

## Serial blasts spark

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the Islamist militants has left messages that they would carry out attacks on the Ahmadiyyas.

Meanwhile, the NGO activists urged the government to address the militant issue seriously to put an end to militancy for good.

BNP Chairperson and former prime minister Khaleda Zia has said that no subversive activities in the name of peaceful religion Islam can be acceptable to the people and religion.

Expressing concern in a statement yesterday, she confirmed BNP's stand against terrorism and called upon the countrymen to resist the anti-people activities. Khaleda Zia also asked for fitting punishment for the people responsible for the blasts.

In a statement yesterday, Awami League (AL) chief and former prime minister Sheikh Hasina said that the bombs were blasted by the evil forces who are against independence, democracy, communal harmony and development.

Condemning the incident, she also noted that the blasts are not separate incidents, rather these prove that those who want to make Bangladesh a safe haven of terrorists are still active.

The extremist forces have been continuing their activities against the advancement of non-communal, democratic and progressive forces, president and general secretary of Communist Party of Bangladesh (CPB) Manzurul Ahsan Khan and Mujahidul Islam Selim in a joint statement said.

The incidents prove that the root of the terrorists is in very deep, they said adding that only hanging the culprits is not enough, their political base is needed to be demolished.

Jatiya Samajtantrik Dal (JSD) President Hasanul Haque Inu and General Secretary Syed Zafar Sajjad described the incidents as dreadful and heinous as the bombs were blasted to kill innocent people.

They demanded eradication of armed terrorists from the country by accelerating the current drive against terrorism.

Expressing concern over the serial bomb blasts, Jamaat-e-Islami Amir Motiur Rahman Nizami and Secretary General Ali Ahsan Mohammad Mujahid in a joint statement said that Islam does not approve any sort of terrorism and they (terrorists) do not have any relation with Islam.

In a joint statement, Bangladesh Society for the Enforcement of Human Rights (BSEHR) Secretary General adocate Sigma Huda, Executive Director Elina Khan and all executive committee members, demanded ensuring security of the NGO workers and punishment to the people responsible for the bomb blasts.

### REACTION OF AHMADIYYA JAMAAT

Ahmadiyya Muslim Jamaat yesterday said that their lives and security are under major threat following the simultaneous bomb blasts on Tuesday morning in Dhaka, Chittagong and Sylhet rail stations.

Meanwhile, although the security has been beefed up in all Ahmadiyya complexes following the incident, it was not considered

adequate.

"Such activities in the name of Islam cannot be acceptable," Abdul Awal, Ameer of Ahmadiyya Muslim Jamaat Bangladesh, said.

"Members of Ahmadiyya community are scared after the bomb blasts by the Islamist militant group," Mohammad Shamsur Rahman, Ameer of the Khulna unit of Ahmadiyya Muslim Jamaat, said.

"We were also in fear in the past about our life and security, but this time we are more concerned as the militant group has sent clear messages that they will attack us," an Ahmadiyya leader told The Daily Star.

Ahmadiyya Jamaat also urged the caretaker government to take tough actions against the Islamist militants and destroy their breeding ground.

About the security personnel deployed in different Ahmadiyya complexes, an Ahmadiyya Jamaat leader said, "This is not enough as members of our community live in different places in the city and district."

Many of them are service holders in government, semi government and financial institutions and also involved in business, he added.

### REACTION OF THE NGOS

Ain o Salish Kendra (ASK) Executive Director Sultana Kamal said that the blasts on Tuesday prove that the militant activities are not over in the country with the recent hangings of the top militant leaders.

"Now the government should take this incident seriously and take proper steps to put an end to militant activities for good," Sultana Kamal, also a former adviser to the caretaker government, said.

She also suggested that the government consults with the experts on how to address this issue.

In her reaction, Khushi Kabir, executive director of Nijera Kori, a social organisation, said that the government should show zero tolerance to the fundamentalists and militants.

She also urged the government to ban religious based politics to tackle the crisis.

"Government should find out how we all can work together to address this issue," Khushi Kabir added.

