

COUNTRY REPORTS ON TERRORISM 2009

US lauds Dhaka's role

DIPLOMATIC CORRESPONDENT

The United States has lauded Bangladesh on its efforts to deny domestic and transnational terrorists safe haven and targeting opportunities in Bangladesh.

It said the government also acted on its pledge to focus serious attention on counter-terrorism, which resulted in the arrest of several high-profile terrorism-related figures in Bangladesh, including some from Lashkar-e-Tayyiba (LT).

In an annual Country Reports on Terrorism 2009 released in Washington DC on Thursday, the State Department said that immediately after taking office in January 2009, the Awami League (AL)-led government began a crackdown on domestic and transnational terrorist groups.

As a result, Bangladesh and India improved their counter-terrorism cooperation during the year, which helped arrest of several senior members of the United Liberation Front of Assam.

In November, the report said Bangladesh arrested several extremists alleged to have ties to LT, the organisation believed to be responsible for the November 2008 Mumbai attack, Harakat ul-Jihad-i-Islami-Bangladesh, and other extremist groups.

"The arrests were evidence of the government's efforts to deny transnational terrorists safe haven and targeting opportunities in Bangladesh," said Daniel Benjamin, coordinator, Office of the Coordinator for Counter-terrorism, while releasing the report.

However, Jamaatul Mujahedin

Bangladesh, the banned domestic Islamist extremist group responsible for a wave of bombings and suicide attacks in late 2005, remained a threat, said the report.

During the first three months of 2009, authorities arrested several suspected JMB members and uncovered weapons caches that included grenades and chemicals that could be used to make explosives, added the report.

In February, the AL-led government adopted into law the Money Laundering Prevention Act (MLPA) and the Antiterrorism Act.

Although not fully compliant with international standards, the MLPA addressed many flaws in the 2002 money laundering law and antiterrorist financing into the Bangladesh legal system for the first time.

The laws facilitated international cooperation and established a financial intelligence unit (FIU) at the Bangladesh Bank. The new laws are part of the effort to enable Bangladesh to enter the Egmont Group, the international body of FIUs that plays a critical role in fighting terrorist financing.

The report said Bangladeshi government has also championed the creation of a South Asia counter-terrorism task force that countries could use to work together regionally to stamp out the rise of violent extremism.

US and Bangladeshi law enforcement agencies cooperated well on several cases related to domestic and international terrorism. Bangladesh worked with the US to further strengthen control of its borders and land, sea, and air ports of entry, the State Department report added.



Finance Minister Abul Mal Abdul Muhith receives Indian Finance Minister Pranab Mukherjee at the Shahjalal International Airport in the city yesterday. (Story on Page 1)

INDIAN CREDIT

BNP comment baseless: Hanif

BSS, Dhaka

Awami League (AL) Joint General Secretary Mahbubul Alam Hanif yesterday termed Bangladesh Nationalist Party's (BNP) comment on Indian credit for Bangladesh as baseless. He also said India is giving credit facility with much lower interest rate than that of World Bank (WB).

Hanif's comment came after Indian Credit Committee member M K Anwar's remark on BNP crediting yesterday.

The AL joint general secretary was speaking at a function marking the National Mourning Day at party's Bangabandhu Avenue office. Bangladesh Jubo Mahila League organised the programme.

M K Anwar said interest rate excluding service charge is 0.25 percent if it was taken from the multinational banks like WB and Asian Development Bank (ADB) instead of Indian Exim Bank with 1.75 percent interest rate.

Contradicting Anwar's view, the AL joint general secretary said if two percent service charge is added with WB's 0.25 percent interest, then the total interest rate stands at 2.25 percent.

Mahbubul Alam said the Indian Exim Bank is completely under state ownership but BNP said it is a private bank, which he termed a "deliberate comment".

He said, "We want development with the assistance of the neighbouring country, but BNP is creating confusion about the Indian credit as they don't want it."

Jubo Mahila League President Nazma Akhter chaired the function while Agriculture Minister Begum Matia Chowdhury spoke as the chief guest. State Minister for Law, Justice and Parliamentary Affairs Advocate Qamrul Islam, Jubo Mahila League General Secretary Apu Ukil also addressed the function.



