

# Cherie Blair hails

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yesterday evening.

Cherie arrived here earlier in the day on a four-day visit to attend a programme of Asian University of Women, Chittagong.

PM's Press Secretary Abul Kalam Azad briefed newsmen after the meeting.

Hasina told Cherie that the people of Bangladesh always recall with deep gratitude the support and cooperation of the British government and its people during Bangladesh's Liberation war in 1971.

She said relations between Bangladesh and the UK are defined by shared aspirations for and common values of democracy, development and human rights, a vibrant trade and economic partnership.

Hasina also mentioned the role of the UK and other European countries in restoration of democracy in Bangladesh through holding the December 29 polls in a free, fair, neutral and acceptable manner.

The PM highlighted the successes in empowerment of women and the enhanced position of women in Bangladesh's politics, government and society, parliament and local government institutions.

She stated that her government has identified women empowerment as one of the key constituent elements for poverty reduction.

Hasina informed Cherie that Bangladesh is committed to improving the socioeconomic conditions of women and integrating them into the mainstream of national life.

"The main goals of the National Policy for Women

Advancement are to bring about equality between men and women, and improve the conditions for women," she said.

Bangladesh is vigorously pursuing policies and programmes to eradicate repression on women and bring them into the forefront of social and economic activities, Hasina said.

The premier said the political empowerment of women started in 1996 during the previous tenure of the present government when directly elected representatives of women were included in local government bodies.

Presently, this process has got a momentum as one vice-chairman at upazila level has already been included in the local government, she said.

Hasina said a significant number of women were nominated in the last parliamentary election from the Awami League-led coalition and a record number of female parliamentarians are there in the 9th parliament.

Cherie Blair also hailed government's various initiatives and programmes to ensure quality education for the people of all walks of life.

She sought the government's continuous support and cooperation for further development of the Asian University of Women, Chittagong.

In reply, Hasina said her government will do everything necessary for ensuring quality education for the people of all strata.

Ambassador at Large M Ziauddin and Private Secretary to the PM Nazrul Islam Khan were present.

# AFGHANISTAN Roadside bombs kill 9 troops

**AP, Kabul**

Roadside bombs have killed eight Afghan soldiers and a US service member in separate incidents in Afghanistan, officials said yesterday.

Nato confirmed the American died Thursday in eastern Afghanistan, but provided no other details.

Also Thursday, an Afghan army vehicle hit a roadside bomb in Uruzgan province in central Afghanistan. Army commander Abdul Hamid said eight soldiers who were inside the vehicle were killed as they were returning from the provincial capital of Tarin Kot.

# Jyoti Basu

**FROM PAGE 1**  
hospital treating the critically ill leader decided to opt for a video conference with specialists at the All India Institute of Medical Sciences (AIIMS) in Delhi.

"Last night, there was an episode of irregularity of heartbeat. This was treated adequately. There has been no significant improvement in his condition, and he continues to be on partial ventilation support," the bulletin issued around 12.45 p.m. said.

"The medical board has decided to have a video conference with specialists of AIIMS to have their opinion for further management," the bulletin said.

"We are trying to do it as early as possible. It may be done today (Friday) also. But first we have to be sure about the type of specialists needed. Depending on the schedule of the AIIMS doctors and their availability, we will do the video conference," AMRI hospital medical superintendent D.N. Agarwal told reporters.

Former prime minister HD Deve Gowda, who called on Basu Friday morning, said the 95-year-old leader greeted him by lifting his hand partially. 'A doctor tried to wake him up. He lifted his hand up to a point. He did not open his eyes,' Deve Gowda said.

"That shows his brain function is very good. Of course he is on ventilator, but as thing stands his condition is a little improved," he added.

The vital signs of the former West Bengal chief minister, admitted to the private hospital near his Salt Lake residence following chest congestion and infection Jan 1 and shifted to the Intensive Critical Care Unit (ICCU) Jan 2, remained 'more or less same' as Thursday.

Earlier, AMRI medical superintendent Debasis Sharma told IANS that the Communist Party of India-Marxist (CPI-M) leader was 'slightly better'.