## Dhanmondi

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Via Russell Square, from Bijoy Sarani to Mohammadpur Traffic Office, from Hotel Sheraton to Kakral intersection, from Matsya Bhaban to Rainbow crossing, from Science Laboratory to Matsya Bhaban, and from Matsya Bhaban to Golapshah Mazar via Old High Court intersection.

"Our main aim is to have roads free from noise pollution by making them horn-free and also eliminate traffic jam from Dhaka streets," said DMP Commissioner Nayeem Ahmed at the press conference in his office.

Two deputy commissioners of traffic and a number of other senior police officers were also present at the press conference.

development in each department but those were dissolved immediately after immediate past vice chancellor Prof Hadi took the charge of the BSMMU.

Burden of huge employees has made the university economically crippled, and disproportionately high number of doctors compared to patients and infrastructure hinders the skill development of the doctors.

In absence of monitoring mechanism, indiscipline prevails at the institution.

Although the University Grants Commission (UGC) objected to recruiting unnecessary manpower, they did not take any stern actions in this regard, said several senior teachers.

As there is no political influence now, it is time to renovate the university and make it a model and right place for producing really efficient doctors for the next generation, they said.

## Prof Yunus

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however contradicts the statement of Tareq, another accused held in connection with the murder case. Tareq previously told police that Shahidullah was present while the professor was being murdered. Tareq also said that the professor was killed by order of JMB chief Shaikh Abdur Rahman.

During interrogation, Shahidullah said that after the JMB high command directed the activists to kill Prof Yunus for his affiliation with outlawed communists, he along with Tareq, Ibrahim, Mostafa, Abul Kashem, Arif and Abdur Rashid held a meeting at Tareq's house at Baniapara in Rajshahi town.

He had been assigned with high profile assignments after marrying the niece of Bangla Bhui. He accompanied Bangla Bhui in operations against outlaws in Chapainawabganj, Rajshahi, Natore and Naogaon, Shahidullah admitted to police.

## 22pc bigger

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designing a less ambitious and more "realistic" budget to strike a balance between revenue and expenditure, sources said.

The government also does not plan on bringing any significant changes to the Annual Development Programme (ADP) by restricting the FY08 original allocation for ADP within Tk 26,000 crore. The original ADP budget for the current budget is Tk 26,000 crore, which was revised down to Tk 21,600 crore.

The government will also raise expenditure to service local and foreign debts in its revenue budget, while expenditure will be increased to finance reforms in several sectors.

Preliminary estimates project Tk 10,900 crore to service local and foreign debt in the FY08 budget. In the current budget, Tk 7,640 crore has been allocated for this purpose.

The government is also looking at ways of financing its reform programmes through foreign aid, sources said.

The revenue budget is also projected to be less ambitious than the budgets pitched by previous political governments, with the estimated revenue income target for FY08 to be Tk 57,290 crore, which is around 16 percent higher than the correct revised revenue target for FY07.

Currently, the total revenue income target for FY07 is Tk 52,540 crore, which could be revised down to Tk 49,200 crore, sources said.

The preliminary revenue income target for FY08 by the National Board of Revenue (NBR) is Tk 43,640 crore, which is around 7 percent higher than the original FY07 target of Tk 41,060 crore. The FY07 target for NBR revenue earnings is also likely to be revised down to Tk 37,360 crore.

Sources said the FY08 NBR revenue target is only 16 percent higher than the revised FY07 target because it is more "realistic" as the FY07 earnings were targeted 20 percent higher than the FY06 even though the earnings are expected to rise by only 12-13 percent.

## Heat wave

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Meanwhile, sale of juicy and sour fruits has increased in Dhaka and other areas of the country as is usual in summer.

"Actually this is the peak period for sale of watermelons. We are now having more and more customers," said a watermelon seller at Karwan Bazar market.

Sources said the heat wave is causing an outbreak of fever in different areas.

Asked about this, two specialist physicians at Dhaka Medical College Hospital however said they are yet to find any patient attacked with fever due to the heat spell.