Fajilatunnesa Mujib's 80th anniversary of birth today

BSS, Dhaka

Today is the 80th birth anniversary of Bangamata Begum Fajilatunnesa Mujib, the spouse of Father of the Nation Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman.

Awami League and sociocultural organisations have chalked out elaborate programmes to observe the day.

Bangamata Fajilatunnesa Mujib Parishad will hold a discussion at Osmany Memorial Auditorium at 11:00am today. President Zillur Rahman will attend the discussion as the chief guest. Eminent intellectuals and academics will take part in the discussion.

AL programmes include placing wreaths and holding milad and doa mahfil at the grave of Fajilatunnesa at Banani Graveyard at 8:30am.

Implement ADR to ease case jam: CJ

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Ctg

Chief Justice Mohammad Fazlul Karim at a seminar here yesterday urged all concerned to play an active role to help implement alternative dispute resolution (ADR) for speedy justice.

He was addressing a seminar titled 'Enforcing court-sponsored ADR in Bangladesh: Need for strengthening legislative, administrative and institutional measures'.

Bangladesh Law Commission organised the seminar in cooperation with South Asian Institute of Advanced Legal and Human Rights Studies (SAILS) at Chittagong Chamber of Commerce and Industries (CCCI) conference room.

Mentioning that the courts are overburdened with cases, chief justice emphasised the need for implementing ADR to facilitate people with better access to justice and relieve them of prolonged trial procedures.

He also urged the judges, lawyers and

the others concerned to discourage filing of cases that can be settled through mediation and arbitration while ensuring justice.

In this regard he said, "Before appearing or conducting any case we should ask ourselves whether our acts will have any positive impact on the society or not."

He also asked all to judge the impact of cases on the society instead of taking them as a way of earning.

Law Commission Chairman Justice Mohammad Abdur Rashid presided over the seminar participated by judges, lawyers, teachers, journalists and members of Bangladesh Environmental Lawyers Association (BELA), Bangladesh National Women Lawyers Association (BNWLA) and Bangladesh Legal Aid Services Trust (BLAST).

Fazlul Karim said with growing number of cases and huge number of pending cases, it is often difficult to handle all cases through formal trial though constitution ensures justice.

He said ADR can play a vital role to

speed up justice to people.

Many people are tending to take up law into their own hands, commit crimes or go for self-destructive activities like suicide due to frustration over prolonged procedures of formal trial, said Justice Rashid.

Law Commission member Prof M Shah Alam, Law Commission Chief Research Officer Md Akhteruzzaman and Senior Research Officer Sharmin Nigar presented three keynote papers at the seminar.

Alam in his paper said Indian subcontinent has a very rich heritage of informal justice system traditionally known as 'shalish' in Bangladesh while panchayat in India. This age-old informal justice system has acquired common characteristics as ADR by last few decades of worldwide positive endeavour to renew and strengthen it.

He also put up recommendations including formation of National Mediation Council, compulsory course on ADR in universities and law colleges and court-sponsored ADR application in both new cases or pending ones.

Barisal city BNP factions clash at Dhaka office

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Two rival factions of Barisal city BNP locked into clashes yesterday afternoon at BNP's central office in the capital's Naya Paltan over formation of the Barisal city BNP.

Officer-in-Charge Shahidul Hoque of Paltan police station said the two factions of BNP clashed inside the party office throwing plastic chairs at each other.

Party sources said the BNP high command asked the former Barisal city corporation mayors Mujibur Rahman Sarwar and Ahsan Habib Kamal to come to Dhaka in a bid to settle their dispute over formation of the city BNP committee through discussion led by Aman Ullah Aman.

As the feud was not settled through discussion at BNP's Naya Paltan office yesterday, Aman decided to conclude the matter by voting, sources said.

While the voting was going on, activists of the two rival groups started fighting with one another, foiling the attempt, sources added.

