

Kabul in lockdown as Karzai takes over tomorrow

AFP, Kabul

Afghan and international authorities have ordered a security lockdown on Kabul to stop Taliban attacks marring tomorrow's inauguration of President Hamid Karzai for another five years in power.

The government declared Thursday a public holiday and vowed maximum security while the city's international airport, controlled by NATO's International Security Assistance Force will close, an ISAF officer told AFP.

"There will be no air movements in or out, except for night Hajj flights" taking Muslim pilgrims to Mecca, he said, speaking on condition of anonymity.

International troops, which in total number 100,000 US and NATO-led forces across the country, will be on standby to assist Afghan security forces in the event of an attack, he said.

Security companies are recommending international clients remain indoors, at home, amid wide expectations of suicide bomb and rocket attacks.

The Afghan government declared Thursday a public holiday in Kabul and advised the capital's residents to "avoid unnecessary movements".

The United Nations is also expected to order international staff to remain indoors, as major roads around Kabul will be closed to traffic.

Foreign staff at some UN agencies have said they are in "lockdown" -- not permitted off their premises -- for three days around the ceremony.

"I'm betting on at least three or four rockets into the palace at 6:30 on Thursday morning," said one senior Western official, who also declined to be identified.

Hasina asks

FROM PAGE 1 They also exchanged views on the global climate change and its impacts on the developing and the least developed countries, the worst victims of the global warming.

Sheikh Hasina reiterated her call for giving priority at the upcoming Copenhagen climate meet in mobilizing all financial assistance to tackle the climate threats.

The prime minister observed that climate change and food production are closely interlinked as food production is severely harmed by the global warming consequences.

About the expatriates' issues, she recalled the time during the 1996-2001 Awami League government, the then Malaysian government took "outstanding measures for the Bangladeshi expatriates living overseas".

During the meeting, the Bangladeshi premier and the Malaysian deputy prime minister exchanged gifts.

Foreign Minister Dr Dipu Moni, Principal Secretary to the Prime Minister MA Karim, press secretary to the prime minister Abul Kalam Azad, Ambassador Ziauddin and Bangladesh Ambassador in Italy Masud Bin Momen were, among others, present.

Gatco's contract

FROM PAGE 16 The Anti-Corruption Commission filed a graft case on September 2, 2007 against former prime minister Khaleda Zia, her younger son Arafat Rahman Koko and 11 others for awarding Global Agro Trade (Pvt) Co Ltd the contract for container management at the ICDs at Kamalapur and Chittagong Port through corruption.

The other accused are former chairmen of Chittagong Port Authority (CPA) Commodore (ret'd) Zulfiqar Ali and AMM Shahadat Hossain, former director (transport) of CPA AM Sanwar Hossain, former chief finance and accounts officer Ahmed Abul Qasheem, former director Luthful Kabir, Ismail Hossain Simon, son of former shipping minister and BNP leader Col (ret'd) Akbar Hossain, Akbar's wife Jahannara Ansar, Gatco directors Syed Galib Ahmed, Syed Tanveer Ahmed and AKM Musa Kajol, and Ehsan Yusuf.

In the case filed with the Tejaigao Police Station, it was alleged that Khaleda and her son influenced the tender process while the CPA officials helped Gatco win the tender although a three-member tender evaluation committee of the port had said Gatco was unfit for the work.

He said requests to the president's office for added security for non-governmental organisations in Kabul have been ignored and as a result "NGOs are feeling a lot more vulnerable".

"Karzai has done nothing to reassure international workers that he is stepping up security," he said. "We're on our own in this town now."

Karzai is due to be sworn in as president for another five years at a ceremony -- described by his office as "glorious" -- at the heavily fortified presidential palace in the centre of the capital.

Western and regional foreign ministers are expected to attend, along with hundreds of Afghan dignitaries and local and foreign correspondents.

Afghanistan's National Directorate for Security announced that "all necessary security measures have been taken" for the inauguration ceremony.

