

Ten dead as Syrians stage mass protests

REUTERS, Beirut

Clashes erupted in Syria yesterday as hundreds of thousands filled the streets to demonstrate against the government of President Bashar al-Assad and activists said at least 10 people were shot dead.

Demonstrators determined to show the strength of their movement to Arab League monitors deployed in hotspots across the country threw rocks at security forces in the Damascus suburb of Douma where troops tear-gassed the chanting crowds.

Five people were shot dead in the city of Hama and five in the city of Deraa in the south.

British-based Syrian Observatory for Human Rights said security forces fired at tens of thousands of protesters in the northern province of Idlib, wounding 25.

At least two dozen were injured in the Damascus suburb of Douma, activists said. One report said army defectors in Douma were engaged in armed clashes with troops. There were no further details.

Some 250,000 gathered after Friday's

Muslim prayer in the northern province of Idlib at 74 different locations, according to the Observatory, an opposition network relaying activist reports.

Assad has signed up to an Arab League plan for a verifiable withdrawal of his heavy weaponry and army from turbulent Syrian cities where more than 5,000 people have been killed since March, many shot during peaceful anti-government protests but also many killed in rebel attacks and defense actions.

The Arab League mission has met with strong skepticism from the outset, over its makeup, its small numbers, its reliance on Syrian government logistics and an initial assessment by its Sudanese chief that the situation was "reassuring."

That comment was met with disbelief in the West on Wednesday but on Friday, Syria's ally Russia accepted the judgment.

Meanwhile the anti-government Free Syrian Army has ordered its fighters to stop offensive operations pending a meeting with Arab League delegates with the peace plan, the rebels' commander said.



Kurds carry the coffins of victims of a Turkish air raid, outside Uludere Hospital in Uludere, Sirmak province yesterday. Thousands of angry Kurds yesterday buried 35 civilians killed in the air raid and branded Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdogan a murderer.

AIR STRIKE BLUNDER Kurdish rebels call for uprising in Turkey

AFP, Uludere

Kurdish separatists in Turkey yesterday called for an uprising after an air strike killed 35 villagers near the Iraqi border in what the ruling party admitted could have been a mistake.

As locals prepared to bury their dead, the admission from the ruling party did little to assuage their anger.

"Damn you, Erdogan ... One day you too will know our pain," shouted a group of protesters in Uludere.

And the call for a new "serhildan" (uprising) also served to ratchet up tensions further.

Turkey's ruling party Thursday said the strike could have been a "blunder".

Diet can stop brain shrinking

BBC ONLINE

A diet rich in vitamins and fish may protect the brain from ageing while junk food has the opposite effect, research suggests.

Elderly people with high blood levels of vitamins and omega 3 fatty acids had less brain shrinkage and better mental performance, a Neurology study found.

Trans fats found in fast foods were linked to lower scores in tests and more shrinkage typical of Alzheimer's.

The best current advice is to eat a balanced diet with plenty of fruit and vegetables, not smoke, take regular exercise and keep blood pressure and cholesterol in check, said Alzheimer's Research UK.

Biman

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said, "We will discuss the matter in the board meeting [today] to find ways to tackle the situation."

Faced with such shortage of fund, Biman sought Tk 2,500 crore in assistance from the government two months ago but the government did not give the money, sources said.

Biman insiders said the national flag carrier has incurred a loss of over Tk 200 crore in 2010-2011. The annual financial report from June 2010 to June 2011 will be placed at the Annual General Meeting of Biman for approval today.

Sharp rise in jet fuel price in the last one and a half years, operation of age-old fuel guzzling aircraft like DC-1030 and hike in the employees' salary are the main reasons for the loss, Biman authorities said.

But experts differ. They say corruption, inefficient management and lack of a smart marketing plan are to blame for the loss.

"The national airlines will die down if the authorities fail to put in place a clever marketing plan and show zero tolerance for corruption," observed Wahidul Alam.

Biman sources said the airlines suffered a loss of an estimated Tk 100 crore in three months following its decision to increase fare on national and international routes in the name of fuel surcharge in January this year. After the fare hike, Biman had lost around 50 percent of its passengers, prompting the authorities to bring down the fare again.

Last year, Biman incurred a loss of around Tk 80 crore, for which the civil aviation ministry demanded an explanation from the Biman board.

According to Bangladesh Economic Review 2010, Biman made profits of Tk 15 crore and around Tk 6 crore in 2009 and 2008 respectively.

The airline was turned into a public limited company in July 2007 and the government exempted Biman from a debt of over Tk 1,194 crore to Bangladesh Petroleum Corporation and over Tk 573 crore to the CAAB.

Recession to grasp Europe

Say leading economists

BBC ONLINE

The vast majority of leading economists polled by the BBC believe recession will return to Europe next year.

One fifth said the eurozone would not exist in its current 17-member form, while the majority put the possibility of a eurozone break-up at 30%-40%.

The poll also found that most economists expect UK interest rates to remain at 0.5% throughout next year.

It was conducted among 34 UK and European economists who regularly advise the Bank of England.

Of the 27 who responded, 25 forecast recession for Europe next year.