"His other parameters like urine output, blood pressure and oxygen content in blood are also better," Sharma said.

He was being fed liquid food.

The eight member medical board treating Basu, who was chief minister for 23 years, put him on ventilator support due to acute respiratory problems early Jan 6.

Basu holds the record for the longest stint as chief minister after having been at the helm of affairs in the state for 23 uninterrupted years. Born 1914 in Kolkata, Basu was state chief minister from June 1977 until November 2000, heading a Left Front government led by the CPI-M. He stepped down voluntarily on health grounds.

# Bid to grab house

**FROM PAGE 1**  
editor of Bangladesh Observer, has been living at his three-storey building on a 12-katha plot (no-20/A on road no-26) for four decades.

On May 5, 2008, Gulshan police arrested Mollah and Siraj following their attempt to sell the property of Rahim to a real estate company named Ma-Baba with a fake power of attorney.

Rahim filed the fraud case (no-14) with the Gulshan Police Station against Shahjahan Mollah, Shahjahan Siraj and Enamul Haq the same day. Enamul Haq was arrested later on.

But all of them secured bail and since then they have been at large.

Rahim alleged that the trio is backed up and blessed by Awami League lawmaker Abdus Sattar, a member of the parliamentary standing committee on housing and public works ministry.

Contacted, lawmaker Sattar said that Shahjahan Mollah is his relative and his ownership documents are genuine.

"Abdur Rahim lives in America," he said, "I informed Rajuk chairman and asked him to verify the 'genuine' ownership of the plot."

The then Dhaka Improvement Trust (DIT), now Rajdhan Udayan Kartirpakkha (Rajuk), allotted the plot to Abdur Rahim on 22 July 1967.

Before they were arrested, Shahjahan Mollah and his accomplices assigned a lady named Papiya Sultana to conduct

information about Abdur Rahim and persuade him to sell the property.

"They offered me a flat or three percent of the total cost of the property if I could succeed in my mission," Papiya said.

My mission wasn't accomplished as Abdur Rahim refused to sell his property, she said.

"I am being harassed by fake claimants of my property as the case has been pending with the court for long 19 months," said Rahim, who also served as Bangladesh Press Minister in London and as the Principal Information Officer in the government.

"My situation clearly indicates how dreadful the plight of ordinary people is when they fall victim to fraudulence of a crime syndicate," he said.

Rahim first came to know about the fraudulent move in 2006 and filed a GD (no-737) with Gulshan Police Station in November the same year.

Meanwhile Rajuk issued a certificate on November 1, 2009 stating that the ownership of the plot had not been handed over to anyone to date since it was allotted in 1967.

A Rajuk high official, on condition of anonymity, said the documents of Rahim have no problem and circumstantial evidence shows that the occupant of the property is Abdur Rahim and he is the original lessee.

"There are a couple of similar fake claims over other properties in the area," he said.

The next date of hearing of the fraud case is on January 25.

# Two held in NY bomb plot probe

**AFP, New York**

Two associates of an Afghan immigrant charged in an al-Qaeda-linked plot to attack New York around last year's anniversary of the September 11 attacks were arrested yesterday, law enforcement officials said.

The two men were arrested by Federal Bureau of Investigation agents early Friday, FBI spokesman Richard Kolko told AFP.

They are "associates" of Najibullah Zazi, who is accused of links to al-Qaeda in Pakistan and plotting a bombing spree in New York around the anniversary of the 2001 attacks, said a law enforcement source, who asked not to be identified.

The arrests came as the US government and security services are reeling from their failure to prevent an alleged attempt to blow up a plane bound for Detroit on Christmas Day.

President Barack Obama has repeatedly singled out the Zazi probe as proof that US intelligence is in fact doing a good job against an increasingly multi-headed foe.

Officials named the two men detained Friday as Adis Medunjanin and Zarein Ahmedzay.

# India keeps

**FROM PAGE 1**  
Criminal Matters, Agreement on Combating International Terrorism, Organised Crime and Illicit Drug Trafficking, and Agreement on Transfer of Sentenced Persons.