"The sworn enemies of the nation will try to (disrupt) the ceremony," it said, referring to the Taliban-led insurgency and offering rewards for information leading to the "exposure of plots".

The defence ministry warned of road closures across the capital on Thursday.

Crossfire

FROM PAGE 1 cohorts and Rab in Madaripur sadar upazila Monday morning.

Human Rights and Peace for Bangladesh (HRPB) filed a writ petition with the High Court on August 6, 2006, challenging the legality of extrajudicial killings.

The HC issued a rule on the government, police and Rab the same day to explain why they should not be directed to ensure protection of the people held in custody.

But the final hearing of the petition was not held since the government did not reply to the rule, and the High Court bench, which was due to hold the hearing, was reconstituted recently, advocate Mazill Murshid, counsel for HRPB, said yesterday.

Majid's Kashmiri

FROM PAGE 16 know his real and his links to Lashkar-e-Taiba leader Moulana Tajuddin, brother of detained former BNP deputy minister Abdus Salam Pintu, and leaders of banned Harkatul Jihad al Islami (Huji).

Additional ASP Abdul Kahar Akand of CID, also the investigation officer of the grenade attack case, told The Daily Star that Yusuf Butt hails from Terigaon village under Kulgaon Police Station of Islamabad district in Kashmir of Indian part.

"Yusuf Butt had been staying in the country using fake name Abdul Majid and carrying out militant activities, supplying arms and grenades from Kashmir to the Bangladeshi militants," the CID investigator said.

Replying to a query Kahar Akand said Yusuf Butt went to Pakistan and India several times from Bangladesh.

CID sources said Yusuf is a close friend of fugitive accused Moulana Tajuddin and they had been collecting grenades and arms from Kashmir.

Uttara police arrested Yusuf on January this year in an arms case as a Bangladeshi terrorist and on November 10 he was shown arrested in the grenade attack case following a confessional statement of Huji founder Moulana Sheikh Abdus Salam, also chief of Islamic Democratic Party.

Secretary to the environment and forests ministry, said that Bangladesh is experiencing natural disasters frequently like floods, cyclones, rain and droughts.

Capital dredging

FROM PAGE 16 metres higher than the existing ones, he added.

Coastal afforestation 'alongside the embankments is equally important to prevent the storm surge and protect coastal embankment,' he said.

Dr Mihir Kanti Mazumdar, secretary to the environment and forests ministry, said that Bangladesh is experiencing natural disasters frequently like floods, cyclones, rain and droughts.

State Minister for Water Resources Mahubur Rahman and Denmark Ambassador to Bangladesh Einar Hebergard Jensen also spoke at the inaugural session chaired by Water Resources Secretary Shaikh Wahid-uz-Zaman.

DU VC

FROM PAGE 16 post to the VC office. In the Sunday's letters, the writer identified himself as Abdul Hamid and claimed to be a leader of Hizb ut-Tahrir.

Delwar and an employee of the registrar building, Hamid, sent the yesterday's letter by post to the VC office around 1:00pm.

DU authorities said Hamid is a third-class employee of the university. Talking to reporters, Hamid denied his involvement with the threat and termed it a part of conspiracy against him.

Arefin Siddique told reporters that he is not worried about his security rather he wanted to prevail a congenial atmosphere on the campus.

Meanwhile, the alumni association of mass communication and journalism department at DU and Bangladesh Chhatra League separately brought out processions and held rallies on the campus yesterday protesting the death threat to Dr Arefin.

Various organisations, including the National Front of Teachers and Employees, Bangladesh Chhatra Federation and Bangladesh Awami Hawkers League condemned the threats and demanded punishment to culprits.

Shootout

FROM PAGE 1 20-minute-longgunfight.

Hasan was caught in the line of fire and died on the spot while his cohorts managed to flee, the OC said.

Police recovered a shutter gun, four bombs and two rounds of bullet from his possession.

The injured policemen are undergoing treatment at Jhenidah Sadar Hospital.