PRANAB HOLDS MEET WITH DIPU MONI

Dhaka, Delhi to ensure equitable benefits

DIPLOMATIC CORRESPONDENT

Bangladesh and India have agreed to follow up on the decisions made during Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina's visit to India in January to ensure equitable benefits of the two countries.

The consensus came at a meeting between Indian Finance Minister Pranab Mukherjee and Foreign Minister Dipu Moni at state guest-house Jamuna yesterday.

They discussed bilateral issues and reviewed progress in implementation of the decisions made during the Bangladesh premier's India visit.

Pranab was happy about the signing of the Credit Line Agreement and said it is another leap forward in strengthening ties between the two nations.

Now the challenge is to identify and implement the projects that would benefit the people of both the nations, said the Indian finance minister.

The Bangladesh foreign minister stressed the need for securing progress on sharing the

water of Teesta River.

Dipu Moni also raised the issue of greater connectivity among neighbouring countries.

She underlined the immense potential of collaboration in the power sector and said the countries in the region should harness water resources for generating power.

Dipu Moni also discussed with the Indian minister the early resolutions of land border disputes between the two countries in the spirit of the Land Boundary Agreement signed in 1974.

The two ministers agreed on holding meetings soon to discuss all unresolved border issues.

The Indian finance minister was in Dhaka on a four-hour visit to witness the signing of \$1 billion credit agreement.

The credit line will be utilised for a range of projects including development of communication infrastructure. Pranab's brief visit provided an opportunity to review the developments and also added impetus to the ongoing process of cooperation.

Revise syllabus to end math scare

Speakers tell Prothom Alo roundtable

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Speakers at a roundtable yesterday emphasised revising the school syllabus for overcoming the fear of mathematics among the students.

The syllabus from classes one to ten should be designed in a way that students refrain from memorising formula and do math playfully, pointed out the experts.

They also underscored the necessity of quality educational institutions and teachers to improve the standard of education.

Dutch-Bangla Bank-Prothom Alo Mathematical Festival and Bangladesh Mathematical Olympiad Committee jointly organised the roundtable titled "Development of Mathematical Education in School Level and Our Duty" at the Prothom Alo office.

Addressing the meeting as chief guest Education Minister Nurul Islam Nahid observed that good teachers could play vital role in improving standard of education.

"Many teachers like to offer quality tuition privately instead of classroom. They also neither prepare question papers nor examine answer sheets just to spare time for private tuition as it promises them more profit," added the minister.

Nahid also expressed grave concern over the indifference of students to studying science. Business studies is comparatively easier and promises better job opportunities, which discourage students to study science, he said adding that the government is going to observe Science Week to encourage the students.

"Private tuition and coaching system diminish self-confidence of students. We need good textbooks which the students will read with pleasure to reduce dependency on private tuition and coaching," said Muhammad Zafar Iqbal, vice-president of Bangladesh Mathematical Olympiad Committee and also a noted writer.

Proper curriculum and question papers are necessary to make students

refrain from memorising mathematical equation or formula. This would certainly motivate them to do well in the exam, said Mohammad Kaykobad, professor of the Department of Computer Science and Engineering at Buet.

"We should arrange more and more inspirational mathematical contests to encourage students to take part and overcome fear of mathematics," he added.

Mentioning that many teachers do not know how to give lesson properly, teacher of mathematics of Dhaka Teachers' College Razia Begum said teachers should be inspired and given proper training to make them fit for proper teaching in the classroom.

Joint Editor of the daily Prothom Alo Abdul Kaiyum moderated the roundtable. Managing Director of Dutch-Bangla Bank Yasin Ali, Professor of Buet Abdul Hakim, coach of Bangladesh Mathematical Olympiad Team Mahbub Majumdar also addressed, among others.

Bomb found at Shilpakala Academy

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Police recovered a homemade bomb from Shilpakala Academy last evening before the start of a function marking the death anniversary of poet Rabindranath Tagore.

The bomb, wrapped in scotch tape, was recovered at 6:45pm.

On information, the bomb disposal unit of Detective Branch of police recovered the bomb and defused it, said Shiblee Noman, officer-in-charge of Ramna Police Station.

Panic gripped the audience after the news spread around.

The programme, however, started on time.



