

# Taskforce meets

**FROM PAGE 1** problems, we need to forge national unity," said the Nobel laureate economist.

Sources said Dr Yunus told the meeting that the demands of the country's poor people would also have to be considered and necessary steps to boost domestic economy and poverty alleviation have to be taken.

Bangladesh and other victim countries should focus on the impact of global recession in the world level through LDC forums.

The 27-member taskforce, formed last week to face the global recession, includes top economists, presidents of main business bodies, one representative of Awami League, BNP and Jatiya Party, some ministers, Bangladesh Bank governor and secretaries concerned.

At the start of the meeting, the government officials highlighted the trends of present economy and the business associations gave their statements. The economists then spoke and the finance minister took part in the discussion. The meeting lasted for about three hours.

Meeting sources said the business bodies mainly reiterated their problems and demanded cash incentive and bank and tax-related benefits.

About the demand of Tk 60,000 crore by the FBCCI as cash incentive and other benefits, the finance minister said, "It is not possible to give Tk 60,000 crore. We will try to give as much as we can from our limited resources."

Prof Rehman Sobhan said, "All problems cannot be solved in the task force meeting. Committees should be formed sector-wise to solve the problems. The Jatiya Sangsad has to be apprised of the proceedings of the taskforce from time to time."

Prof Wahiduddin Mahmud said, "To face the crisis we would have to accept increase in budget deficit. To increase

employment and to boost local economy, banking rules should be relaxed."

BNP lawmaker MK Anwar said the government should cut extravagant expenditure and increase development expenditure.

Agriculture Minister Matia Chowdhury stressed on increasing more money in the agriculture sector. She said, "You give me Tk 1 and I will return you Tk 4."

Prime minister's economic adviser Dr Moshir Rahman said necessary public expenditure has to be increased to give impetus to local economy."

Dr Atiur Rahman said the recommendations have to be fixed mainly in the meeting of the technical committee on recession and later presented in the task force meeting.

Business bodies, including Metropolitan Chamber of Commerce and Industry, demanded withdrawal of Tk 5 lakh renewal fees on captive generation of electricity. The finance minister instantly announced to take action in this regard.

Economists and businessmen also demanded lowering rate of interest on bank loan and various charges.

## Frequent

**FROM PAGE 16** Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina's letter to the secretaries last week.

The meeting discussed ways to bring dynamism to the administration, which has been suffering due to frequent promotions and transfers of the officials.

To expedite the functions of the ministries, the meeting decided to hold inter-ministerial coordination meeting at regular intervals.

In the letter to the secretaries, Hasina expressed concern over the problems her government is facing in extending services to the people and in resolving their problems, as the ministries are not acting with sufficient speed.

"She observed that different ministries were making unnecessary delays in taking appropriate measures to implement the decisions [of the government] and solve the problems," Prime Minister's Secretary Molla Waheeduzzaman said in the letter.

The letter asked the secretaries to ponder whether the delay is an wilful act or is caused by inexperience of the staffs.

The prime minister also warned them of legal and punitive actions if anyone makes delays or creates obstacles to activities.

"How can an officer perform well if he or she is transferred so frequently," a secretary told The Daily Star after yesterday's meeting.

"We are really facing difficulties due to frequent transfers and postings as part of the ongoing reshuffles in the administration," he added.

Chaired by Cabinet Secretary Md Abdul Aziz, the meeting decided to endorse various plans to expedite the activities in the administration.

Abdul Aziz, however, said the administration has been keeping up its pace and that they sat to discuss how to bring more dynamism to its activities.

"Many officers were denied promotion in the past. We are now giving promotion to them, which will ultimately encourage them to work with speed," Aziz told reporters after the meeting.

The committee also discussed the law and order issue and directed the local law and order committees at the district and upazila levels to be more active and remain alert to any subversive acts.

Earlier on March 22, the then VC Prof Nazrul Islam along with the two pro-VCs and treasurer stepped down reportedly amid pressure from the higher authorities.

The pro-VCs who resigned are Prof Chowdhury Ali Kawsar and Mohammad Kamal while the treasurer who quits is Prof Ruhul Amin Mia.

All the four were appointed by the immediate past caretaker government on November 5 last year.

And their appointment was hailed by faculty members at the BSMMU since they were considered competent, efficient and free from political affiliation, sources said.

Earlier, Health Minister Prof AFM Ruhul Haque had indirectly asked them to quit so that the government could go ahead with its plan to reshuffle the BSMMU administration.

Since the Awami League (AL)-led alliance government assumed power, pro-AL doctors' forum Swadhinata Chikitsak Parishad (SCP) was putting pressure on the four to resign. And members of the SCP were lobbying hard for the four key posts of the university, sources mentioned.