Hasan, an expert in bomb making, was an accused in seven cases including fire-arms, the OC added.

Poly Instt

FROM PAGE 16 Police from sadar police station and a team of Rapid Action Battalion rushed to the spot.

Police recovered splinters from the spot.

Following the incident, the institute authorities convened an urgent meeting of teachers' council at the institute where high officials of the police were also present.

The institute was closed immediately to avoid any eventualities and students were ordered to vacate the halls--one of male and another of female students--within 4:00pm.

The ongoing examinations of different sessions however will continue, said Principal of KPI Atahar Hossain.

He said the institute would reopen after the situation of the campus comes to normal.

BCL, KPI and Kushtia Government College unit brought out a procession in the town demanding immediate arrest of the culprits. They also blamed Bangladesh Jatiyatabad Chhatra Dal (JCD), student front of BNP, and Islami Chhatra Shibir (ICS), student wing of Jamaat-e-Islami, for the attack.

Additional police forces have been deployed there as a tense situation is prevailing on the campus.

Justice AHM Shamsuddin Chowdhury delivered the verdict upon a writ petition filed by Human Rights and Peace for Bangladesh, a human rights and environmentalist organisation.

The organisation filed the petition with the HC in 2006 seeking an order to stop the road construction through the graveyard by the construction firm reportedly owned by then BNP lawmaker Nasiruddin Ahmed Pintu.

Following the petition, the HC on July 3, 2006, issued a rule upon the government to explain why the decision to construct the road should not be declared illegal. The court also directed the authorities to maintain status quo on construction of the road.

After holding final hearing, the HC yesterday delivered the verdict.

Advocate Manzill Murshid, president of the organisation, told the court the DCC is duty-bound to maintain the graveyards as per the DCC laws, but it violated the laws by undertaking the project and by demolishing hundreds of graves, which was illegal.

LGRD secretary, Dhaka city mayor, chief executive officer and health officer of DCC and the officer-in-charge of Lalbagh police station were made respondents in the verdict.

\$2b project

FROM PAGE 1 ways, toll roads and bridges on Build, Operate, Transfer (BOT) or Build, Own, Operate, Transfer (BOOT) or PPP basis with combined value of not less than \$500 million over the last 12 years.

One of the criticisms of this tender process is that it lacks a feasibility report. But according to Hossain, the Strategic Transport Plan (STP) stands as a feasibility report cum a guideline for undertaking large infrastructure projects in the capital of 13 million people with a density of 6,200 persons per square kilometre. Dhaka's population is projected to double in the next 20 years.

But the STP is not exactly a feasibility report for such elevated expressway project. Framed in 2005 by Louis Berger Group, USA and Bangladesh Consultants Ltd, the STP was approved by the government in March 2008 as a strategic paper to improve the capital's transport infrastructure. The STP touches upon other large-scale concepts like subway and rapid transit systems.

"Our tender documents include a provision for the bidders to conduct their own feasibility study for this project," the minister clarifies. "No investor would put their money in a large project like this unless s/he is sure of financial returns," he adds.

A panel of local and foreign experts will review the feasibility studies to be submitted by

the bidders, he said.

The minister argues that the project will slow down if it starts off with a feasibility study.

In the past, some projects like maglev train saw feasibility study without any result while the communication ministry had wasted money for such studies.

In the current project, the investor will design and implement the expressway to encourage public transport and high occupancy vehicle by offering preferential usage rates and also preferably by segregating exclusive bus lanes. The investor will aim at relieving traffic congestion in the city. Its design will be sensitive to environment and the society.

To pre-qualify, the investors may form consortiums and provide information about their background, history of financial performance including audit reports of the last three years and list of professional employees with resume indicating their major professional experience.

The bidder will have to show experience in general construction in the field, constructing at least 10 km of elevated expressway, constructing elevated expressway/railways in major cities with specific achievements in traffic control and diversion and utilities relocation during the execution of the construction work with a combined value of \$500 million or more in the last 12 years.