"May be, such patients are yet to come to hospital," said Dr Abul Khashem Khandaker.

Dr MA Fayez also expressed similar views.

Met office said a well-marked low has formed in South Andaman Sea and adjoining areas, which may move towards Bangladesh and nearby Indian coast.

Maritime ports of Chittagong, Cox's Bazar and Mongla have been advised to hoist distant cautionary signal number one. All fishing boats and trawlers in North Bay and deep sea have been asked to come closer to the coast and proceed with caution till further notice. The ports will be asked to hoist bigger signals if the sea becomes more rough. Met office sources said.

The highest temperature in the country yesterday --38 degree Celsius-- was recorded in Jessore and Ishwardi. In the capital, temperature was 37.5 degree Celsius.

## Hasina

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Bangladesh" at School of Oriental & African Studies (SOAS) as chief guest last night with Professor Werner Menski in the chair. Centre for Ethnic Minority Studies at SOAS organised the event.

The AL chief will meet Commonwealth Secretary-General Don McKinnon today (May 3) at 11:00pm Bangladesh time.

Hasina was scheduled to return home on April 26 or 27. But the caretaker government on April 18 imposed a ban on Hasina's return, saying that her presence in the country might jeopardise political stability and public security.

Following the ban, the Civil Aviation Authority of Bangladesh (CAAB) promptly requested all airlines operating to Dhaka not to carry the former prime minister.

The government later withdrew the restriction on April 25. Hasina left the country for USA on March 15 on a private visit to meet her son and daughter.

## US issues

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said the US embassy continues to receive reports of incidents of kidnapping, arms and narcotics smuggling and clashes between local Bangladeshis and Rohingya refugees in areas near Rohingya refugee camps in the Teknaf, Kutupalong, Ukhiya and Ramu areas of the Cox's Bazar district.

The US embassy also recommends against travel to these areas. Individuals who choose to visit these districts are urged to exercise extreme caution.

## Blasts in 3 cities

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"Zadid al Qaeda, Bangladesh" (meaning new al Qaeda or an establishment of al Qaeda).

Police, Rapid Action Battalion (Rab) and other intelligence agencies are suspecting the attack was a militant one but they are yet to be sure about the identity of the group behind it. They also could not arrest anyone as of last evening.

"We are investigating whether the third-fourth row leaders-activists of JMB have reorganised and orchestrated the bomb blasts or another new militant group is behind it," Dhaka Metropolitan Police Commissioner Naeem Ahmed said at a press briefing yesterday.

He said the law enforcers were fully unaware of the name of Zadid al Qaeda, Bangladesh and its activities in the past.

The law enforcers said they are verifying the mission of JMB and the Zadid al Qaeda to identify if JMB activists carried out the attack under a new identity.

The JMB mission was to establish the rule of Islamic law through Jihad and their targets included the court, NGOs, jatra (traditional theatre) and cinemas. Tuesday's attackers expressed their vengeance on the NGOs and Kadiyanis (Ahmadiyyas).

The one-foot radius aluminium plates found near the scene bore a message inscribed on it: "The Kadiyanis and NGOs prepare for death. It is haram [prohibited] to work in NGOs and having relation with the Kadiyanis. All must quit NGO jobs by May 10, all Kadiyanis must recognise Prophet Muhammad (SM) as the last and best prophet and if you fail to do it before the aforesaid time, your death is a must." Below the message was inscribed: Zadid al Qaeda, Bangladesh.

Rab Director General Hasan Mahmud Khandaker at the press briefing said they are investigating the matter seriously and are hopeful to find out those involved in the incident.

"The incident took place when a stable situation was prevailing in the country. So, we are also taking into consideration whether the bombs were blasted to destabilise the situation."

He said three separate cases were filed and the intelligence agencies have started investigating the incidents.

The Rab DG also sought cooperation from people to root out militants.

**KAMALAPUR**  
The explosion took place at 6:50am in front of the ticket counters at the Kamalapur Railway Station in the capital.

