

Dhaka slates

FROM PAGE 1
stands firm with her friends in India at this hour of grief."

He conveyed his deepest sympathy to the bereaved families.

The chief adviser in a separate message to Indian Prime Minister Manmohan Singh, condemned the terrible terror strikes in Mumbai that left over 100 dead and around 300 others injured.

He expressed sympathy for the members of the bereaved families and prayed for an early recovery of those injured in the gun and bomb attacks.

Foreign Adviser Iftekhar Ahmed Chowdhury has strongly condemned the Mumbai incidents.

In a message to his Indian counterpart Pranab Mukherjee, the foreign adviser said, "I condemn it as mindless acts of terror. I wish to underscore that terror can serve no purpose. Our hearts are with those innocent people who have been affected by these cowardly bombings."

SHEIKH HASINA

Awami League President and former prime minister Sheikh Hasina condemned the brutal gun and bomb attacks in Mumbai.

In a condolence message to Indian Prime Minister Manmohan Singh yesterday, she termed the overnight gun attacks on civilians "cowardly" terrorist attacks.

The AL chief said these dastardly acts are repeatedly taking place to thwart peace and stability and also halt the advancement of democracy in the subcontinent.

She conveyed her sympathy to the bereaved families.

KHALEDA

BNP Chairperson and former prime minister Khaleda Zia has condemned the terrorist attacks in Mumbai.

In a statement, Khaleda expressed her profound shock at the loss of over 100 lives and deep sympathy for the bereaved families. She wished early recovery of the injured.

Khaleda's adviser and former foreign secretary Shamsher Mobin Chowdhury read out the statement at BNP's Gulshan office last night.

Our staff correspondent adds: Following terrible terror strikes in Mumbai of neighbouring India, the police headquarters in Dhaka yesterday asked the law enforcement and intelligence agencies to remain alert country-wide.

Besides, the members of Bangladesh Rifles (BDR) have been asked to beef up border security while the Indian Border Security Force (BSF) issued red alert with shoot-at-sight order in the bordering

Huda

FROM PAGE 16
Power Rules (EPR).

The HC division bench comprised of Justice Md Arayesuddin and Justice Md Abu Tariq also upheld the trial court order that asked the government to confiscate Tk 2.40 crore taken by Huda as bribe.

The same court also dropped from its cause list another appeal of Huda against the trial court verdict in another case filed by the ACC under the EPR for not mentioning that the case was under the EPR.

Huda was sentenced to 13 years' imprisonment in the case for amassing illegal wealth and concealing information about it from the ACC.

On March 21 last year, the ACC filed the case with Dhanmondi Police Station stating that Huda took Tk 2.40 crore bribe from Mir Zahir Hossain, owner of a construction firm, on different occasions in exchange for awarding him five government contracts for construction work including road renovation worth about Tk 30 crore.

Huda's wife Sigma was also charged in the case for aiding and abetting her husband in taking the bribe deposited to an account of Khoboror Ontario, a weekly newspaper owned by her. Later Tk 1 crore of the amount was transferred to the HSBC bank accounts of their daughters.

Later on August 27 last year, a special court on Jatiya Sangsad Bahadur premises awarded Huda seven years' rigorous imprisonment in this bribery case and Sigma to three years' imprisonment.

Both of them had filed appeals with the HC against the conviction order. Sigma was later released on bail.

Advocate Fazlul Karim appeared for Nazmul Huda in the case.

The joint forces arrested Nazmul Huda from his Dhanmondi residence on February 4 last year on charges of corruption.

area after evening.

Inspector General of Police (IGP) Nur Mohammad yesterday said all the units of law enforcement and intelligence agencies have been asked to beef up security immediately.

The IGP said special security measures have been taken for the diplomatic zones, hotels, markets and all the important places and establishments.

Replying to a question, he said, "So far, there is no information and apprehension of such attack in the country."