In the agreement on transfer of sentenced persons, people sentenced for criminal offence would be able to serve their sentences in their own country if they wanted. However, if the prisoner was sentenced to death he or she would not get this opportunity. The draft agreement mentioned that if such type of agreement existed with a third country, Bangladesh and India would provide transit facility for the extradition of the sentenced person.

The agreement on combating international terrorism, organised crime and illicit drug trafficking is the bilateral implementation of a protocol long been effective under Saarc. If terrorists conduct terrorist activities in and against both the countries, the two countries can exchange general and intelligence information.

Bangladesh and India may sign a MoU related to import of power from India. Official sources said the PDB under the MoU will buy electricity from India at price to be agreed upon by the two parties. Bangladesh would import up to 1,200MW of electricity from India by the middle of 2012 to meet its fast growing demand for power. Bangladesh will initially buy 500MW increasing to 1,200MW over three years.

Dhaka and New Delhi is likely to sign another MoU for recognising each other's standardisation certificates for goods and services. The

draft of the MoU, styled "Bilateral Cooperation Agreement Between the Bangladesh Standards and Testing Institute (BSTI) and the Bureau of India Standard (BIS), has also been finalised for signing.

Both BSTI and BIS will authorise each other to carry out pre-certification and certification of goods and services to be exported. The non-tariff barriers generally imposed on Bangladesh products to India will be reduced to a great extent. Recognition of standardisation certificates is established.

There is a likelihood of another MoU being inked under which India will provide a credit line of up to \$500 million for infrastructure development in Bangladesh. Official sources said the loan would be utilised for 11 railway and a highway development projects and the purchase of 400 CNG-run BRTC buses.

India has expressed its intent to resolve outstanding issues relating to Dahagram and Angarpota enclaves and the Tin Bigha Corridor and agreed to provide electricity to Dahagram and Angarpota enclaves.

The Indian side agreed to facilitate Nepal-Bangladesh and Bhutan-Bangladesh connectivity.

"India's effort is to boost Hasina's stature so that she can go back to Dhaka and announce substantial gains for Bangladesh that will enable the ruling Awami League to effectively respond to the pressure from opposition BNP which has warned Hasina not to return empty-handed from New Delhi," said a diplomatic source in India.

# Sri Lanka outclass

**FROM PAGE 1**  
However, Sri Lanka had much to thank Lady Luck for. Kumar Sangakkara, the Sri Lankan skipper won the toss for the third successive occasion to make the obvious decision of bowling first under conditions where bowlers struggle in the second session due to the dew factor.

That meant Bangladesh batting first for the third occasion in a row, once through own folly. But while against India they batted well; this time the innings saw a lack of thrust. Most of the players got starts but failed to carry on as the wickets fell at regular intervals against the disciplined bowling effort of the Lankans.

The southpaw opening pair of Tamim Iqbal and Imrul Kayes made another confident start but the early departure of the dashing Tamim made sure that there would be no ample fireworks in the initial stage like the previous two games in front of nearly 10,000 fans.

And then there was a costly run out when a confident Mohammad Ashraful departed on an unlucky 13 after a sharp direct throw by Thilan Thushara from the third man spoiled the former Bangladesh skipper's attempt to take an ambitious second run.

Imrul Kayes was quick to follow him being trapped in front by Thisara Perera as Bangladesh were reduced to 88

for three.

Captain Shakib Al Hasan however returned amongst the runs after forlorn performances in the last two games but his 75-ball 47 and a 77-run fourth wicket association with Rokibul Hasan (43 off 71 balls) hardly made the impact from where the hosts could throw a real challenge for the Lankan batsmen.

The score could have been much better if a collapse had not happened during the batting powerplay, as the home side lost five wickets for 32 runs. Bangladesh took the batting powerplay from the 43rd over on 199 for four but lost the way very quickly when Shakib was out first ball of the Powerplay trying to drag a short ball from Thushara from outside off for the pull, only to find the man at the square-leg boundary.

