaints about patrolling troops from other parts of the country who do not speak the local dialect.

"When all of the organisations we are setting up are fully operational, the violence, the bombings, the ambushes, the arsons and the shootings will decrease," Boonrawd said.

"There will be progress within six months," he added.

The general said the government's offer to hold talks with insurgents remained open, but officials were still trying to find out who was directing the insurgency movement.

Boonrawd said the government had no plans to lift martial in the region, saying it was still needed to help soldiers in the area.

"We cannot cancel it at this time. We have to maintain it to help facilitate the work of soldiers there," he said.

## Police admin remains

FROM PAGE 1

have either been made OSD (officer on special duty) or "dumped" in the Armed Police Battalion (APBn), Sardah Police Academy, Police Training Centres (PTC), training schools, Police Special Training School (PSTS), Special Branch (SB), Railway Police, riot department, and the hill tracts. In these sectors these officers will have no scope of election duty.

After curtailing the basic training programme at Sardah Police Academy in 2005, the then government shortened the six-month field-level training for assistant superintendents of police--

recruited through the controversial 24th Bangladesh Civil Service examinations--to three months. The reason was to ensure that the BNP-led government could handle the posting process of these police officers within its tenure.

Unlike the previous caretaker government's moves to depoliticise the police for ensuring a free and fair election, the present CG rather promoted a few officers while conducting the eyewitness reshuffle by merely sending officers from one place to another.

**DRAMA IN TOP OFFICES**

In its first move towards the reshuffle, the CG cancelled the contractual appointments of Abdul Aziz Sarker, director general (DG) of Rapid Action Battalion (Rab), and Farrukh Ahmed Chowdhury, additional inspector general (IG) of police (administration), on October 31.

Additional IG of Criminal Investigation Department (CID) Khoda Bux Chowdhury was made the DG Rab on October 31. The CG made Bux the IG in two days, making the then IG Anwarul Iqbal, who is known for honesty, an OSD.

Chowdhury Kamrul Ahsan, who is senior to Bux, was made OSD on October 31 in an apparent bid to favour Bux.

Just before handing over power, the BNP-led government sent Additional IG Sadat Hossain, who was also senior to both Chowdhury Kamrul and Khoda Bux, into forced retirement to clear Bux's way.

Dhaka Metropolitan Police (DMP) commissioner SM Mizanur Rahman was made the CID chief on October 31 and Rajshahi Range DIG Naim Ahmed filled his post at the DMP.

Interestingly, Naim was swapped with SB chief ABM Bazlur Rahman in less than 48 hours.

Similarly, before starting well the work as CID chief, Mizanur Rahman was made DG Rab on November 2.

All these officers enjoyed strong favour from the previous government, sources said.

Khoda Bux, who was an SP in Dhaka in 2001, was promoted as IG in just five years superseding a few senior officers. As DMP commissioner Mizanur also reportedly ran the department as best suited the previous government's desires.

Khulna Metropolitan Police commissioner Khan Sayeed Hasan, who was made the Rajshahi Range DIG on October 31, was one of the officers getting promotion in the quickest possible time.

DIG of SB Dr Sadequr Rahman was transferred to CID on October

31 only to be brought back to the SB on November 19.

**INSIGNIFICANT TRANSFER OF OCs AND SPs**

Khaleda Zia claimed Friday that all the SPs and OCs were changed but what she avoided in her speech is that only very few new recruits were appointed in these posts and that the same old officers only changed their offices.

The OCs were also transferred to other police stations of the same range under the same DIGs.

The changes in the posts of SP were also done as per the design of the previous government as the CG transferred many SPs from one district and metropolitan area to another. The CG, however, did not redress the cause of the deprived.

SP Abul Kalam Siddique was transferred from Shariatpur to Patuakhali, and Shahidur Rahman from Thakurgaon to Nilphamari. AM Naser M Khaled of Netrakona, SM Rokanuddin of Meherpur, Delwar Hossain Mia of Dinajpur, Abdullah Al Mahmud of Rajshahi, and Morshedul Alam of Tangail were transferred to DMP as deputy commissioners (DC) on November 6.

Gazipur SP Shafique Islam was made the Rajshahi Metropolitan Police (RMP) DC, and Lokman Hakim was transferred from RMP to DMP, while DMP DCs Mahbubul Alam was transferred to Rajshahi as SP, Reazul Karim to Gazipur, AKM Sahidur Rahman to Bagerhat, Abul Khayer to Comilla, and Israil Hawaladar to Tangail the same day.