Give top priority

FROM PAGE 1 Sheikh Hasina also said the climate funds should not be loans but grants and there should be no conditionality. "Such fund must be additional and distinct from ODA targets of 0.7 percent of their Gross National Income for developing countries and 0.2 percent for LDCs as affirmed by the Brussels programme of action," said Hasina.

She arrived in Rome on November 15 to attend the three-day World Summit on Food Security.

The prime minister added that MVCs and LDCs do not want adaptation, mitigation, and technology transfer support to be in one basket.

She said there is absolute necessity of a new legal regime under UNFCCC Protocol ensuring social, cultural and economical rehabilitation of climate migrants and refugees that Bangladesh and countries in both groups are witnessing.

Welcoming British Prime Minister Gordon Brown and European Union's climate financing proposal, the premier said they are inadequate in terms of need but good to start with. "We should go further and beyond the European Union proposal meaningfully," added Hasina.

Sheikh Hasina is scheduled to co-chair a round table on climate change adaptation and mitigation challenges for agriculture and food security at the FAO headquarters around 10:00pm BST.

The prime minister hoped that it is possible to have a successful Conference of Parties (COP 15) in Copenhagen. If the developed countries could invest trillions of dollars in resurrecting the world economic situation, and spend three trillion dollars for armaments, they could surely contribute generously to the climate fund as proposed to be established in Copenhagen in December this year.

With a worldwide population expected to cross 9 billion by 2050, and increasing adverse effects of climate change, many unpredictable and difficult challenges might emerge, she pointed out adding that a dominant challenge would be the threat to the agriculture and thus to food

Graveyard

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Earlier on October 15, the same court issued an arrest warrant against Jalil hours after the National Board of Revenue (NBR) filed a case against him in connection with dodging income tax to the tune of Tk 4 lakh.

In the statement, the NBR mentioned that Jalil, chairman of Mercantile Bank Limited, evaded income tax worth Tk 4,07,485 on his income of Tk 54,60,234 from the bank for the fiscal years 2003-2008. He concealed his income of Tk 54 lakh in his tax returns.

Jalil repeatedly provided false information about his real income and expenditure, alleged the NBR.

Verdict day

FROM PAGE 1 State Minister for Law Quamrul Islam told the lawmakers.

Inspector General of Police Nur Mohammad, as well as heads of other police units and senior officials of the Home Ministry attended the meeting, which was presided over by Home Minister and lawmaker of Dhaka-18 constituency Sahara Khatun.

Earlier in the morning, Sahara met with administrative and police officials of the capital and its suburban districts.

She said that law enforcement agencies will be placed on high alert and that special measures are already in place to prevent acts of sabotage.

Security has been stepped up at the Supreme Court, the trial courts, diplomatic areas and other important installations across the country.

Kamal Ahmed Majumder, a lawmaker from Dhaka-15 constituency said, "We have decided against organising a joyous procession because we don't want to give people with ill-motive any chance."

Tuesday's meeting also addressed the need for greater coordination between deputy commissioners and superintendents of police in order to maintain law and order in Dhaka and other metropolitan areas.

Law enforcers were also asked to remain watchful ahead of other upcoming occasions such as Eid-ul-Azha, Victory Day on December 16, Christmas on December 25 and New Year's Eve.

The meeting was also attended by Information Minister Abul Kalam Azad, State Minister for Local Government and Rural Development Jahangir Kabir Nanak, lawmakers Sanjida Khanon, AKM Rahmatullah Illius Molla and Rashed Khan Menon, and the president of Workers Party of Bangladesh Khandaker Ali Abbas.

Govt asked

FROM PAGE 1 According to the findings of several probe committees on the Tengratila blasts, Petrobangla in its letter said three BCF gas had been lost from the surface level and another 5.9 BCF from the sub-surface level of the Tengratila gas field.

The probe committees faulted Niko's poor planning and operation for the two rounds of blowout.

Following the Petrobangla letter, Niko sought some clarifications. Then in August 2006, the Canadian company proposed to settle this matter at an international arbitration court namely International Centre for Settlement of Investment Disputes.