Sources said Rapid Action Battalion (Rab), Criminal Investigation Department (CID), Special Branch (SB), Detective Branch (DB), all the seven divisional ranges and six metropolitan police headquarters have been asked to keep their forces on alert.

A huge number of personnel from different law enforcement agencies have been deployed at different strategic points. Dhaka Metropolitan Police Commissioner Naim Ahmed said they have already set up additional check posts across the city.

Lt Col Badrul Huda, BDR Commanding Officer in Jessore, said the border guards have been put on alert so that no one can cross the border illegally.

Aman freed

FROM PAGE 1
freed at about 8:00pm from the hospital where several hundred party men welcomed him.

On May 8 this year, a Dhaka court sentenced the former state minister to seven years' RI for extortion of Tk 10 lakh from a businessman in June 2004.

Besides, on June 21 last year, a special court dealing with graft cases sentenced him to 10 years' RI and three years' simple imprisonment, and fined him Tk 10 lakh in a case filed by the ACC.

Aman and his wife Sabera Aman, who is now on bail, are accused in several other cases.

RPO's proper use

FROM PAGE 16
Haiz Uddin Khan said political parties did not follow the code of conduct in the past elections. He called for proper application of the RPO.

He said the legal experts should participate in the discussions on laws relating to the elections, as most of the people do not have any idea about the laws.

Tigers vs SA

FROM PAGE 16
grip when South Africa lost five wickets for 134 runs but wicketkeeper-batsman Boucher (102) joined Prince (115) to ease the pressure and confirmed a 107-run first innings lead before stumps were drawn for the day.

The pair added 223 runs for the sixth wicket as South Africa finished the day at 357 for 5 in reply to Bangladesh's first innings total of 250 runs. They beat the previous record of 200 runs set by Graeme Pollock and Tigers Lance against Australia in Durban in 1969-70.

Prince had some nervous moments before the left-hander hit his tenth Test hundred when he pulled Mashrafe Mortaza for a boundary.

Boucher reached his fifth Test hundred in the final over of the day when he cut Shahadat Hossain to point for four.

Earlier Bangladesh were well placed in the first two sessions after the home side resumed the day on 20 for one.

Right-arm paceman Mahbubul Alam gave the first breakthrough by removing dangerous Graeme Smith (27). The Proteas skipper played across the line only to be trapped leg-before by an excellent delivery as South Africa went to lunch with 97 for two on the board.

Bangladesh dominated the third session thanks to Shakib Al Hasan who picked up three wickets to put pressure on the home team before the sixth wicket pair got rid of the visitors.

Jacques Kallis (24) was the first victim of Shakib who uprooted the big man's off-stump to put an end to the 65-run stand Kallis set with Hashim Amla.

The home side got a real jolt when Shakib claimed two more wickets in one over. Amla (71 off 140 balls) gave a simple chance to short cover where Imrul Kayes made no mistake.

AB de Villiers was dismissed after just one delivery as the right-hander went down the track on his second ball only to become the first stumping of Mushfiqur Rahim in Test.

War heroes vow

FROM PAGE 16
through the loopholes of law.

Rokeya Hasina Nili, daughter of martyred intellectual Prof Rashidul Hasan, said, "Every government since the country's independence assured us that they would bring the war criminals to book but has not done it."

"I have been bearing the sad memories of my father's murder at the hands of razakars for the last 37 years. In December, we receive calls from media persons who request us to tell them our sad stories. Political parties also capitalise on the sad events but forget everything once they assume power," she said.

Shaon Mahmud, daughter of martyred musician Altaf Mahmud, said, "The demand for trying the war criminals is not only a demand of the martyrs' family members but of the whole nation."

Azizur Rahman, son of martyred Shaheed Aizuddin of Sherpur, alleged, "Jamaat leader Kamaruzzaman along with other razakars tortured my father to death and also killed 146 people in two villages."