The transfers of assistant IG Humayun Kabir from the police headquarters to Khulna PTC, and Sardah Police Academy Principal Nazibur Rahman to Highway Police as DIG, and the swapping of Chittagong APBn commandant SM Mahfuzul Haq Nuruzzaman with AIG Banor Mukamr Jamjunder of the police HQ, also seem to have no major effect in terms of depoliticising the police department.

**THE FAVOURED**

The SPs and DCs, who were close to the BNP-led four-party alliance and enjoyed strong favour during its rule, now also have good postings.

Chittagong Metropolitan Police (CMP) DC Nazmul Karim Khan, Bangladesh Agriculture University (BAU) JCD unit vice president and brother of former special judge and BNP candidate from Kishoreganj sadar Rezaul Karim Khan Chunnur, has been made Khulna SP.

Khulna Metropolitan Police (KMP) DC Gazi Jasim Uddin, who was president of Patuakhali district unit Islami Chhatra Shibir, was made Sherpur SP; former JCD president of Rajshahi BIT Anwar Kamal was transferred from Faridpur to Cox's Bazar; and DMP DC Rezaul Karim Malik, who was general secretary of Amra Ziar Sainik, was transferred to Laxmipur as SP.

DMP DC Monjur Morshed Alam, also son of the nayebe amir of Jamalpur unit Jamaat, was made SP in Pabna--district of Jamaat Amir Motiur Rahman Nizami; former BAU Shibir president Munir Hossain was made SP in Netrakona, district of former state minister for home Lutfozzaman

Babar; and former BAU JCD senior vice-president Mostafa Kamal was transferred from Bagerhat to Dinajpur.

Former Naogaon SP Fazlur Rahman, who allegedly patronised Jama'atul Mujahideen Bangladesh kingpin Siddiqui Islam alias Bangla Bhai, is now the SP of Manikganj; and Chapainawabganj SP Ashrafur Rahman, who was the president of Islamic University unit JCD, was transferred to Barisal.

DMP DC Abdul Mannan, who is known as a "jatiyatabadi police officer" because of his BNP connection, was transferred to Comilla as SP at the end of the previous government's rule. But after taking office, the CG first brought Mannan back to DMP and later made him Habiganj SP.

Interestingly, no one has been transferred from the city unit of the Detective Branch and Special Branch.

**FATE OF THE DEPRIVED UNCHANGED**

SP Mokhesur Rahman, who was made an OSD in the beginning of the four-party coalition government's rule, remained deprived of promotion during almost five years. At the fag end of its tenure, Khaleda's government made him the commandant of Barisal Range Reserved Force only to transfer him to Khulna PTC a few days later.

After taking over, the CG first made Mokhesur the DIG of SB and then transferred him to Sardah Police Academy 15 days later.

Although the Superior Selection Board recommended promoting Additional DIG Sheikh Hemayet Hossain to DIG, the BNP government ignored the recommendation and kept him at the Rangpur PTC.

The CG also did not promote Hemayet and transferred him as DIG to Railway Police. He was deprived of postings as he hails from Gopalganj, the area of Awami League President Sheikh Hasina, sources alleged.

Many such police officers had been deprived of good postings and promotion during the immediate past government's rule for hailing from Faridpur and Gopalganj regions and belonging to the minority community.

## BSF kills 2

FROM PAGE 16

Mohammad Wahab Ali of Roychandipur village under Tentulia upazila of Panchagarh district at around 7:00pm.

Officials of 29 Rifles Battalion quoted the villagers as saying that Abdur Rahim lost his way in dense fog and reached the border pillar no 442.

A BSF patrol team of Haptia camp picked him up at gunpoint and took to their camp.

BDR strongly protested the abduction of the Bangladeshi and asked its Indian counterpart to release him.

Meanwhile, the border guards of the two countries exchanged fire on Beurjhari border under Baliadgang upazila of Thakurgaon yesterday morning.

BDR officials said the BSF men fired at least ten rounds of bullet targeting Beurhari border village, prompting Bangladesh paramilitary troops to retaliate by firing only two bullets.

However, no casualties were reported during the exchange of fire.