Rise in temperature likely

UNB, Dhaka

Light to moderate rain or thundershowers accompanied by temporary gusty wind is likely at one or two places as of seven divisions of the country in next 12 hours as of 6:00pm today.

Day temperature may rise slightly over the country, Met Office said.

The sun sets in the capital tomorrow at 6:37pm and rises on Monday at 5:31am.

Monday's highest temperature 35.5 degrees Celsius was recorded yesterday at Ishwardi and lowest 24.8 degrees Celsius at Srimongal.

Highest and lowest temperature and humidity recorded in some major cities and towns yesterday were:

Table with 4 columns: City/Town, Temperature in Celsius (Max, Min), Humidity in percentage (Morning, Evening). Rows include Dhaka, Chittagong, Rajshahi, Khulna, Barisal, Sylhet, Cox's Bazar.

'No survey before resolving land disputes in CHT'

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Any land survey before resolving the land disputes in the Chittagong Hill Tracts (CHT) would drive out the entire indigenous community from their homes, said the representatives of indigenous people at a seminar yesterday.

Deputy leader of the parliament Syeda Sajeda Chowdhury, however, said the solution lies in land survey followed by dispute resolution.

While Shantu Larma, chairman of Parbatya Chattagram Jana Sanghati Samity, demanded amendment of the CHT Land Dispute Resolution Commission Act 2001 saying it contradicts the CHT Accord.

He also demanded termination of the current land commissioner for CHT terming him inefficient.

Adivasi Forum to mark the International Indigenous People's Day 2010 at LGED auditorium.

Santu Larma, also the chairman of the CHT Regional Council, said, "If the land survey is conducted before resolving disputes, the Adivasis would lose everything, and those who forcefully occupied our homestead will be the owners."

Santu Larma also demanded that the regional council should be imparted with its due power as mentioned in the CHT Accord to solve the land disputes.

Sajeda Chowdhury, also the convener of CHT Accord Implementation Committee, said, "Santu Larma should become a parliamentarian as requested by the prime minister. Then he can get the chance to speak about the problems of his community in the House."

Indigenous people, present at the seminar, also demanded exclusion of the word 'tribal' from all government papers and promoting the term Adivasi (indigenous). They also demanded

constitutional recognition.

Meanwhile, Dr Abdur Razzak, Minister for Food and Disaster Management ensured them to meet their demand and said it is time to mull over a separate commission to resolve the land disputes.

Chakma Chief Circle Raja Debasish Roy said land survey is not the responsibility of the land commission. Their responsibility is to resolve the disputes.

He urged the government to redefine the term secularism saying the word is now being applied in many things, not only religion.

Among others, former justice Golam Rabbani, Sultana Kamal, former advisor to the caretaker government Promod Mankhin, State Minister for Culture Khushi Kabir, chairperson of Association for Land Reform and Development (ALRD) Barrister Sara Hossain, Samsul Huda, executive director of ALRD Sanjeev Drong and general secretary of Bangladesh Adivasi Forum Prof Sadeka Halim spoke at the seminar.



Obituary

METRO DESK

Hayatun Nessa Choudhury, wife of late Engineer Abid Reza Choudhury, passed away at Ibrahim Cardiac Hospital in the city yesterday at the age of 90, says a press release.

She is survived by her three sons, two daughters and a host of relations and well-wishers to mourn her death.

Hayatun, mother of Dr Jamilur Reza Choudhury, was buried at the Banani graveyard.

Her qulhwani will be held at her residence at Elephant Road in the city after Asr prayers on August 10.

Syeda Maksudah Aref Topa

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Syeda Maksudah Aref Topa, former official of the Ahasania Mission, passed away at a hospital in the city on Friday at the age of 37, says a press release.

Maksudah, wife of Dr Margub Aref Jahangir, left behind her son and daughter to mourn her death.

She was buried at Banani graveyard after namaz-e-janaza at New Eskaton yesterday.

Her Qulhwani will be held at her residence at 16, New Eskaton in the city after Asr prayers today.

Relatives, friends and well-wishers have been requested to attend and pray for salvation of the departed soul.