A cameo came from wicketkeeper batsman Mushfiqur Rahim, who smacked two sixes in an over against Thilan Samaraweera to collect seventeen runs. But his 22-ball 32 and inform Mahmudullah Riyad's run-a-ball 24 in the latter part of the innings were not good enough to put up a stiff target for their opponents on the batting paradise.

And in the second innings, the Lankan batsmen aptly proved how good the track was.

# Bangladeshi workers

**FROM PAGE 16**  
to go there. But now they can neither send home money nor manage a good living.

Bangladesh started afresh sending manpower to Libya from January last year. In a year, it sent around 24,000 workers, but some malpractices were reported often in the oil-rich country that needs around a million foreign workers for huge development projects by 2014.

Kaiser said a worker was supposed to get 360 Libyan Dinar (1 Dinar is equivalent to Tk 55.88) a month for an eight-hour workday. But for the first two months, they were paid only 230 Dinar a month each though they worked for 11 hours a day.

They all have to use open spaces as toilets with no sanitation facilities. "We are gradually getting sick... please help us get jobs or get back home," said Jahanur, another worker.

The migrant workers said a Libyan contractor and a Bangladeshi manpower broker named Salam ate up the salaries they got from the Rastota. Salam also threat-

ened them of dire consequences if they go to the Bangladesh embassy in Tripoli, they said.

Meanwhile, Jahanur's wife Shirin Akter said, "Jahanur has not sent a single penny, though interest on the money [borrowed to send Jahanur abroad] is going up every day. How long can a man survive without job and salary?"

Contacted, Ahsan Kibria Siddiqui, first secretary (labour) of Bangladesh embassy there, said the group of workers met him and he took the matter to the Libyan labour ministry.

"We said the workers should either be provided with jobs or compensated," he said. The labour ministry said Rastota had stopped its project due to fund crisis, but will soon restart it and employ the workers, Ahsan Kibria added.

Orbit Consultant General Manager Belal Uddin said they are aware of the problem and trying to solve it.

Asked how long it will take, he said, "I exactly don't know. Our boss Shahjahan, who is now in the Saudi Arabia, knows it all."

# Khaleda blames

**FROM PAGE 1**  
Bakir, president of Bangladesh Bank Employees Federation and member of the newly announced national executive committee of BNP, died in custody at the city's Apollo Hospital at about 2:30pm on Thursday.

Earlier, he was taken to Dhaka Medical College Hospital after he fell unconscious in jail on December 22.

# Gas crisis in city

**FROM PAGE 1**  
Jatrabari, said they have been keeping their operation suspended from 9:00am to 3:00pm and 6:00pm to 11:00pm every day over the last two months and this has intensified in the last one week.

He said there are 13 filling stations between the Jatrabari bridge and Jurain rail gate and all of them remain shut for about 12 hours every day.

Sifat CNG Filling Station and Conversion Centre's managing director Md Kamal Uddin said their income has gone below the break-even point in the last one month. "We will have no alternative but to go for a movement if the government decides to keep filling stations shut for two days," he said.

A meeting of the energy ministry decided on Wednesday to examine more before making any final decision on it, said ministry sources.

A few days back the government also decided to keep industries shut a day in a week zone-wise to help ease the acute gas supply crisis.

Md Khalid Hasan, general manager (operations) of Titas

Gas Transmission and Distribution Company Ltd, said the lack of a proper gas transmission system is contributing to the problem. The system of keeping gas supply to different industries suspended on different days a week will reduce the crisis, he said.

Khalid said gas shortage in Dhaka could be resolved immediately if a compressor was installed at Ashuganj but it may take around two and a half years to complete the installation and other procedures if everything goes smoothly.

"We need to intervene in demand during winter to solve the problem before installing the compressor and increasing production," he said.

Khalid said as they have stopped giving fresh connections, the demand will not increase any more soon. He added that it is vital to increase gas production and improve the network system, particularly in Mirpur.

"We have been working to replace the two-inch pipelines with 10-inch ones at different places in the city, which will be finished by this winter," he said.