"Hearing a bang I turned around and found smoke and a large number of small pieces of papers blown in the air," said a boy of the station cafeteria. He said no one was around the spot at that time.

## Asia Energy

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the international market. This poor rate was fixed decades ago when coal and energy prices globally were very low.

Other issues include provision of performance guarantee to be provided by the coal developer to the government. This guarantee may range between \$10 million and 15 million to ensure that a developer does not abandon a mine all of a sudden without compensating for environmental or resource damage.

The draft policy seeks export of 60 percent of the country's coal, leaving 40 percent for domestic consumption.

The policy would also propose setting up a Coal Development Authority, which will be manned by coal sector professionals to monitor and deal with mining issues like environment, land use, ash or other hazardous elements.

The government has been working on the coal policy for nearly two years now. The draft policy has undergone many revisions on the basis of discussions with various stakeholders and experts.

"Besides, we are separately planning to strengthen the Bureau of Mineral Development (BMD), which is not equipped enough to act as the regulatory body," said the ministry source. Run with a few officials, the BMD under the energy ministry issues all licences for mines and minerals.

The new policy will not allow any more unsolicited coal deals like that with Hosaf group. The immediate past BNP-led alliance government in 2004 had awarded the contract for Khalaspir coal mine area to Hosaf, owned by the brother of a BNP lawmaker. Hosaf, which played a major role in making the government swallow the corruption-plagued and highly faulty Barapukuria coal mine deal, made a sketchy study in Khalaspir. It is now seeking government approval for development of Khalaspir mine which has a coal reserve worth billions of dollars.

While the Hosaf proposal for developing Khalaspir mine appears too sketchy and poor for any serious consideration for approval, Asia Energy's \$3 billion development plan for Phulbari mine is backed by a \$20 million study that determines a recoverable coal reserve of 572 million tonnes.

The Asia Energy deal remains suspended since August last year after the law enforcers killed several people who had gathered around the company's Phulbari office protesting its open pit coal mining plan.

Earlier that year, the then energy adviser Mahmudur Rahman had suddenly started saying that this deal

He also said security personnel at the station rushed to the place and cordoned off the area. Later, explosives experts from the Rab and Criminal Investigation Department visited the spot and collected evidence.

The explosion occurred when Communications Secretary Dr Mahbubur Rahman was attending the opening ceremony of Rail Service Week 2007 at the Kamalapur Railway Station auditorium.

Law enforcers said they did not find any splinter. Explosives experts seized two pencil batteries, pieces of a bag in which the bomb was probably kept and pieces of papers from the spot.

### CHITTAGONG

Our correspondent in Chittagong reports: A bomb set off on the Chittagong Railway Station platform at 7:10am injuring rickshaw-puller Munir Hossain, 35.

Witnesses said an unidentified person came to the place with a bag, gave the bag to a woman beggar, and left hastily saying it contains some breakfast.

The woman then called another beggar to share the breakfast and requested Munir to help them open the bag. As Munir tried to open the bag, the bomb incident went off leaving him injured.

Police recovered some Scotch tape, broken remains of a clock and torn papers from the scene.

Munir is undergoing treatment at Chittagong Medical College and Hospital.

Abu Bakar Siddique, assistant commissioner of Chittagong Metropolitan Police (Kotwali Zone), said they have already interrogated 15 suspects.

A case was filed with the Kotwali Police Station under explosives act.

### SYLHET

Our Sylhet correspondent reports: Sylhet Railway Station Manager Abdul Ghani said the bomb exploded at 7:20am with a huge bang near some fixed chairs on the platform.

"We thought something fell on the floor from upstairs," he told The Daily Star, adding that as the chairs were empty, none was hurt. Some one might have kept the bag under the chairs.

Some torn papers and small remains of explosives were found at the blast spot. A round aluminium plate covered with old newspapers was also found in a bag at the place of explosion.

Sylhet kotwali police yesterday picked up Sheikh Kazi Al Amin, 24, son of Abdul Hamid of Bade Halenga village under Kalmakanda upazila of Netrokona from the slum near the Sylhet Railway Station for interrogation.

