

# WikiLeaks

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"credible" elections, while insisting that the army "needs to remain out of politics."

Kumar also briefed the US diplomat on chief adviser Fakhruddin Ahmed, lending credence to the view that he was not in control of the government, but rather an "executor" for the military.

The Indian bureaucrat is also said to have asked for US help in getting Bangladesh to open its economy.

All three men agreed that the decision by the caretaker government to allow Hasina and Khaleda back to politics had put Bangladesh "on the crossroads." They noted that the government had "gone back on its decision to remove the two women from the political scene."

They foresaw three possible alternative scenarios, including an "unlikely" military coup. They also asserted that their respective countries should agree on "a core message" to take to the Fakhruddin government, pressing for elections and voter list reforms, while again making clear the military needs to stay out of politics.

The cable also notes matter-of-factly that any move to enter the mainstream politics by the Huji, through the formation of IDP, would probably

not meet with much success, as the people would reject them.

According to the cable Kumar also said Indian conglomerate TATA had complained to him about the caretaker government "impeding its entry" into Bangladesh.

The rest of the cable contains some Indian frustrations over the volume of trade between the two countries and also discusses Burma and Sri Lanka.

None of the cables released so far originate from the US embassy in Dhaka. Data compiled on the total cache of cables by The Guardian and Der Spiegel indicates as many as 1984 cables, sent from Dhaka to Washington, are among the total of 251,287.

As of Saturday evening in Bangladesh, only 1618 of these cables have been released, which is less than one percent of the total number of cables obtained by WikiLeaks.

Apart from the two mentioned above, the others refer to Bangladesh more generally within a group of nations, for example one that reveals the French government was planning to DNA-test visa applicants from Bangladesh and eight other countries.

# Ukraine MPs hurt in parliament brawl

BBC ONLINE

Several Ukrainian opposition MPs have been injured in a brawl in the country's parliament, during which chairs were thrown.

They clashed with ruling Party of Regions MPs, who stormed the podium in the chamber on Thursday evening.

The supporters of the opposition leader and former prime minister, Yulia Tymoshenko, are now demanding a criminal inquiry into the incident.

Some MPs were admitted to hospital. Reports said some had fractures.

The clash came after a group of Mrs Tymoshenko's supporters had blocked the podium to protest at a corruption inquiry against her, which opened this week.

# 13,680 bullets

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57 packets of bullets were kept under a bed inside the room, the SP said.

Tajul Islam, sub-inspector of Jhinaigati Police Station, filed a case in this connection under the Arms Act.

Police said a gang of four miscreants kept eight sacks at the house of Wasir Uddin, 80, early morning yesterday and left the place. The gang threatened Wasir not to disclose the matter to others, police said quoting Wasir.

Ruling out the involvement of the house owner with the incident, the SP said, "Wasir Uddin is an octogenarian."

Police are now trying to find out whether the bullets were gathered to carry out any subversive activity and a drive is on to nab the culprits, the SP said.

The Rapid Action Battalion troops last year seized 10 Arges grenades from the same area, just two kilometres off India's Meghalaya.

# Khaleda flies

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Hossain Khoka and BNP MPs were obstructed from entering the VIP lounge at the airport to see off Khaleda.

Some journalists and photographers, however, could enter the airport premises defying the security at the gate leading to the VIP lounge.

After getting down from her car, Khaleda condemned the government for "not allowing" her party leaders to enter the VIP lounge.

She alleged that the government has "failed on all counts and in all fronts and chosen the path of repression".

The BNP chairperson accused the government of torturing members of parliament and obstructing journalists from their professional duty to collect information.

Khaleda left for Bangkok by a Thai Airlines flight en route to China. She will make overnight stopover in Bangkok and leave for Beijing this morning to begin her five-day visit at the invitation of the Communist Party of China (CPC).

During the visit, the former prime minister is likely to call on President Hu Jintao, Premier Wen Jiabao and other officials of the Chinese government.

In Bangkok, Khaleda may meet her youngest son Arafat Rahman Koko who is in the Thai capital for treatment.

Members of Khaleda's entourage are BNP standing committee member and ex-army chief Lt Gen (ret'd) Mahbubur Rahman, Vice-Chairman and ex-foreign secretary Shamsur Mobin Chowdhury, Press Secretary Maruf Kamal Khan, Private Secretary ASM Saleh Ahmed, Special Assistant Shamsur Rahman Shimul Biswas and photojournalist Nuruddin Ahmed.

Lt Gen (ret'd) Mahbubur Rahman told UNB that during the visit, the leader of the opposition is expected to discuss ways to strengthen relations between BNP and CPC, bilateral relations between Dhaka and Beijing as well as regional matters.