# Dhaka wants

**FROM PAGE 1**  
Under the convention, Bangladesh has to submit necessary documents to UN to validate its claims of territorial waters, exclusive economic zone (EEZ) up to 200 nautical miles (nm) and continental shelf up to 350 nm from the baseline.

But the demarcation on equidistance method would deprive Bangladesh of its equitable share of the territorial waters.

Bangladesh needs to settle the dispute to preserve its sovereignty and resources in the territorial waters, said the sources.

The meeting is the first of its kind after Bangladesh officially asked in October 2009, for arbitration under 1982 UNCLOS to settle the issues on maritime boundaries with India and Myanmar.

Bangladesh would be trying to settle the dispute through talks with Myanmar and India, said the delegation members while talking to journalists yesterday.

Bangladesh Ambassador in Myanmar Major General Anup Kumar Chakma and Myanmar Ambassador in Bangladesh U Phae Than Oo were also present at the meeting.

Bangladesh delegation included Sector General (Administration) Mohammad Abdul Hye and five high officials of foreign ministry and representatives from Hydrography and Naval Operations of Bangladesh Navy, Bangladesh Geological Survey, Petrobangla and Bangladesh Inland Water Transport Authority.

In the Myanmar team, representatives from Ministries of Defence and Education, Legal and Consular Affairs, Consular and Legal Affairs Department, Myanmar National Hydrographic Centre, State Peace and Development Council, Legal Expert Group and Law Department of University of Yangon were present.

# 31 killed

**FROM PAGE 16**  
seeking anonymity told The Daily Star they are under pressure for not arresting Chhatra League leaders although the city BCL dissolved the Chhatra League Polytechnic Institute unit and expelled eight of its activists including Nizam and Tushar for their involvement in the killing.

Sunny was buried at Tikapara graveyard after the Jum'a prayers yesterday.

Meantime, Chhatra Moitree yesterday held a protest rally at Shaheb Bazar zero point and brought out a procession demanding arrest of Sunny's killers immediately.

City Moitree president Motiur Rahman spoke at the rally. He said Moitree would bring out a mourning procession in the city this afternoon.

Both Chhatra League and Chhatra Moitree blamed each other for the incident. City unit general secretary of Chhatra League Zedu Sarker said Moitree recruited Jatiyatabadi Chhatra Dal activists in their committee who were involved in beating up Chhatra League activists during the BNP-Jamaat alliance government. This led to the clash on Thursday.

City unit Chhatra Moitree president Matiur Rahman, however, blamed the local Chhatra League for accommodating several students with Shibir background in their party ranks.

# Hectic schedule

**FROM PAGE 1**  
Sheraton Hotel.

Hasina will return to Rashtrapati Bhavan and call on Indian President Pratibha Patil before addressing the captains of Indian industry over lunch at the Sheraton Hotel.

This will be followed by a meeting between Hasina and Indian Finance Minister Pranab Mukherjee who will call on her.

After the Hasina-Mukherjee meeting, the leader of the opposition Sushma Swaraj of BJP will also call on the visiting prime minister.

Later, Hasina will travel to 10 Janpath to meet Congress Party President Sonia Gandhi.

The high-point of her visit will, of course, be the formal delegation-level talks with Indian Prime Minister Manmohan Singh at Hyderabad House in the evening before Singh hosts a banquet for Hasina.

Hasina will begin January 12 by meeting former Indian prime ministers Atal Bihari Vajpayee and Inder Kumar Gujral before receiving the Indra Gandhi award for international understanding at 11:30am.

This will be followed by a meeting between Hasina and Indian Railway Minister Mamata Banerjee in the afternoon of January 12.

On the same day, she is scheduled to receive a delegation of Federation of Indian Chambers of Commerce and

# Move to curb

**FROM PAGE 1**  
justice has made the move to do away with corruption over place in the queue for hearing.

Allegations are rife that some court staff arrange for cases to be pushed up on the cause list and given early hearing in exchange for money.

On January 6, the chief justice held a meeting with the attorney general and the president and secretary of the Supreme Court Bar Association on the issue.