The police picked up four persons from the slum but released three upon preliminary interrogation.

## Govt set to induct advisers

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of 2008, the jobs in hand appear too much for the present advisory council, which already spent 90 days in office on April 11.

"Each adviser has to look after 3-4 ministries and, as you can guess, it is not easy to do justice to the jobs we are entrusted with. For quite sometime, we all have been thinking of ways to lessen the work pressure on us," said Law Adviser Mainul Hosen, who also echoed the grave concern of Chief Justice Mohammad Ruhul Amin regarding politicisation of the highest judiciary.

Over 60 ministers looked after at least 55 ministries during the previous BNP-led alliance government.

"The constitution states that the caretaker government shall con-

## Bush, Democrats to meet today on Iraq

AP, Washington

President Bush showed little appetite for compromise, hours ahead of a session with congressional leaders aimed at crafting a new bill to fund the war in Iraq.

Fresh from his Tuesday night veto of spending legislation that set timeliness for U.S. troop withdrawals, Bush stuck firmly to his demands on what a follow up bill should look like. The Democrats who control Capitol Hill, and their Republican counterparts, were due at the White House Wednesday afternoon for discussions with the president, just after a planned attempt in the House sure to fail to override Bush's veto.

The 1 p.m. EST vote was primarily procedural, as Democrats lacked the two-thirds majority needed to override the veto. Prospects for override were similarly bleak in the Senate.

"I am confident that with good-will on both sides that we can move beyond political statements and agree on a bill that gives our troops the funds and flexibility to do the job that we asked them to do," the president said in a speech in Washington before The Associated General Contractors of America.

Of the original bill pushed through Congress by Democrats, Bush said: "It didn't make any sense to impose the will of politicians over the recommendations of our military commanders in the field."

House Majority Leader Steny Hoyer (news, bio, voting record) told reporters Wednesday that he hopes to have a new bill passed in the House in two weeks, with a final bill sent to the president before the Memorial Day recess.

"We're not going to leave our troops in harm's way... without the resources they need," said Hoyer, D-Md.

Hoyer was reluctant to say exactly what the bill will look like, but said he anticipates a minimum-wage increase will be part of it. He also said the bill should fund combat through Sept. 30 as Bush has requested, casting doubt that Democratic leaders would adopt a proposal by Rep. John Murtha (news, bio, voting record), R-Pa., to fund the war two or three months at a time.

## Container

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on auction containers staying for more than 30 days.

Privatisation of Chittagong Container Terminal, abolition of stevedoring system and arrests, suspensions and transfers of corrupt and inefficient CPA officials also helped bring in dynamism in port activities.

## BNP leaders

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on politics following declaration of emergency on January 11.

Khaleda Zia, who has decided to go to Saudi Arabia to perform Umrah, made her brother, who is a 'much junior' leader in BNP politics, a party vice president only to ensure her control when she stays abroad, said several party leaders.

"According to the party constitution, the party chief could appoint anyone a party vice chairman," Major General (retd) ZA Khan, adviser to the BNP chairperson, told The Daily Star yesterday.

Khaleda Zia will return home just after performing Umrah if she goes to Saudi Arabia, he added.

Earlier, Sayeed Iskandar, who is also a former BNP lawmaker, told the reporters that Khaleda asked for collecting visa to go to Saudi Arabia.

BNP vice presidents Nazmul Huda and Tariqul Islam, who were most active among 15 vice presidents of the party, are now in jail on charge of corruption while corruption allegations have also risen against a few other vice presidents.

As some others, not being active enough in party activities, might not have acceptability to the party leaders and workers, Khaleda made Sayeed Iskandar a vice president who might take charge of the party in her absence if she is finally forced to stay abroad, sources said.

Most of the party leaders think the decision is a wrong one as there is tremendous pressure to bring reforms in the party and it is the 'right time' to begin democratic practice in the party.