The HC bench of Justice Syed Mahmud Hossain and Justice Quamrul Islam Siddiqui delivered the verdict upon a writ petition jointly filed by Bangladesh Environmental Lawyers Association, Ain O Salish Kendra and Odhikar, challenging the legality of the joint venture agreement between Bapex and Niko. It was signed on October 16, 2003.

The petition filed in 2005 stated that the gross negligence by Niko while undertaking petroleum operation in West Chhatak caused incidents of explosion and fire on January 7 and 24 June, in 2005.

It resulted in loss of country's natural resources, damage to public and private properties and irreparable damage to environment and ecology.

Earlier on September 12, 2005, following the petition the HC directed the government to stop gas payment to Niko and freeze its all bank accounts and also issued a rule upon the government to explain why the Bapex-Niko agreement should not be declared illegal.

The secretaries to the ministries of power, energy and mineral resources, law, justice and parliamentary affairs, and the Environment and Forests, the Petrobangla, Bapex, director general of Directorate of Environment, deputy commissioner of Sunamganj, UNO of Doara Bazar in Sunamganj, and Board of Investment were directed in the verdict not to make any payment to Niko.

Advocate Mahmudul Islam assisted by advocate Syeda Rizwana Hasan appeared for the petitioners, while barrister Rakanuddin Mahmud argued for Niko, Additional Attorney General Md Kafilur Rahman appeared for the government, barrister Abdullah Al Mamun stood for Petrobangla and advocate Imtiaz Mahmud appeared for Bapex.

Bangladesh betters

FROM PAGE 1 Director Dr Iftekharuzzaman while presenting the CPI at Dhaka Reporters Unity.

"The anti-corruption drive and institutional reforms made by the last caretaker government had an impact even after the political government came to power," he said.

Earlier, Bangladesh was placed at the bottom of the list for the fifth successive year from 2001-2005. In 2006, 2007 and 2008 Bangladesh was ranked third, seventh and tenth positions respectively.

In South Asia, only Bangladesh performed better this year compared to that of the last year. Score-wise, Bhutan, India, Sri Lanka and Maldives remain in a better position while Pakistan and Nepal are almost similar to Bangladesh.

According to the CPI, New Zealand has been ranked the first with the score of 9.4, Denmark second with 9.3 and Sweden and Singapore were jointly ranked third with 9.2 this year. The countries where corruption is perceived to be the highest include Iraq, Sudan, Myanmar, Afghanistan and Somalia.

The index published by the Berlin-based anti-corruption watchdog provides international ranking of countries in terms of perceived degree of prevalence of political and administrative corruption. Experts and business leaders were the main sources of survey of this report.

"The progress of Bangladesh indicates a positive assessment of the fact that many of those reforms made during the last caretaker government were carried forward, or so promised, by the newly elected government to their pledge to fight corruption," the TI indexes.

The improvement made by Bangladesh, however, will depend on the new government's will and capacity to deliver. Effectiveness of the parliament, Anti-Corruption Commission, Election Commission and Judiciary will largely impact the sustainability of the progress, Iftekharuzzaman said.

"Bangladesh would not have made good score if there had been no reforms in the EC, and the parliamentary committees were not formed and activated immediately after its formation," he said.

Asked on changes in the ACC, TIB Trustee Board Member Professor Muzaffer Ahmad said there was not any major change that could bar strengthening of the ACC.

Besides, the prime minister's pledge is also there to make it independent, he said.

US, China pledge

FROM PAGE 16 China's yuan currency is being kept artificially low to boost Chinese exports, said he welcomed "past statements" by Beijing to pursue a market-oriented exchange rate "over time."

On Iran, Obama warned that if Tehran did not "present and demonstrate its peaceful intentions" with its nuclear programme, it would face "consequences."

But Hu was less adamant, saying only the issue needed to be solved through "dialogue and negotiations." There was no sign Beijing now shared the impatience of Russia, another key power, on Iran's foot-dragging.