Earlier, at the January 3 felicitation of the chief justice, Attorney General Mahubey Alam said bench officers at the courts are involved in corruption taking advantage of inefficiency and carelessness of some judges.

He said corruption takes place over the listing of cases and sending of files to the sections concerned of the courts.

He urged the chief justice to take steps to protect the image and dignity of the court.

# 4 pirates

**FROM PAGE 16**  
office, said the gunfight began when on-duty forest guards patrolling the area came under attack by a group of pirates of 'Ali Bahini' in the evening.

Forest guards opened fire as soon as they came under gun attack by the outlaws, said Divisional Forest Officer Mihir Kumar.

They exchanged a hundred rounds of bullet during the clash that lasted for an hour, he added.

The forest guards seized one engine boat from the spot left by the pirates.

Meanwhile, coastguards, police and forest guards jointly launched special drive to nab the criminals.

# Blast kills 8

**FROM PAGE 16**  
chief Waseem Ahmad said the explosives appeared to have been detonated unintentionally.

"It seems that explosives which were stored in the house caused the explosion... The house was being used by terrorists," Ahmad said, adding that two people had been arrested at the scene.

Interior Minister Rehman Malik told reporters the people living in the house were from Swat, a northwestern district where the military launched an operation last year to quash a two-year uprising by Taliban fighters.

Suicide bombings and attacks by the Taliban and other Islamist militant groups have intensified in recent months as the military pursues an aggressive offensive to quash insurgent strongholds near the Afghan border.

Karachi had until recently been spared the worst of the bloodshed, then on December 28 a bomb ripped through a procession of Shia Muslim worshippers, killing 43 people and turning their holy day of Ashura into a bloodbath.

The victims of Friday's blast appeared to be residents of the rented house, officials said.

In Khyber tribal district, meanwhile, five people were killed and 12 wounded when a suicide bomber blew himself at the offices of a rival militant group, top local administration official Shafeerullah Khan told AFP.

"The bomber blew himself up when stopped by a security guard from entering the headquarters of militant group, Ansar-ul-Islam," Khan said.

"This was a suicide attack on Ansar-ul-Islam headquarters in which five militants belonging to the outfit were

killed."

Ansar-ul-Islam (Companions of Islam) is a rival of Lashkar-e-Islam (Army of Islam), the main militant group staging attacks in Khyber, which borders Afghanistan.

More than 2,900 people have been killed in attacks in Pakistan since militant violence intensified in July 2007.

Although Karachi, a cosmopolitan port city far away from the troubled northwest, sees fewer attacks, there are fears militants are using the cover of a city of about 14 million people to regroup and plan attacks.

Islamist militants say their campaign is to avenge the military offensives and Pakistan's unpopular alliance with the United States in the eight-year war against the Taliban in neighbouring Afghanistan.

Washington has praised Pakistan's action against the Taliban but is urging the country to also crack down on militants who hide out in the lawless northwest and cross the border to attack Nato and US troops in Afghanistan.

The two nations are also at odds over increasing missile strikes by unmanned US aircraft targeting high-level militants in Pakistan's northwest.

Speaking during a visit to Islamabad on Friday, US Republican Senator John McCain defended the attacks as necessary to protect troops in Afghanistan.

"Friends don't always agree on every issue but we certainly are in agreement on a common goal, and we also face a common enemy," he said.

"The enemy of radical Islamic extremism, that wants to destroy everything that we stand for and believe in."

# 2 killed

**FROM PAGE 16**  
to stop a fight between Badsha and supporters of Nabarul. Following Sattar's death villagers were locked into clashes, which left Abu Sama, brother of Badsha, dead and three others injured.

Baraigram Police Station Officer-in-Charge Ibrahim Hossain said Sattar's son Salim Uddin filed a case accusing 12 people.

# 30 shanties

**FROM PAGE 16**  
storehouses, three bedding stores, ashoe factory and shops.

Fire fighters managed to tame the flame around 4:00pm.

Zakir Hossain Molla, officer-in-charge of Mirpur Police Station, said the fire might have originated from a gas burner at a shop in the market.