## Cold claims

FROM PAGE 16

Our Sakhira correspondent reports that the sweeping cold claimed the lives of four more people in Shyamnagar upazila yesterday. Of them, three are elderly women including a hundred-year-old woman. Several thousand have fallen ill with cold related diseases.

Deputy Commissioner (DC) of the district Kefayatullah said he has asked higher authorities to allocate more warm clothes for the poor people of the district.

At least four more people died of cold or cold related diseases and 200 more were admitted to different hospitals in Sirajganj district yesterday, our Sirajganj correspondent reports. The victims of the cold wave are thronging different hospitals of the district, sources said.

Three people died in Chandpur yesterday due to the bitter cold wave, our Chandpur correspondent reports. People from the Char areas have been the worst hit by the cold wave.

Our Gaibandha correspondent reports the severe cold spell has claimed one life in the district yesterday. The district administration distributed 4,500 blankets among the affected people who mostly live on the flood control embankment along the Brahmaputra river. Over three lakh destitute people living on different embankments are badly suffering for want of warm cloths.

## 300 get released

FROM PAGE 16

Of the 698 arrestees produced before the court on Saturday, 355 got release after paying the fine imposed by the court. The court sent the remaining others, implicated in regular cases, to the central jail and fixed yesterday for their bail hearings.

Of the 383 arrestees forwarded to the court on Sunday, 184 got release after paying fine. The court also sent the remaining others, implicated in regular cases, to jail custody and fixed tomorrow for their bail hearings.

## Grand alliance

FROM PAGE 16

but resignation of President Iajuddin Ahmed from the post of chief adviser, preparation of an accurate and complete voter roll and reconstitution of the Election Commission to hold an acceptable election," Jaiil said.

He asked the caretaker government and the law enforcement agencies not to obstruct today's Bangabhaban siege programme that isto start from 10:30am.

The AL general secretary also told them not to arrest or torture the grand alliance leaders.

He said the interim government and the concerned officials will have to take the responsibilities if any untoward incident takes place today.

According to him, around 4,500 to 5,000 AL leaders and activists have been arrested during the last four days including yesterday's 500 from the capital.

Jaiil asked all the election related officials to refrain from performing their duties.

"If you get involved with the electoral process, you will be identified as enemies of the people like Rajakars and Al Badars and will be despised forever," the AL leader said.

He also asked the teachers' community to stay away from the electoral process.

Senior leaders of the grand alliance Abdur Razzak, Tofail Ahmed, Suranjit Sengupta, Sheikh Fazul Karim Selim, Abdul Mannan, Kazi Zafar Ahmed, Ruhul Amin Hawlader, Rashed Khan Menon, Hasanul Haque Inu, Bimal Biswas, Nurul Islam, Pankaj Bhattacharya and Dilip Barua were present at the briefing.

Prior to the briefing, the grand

alliance leaders held a meeting with AL Presidium Member Amir Hossain Amu in the chair to review the latest political developments.

People expressed solidarity with the grand alliance's demand of resignation of the chief adviser to ensure a free and fair poll by observing the second day of the 72-hour non-stop countrywide blockade, the meeting observed.

## Pakistan should not use terrorism as a foreign policy tool: Afghan FM

AFP, Kandahar

Pakistan should be told not to use "terrorism as an instrument of foreign policy," Afghanistan's foreign minister said yesterday amid new tensions over the Taliban insurgency.

Foreign Minister Ranganee Dadfar Spanta made the remark while visiting the volatile southern city of Kandahar, a Taliban hotbed, with his Canadian counterpart, Peter MacKay, who is due to visit Pakistan this week.

Asked by a reporter what message he would like MacKay to pass on in Islamabad Tuesday, Spanta replied: "Don't use terrorists and terrorism as an instrument of foreign policy."

Tensions between the Islamic neighbours stepped up again last month with Pakistan's announcement that it would mine or fence part of border to block the routes of militants said to be launching attacks in Afghanistan.

# India hopes

FROM PAGE 16

security and friendship," Singh said. Manmohan said he dreamt of breaking down barriers in South Asia so that people could have breakfast in India, lunch in Pakistan and dinner in Afghanistan.

"I dream of a day when, while retaining our respective national identities, one can have breakfast in Amritsar, lunch in Lahore and dinner in Kabul," he said, referring to cities in India, Pakistan and Afghanistan respectively.

"That is how my forefathers lived. That is how I want our grandchildren to live," Singh told a business conference.