Rafiqul Alam Mukul, son of martyred Maniruzzaman of Syedpur, Shaheen Reza Noor, son of martyred journalist Sirajuddin Hossain, Dr Gazi Salehuddin, son Shaheed Ali Karim of Chittagong and Shikha Chakravarti, daughter of martyred lawyer Sudhir Kumar Chakravarti of Barisal also shared their experiences.

Sector commanders Maj Gen (ret'd) KM Shahiullah, Maj Gen (ret'd) GR Dutta and Lt Col (ret'd) Abu Osman Chowdhury also spoke at the meeting moderated by SCF coordinator Maj Gen (ret'd) Zamil D Chowdhury.

Akbar Ali Khan

FROM PAGE 1
"Political parties are not supposed to nominate undesirable persons and even if they nominate them, what is the guarantee that people will elect them?" he said. "We have to trust the people and if we do not have trust on them, we do not have trust on democracy."

Dr Akbar said the government should have made some necessary amendments in the constitution to change the political culture and sit with political parties to do that.

He suggested strengthening the constitutional bodies increasing the power of lawmakers so that they can work with more responsibility.

Dr Akbar believes better people will come to parliament if the election is held in a free, fair and neutral manner.

BNP constitution

FROM PAGE 1
concerned. And the BNPPB was supposed to finalise nominees from the panels.

BNP incorporated the mandatory RPO provision in its constitution to qualify for registration with the Election Commission (EC). And such registration is a must for parties to be eligible to contest parliamentary polls.

The much-talked-about electoral reforms made by the caretaker government empowered political parties' grassroots leaders to make primary selection of polls contenders from parliamentary constituencies mainly to stop nomination business, sources mentioned.

The parties now have jurisdictions to pick candidates only from panels prepared by their grassroots committees.

If a political party violates the mandatory RPO provision, the EC is empowered to cancel its registration.

BNP started selling nomination forms on Tuesday. Of the 3,186 forms sold, 2,063 were submitted by nomination seekers with a deposit of Tk 20,000 each.

Party central leaders however claimed that they had earlier collected names of prospective candidates from the grassroots through seven organisational teams.

Contacted in the last few days, many grassroots leaders however said they did not send any panels of candidates to the BNPPB.

This has created an awkward situation for the EC, sources said.

The EC at a meeting on Tuesday discussed non-implementation of electoral laws regarding nomination of candidates. But it did not take any decision on violation of the mandatory RPO provision, sources in the EC said.

Meanwhile, Awami League (AL) picked almost all its candidates from grassroots panels, and criticised the EC's silence over BNP's violation of electoral laws. It accused the EC of 'favouring' a certain party by not enforcing the laws.

Alex Chamberlain, a British

Mumbai massacre

FROM PAGE 1
Oberoi where a large fire had broken out from the upper floors.

About 100 people are still trapped in three buildings due to the strike carried out by the terrorists last night.

Preliminary investigations yesterday pointed to involvement of at least some Pakistani nationals in the serial terror attacks in Mumbai.

Intelligence sources say that foreign hand is fully evident in these attacks. They have arrested a Pakistan national from Chowpatty area in the city.

"There are indications that the perpetrators of the crime, who arrived in Mumbai by boats, are Pakistani nationals," authoritative sources said.

The indications are based on information gathered from captured terrorists, the sources said.

Maharashtra deputy chief minister RR Patil, who also holds the Home portfolio, said revealing detailed information on the terror strikes could prove detrimental at this juncture.

But Pakistan's defence minister on Thursday said his country had played no role in terror attacks in Mumbai.

According to sources, terrorists have demanded the release of prisoners, ransom. However, Ministry of Home Affairs has denied this saying that the terrorists did not make any demand.

Four Navy ships and choppers have launched search over Gujarat-Goa seas. Navy and Coast Guard are conducting joint search for the ship that may have carried the militants.

Credit cards with photos of militants have been seized by the Naval Commandos.

Naval commandos have seized grenades, AK 47 magazines, shells and knives from militants.

At least eight gunmen had been shot dead and one captured, police said. Around a dozen security personnel were also killed, including the head of Mumbai's anti-terror squad.