# Changes

**FROM PAGE 16** the foreign ministry for appointment as an ambassador, sources in the establishment ministry said.

Of the three directors of NSI, Brig Gen Enamur Rahman will be made registrar of the army-run Bangladesh University of Professionals while Brig Gen Golam Mostafa and Brig Gen Tafaddek Hossain will return to the army.

In another change, National Identity Registration Authority Member Brig Gen Moazzem Hossain has been made project director of Construction of Upazila and Regional Server Stations for Electoral Database.

Captain Saiful Kabir of Bangladesh Navy, incumbent managing director of Khulna Shipyard under the defence ministry, will return to the navy.

Besides, Major Asad Un Nabi will replace the incumbent Anti-Corruption Commission Director Major Mohammad Maksudur Rahman.

Meanwhile, dozens of deputy secretaries, including several deputy commissioners (DCs), and a number of upazila nirbahi officers were also changed yesterday.

Of them, DC of Natore Shahin Ahmed Chowdhury, who has been attached to the establishment ministry, will be replaced by Mujibur Rahman—who was earlier appointed as Chapainawabganj DC on Mar 16, according to the establishment ministry.

DC of Rajshahi Shefaul Karim has been asked to join the establishment ministry while DC of Chapainawabganj Serajul Huq Khan was made DC of Rajshahi.

Home ministry Deputy Secretary Sujayet Ullah was made deputy director of National Institute of Local Government while Abu Alam Shahid Khan, a 1982 regular batch BCS officer, has finally been promoted to the rank of deputy secretary.

Shahid Khan, who was a deputy press secretary at the Prime Minister's Office during the 1996-2001 Sheikh Hasina government, had been a senior assistant secretary for more than seven years.

## Govt to ensure

**FROM PAGE 1** sending observers and extending cooperation to make the parliamentary polls "free, fair, neutral and acceptable."

She also recognized that the election had taken place in a fair manner due to a flawless voter list formulated by the army as there were above one crore "fake voters" on the previous voting rolls.

"The last parliamentary polls were held amid huge enthusiasm and the voter turnout was very much impressive because the people had to wait seven years to get the taste of democracy," the prime minister told the European parliamentarian.

She said, "People were repressed and had to suffer a lot for misuse of the last BNP-Jamaat alliance government."

Hasina categorically said it is not possible to achieve country's development and prosperity without democratic government.

She observed that at present in all of the South Asian countries democratic governments are in power, which is a "positive matter for the democracy."

The EU chief election observer expressed deep shock at the death of army officers in the February 25-26 Pilkhana carnage.

He also highly praised the PM's wisdom and farsightedness in tackling the BDR crisis "peacefully and quickly."

Press Secretary to the PM Abul Kalam Azad was present during the meeting.

Earlier in the day, Tony Shale, chief executive officer of Asia of Euromoney Institutional Investor, called on Hasina at the PMO and offered their cooperation.

As the current global economic meltdown came up for discussion, the PM informed Tony that already a taskforce for monitoring and taking necessary steps in tackling any possible negative impact of the recession has been formed.

She also presented her government's plan and programme to increase food production in the country and help flourish private and public sectors.

Hasina said the previous AL government had taken various initiatives for development of banks, mobile, media in private sector.

Tony expressed interest in assisting Bangladesh for the development of various sectors, including energy, power and infrastructure.

He also mourned the death of the army officers in the BDR carnage and hailed the prime minister for peacefully solving the crisis.



The books on jihad, one of which has the picture of Osama bin Laden on its cover, recovered at the madrasa.

# Ammo factory

**FROM PAGE 1** remote control devices, binoculars and a book on how to operate firearms.

Pretty well furnished, the seminary has no signboard. It drew attention of the neighborhood, but few knew it was a militants' den capable of making improvised explosive devices (IED) and assembling ammunition.

Rab officials said they suspect it might have been used for training militants.

It Commander Mamunur Rashid who led the operation told The Daily Star that the madrasa, launched recently, is circled by a trench-like canal to keep off the locals.

In the daytime, the occupants would use a hanging bridge over the canal to get in and out. But they would remove it at night-time so no-one could gain access to the premises.

Referring to the items recovered, Mamun said, "We've found materials needed to assemble bullets. They include percussion caps, cartridge cases and bullet heads. And all these are made in the UK."

About the blasting machine, Mamun said it is a military item that can detonate wired-up explosive devices planted in the distance. It is usually used in training on how to explode bombs.

"The recovery also indicates they [the militants] have all equipment necessary to make IEDs," he continued.

In primary interrogations, the arrestees told the Rab officials that they were recruited by one Moulana Mohiuddin.

They also said Faisal Mostafa, a Bangladeshi expatri-

ate in London, has been financing the madrasa.

He is nephew of former BNP minister and ex-lawmaker from Bhola-3 Major (retd) Hafizuddin Ahmed.

