



Indian policemen frisk a pedestrian at a railway station in Mumbai yesterday. Mumbai police warned that four operatives of the Pakistan-based Lashkar-e-Taiba (LeT) militant outfit were preparing a "violent attack" during the festive season and called for residents to be vigilant.

PHOTO: AFP

Corruption in China 'still very serious'

Says a govt report

AFP, Beijing

China yesterday admitted its corruption problem was "still very serious" and pledged to work harder to crush widespread official graft and win the public's confidence.

In a new government report on the anti-corruption drive, the communist rulers in Beijing reiterated that the country's "harmony and stability" depended on efforts to build a clean government.

It said the ruling party had shifted its efforts to stamp out graft in the past decade to focus on senior officials who collude with corrupt businessmen or shield underworld figures, as well as cases "that cause mass disturbances".

"So far, China's effort to combat corruption... has yielded notable results," said the report issued by the State Council, or cabinet.

But it warned that "corruption persists, with some cases even involving huge sums of money. The situation in combating corruption is still very serious, and the tasks are still abundant," it said.

The government and the Communist Party pledged to "resolutely punish and effectively prevent corruption with more resolutions and

powerful measures, so as to win the people's confidence with actual achievements".

The report highlights new rules that went into effect earlier this year that require government officials to report their incomes, investments, personal assets and whereabouts of family members.

Corrupt officials in China have a long history of funneling ill-gotten gains into the bank accounts of relatives or to family members overseas.

Wu Yuliang, member of the Communist Party's central disciplinary committee, told a press conference on the report that more curbs on "extravagant expenses" such as official travel, purchasing cars and banquets would be implemented.

Wu added that the focus of government and party anti-corruption efforts would be "institutional building", meaning efforts to structure the political system in a way that prevented corruption.

"The cause of corruption is complicated," Wu said. "Institutional building is a systematic process that will take time... (but) the party and government is fully capable of curbing corruption to the lowest level."

Suicide attacks kill four in Iraq

AFP, Mosul

Two suicide bombers yesterday killed four policemen in a police station in the northern city of Mosul, including an officer who oversaw a security raid on militants, Iraqi deputy officials said.

A third bomber was shot dead before setting off his explosives belt in the attack targeting Lieutenant Colonel Shamil Ahmed Oglah, who commanded the operation last week against an Al-Qaeda affiliate, a police officer said.

The early morning bombings killed Oglah and three other policemen, an interior ministry source said, and destroyed most of the police station in the Qabr al-Binat area of western Mosul, according to the police officer.

The officer said Oglah had commanded an operation in western Mosul in which a leader of the Islamic State of Iraq, Al-Qaeda's Iraqi affiliate, was killed.

Indians to outnumber Chinese in 2025

Says US Census Bureau forecast

AFP, Washington

India is on course to top China as the world's most populous country in 2025, the US Census Bureau forecast, potentially changing the dynamics between the Asian giants.

The latest Census Bureau estimates out this week, which are in line with previous studies, predicted that India would have 1.396 billion people in 2025, surpassing China, whose population growth is more modest.

China since 1980 has allowed most women to bear only one child, in a controversial policy aimed at creating a more sustainable population.

The average Chinese woman now has 1.5 children in her lifetime, compared with 2.7 children for the average Indian woman, although the so-called fertility rate has also been declining in India due to rising education and urbanization.

The demographic shift could affect the Asian powers' economies, which are now among the world's fastest.

China has enjoyed a stronger growth rate than India as young people flock to manufacturing hubs that pump out exports for the world. But China in coming years will likely face a shrinking labor force and a mass of pensioners.

The US Census Bureau forecast that the ranking of the largest countries would otherwise remain the same in the coming 15 years.

The United States -- whose population is growing more quickly than most wealthy countries, albeit at a slower rate than in recent decades -- will remain the third largest nation, followed by Indonesia, Brazil, Pakistan, Bangladesh and Nigeria, the figures showed.

Russia cargo jet crash kills 12

AFP, Moscow

A giant Antonov cargo plane crashed during a training exercise in central Russia, leaving all 12 military pilots aboard the aircraft missing and presumed dead, officials said yesterday.

Rescue workers and investigators were battling thick snow as they combed the crash site -- a field hemmed in by forest -- for the pilots' bodies and black boxes of the An-22 military plane which disappeared from radar screens late Tuesday and went down after an explosion, officials said.

The cargo plane -- one of the world's largest -- with 12 pilots but no cargo on board, had been performing a training exercise on its way from Voronezh to Tver in central Russia when it came down, said a spokeswoman for military prosecutors of the Moscow military district.

Pakistan's ruling party in crisis negotiations

AP, Islamabad

Pakistan's US-allied ruling party scrambled yesterday to keep its fragile coalition government in power as its senior leaders met with two dissident political partners, urging them to rejoin the Cabinet.