His comments came ahead of a two-day visit to Pakistan by Indian Foreign Minister Pranab Mukherjee, beginning on January 13.

He is due to invite Pakistani President Pervez Musharraf to New Delhi for a South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (Saarc) conference in April 2007, and the visit will also include a review of the peace process launched in January 2004.

Singh said commercial ties between the eight Saarc members - Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, the Maldives, Nepal, Pakistan and Sri Lanka -- could guarantee durable peace.

"India cannot be a prosperous, dynamic economy and a stable polity if our neighbourhood as a whole is also not economically prosperous and politically stable," Singh told a conference of the Federation of Indian Chambers of Commerce and Industries. "And similarly, our neighbours cannot prosper if India does not do so as well. There are enormous opportunities for promoting mutually beneficial cooperation in South Asia.

"To exploit these opportunities, the nations of South Asia have to work sincerely to control the scourge of terrorism and extremism," he said.

India has forged soft-trade regimes with South Asian neighbours such as Sri Lanka, but so far hopes for a preferential trade agree-

## US and N Korea

FROM PAGE 16

in Washington over the past few days that a compromise on holding talks on the financial measures might have been reached.

"No date has been fixed yet, but I was told North Korea and the US have provisionally reached a compromise to hold it in the week starting on January 22," he said on the weekend, according to a Web posting on South Korea's Overseas Information Service.

US and North Korean financial officials have met before, including on the sidelines last month at the nuclear talks in Beijing, to discuss the measures.

The United States has said it will not back down on its crackdown on firms it suspects of aiding North Korea in illicit activities such as counterfeiting. Washington said the move was a law enforcement measure not related to the nuclear talks.

The UN Security Council imposed sanctions on North Korea after it defied international warnings and conducted its first nuclear test on October 9.

Last Friday, the United States warned North Korea of deeper isolation if the North conducts a second atomic test, amid a report from American TV network ABC that Pyongyang has been preparing to detonate nuclear atomic device.

# Army given blanket power

FROM PAGE 1

The home ministry will decide for how many days the armed forces will be allowed to exercise the power.

But sources in the EC said the armed forces will enjoy the power for 20 days from January 10, the day of their deployment across the country on election duties.

President and Chief Adviser Iajuddin Ahmed yesterday directed the armed forces to carry out their assigned duties for holding the January 22 parliamentary election in a fair manner. The president gave the instruction when Army Chief Lt Gen Moeen U Ahmed called on him in Bangabhaban in the afternoon.

Being legally empowered, the army, navy and the air force will be able to take actions against any person if the person is guilty of unduly influencing or compelling any other person to vote or to refrain from voting, directly or indirectly, by himself or herself or by any other person on his or her behalf.

"The Election Commission has agreed with the proposal considering the prevailing situation centring the parliamentary election," EC Secretary Abdur Rashid Sarkar told The Daily Star yesterday, terming the security of voters as crucial following Awami League-led grand alliance's announcement of boycotting and resisting the election.

Meanwhile, AFD held a meeting yesterday morning and finalised the plan for deployment of troops from January 10 as decided earlier. About 60,000 troops will be deployed, sources said.

Two senior officials of the EC Secretariat yesterday afternoon met the home secretary and handed over the EC's letter to him allowing the armed forces to have the additional power. They also discussed the law and order situation.

Sources said the meeting

decided to send the ballot papers and other election materials to the polling centres from January 19 amid tight security provided by the armed forces and police.

The letter asked the home ministry to issue directives allowing the armed forces to take legal actions including arrest of any person without a warrant before, during, and for a few days after the election.

The letter however did not clarify whether other law enforcement agencies will also enjoy the additional power like the armed forces.

The home ministry will now issue fresh instructions amending the previous circular issued by it on January 3.

Instructed by the EC, its secretariat also sent copies of the letter to the office of the chief adviser, to the principal staff officer (PSO) of AFD, and to the inspector general of police, sources said.

According to the existing electoral laws, a member of any law enforcement agency including the army, navy and the air force shall have the power to arrest any person without a warrant for maintenance of peace, law and order in a polling station or within a radius of four hundred yards of a polling station on the polling day.

The power given to the armed forces, for the first time through a controversial ordinance in 2001, also allows them to take actions against any activity that goes against the electoral code of conduct.

AFD now has an additional authority of exercising this power all over the constituencies, which will have the polls on January 22.

The armed forces, which will act as mobile strike forces, however will handover the arrestees to the police.