Early Thursday, state Home Secretary Bipin Shrivastava said four suspects had been killed in two incidents in Mumbai when they tried to flee in cars, and Roy said four more gunmen were killed at the Taj Mahal. State Home Minister RR Patil said nine more were arrested. They declined to provide any further details.

At least 14 policemen have been killed across the city, including the head of the Maharashtra Anti-Terror Squad Hemant Karkare, who was shot three times.

Early Thursday, several European lawmakers were among those who barricaded themselves inside the Taj, a century-old seaside hotel complex and one of the city's best-known destinations.

"I was in the main lobby and there was all of a sudden a lot of firing outside," said Sajjad Karim, part of a delegation of European lawmakers visiting Mumbai ahead of a European Union-India summit.

In an audacious operation apparently tailored to gain maximum international attention, the militants had used small groups to attack at least eight other targets in India's financial hub, including the main railway station, a hospital and a restaurant popular with tourists.

Guests who escaped the hotels recounted how the gunmen had specifically tried to round up US and British citizens.

Singh said the attacks were clearly "well-planned and well-orchestrated" and warned "neighbours" who provided a haven to anti-India militants that there would "be a cost" to pay.

An unknown group calling itself the Deccan Mujahadeen claimed responsibility, with one gunman telling an Indian TV channel by phone that the outfit was of Indian origin and motivated by the treatment of Indian Muslims.

"Muslims in India should not be persecuted. We love this as our country but when our mothers and sisters were being killed, where was everybody?" he said.

Some Indian officials pointed a finger at the Pakistan-backed Lashkar-e-Taiba -- best known for an assault on the Indian parliament in 2001. A Lashkar spokesman denied any involvement.

Militant group Lashkar-i-Tayyiba, which is fighting Indian rule in Kashmir, on Thursday denied any involvement in the attacks.

Nine foreign nationals were among the dead -- including a Japanese businessman, an Australian, a German, a British and an Italian -- while Americans, French, Israelis and Canadians were said to be among those held or trapped.

Gunmen also seized the Mumbai headquarters of the ultra-orthodox Jewish outreach group Chabad Lubavitch. Indian commandos surrounded the building Thursday morning and witnesses said gunfire was heard from the building.

At least three top Indian police officers including the chief of the anti-terror squad were among those killed, said AN Roy, a top police official.

The attackers specifically targeted Britons and Americans at the hotels and restaurant, witnesses said.

Alex Chamberlain, a British

citizen who was dining at the Oberoi, told Sky News television that a gunman ushered 30 to 40 people from the restaurant into a stairway and, speaking in Hindi or Urdu, ordered everyone to put up their hands.

"They were talking about British and Americans specifically. There was an Italian guy, who, you know, they said: 'Where are you from?' and he said he's from Italy and they said 'fine' and they left him alone. And I thought: 'Fine, they're going to shoot me if they ask me anything and thank God they didn't,' he said.

The main Bangkok Stock Exchange, itself hit by a terror attack in 1993, was closed until further notice, as were shops, schools and businesses.

In the wake of the attacks, England's cricketers also abandoned their tour of India to return home.

A number of airlines cancelled flights to Mumbai yesterday after attacks across the city killed more than 100 people killed and hundreds more injured, operators said.

Italy's flag-carrier Alitalia, which is in severe financial straits, cancelled all its flights to Bombay until further notice, a spokeswoman said.

German airline Lufthansa said it had scrapped two flights to Mumbai due to leave Frankfurt and Munich on Thursday.

Prime Minister Singh said the aim had clearly been to spread panic by choosing high profile targets and "indiscriminately killing foreigners".

Witnesses said the gunmen had been very particular in their choice of hotel hostages.

"They were very young, like boys really, wearing jeans and T-shirts," said one British guest at the Taj, Rakesh Patel, who was among a dozen people herded together by two heavily-armed men and taken to the hotel's upper floors.