A leader of one of the disgruntled parties, however, reiterated demands that the prime minister quit or be fired.

The political turmoil threatens to distract Pakistan lawmakers from tackling challenges ranging from a struggling economy to an Islamist insurgency that deeply worries U.S. officials overseeing the war in neighboring Afghanistan.

The Pakistan People's Party-led government faces a crisis with the secular Muttahida Qaumi Movement party quitting its two cabinet posts but remaining in the ruling coalition for now, while the Islamist Jamiat Ulema Islam party said it would defect to the opposition benches.

If the MQM decides to follow the JUI into the opposition, it could cost Prime Minister Yousuf Raza Gilani the parliamentary majority he needs to continue his almost three-year-old govern-

ment.

In an effort to forestall a possible collapse, Interior Minister Rehman Malik, a senior PPP lawmaker and envoy of President Asif Ali Zardari, held crisis meetings with MQM and JUI leaders overnight yesterday, urging them to support an increasingly unpopular government and to remain part of the policymaking cabinet.

Malik asked the MQM leadership at a face-to-face meeting in the southern port city of Karachi to keep the key party's two Cabinet posts, local media reported.

JUI leader Maulana Fazlur Rehman's aide, Hafiz Hussain Ahmad, however, said their party would only return to the government if Zardari sacked Gilani. The premier must be punished for stirring up tensions when he dumped a JUI lawmaker from his Cabinet, Ahmad said.

The JUI has refused an offer to nominate a replacement Cabinet minister from its ranks.

"We will only consider working with the ruling party if President Asif Ali Zardari sacks Gilani," Ahmad said yesterday following Rehman's meeting with Malik in the capital Islamabad.

Abbas heads to Brazil to found Palestinian embassy

AFP, Ramallah

Palestinian president Mahmud Abbas is to travel to Brazil yesterday to lay the symbolic foundation stone of a Palestinian embassy in Brasilia.

The ceremony is to take place on Friday and comes after Brazil announced it was recognising a Palestinian state based on the borders which existed before the 1967 Six-Day War when Israel seized the West Bank, including east Jerusalem, and the Gaza Strip.

On Saturday, Abbas is due to attend the inauguration of Brazil's new president, Dilma Rousseff, and expected to hold meetings with Latin American leaders in Brazil for the ceremony.

Brazil's outgoing President Luiz Inacio Lula da Silva said on December 3 that his country would recognise a Palestinian state following a personal request from Abbas.

"The demand presented by his excellency (Abbas) is just and consistent with the principles upheld by Brazil with regard to the Palestinian issue," Brazil's foreign ministry said.

The announcement angered both Israel and the United States, which have said a Palestinian state can only be achieved through a negotiated peace deal.

But a string of other Latin American countries, including Bolivia, Argentina and Ecuador, have followed suit, and Uruguay has said it will recognise a Palestinian state on the same basis in 2011.

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Navy to get submarine

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graduation of midshipmen 2009 of Bangladesh Navy at the Bangladesh Naval Academy, she said by the middle of next year, two helicopters will be included into the BNS Bangabandhu.

Hasina said inclusion of these maritime helicopters is a big step forward for making the naval aviation unit up-to-date.

Hasina said when Bangladesh will achieve more economic advancement; more steps will be taken to turn the Navy into effective and strong tri-dimensional force.

The premier asked the naval force to work shoulder to shoulder with Army and Air Forces to protect the country's independence and sovereignty. "You will have to work to face any disaster of the country," she said.

To the newly commissioned navy officers, the PM said they will be leading the force in future. "Always you have to put national interests above of personal interests," she told the young officers.

Hasina said they should not do anything that can tarnish the image of the naval force and the motherland.

"I hope your patriotism, sense of discipline and responsibility will begin a new era in national defense," Hasina said.

The PM further asked the Bangladesh Navy to ensure absolute control over the country's maritime boundaries. "Our large maritime area is part of our national existence," she remarked.

About 90 percent of Bangladesh's international trade is taking place through the maritime ways, she mentioned.

"Our large marine area is full of valuable minerals and fish resources. Maintaining absolute control over the maritime areas and ensuring security during procuring the resources are one of the prime duties of the naval force," she added.

The premier also appreciated Bangladesh Navy for its continuous success in curbing smuggling and drives against attempts of illegal fishing.

She recalled Bangladesh Navy's contribution to the rescue and rehabilitation of the victims of cyclone Aila.

Moreover, the PM said with the participation of

Bangladesh Navy's frigate 'Osman' and petrol craft 'Madhumati' at the UN Peace Keeping Mission, the navy's goodwill has also increased in the international arena.

Hasina recalled that Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman on December 10, 1974 had established three naval bases-BNS Isha Khan, Haji Mohsin and Titumir and given naval assigns to them on the same day.