Khaleda is scheduled to return on December 24.

# 20 hurt

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Maj (ret'd) Sunil Sarkar, director (production) of Ha-Meem Group, said the sound the workers heard was that of the repair work of the building.

Eighteen of the injured were rushed to Women and Children Health Centre and two others at Khalil General Hospital in Ashulia.

Sirajul Islam, officer-in-charge of Ashulia Police Station, said the wounded were released after initial treatment.

Meanwhile, soon after they got down from the building, the workers blocked the Dhaka-Tangail highway for two hours claiming that many of their fellow workers went missing since the December 14 fire.

The devastating blaze burned the upper part of the 11-storey building killing at least 26 people and injuring over 100 others.

The blockade at Narsinghpur halted traffic movement causing a severe gridlock till 11:00am.

Police and factory officials later persuaded them to lift the barricade.

Following the fire incident, the factory reopened on Friday but production was yet to resume, as the workers did not work. They demonstrated on that day as well demanding an immediate explanation about their "missing" fellow workers.

# Afghan kidnappers

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No South Korean workers were harmed in the incident and the company has decided to bring its workers back home following the attack, a South Korean foreign ministry spokeswoman told AFP.

The incident took place on a remote road being constructed between the northern provinces of Samangan and Balkh.

One local official said the gunmen burst into a road construction camp, killing the Bangladeshi immediately and then kidnapping the others.

"Last night at 8:00 pm (1530 GMT), unknown gunmen entered a road construction camp, killing one Bangladeshi on the spot and snatching away seven other workers including an Afghan guard," said Enayatullah Zafar, the head of Balkh's public works directorate.

Given the remoteness of the location, police say it is not yet clear whether the body of the dead man has been recovered or not.

Kidnappings in the area are sometimes linked to the Taliban but can also be related to gangs hoping to secure ransom payments.

Criminal groups and insurgents have kidnapped several dozen foreigners in Afghanistan since the 2001 US-led invasion ousted the Taliban regime in Kabul. Most of the hostages are released safe and well.

Most abductions of foreigners in Afghanistan are carried out by criminal gangs, who then sell their hostages to Taliban insurgents fighting against the Western-backed government and foreign troops.

Earlier this month, two South Korean construction workers were rescued after being briefly kidnapped by unidentified attackers in northern Afghanistan.

Apart from civilian companies, South Korea has a team of reconstruction workers and troops tasked with protecting them in the country.

In October, a Dutch aid worker and his Afghan driver were snatched at gunpoint while driving through northern

Afghanistan's remote Takhar province. The Dutch government announced on December 2 that they had been freed.

In the last two years, northern Afghanistan has been increasingly affected by the Taliban insurgency that was previously confined to Pashtun-dominated areas in the east and south of the country.

Merkel visited German troops on Saturday and said publicly for the first time that they were fighting a war.

She addressed German soldiers on a surprise visit to Kunduz province, which neighbours the province where the Bangladeshi engineer was killed.

She went on to Mazar-i-Sharif, the de facto northern capital, for talks with Afghan President Hamid Karzai and US General David Petraeus, commander of the roughly 140,000 NATO troops fighting the Taliban.

"What we have here is not just a warlike situation," she told the troops in Kunduz. "You are involved in combat as in war."

Opinion polls suggest that a majority of Germans are opposed to the Afghan mission and the deployment of combat troops is controversial in a country where the legacy of World War II still colours political discourse.

**Foreign office in the dark**  
Our staff correspondent adds, Mehedi Hasan, director of SAARC at the foreign ministry in Dhaka, said the ministry last night contacted the Bangladeshi missions in Delhi, Islamabad and Uzbekistan, but nothing could be learnt about the incident.

In October 2008, a criminal gang abducted Mohammad Shahjahan Ali and Akhter Ali, two officials of Brac in Ghazni, southwest of Afghan capital Kabul.

Unnamed gunmen killed Abdul Alim, another official of the NGO, in September 2007.

Nurul Islam, another Brac official, was abducted from his office by unknown gunmen in Loger province of the country a few days later.

# Gbagbo orders UN peacekeepers to leave Ivory Coast

AP, Abidjan

The man who refuses to step down from the presidency in Ivory Coast is now ordering all U.N. peacekeepers to leave the country immediately.

In a statement read on state television yesterday, a spokeswoman for incumbent Laurent Gbagbo said the U.N. mission has not remained neutral in the election dispute.

The United Nations did not immediately respond to the request.