"They said they wanted anyone with British and American passports and then they took us up the stairs. I think they wanted to take us to the roof," he said, adding that he and another hostage managed to escape on the 18th floor.

The United States and Britain led global condemnation, with Washington describing the attacks as "heinous", and US president-elect Barack Obama pledging to work with India to "root out and destroy terrorist networks".

The US State Department called the attacks "heinous" and US president-elect Barack Obama said they showed the need for the United States to work with other nations to "root out and destroy terrorist networks."

Pakistan President Asif Ali Zardari, whose country has seen an upsurge of Islamist attacks, "stressed the need for taking strict measures to eradicate terrorism and extremism from the region".

Afghanistan's President Hamid Karzai said: "Terrorists are especially challenging South Asia. A vigorous response to counter these terrorist challenges requires an even more intensified regional cooperation and coordination in all aspects."

Nato Secretary General Jaap de Hoop Scheffer blasted the "despicable" raids.

UN Secretary General Ban Ki-moon said the violence was "totally unacceptable". The European Union expressed "horror and indignation" after European parliament members were caught up in the carnage.

Arab League Secretary General Amr Moussa and Egypt's opposition Muslim Brotherhood on Thursday denounced the "terrorist" attacks which left around 100 people dead in India's financial hub Mumbai.

Moussa, who heads the 22-member Arab League, said such "criminal and terrorist acts aggravate the vicious cycle of violence and counter-violence," Egypt's state news agency MENA reported.

Another little-known Islamic group, the Islamic Security Force-Indian Mujahadeen, claimed responsibility for serial blasts last month in India's northeast state of Assam that claimed nearly 80 lives.

Six weeks earlier, the capital New Delhi had been hit by a series of bombs in crowded markets that left more than 20 dead. Those blasts were claimed by a group calling itself the Indian Mujahadeen.

Graft eats

FROM PAGE 1
while the rest were completed during 2007-2008 at 18.27 percent lower cost.

According to Ernst & Young, Tk 6.33 lakh was misappropriated in 2005-2006 in a maintenance job in Bagerhat where money was paid without any work actually being done.

The audit report also mentioned misappropriation of Tk 15.44 lakh, Tk 35.22 lakh, Tk 6.24 lakh, Tk 12.88 lakh, Tk 44.97 lakh, Tk 4.21 lakh, Tk 112.17 lakh, Tk 61.28 lakh, Tk 20.65 lakh, Tk 61.44 lakh and Tk 90.24 lakh in road maintenance jobs in Madaripur, Natore, Bogra, Habiganj, Khagrachhari, Chittagong, and Gazipur between 2000 and 2006 through various irregularities.

Emergency

FROM PAGE 16

The adviser welcomed the EU election observation mission and said that Bangladesh would return to its political tradition characterised by democracy, pluralism and liberalism.

Asked about the lifting of emergency, Iftekhar said the matter was discussed with Lambsdorff. "It will be lifted well ahead of the elections... a precise date of lifting (emergency) will be known soon."

The chief of EU election observation mission said they had discussed the upcoming elections and challenges that go along with it.

He said all are expecting for the election that is going to be administered in a very peaceful manner. He thanked the caretaker government for the preparations taken so far.

Asked about the challenges to the election, Lambsdorff said he is still forming an opinion about what are the challenges and is in discussion with leaders of political parties and government. He will share the outcome of this discussion at a press conference today.

About the state of emergency, he said generally, it is desirable that it should be lifted before the elections.

Meanwhile, a six-member delegation of EU election observers, led by Alexander Graf Lambsdorff, yesterday met Chief Election Commissioner ATM Shamsul Huda at his office and discussed the matters relating to the upcoming polls in Bangladesh.

Election Commissioners M Sohel Hussain and Brig Gen (ret'd) MS Sakhawati Hossain and EC Secretary M Humayun Kabir were present at the meeting.