According to the election laws, the armed forces can also themselves remove or issue orders to

remove multi-coloured posters or portraits of candidates, campaign gates and arches, barricades, banners, microphones, loudspeakers, and decorative campaign illuminations, and can paint over graffiti on walls.

## Burned driver

FROM PAGE 16

set fire to a car pouring kerosene on it.

With both of his hands and legs badly burnt and the right side of his face completely deformed, Halim was slipping in and out of consciousness frequently in his bed at DMCH.

"In the blink of an eye, even before I could realise what was happening, the picketers set my CNG ablaze while I was still stuck inside," said Halim to this correspondent in a choked voice as he gained consciousness again. "Later I found myself lying in a hospital bed."

Halim didn't allow photographers to take his photograph. He said his family members in Bagerhat would be devastated if they see his picture and find out about the incident. "I don't want my family to know about my accident as they are solely dependent on me for survival."

Il-fated Halim, unable to bear the medical expenses, is now lying all alone in the hospital bed without any treatment and totally at the mercy of the unmoved medical authority.

"We cannot continue to bear his medical expenses because we have limited resources," reasoned the sources at DMCH.

## EWG

FROM PAGE 1 going to be," he told The Daily Star last night.

A press release of the group said that it will refrain from monitoring the upcoming polls "if the present political situation prevails and the caretaker government, election commission, and political parties fail to establish conditions conducive to credible polls, and the parliamentary election proceeds on January 22 without the full participation of all major political parties."

The group has suspended all voter and civic education activities, but will continue to assess the present situation, with an emphasis on political-related violence. It will sit for discussing its prospective role soon, the release added.

The 34-member EWG was formed in August last year with a mission to contribute to a peaceful, free and fair elections in Bangladesh and to help foster a genuine culture of democracy and the highest standards of integrity and accountability of governance.

## Polls must be held

FROM PAGE 1

parties, Anwar observed that it would certainly be to the people of the country. "I do not know," the acting CEC replied when asked the same question.

"We have come here (EC) to enquire about the preparations for the upcoming election," Anwar said adding that they are satisfied with the EC's activities.

Asked whether holding the election on scheduled date or its acceptance was more important, he replied that the constitution is the supreme law of the country, which cannot be amended without a parliament. There is no other option other than holding the election within the 90-day time according to the constitution, he added.

Anwar, however, observed that participation of all political parties in the election is important. "Though the election would not be fully meaningful now, there is no other alternative than to hold it on the scheduled date," he added.

Adviser to the BNP chairperson AH Mofazzel Karim, advocate Jasimuddin Sarker and former secretary Sujauddin were the other delegation members.

# Education project

FROM PAGE 16

The two advertisements mentioned that aspirants would have to send applications with Tk 100 and Tk 50 pay order or bank draft from any bank branch in the capital within ten days from the date of advertisement publication.

As the advertisements were published in November when several political parties enforced countrywide blockade programmes, most of the aspirants outside the capital could not send their applications fulfilling the condition of sending bank draft and pay order from a Dhaka branch of any bank.

Usually such advertisements allow sending pay order or bank draft from any branch of specific banks across the country.

The syndicate of education sector officials, who were most beneficiaries during the last five years of BNP-Jamaat coalition rule, worked behind attaching the unusual conditions in the two advertisements and allocating very short time for application so that not many candidates other than those loyal to the BNP-Jamaat alliance could apply for the posts under the SESDP, sources said.

The advertisement published on November 11 sought application for the post of one system analyst, 14 programmers, 333 assistant inspectors, 91 research officers, 222 upazila academic supervisors, one administrative officer, one accountant, two assistant programmers, one documentation officer and 18 computer operators.

The advertisement published on November 20 asked for 73 data entry operators, one accountant, one stenographer, one storekeeper, four

drivers, one cash officer, 16 guards and one sweeper.

Giving the hope of incorporating 1,500 staff of the SESP project into the SESDP, the syndicate has already collected around Tk 7 lakh and a half, sources said, adding that the syndicate members also told them to pay Tk 10 to 50 thousand each after finalising the recruitment.

Most of the SESP staff are also loyal to the BNP-Jamaat alliance as the SESP started in January 2002 when the alliance government was in power.

The DSHE issued a show cause notice on December 7 in the wake of allegation of taking Tk 7 lakh 50 thousand in bribes.

The