The U.N. certified election results showing that Gbagbo's opponent won the election. About 800 U.N. peacekeepers have been protecting the compound where Alassane Ouattara is trying to govern the West African nation.

Early yesterday, the U.N. says six masked assailants opened fire on the U.N. base in Ivory Coast. No one from the U.N. was harmed in the attack.

Masked men in military uniforms opened fire on the United Nations base after following guards back from a patrol early yesterday, the U.N. mission said. No one at the U.N. was harmed in the shooting, which came two days after violent protests left up to 30 dead.

The six armed men in a civilian vehicle shot at the patrol as it entered the mission compound early yesterday and continued firing along the wall of the compound, the U.N. mission said in a statement. The U.N. guards returned fire.

The United Nations certified results following the disputed presidential election that showed longtime opposition leader Alassane Ouattara had won the vote. The U.N. has been providing protection at the Golf Hotel, where Ouattara has tried to govern.

As many as 30 people were killed during violent protests Thursday, when Ouattara called on his supporters to seize key state institutions that incumbent Laurent Gbagbo has refused to let go of. Police and troops loyal to Gbagbo prevented Ouattara's supporters from marching on government buildings Friday.

International pressure is growing on Gbagbo to give up his claim to power in this West African nation that was once an economic hub because of its role as the world's top cocoa producer. A 2002-03 civil war split Ivory Coast in a rebel-controlled north and a loyalist south, and many had hoped that the election would help reunite the country.

While the country officially reunited in a 2007 peace deal, Ouattara still draws his support from the northern half of the country where he was born while Gbagbo's power base is in the south.

# 35 drown

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of 35 people in the accident.

The accident occurred in a remote area of the district, and two local police stations were asked to send their men to the spot immediately. But they could not reach the spot till 12:30am, he added.

# Ashura

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Shi'a Muslims brought out the largest procession known as 'Tazia' from Imambara at Hussaini Dalan in old part of the capital.

Besides, several processions were brought out from the different areas of the city including Mirpur, Mohammadpur and Purana Paltan.

In the processions, the Shi'a Muslims expressed mourning and grief by flagellating themselves on the back with chains, beating their heads intending to connect them with the sufferings of Imam Hussain (RA).

In all main cities including Chittagong, Barisal, Khulna, Rajshahi and Sylhet, such Tazia processions paraded the main streets chanting "Hai Hussain, Hai Hussain."

Bangladesh Television, Bangladesh Betar and other private TV channels and radio stations aired special programmes, while newspapers published special articles highlighting the significance of the day.

According to Islamic history, a disagreement among Muslims on the question of succession after the demise of Hazrat Ali, the fourth caliph, resulted in the Karbala tragedy.

Moreover, Imam Hossain (RA) and his fellows were ambushed by the forces of Yazid on a journey towards Kufa. They were deprived of food and water, and many of them were put to death. Eventually, Imam Hossain (RA) was brutally slaughtered.

# Iran's new FM to bolster ties with Saudi, Turkey

AFP, Tehran

Atomic chief Ali Akbar Salehi officially took charge on yesterday as Iran's new foreign minister and said Tehran's top priority will be to boost ties with regional power Saudi Arabia and Turkey.

Salehi, who oversees Iran's controversial nuclear programme, was named as interim foreign minister after his predecessor, Manouchehr Mottaki, was sacked by President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad on December 13.

"Iran's first priority in diplomacy should be neighbours and the Islamic world. In this regard, Saudi Arabia and Turkey have a special position," Salehi, a fluent Arabic and English speaker, was quoted as saying by Mehr news agency after he took charge of the ministry.

"Saudi Arabia deserves to have special political ties with Iran. Iran and Saudi Arabia, as two effective countries in the Islamic world, can resolve many problems together."

Salehi's remarks about Saudi Arabia are significant after US diplomatic cables released by WikiLeaks showed Riyadh obsessed by a threat from Iran. King Abdullah reportedly urged top US officials to destroy Tehran's nuclear programme, telling them "to cut off the head of the snake."

Ties between Iran and Turkey have grown in recent months with Ankara even endorsing a nuclear fuel deal for Tehran in May, along with Brazil.

Turkey is also hosting the next round of talks between Iran and the six world powers in Istanbul, following the last negotiation held in Geneva on December 6 and 7. Turkey has repeatedly called for sustained diplomacy to resolve Iran's nuclear controversy.

"Turkey is a powerful country with strategic position and shares common cultural and ideological grounds with Iran," Salehi said.

Salehi, 61, said Iran and the European Union too would "benefit" if the EU switched its position towards Tehran from "confrontation to engagement as soon as possible."