During the 1996-2001, the then Awami League (AL) government implemented many steps to build the Navy as a modern force, Hasina said.

Commissioning of Naval ships Titas, Kushiara and Barkat, incorporation of modern LPC Madhumati, diversion of BNS Shoibal into modern survey ship, establishment of Bangladesh Navy's Hydrographic and Oceanographic Centre and inclusion of School of Maritime Warfare and Tactics are among the development works done by the AL government, she said.

Besides, Hasina said to increase health services, BNS 'Upasham' and to bring dynamism in naval operations, BNS Mongla had been included into the force.

The PM watched a spectacular parade and took salute of the newly commissioned officer.

Earlier on her arrival at the parade ground, the premier was received by Navy Chief Rear Admiral ZU Ahmed.

A total of 34 cadets of Bangladesh Navy including two female and four Palestine got midshipmen commission under the Midshipmen 2009 Alpha Batch Graduation.

Nahiyah Baker Moin was adjudged the best midshipman and awarded the Sword of Honour while Zia Nur Nabi was awarded the Osmani Gold Medal for his academic excellence.

Nahiyah Baker was conferred the acting Sub-Lieutenant Rank Badge as a commissioned officer by the premier.

Ministers, Advisers, lawmakers, diplomats, high civil and military officials were present at the function.

At the end of the parade, the PM laid foundation stone of Bangabandhu Complex at the Naval Academy, which will provide modern training facilities for the officers.

Iran's ex-president sees rise in poll 'restrictions'

AFP, Tehran

Former president turned opposition backer Mohammed Khatami predicts that more and more "restrictions" will be imposed on elections in Iran, an opposition website reported yesterday.

Khatami said all sections of Iran would take part in future polls if conditions to ensure "fairness" in the electoral process were met, Rahezabz.net quoted him as telling a group of reformist MPs.

"Everyone will take part in the vote if people feel that their candidates are allowed to participate, votes are announced as they were cast, the electoral preparations are not holding them back, and if they are sure of the fairness of the election," the charismatic cleric and two-time former president said.

"If these conditions are met, then we will decide how to act," he said at the meeting on Tuesday.

"But considering the current situation, it seems that conditions will become more difficult in the future, the paths will be more blocked and restrictions will be increased."

Pro-AL panels

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securing 662 votes and Prof Dr Shaheed Akther Hossain of soil, water and environment department was elected general secretary by bagging 646 votes in Duta election.

Their rivals Prof Sadrul Amin got 568 votes and Dr Mamun Ahmed bagged 575 votes respectively.

Dr AKM Golam Rabbani was elected joint secretary by defeating Dr Mohammad Moinul Islam 619 by 35 votes.

Prof Aktheruzzaman bagged 711 votes and was elected vice-president and Dr Farid Uddin Ahmed was elected treasurer by winning 758 votes. Both of them are from the blue panel.

Other members from the blue panel who won the poll are Prof ABM Faruk (636), Dr Abul Barakat (740), Dr Nazma Saheen (641), Dr Nasreen Ahmed (620), Prof Fakhrul Alam (667) and Dr Omiduzzaman Chan (660).

Prof BNP-Jamaat backed white panel won only four member posts. They are Prof Laila Nur Islam (633), Prof Dr Tazmeri SA Islam (571), Prof Dr ABM Obaidul Islam (544) and Prof Abu Ahmed (555).

Convener of white panel Dr Sadrul Amin congratulated the winners and said election process was fair.

Congratulating the newly elected body of Duta, Dhaka University's Vice Chancellor Prof AAMS Arefin Siddique said general teachers' opinion is

reflected in the election as a congenial atmosphere is prevailing in the university.

Our CU correspondent reports: Yellow panel bagged 10 posts while BNP-Jamaat backed white panel won one in the Duta election.

Professor M Ruhul Amin of yellow panel was elected president defeating white panel candidate Dr M Atiqur Rahman by 29 votes. M Ruhul Amin got 273 votes.

Yellow panel candidate Prof Dr M Sekander Chowdhury was elected general secretary defeating Prof Dr Mohammad Al-Amin of white panel by 83 votes. Sekander Chowdhury bagged 300 votes.

Prof Dr Mohammad Safiul Alam, Assistant Prof Mohammad Asadul Hoque and Associate Prof Dr M Anwarul Kabir were elected vice president, joint secretary and treasurer respectively from yellow panel.

The six other members of the 11-member Cuta executive committee are Prof Dr Abul Monsur, Dr Mohammad Anwarul Islam, Dr Faruk Uddin, Prof Abdulla Al Faruk, Prof Salamat Ullah Bhuiyan of yellow panel and Dr MA Tiur Rahman of white panel.

Prof M Afsar Ali of Philosophy Department was the chief election commissioner of the election that was held at the BBA faculty auditorium from 9:30am to 1:30pm where 538 voters, out of 645, cast their votes.