US President also addressed the thorny issue of Tibet with China's Hu Jintao, saying he backs an early resumption of talks between Beijing and representatives of the Dalai Lama.

"We did note that while we recognise that Tibet is part of the People's Republic of China, the United States supports the early resumption of dialogue" between envoys of the exiled Tibetan spiritual leader and Beijing, Obama said.

Both leaders said their nations, the two biggest emitters of greenhouse gases, were vital to hopes of a deal to slow global warming, despite clear signs that no global deal will emerge from next month's Copenhagen conference.

"Our aim there is... not a partial accord or a political declaration, but rather an accord that covers all the issues in the negotiations and one that has immediate operational effect," the US leader said.

The sides announced a series of new initiatives on clean energy research and agreements on the cleaner use of coal, electric vehicles and shale gas.

Obama's talks with Hu came on the third leg of his four nation maiden tour of

TIB, however, expressed concern over the recent amendment to the public procurement act, saying allowing inexperienced bidders up to certain level to get public jobs cannot help ensure establishing transparency and accountability in public procurement.

Absence of the opposition in the parliament and poor presence of the lawmakers in the parliamentary sessions is another issue of concern, Iftekharuzzaman told newsmen.

"The issue of lawmakers' interests -- in local development activities or framing laws -- must be considered. More interests in their constituencies do not give good signals," he said.

"Whether or not judiciary is free of political influence and the information commission is active is a matter of concern as well," the TIB official said.

TIB former chairman Muzaffer Ahmad said there appears to be no accountability as to why there is an increase in education fees and user fees in the public hospitals. There is also absence of accountability in safety net programmes like Food for Work. "These are negative trends."

TIB Chairman M Hafizuddin Khan chaired the press conference.

BNP summons

FROM PAGE 1 responsible for foiling the city unit council.

Meanwhile, BNP standing committee member Moudud Ahmed said the Chittagong unit committee would be formed before the national council on December 8.

BNP Joint Secretary General Mirza Abbas said the Chittagong incident would not have any impact on the central council.

The party arranged district unit councils in Chittagong city and Faridpur on Monday but both the councils had been foiled due to intra-party clashes, which created confusions over whether the councils to be held within the next few days would be successful.

According to the party decision councils of Chittagong (South), Feni, Laxmipur, Noakhali, Chapainawabganj, Thakurgaon and Rajshahi will be arranged between November 19 and December 4.

However, Shaheed Uddin Chowdhury Anny, lawmaker of Laxmipur district, yesterday told The Daily Star, "We will set an example on November 21 by holding the council successfully."

Asia as president, which concludes on Thursday in South Korea.

After the press conference, Obama braved the crisp November air for a hectic tour of the ancient Forbidden City, one of the few moments of tourism in a trip that also took him to Japan and a regional summit in Singapore.

Hu was later Tuesday to lay on the lavish splendour of a full state dinner.

On Monday, the US president pushed for expanded political freedoms and spoke out against censorship in a town-hall meeting in Shanghai -- comments that were widely ignored by the tightly controlled Chinese state media.

Taliban

FROM PAGE 16 mostly for girls, in the northwest of the country in recent years.

Quetta has been the scene of frequent bomb attacks targeted against officials and non-Baluchi residents or visitors, the BBC's M Ilyas Khan in Islamabad says.

Most such attacks are claimed by ethnic Balochi militant groups who say they are fighting for autonomy, our correspondent adds.

Witnesses said about yesterday's attack that the bomb was detonated as Durrani's jeep passed by. Several pedestrians were hit, and one of them died on the spot.

Police said Durrani received minor injuries and was given first aid at the hospital. The condition of his driver is stated to be serious.

The motorbike in which the bomb was planted was completely destroyed. Durrani's jeep was also damaged, its tyres burst and the windshield was smashed, witnesses said.

As operations chief of Quetta police, Durrani has been involved in dozens of arrests of suspected militants.

Recently, he said he was on the hit list of a number