Faisal, who has been living abroad for over two decades, often comes to Bangladesh. Now he is on a visit to Chittagong.

His father Golam Mostafa, Major (retd) Hafizuddin's cousin, too is settled in London.

Contacted, Faisal's father-in-law Shahidul Haque Naquib Chowdhury, who was the founder president of Bhola BNP, said they are shocked to know of the arms haul.

As far as he is concerned, he continued, Faisal and a few of his friends have been running an NGO named Green Crescent. Their organisation is headquartered in Doulatkha of Bhola.

He said the building has been constructed on a piece of land that he sold to Faisal. He was told it would be used as a vocational training school for orphan children.

The Rab team hauled in 11 students of the madrasa for questioning. But they could not capture Kajal, caretaker of the building, as he has gone to Chittagong with Faisal.

The students told the Rab officials that the madrasa is only a month old.

Those involved in the operation said they can tell from the interior and exterior and tile floors that a handsome amount of money had been spent on construction of the building.

# Darbar Hall

**FROM PAGE 1** considering the massive task and also increased its groups from eight to 12.

Besides, CID yesterday arrested 103 more BDR members from the Pilkhana HQ. Of them, 23 were placed on seven-day remand.

The investigators have also recorded statements of 33 more BDR members and 18 members of the victims, who were held hostage by the mutineers.

Moreover, they recovered some ammunition and evidence from Pilkhana yesterday.

A CID official said, "We have yet to gather all the pieces of evidence as we entered the BDR Headquarters on March 1 and by then army, Rab and police collected much evidence."

"If they share the evidence with us, it would help our investigation," he added.

The Pilkhana carnage is being investigated at a time by the army, CID and a committee formed by the government.

Meanwhile, the commerce minister yesterday said the two committees formed by the government and army would submit their reports in one week.

He said this while talking to journalists at the end of the postponed meeting of the parliamentary standing committee on commerce ministry.

## BNP to dissolve

**FROM PAGE 16** opinion on restructuring of the party.

On the first day, it discussed the district and upazila level committees under Chittagong division.

The committee will declare its decisions on district- and upazila-level committees once all the reports are reviewed.

"They will come up with decisions after thorough discussions about the state of all committees," Goyshwar Chandra Roy, who leads the team covering Chittagong division, told The Daily Star yesterday.

His team attended last three days' standing committee meetings with Chairperson Khaleeda Zia in the chair.

Most of the 75 BNP organisational districts do not have a valid committee. But initially, the party will form convening committee for the district units that have no committee at all.

"The sooner the party dissolves the defunct district committees, the better for its revamp efforts," observed a central leader.

## Party registration

**FROM PAGE 16** employees or workers.

The commission could also cancel registration of a party lacking provisions in its constitution for electing committees down to the grassroots level through councils and setting aside 33 percent of all committee positions for women by 2020.

The CEC said there are some mistakes in the bill, which was passed in parliament. "We will ask the law ministry to correct those," he added.

On the EC's authority to cancel registration of a political party on grounds of breaching the registration provisions, the CEC said cancellation of registration of political parties for violating the registration provisions is not related to the power of the EC.

"The people of the country will judge and reject the political parties," he said.

About holding the long overdue elections to Dhaka City Corporation, the CEC said the commission might hold the poll in next July after passage of the city corporation law in parliament.

# Pak CJ vows to end judicial corruption

AP, Islamabad

The Pakistani chief justice whose ouster sparked political turmoil called for an end to judicial corruption upon returning to his office yesterday, a day after the president who had long blocked the judge's reinstatement reached out to reconcile.

Meanwhile, the capital remained tense after a suicide bombing killed an officer at a police station housing intelligence facilities a reminder of the militant threat to this shabby, US-allied nation.

Supporters of Chief Justice Iftikhar Mohammed Chaudhry threw rose petals on his car as it entered the Supreme Court compound. Chaudhry technically resumed work Sunday, the day after the justice who had replaced him retired.

At the start of his first hearing, Chaudhry thanked Pakistanis for supporting his restoration but warned that the population often viewed the courts as corrupt.

"Lawyers should help us end corruption," he said. "You should point out those cases in which you see elements of corruption. It is a must for justice to end corruption first."

Agitation over Chaudhry's

fate following his 2007 firing by former President Pervez Musharraf has riveted Pakistan but worried Western allies who feared it would distract the country from battling al-Qaeda and the Taliban.

President Asif Ali Zardari, in a message on Pakistan's national day Monday, urged feuding factions to put aside their differences.

"I urge everyone to work in the spirit of tolerance, mutual accommodation, and respect for dissent and invite every one to participate in the national effort for national reconciliation and healing the wounds," Zardari said.

Zardari's message was one of several in recent days from the ruling party urging peace with the opposition, which had demanded that Chaudhry be reinstated.