Even they fear a possible split in the party if Khaleda nominates Sayeed Iskandar as the acting chairperson of the party.

sists of not more than 10 advisers. I was in particular asked to find out a solution. Frankly speaking, I see no easy way to overcome the constitutional constraint in increasing the number of advisers beyond 10," he said.

However, leading jurist Dr M Zahir opined that under Article 106 of the constitution, the issue of expanding the advisory council can be sent to Appellate Division of the Supreme Court for guideline. Barrister Rokonuddin Mahmud meanwhile told of two options – appointing persons with designations other than 'adviser' or seeking guideline from the Supreme Court.

Sources meanwhile said a set of alternative proposals including the much-talked-about national government are already on the table of Chief Adviser Dr Fakhruddin Ahmed.

Expanding the council apart, the government is also close to say good-bye to a few under-performing advisers. Sources said that the government is not happy with the poor performances of the advisers in question for quite some time.

Usually, a caretaker government fulfils the constitutional obligation by arranging a general election within 90 days and by not meddling with policy decisions.

But this is not the case with this government, which had to take over the mantle of the country amidst lengthy political conflict between the two major parties – the Awami League and BNP.

## Bush vetoes Iraq

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leverage, because even with the liberals' votes, Democrats don't have enough support to override Bush's veto. It will force Speaker Nancy Pelosi, D-California, to seek more Republican help in drafting a new bill that Bush might accept, her allies and opponents say.

"I think the Democrats are in a box," Rep Eric Cantor, R-Virginia, said in an interview Tuesday. "We're pretty resolute on our side. We are not going to let this funding to any type of withdrawal deadline or any type of redeployment deadline."

Some Democrats believe the GOP solidarity will crack over time, noting that polls show heavy public support for a withdrawal plan.

Lawmakers in both parties agree that a workable compromise is a huge challenge in the coming days or weeks. Because Democrats control the House and Senate, the pressure is mainly on them to craft a bill that Bush will sign, and thus avoid accusations that they failed to finance troops in a time of war.

Many Democrats say a new spending bill must include so-called benchmarks for progress in Iraq that, if not met, would trigger movements of US troops out of the country or perhaps to non-urban areas that see little sectarian violence. A new spending bill "has got to be tied to redeployment," said Rep Rahm Emanuel, D-Illinois, the House's fourth-ranking Democratic leader.

Emanuel conceded, however, that Democrats have yet to figure out where they will find the votes. The situation frustrates Democrats, who won control of the House and Senate in an election that largely focused on Iraq.

Moreover, Democrats showed impressive solidarity in passing the bill that Bush vetoed Tuesday, losing only 14 House Democrats while holding 216. Top Democrats say they have no hope of replicating that showing once they begin making even modest concessions in response to Bush's veto.

That makes them dependent on Republican help to some degree perhaps a lot. As long as most GOP lawmakers stick with the president, "the question is how much policy and change we can push in Iraq," Emanuel said.

In his veto statement Tuesday, Bush again rejected the notion of an "artificial deadline" for troop withdrawals. But he added, "I'm confident that with good will on both sides we can agree on a bill that gets our troops the money and flexibility they need, as soon as possible."

Pelosi, who was to join Republican and Democratic leaders from both houses in a meeting with Bush on Wednesday, told reporters after Bush's remarks: "The president wants a blank check. The Congress is not going to give it to him."

Democrats will work with the White House, she said, "but there is great distance between us right now."

Numerous possible compromises are being floated on Capitol Hill, all involving some combination of benchmarks. Some would require Bush to certify monthly that the Iraqi government is fully cooperating with US efforts in several areas, such as giving troops the authority to pursue extremists. Others would require an Iraqi-run programme to disarm militias and a plan to distribute oil revenues fairly.

The key impasse in Congress is whether to require redeployments of US troops if the benchmarks are not met. Many Democrats insist on it, and many Republicans vow not to budge.

"Our members will not accept restraints on the military," House Minority Whip Roy Blunt of Missouri told reporters Tuesday. He suggested tying benchmarks to continued US non