"Despite some unfair moves by the European Union, this union wants respectful ties with Iran for a number of reasons, including energy," he said.

Salehi also underlined the

importance of expanding ties with Syria, Iraq, Azerbaijan, Afghanistan and Pakistan, and Russia and China.

Salehi took charge at a function that was also the farewell ceremony for Mottaki. However, the 57-year-old Mottaki, who was fired while he was on an official visit to Senegal, did not attend.

His dismissal came after he hailed as a "step forward" remarks by US Secretary of State Hillary Clinton that Iran is entitled to a peaceful nuclear energy programme.

Clinton had told the BBC Tehran could enrich uranium for civilian purposes in the future, but only once it has demonstrated it can do so in a responsible manner and in accordance with Iran's international obligations.

Mottaki's comments appeared to cut across Iran's official position, repeated almost daily, that its enrichment of uranium is non-negotiable.

Mottaki's sacking also came just days after Iran held talks in Geneva with world powers over the nuclear dossier.

Salehi, who was appointed atomic energy chief on July 17, 2009, has been a driving force behind Iran's atomic programme. During his tenure, the country's first nuclear power plant built by Russia has come on line in the southern city of Bushehr.

Before taking up the post, he was deputy chief of the Jeddah-based Organisation of the Islamic Conference.

Salehi holds a doctorate from the prestigious Massachusetts Institute of Technology.

He served as Tehran's representative at the Vienna-based International Atomic Energy Agency during the presidency of reformist Mohammad Khatami.

Media reported that Salehi will be interim foreign minister until parliament endorses his appointment.

Meanwhile, Vice President Mohammad Reza Rahimi said Salehi's appointment comes at a time when Iran was at a "special and crucial" position following the sanctions.

"It is now Mr Salehi's turn to launch a new initiative following Mr Mottaki's efforts and do a greater job for the system," he was quoted by ISNA news agency as saying.

# SQ reveals vital

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supposed to hear the application submitted by the war-crimes investigators to detain Salauddin.

A DB official said Salauddin gave import information regarding the "conspiracy" to create anarchy in the country. He, however, declined to give details on the interrogation.

"Salauddin expressed his dissatisfaction over central leaders of his party as they treated him as a regional leader by calling hartal only at the port city," the DB official claimed.

Law enforcers arrested Salauddin early December 16 in connection with a case filed for torching a car at Moghbazar on June 26, on the eve of the opposition's hartal.

At a press conference at his Dhanmondi home, Salauddin's daughter Farzana Quader Chowdhury said, "We don't even need fair trial, we only want trial so that my father can defend himself before the judge."

Family members including her mother Farhad Quader Chowdhury, brothers and sisters were present. They said they do not believe that he was being "tortured" on the prime minister's directives.

She said, "I am just requesting the prime minister to stop the torture on my father. The relationship between my grandfather and Sheikh Mujibur Rahman and my father and Sheikh Hasina prompted me to make this appeal to save the life of my father."

"Our hands are shackled. But we have to fight back and BNP is doing something to that effect," she replied when asked about the party's stance on the arrest.

At a separate press conference held at the parliament media centre, Opposition Chief Whip Zainul Abidin Farooque said they would meet the speaker to protest the "torture" on party lawmaker Salauddin Quader Chowdhury and barring lawmakers from entering the airport VIP lounge yesterday when Khaleda Zia left for China.

On Friday, the BNP

extended its support to the hartal in Chittagong today protesting the arrest of Salauddin.

A joint meeting of central BNP held at the party's central office with Secretary General Khandaker Delwar in the chair decided to call the dawn-to-dusk hartal in Chittagong for today and the two-day protest programme countrywide.

According to the call, demonstrations will be staged today at the city's Muktangor while protest rallies will be held tomorrow in district headquarters and memorandums will be submitted to the deputy commissioners.

Jamaat-e-Islami acting Secretary General ATM Azharul Islam yesterday in a statement condemned the "torture" and remand of Salauddin. He also urged local and foreign human rights bodies to mount pressure on the government to stop "torture on the opposition".

A correspondent in Chittagong adds: Police yesterday foiled several pro-hartal processions and arrested 13 BNP activists from different parts of the port city.

Police arrested seven under the Chittagong Police Station and six others from Bahadurhat area under Chandgaon Police Station.

"Police obstructed the leaders and workers of BNP from holding meetings and bringing out processions and the law enforcers halted the city's leaders in front our party office," said city BNP General Secretary Shahadat Hossain.

Humam Quader Chowdhury, son of Salauddin, told journalists at his Goods Hill home that police allowed no one in his residence.