The prime minister visited the home of opposition leader Nawaz Sharif in a goodwill gesture.

The reconciliation attempts come amid wrangling over which political parties will join forces to control the most powerful province, Punjab. They could also be a way to raise support for Zardari, whose reluctance to bring back Chaudhry damaged his standing.

# BNP demands Black night

**FROM PAGE 16** parliamentary body to probe allegations against former speaker Jamiruddin Sircar would influence the by-election as Sircar is contesting it with BNP ticket from Bogra-6.

"We have placed some specific recommendations on how to ensure fair vote counting," Anwar told reporters after a nearly hour-long meeting of his delegation with Chief Election Commissioner ATM Shamsul Huda and two other election commissioners.

The BNP team also requested the EC to deploy sufficient number of magistrates in the constituencies having by-election on April 2.

BNP Joint Secretary General Nazrul Islam Khan, Opposition Chief Whip Zainul Abidin Farroque and Organising Secretary Rizvi Ahmed were the other members of the delegation.

"We have also requested the election commissioners to allow polling agents as much as possible in the presiding officer's room during polling," Anwar said. "They have assured us of considering our recommendations."

"We urged the election commissioners to visit the constituencies to ensure neutrality of the government and election officials on duty," he said.

The BNP vice-chairman alleged that with the by-election approaching, their leaders and activists are being repressed and attacked.

Replying to a question, Nazrul Islam Khan said, "We told the commissioners that forming of the parliamentary body to probe allegations against former speaker Jamiruddin Sircar is aimed to influence the by-election and malign Sircar's image."

# Black night

**FROM PAGE 1** cracked down on the Bangalee police personnel and EPR members to prevent them from joining the armed struggle for freedom.

On March 26, the nation waged an armed struggle against the Pakistani forces following the declaration of independence by father of the nation Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman.

The Pakistani forces arrested Bangabandhu as he, through a wireless message, called upon the people to resist the occupation forces with whatever they had.

Later, Awami League leader MA Hannan and Major Ziaur Rahman (later president of Bangladesh) read out the proclamation of independence on behalf of Bangabandhu, which was broadcast from Kalurghat radio station in Chittagong.

The nine-month long Liberation War culminated in emergence of Bangladesh as an independent, sovereign state.

Different socio-cultural and educational organisations have chalked out elaborate programmes to observe 25th March.

Ektattor Ghatok Dalal Nirmul Committee will bring out a torch procession and place candles at the graveyard of the martyred freedom fighters at Jagannath Hall of Dhaka University. The programme is scheduled to start at 8:00pm at Central Shehel Minar today.

Liberation War Museum will hold a week-long programme to observe 25th March on its premises.

The Faculty of Fine Arts of the University of Development Alternative has organised a street painting on Manik Mia Avenue.

# Rights bodies

**FROM PAGE 16** talks on the matter, they have to ensure that workers' rights are in no way violated.

Others at the press conference pointed out that workers have been seriously exploited as they are being laid off despite the duration of their contracts not ending over.

Refugee and Migratory Movements Research Unit (RMMRU) Coordinator Dr Tasneem Siddiqui said they had submitted a report to the government over a month ago, predicting the possible retrenchment of workers and recommending ways in which to deal with it, but the government had taken no action in this regard.

Referring to the Filipino government's stand on the matter, she pointed out how they had formed a taskforce to negotiate airfares or placement fees from the employers laying off their citizens.

"But our government is doing nothing. The government's knowledge base to manage the crisis has been seriously affected by the transfer of high officials concerned," Siddiqui said.

Warbe Development Foundation Chairman Syed Saiful Haque said labour issues in Malaysia have been in place for too long but the government has been pretending problems don't exist.

He also said that it should be investigated why the Malaysian government cancelled the visas already

issued, and exactly how many Bangladeshi workers with valid documents in Malaysia have been laid off.

Bangladesh Human Rights Commission, meanwhile, expressed concern over return of thousands of migrants. It is a serious violation of rights that workers who sold their land for overseas jobs were being forced to return empty-handed before their contracts were over.

The Commission demanded urgent diplomatic efforts to resolve the issue and also punitive actions against those involved in malpractices further victimising jobseekers.

**MOREWORKERS RETURN** At least 92 workers returned from abroad till 7:00pm yesterday.

Of them, 49 returned from Malaysia, 38 from the United Arab Emirates and 5 from Kuwait.

With this, the number of returnee migrants crossed 7000 in March. Over 8,000 workers were forced to return in February, a figure more than double the numbers in previous months.

They all returned on special travel passes, issued by the Bangladesh missions in cases of overstay or irregularities in their travel documents.

Almost all the workers returning from Malaysia had irregularities in their documents because of untimely lay offs. Many have also spent time in jail before returning, sources said.