EC sources said the EU delegation visited the commission to appraise the latest situation of the upcoming parliamentary elections and discuss the election-observation rules.

Abbas, Babar

FROM PAGE 16

writ petitions filed by Mirza Abbas and Lutfuzzaman Babar, an HC bench comprised of Justice Tariq ul Hakim and Justice Farah Mahbub gave the orders.

Barrister Ahsanul Karim, counsel for Abbas and Babar, later told The Daily Star that there was no legal bar to his clients' release from jail as the HC had earlier granted them bail in all the cases against them.

The government should release them without further delay, he added.

On October 30, the government held back Abbas in prison by issuing a one-month detention order against him just before his release on bail in all the cases.

Moreover, on October 26 the government issued a 30-day detention order when Babar was about to be set free on bail.

The detainees filed writ petitions with the HC on November 12 challenging their detention.

The HC the same day issued rules upon the government to show cause as to why the detention orders against them should not be declared illegal.

After the hearing on the rules yesterday, the HC ordered their release.

Huji operative

FROM PAGE 16

November 30 for recording the depositions of more prosecution witnesses. All accused in the murder case including Huji chief Mufti Abdul Hannan were produced before the court.

Bangladesh-born former British high commissioner to Dhaka Anwar Choudhury along with 70 others was hurt in the attack and three people were killed--Special Branch assistant sub-inspector of police Kamal Uddin and Habibur Rahman Habib and Zobayer Ahmed Rubel.

A district judge of Sylhet on July 12 last year acquitted 20 accused as their names were dropped from the charge sheet. They were arrested after the attack.

A few days after the attack, two cases were filed--one under Arms and Explosives Act and another for murder. The cases were transferred to Criminal Investigation Department (CID) for investigation as police failed to find out clues.

CID's Senior ASP Munshi Atiqur Rahman filed two charge sheets against four Huji men, Huji chief Mufti Abdul Hannan, his brother Mofizur Rahman and Huji operatives Delwar Hossain Ripon and Sharif Shahedul Alam.

Supplementary charge sheets against Huji operative Abu Zandal were later filed in the cases.

The murder case is under trial at the Sylhet Divisional Speedy Trial Tribunal while the Arms and Explosives case is under trial at the Court of Additional District and Session's Judge.

Thai govt asks

FROM PAGE 16

to carry out your duty as usual. Do not make any movement or be on stand-by. This is to stop the coup rumours," government spokesman Nattawut Saikuar said on national radio.

Nattawut denied rumours that the government wanted to sack the army chief, General Anupong Paojinda, after Anupong urged Somchai on Wednesday to dissolve parliament and hold fresh elections.

An army spokesman urged political reconciliation, saying it neither wanted to move against protesters at the two Bangkok airports nor risk a confrontation with government supporters if it staged a coup.

"The military have moved tanks for strategic purposes but I can confirm that there is no coup and the military has not been ordered to be on stand-by," Colonel Sunsern Kaewkumnerd told AFP.

The army has staged 18 coups in Thailand's history, the most recent in 2006 when it toppled prime minister Thaksin Shinawatra, Somchai's brother-in-law.

Supporters of the anti-government People's Alliance for Democracy (PAD) earlier blockaded Bangkok's old Don Mueang airport in an attempt to prevent ministers from flying to Chiang Mai, a Thaksin stronghold.

But cabinet members slipped out of the city in small aircraft.

Demonstrators stormed the main Suvarnabhumi International Airport on Tuesday night and have set up a protest camp there, effectively cutting Bangkok off from the rest of the world.

Thai aviation authorities later gave airlines the green light to use the U-Tapao naval base instead, saying that

several flights had already landed there including a Thai Airways flight from Los Angeles.

"It's already begun," said Chaisak Angkasuwat, director general of the Civil Aviation Department.

The PAD launched their campaign to topple the democratically-elected government six months ago, accusing it of being a puppet of Thaksin, who remains in exile to avoid a jail term imposed for a corruption conviction.

The group has the backing of elements in