Gatekeeper of the house, Abdul Kader said a man tried to go out of the house but was detained by police. He was later released.

Meanwhile, demanding death sentence to Salauddin Quader Chowdhury, Bangladesh Chhatra League Chittagong City Unit organised an anti-hartal rally at Shaheed Minar around 4:00pm.

# CNG stations

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demand, including cancellation of CNG rationing system.

They also demanded the government reduce the licence fee to Tk 5,000 from Tk 100,000, re-fix annual renewal fee at Tk 1,000 and exempt the stations from taking no objection certificates from the Department of Environment.

Earlier Bangladesh CNG Refuelling Station and Conversion Workshop Owners' Association postponed their planned strikes twice as the government sought time to consider their demands.

The government during last Ramadan requested the owners to stop operating the stations to facilitate domestic use of gas on the eve of Iftar, Zakir Hossain Nayan, secretary general of the association, told The Daily Star.

The government is yet to withdraw its earlier decision causing loss to owners and sufferings to consumers, he added.

Presently there are 582 refuelling units and 170 conversion workshops across the country, sources in the association said.

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Some MPs were admitted to hospital. Reports said some had fractures.

The clash came after a group of Mrs Tymoshenko's supporters had blocked the podium to protest at a corruption inquiry against her, which opened this week.

# WB-UNODC

**FROM PAGE 20**  
was prepared under the Stolen Asset Recovery (STAR) Initiative of the WB in association with the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC).

The 270-page book cited Arafat Rahman Koko's case on page 53 and page 196 while discussing the issues relating to prosecution of accounting and establishing jurisdiction for legal proceedings.

On both pages, it referred to the bribery case of Siemens from where Koko allegedly embezzled several million US dollars, costing the national interest.

On page 53, the handbook said Siemens and its subsidiaries in Argentina, Bangladesh and Venezuela bribed public officials to secure government contracts. "Bribes were accounted for as payments to consultants, who subsequently channelled them to the public officials," it said.

It is also mentioned in the book that Siemens pleaded guilty to the charges of conspiracy and violations of books and records and internal controls provisions in a plea agreement that resulted in a \$450 million.

The book on page 196 goes further with the reference of the action of the US Department of Justice stating: "In 2009, the US Department of Justice filed a confiscation action against bribery proceeds paid (in Singapore, with US currency) by a foreign company to the son of the former prime minister of Bangladesh."

Earlier, media reports said the US authorities on January 8, 2009, moved a legal process in a court in the District of Columbia to recover funds worth \$3 million, allegedly obtained by Koko from Siemens and kept with a Singapore-based bank.

[The Daily Star too published a report on the scam on December 23, 2008, carrying the headline "Foreigner spilled the beans".]

The World Bank publication was released two weeks after a special Judge Court of

Dhaka framed charge against Koko and Ismail Hossain Saimon, son of former shipping minister late Akbar Hossain in the same case.

The Anti-Corruption Commission (ACC) filed the case on March 17 last year with the Kafur Police Station of the city accusing Koko and Saimon of laundering \$9 lakh 32 thousand 672 and Singapore \$28 lakh 84 thousand 604.

The issue of repatriation of siphoned off money surfaced in Bangladesh during the past military-backed interim administration in 2007-2008 when officials said they estimated millions of dollars were smuggled out by influential but corrupt people.

The corruption suspects at that time, however, were forced to return \$129 million.

Former World Bank vice president Praful C Patel at that time said Bangladeshi assets had either been stolen or smuggled outside the country for the last several years while "corruption had eaten up nearly three percent of the country's growth rate".

The Breton Woods institution released the handbook to guide developing countries recover money stolen by individuals and institutions while it was prepared by an international team of experts, drawing on the experience of a wide range of countries and legal traditions.

Designed as a quick reference, it describes approaches to recovering proceeds of corruption located in foreign jurisdictions, identifies the difficulties that practitioners are likely to encounter, suggests strategic and tactical options to address the challenges, and introduces good practices.

The WB publication suggested strengthening of international cooperation for recovering such stolen assets.

It said the embezzlement of national assets costs developing countries \$20 to \$40 billion every year while developing countries over the past 15 years could recover only \$5 billion.

# City dwellers

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applicants are waiting for gas connection.

These applicants demand at least 1.6 lakh cubic metres of gas per day.

"But to our knowledge, many of them have obtained connections by bribing a section of Titas gas officials and contractors," one source said.

A field survey detected that even a senior Petrobangla official obtained an illegal connection for his newly constructed six-storey building.

Such illegal activities have spoiled the