Growth in Europe has slowed in recent months as the eurozone debt crisis has forced governments to rein in spending and has undermined confidence in global financial markets.

The eurozone economy grew by 0.2% between July and September, while the 27 economies of the European Union grew collectively by 0.3%.

Politicians have attempted to resolve the crisis, including an agreement to forge closer ties between EU members, but markets have yet to be convinced the measures they have taken are sufficient.

The longer the debt crisis rumbles on, the more likely Europe will return to recession, economists believe.

Growth in the UK during the third quarter was 0.6%. However, growth in the previous three months was flat.

The CBI business group said that 2012 could be the beginning of a more prosperous future if the "pain" of deficit reduction passed quickly.

In his New Year message, the CBI's John Cridland said the eurozone crisis posed a "significant threat" to the British economy, because 40% of UK exports were sold there.

Cridland added that the faltering recovery and the continuing debt crisis were stark reminders of the need to rebalance Britain's economy away from household and government debt.

Amartya wants

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addressing a programme titled "40th anniversary of Bangladesh's Independence: The Vision and The Journey".

The Centre for Policy Dialogue (CPD), Prothom Alo, The Daily Star and Ain o Salish Kendra (ASK) organised the event at the National Museum auditorium in the capital with Sultana Kamal, executive director of ASK, in the chair.

Planning Minister Air Vice-marshal (ret'd) AK Khandker spoke on the occasion as the chief guest. Mahfuz Anam, editor and publisher of The Daily Star, and Prothom Alo Editor Matiur Rahman also addressed the programme.

Amartya Sen said Bangladesh is one of those countries bearing the brunt of global warming and this is why it should assume the leadership of climate battle.

If the global warming could not be checked now, the noted economist said, it would have adverse effect across the world. In Bangladesh, the southern region might get submerged.

Giving credit to the country for its progresses since independence, Dr Sen called

for recognition of women's role in different sectors, including the readymade garments.

"The people who once branded Bangladesh as a bottomless basket, they now consider it as a model for progress," said the Bangalee Nobel laureate, best known for his work on the causes of famine.

The comment, "Bangladesh is a bottomless basket," was made by Henry Kissinger after the country became independent in 1971 despite his opposition as the US foreign minister.

AK Khandker said Bangladesh has made a diversified advancement in the last 40 years. Although there are yet many other challenges, the country is no more a basket case.

"Amid global recession, our economic growth continued," the minister proudly said.

He, however, admitted that although the per capita income has reached \$ 750, the income gap between rich and poor stays wide.

Sultana Kamal, also a former caretaker government adviser, vowed to establish a society free from inequality in the years to come. It is very much possi-

ble as the ordinary people are against all discrimination, she said.

Recalling the sacrifice of Liberation War martyrs, Matiur Rahman said after 40 years of independence it could be boldly said that there is freedom of speech and press in the country. "This achievement is precious for us."

Mahfuz Anam said, "Forty years as a nation, in a sense, is not a long journey. Again, in the 21st century, it is comparatively a long time. In the forty years, there have been a lot of achievements. But there are still a tremendous number of challenges."

"Today, 70 percent of Bangladeshi population are below the age of 40... We are among the youngest nations in the world. As we are young, we are ambitious, visionary, courageous and full of energy," he said.

"But, the question is, what are we doing for that energetic, visionary generation? We have to admit that today in Bangladesh we are not providing the young with the space they deserve."

He urged all to serve that beautiful and energetic generation.

Blame-game

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with the adjournment at midnight and that the people of India would know who was responsible for the failure to reach a vote.

But the BJP immediately called on Prime Minister Manmohan Singh to resign, saying his government had shown it was not fit to rule.

"The government has lost all moral right to continue in power. It should resign immediately," opposition leader Arun Jaitley told reporters.

"The [ruling] Congress [party] was never serious and committed to bring a strong Lokpal. It knew that it would never be able to get the bill passed in the lower house, so it choreographed the entire drama of debate which continued till midnight," he said.

The ruling alliance has 94 members there and needed a simple majority of 122 MPs to ensure the passage of the bill.

Communist Party of India (Marxist) leader Sitaram Yechury said the adjournment was "big moral defeat" for the Congress party.

He said if the government was "serious about the passage of the bill, it should have taken the opposition parties in confidence".

Sukhendu Roy, a leader of the Trinamool Congress party, which is an ally of the

ruling government, also criticised the adjournment of the vote, saying it was a "shameful" day for democracy and a result of "orchestrated chaos".

The ruling Congress party, however, said that with nearly 200 amendments to the bill demanded by the opposition it ran too late because the winter session of parliament ended at midnight.

"How can a government pass a bill with so many amendments without studying it and examining it? It was a pre-planned move by the BJP to discredit the government," the junior minister for parliamentary affairs Harish Rawat told The Hindu newspaper.

The debate has not only been heated in parliament.

Leading anti-corruption campaigner Anna Hazare has called the bill "useless". He had started another hunger strike but has since called it off and threatened instead to launch a campaign of civil disobedience that would fill the country's jails.

Hazare and his supporters say that tougher measures are required in the bill if it is to prove effective at reducing the level of corruption.

A recent survey said corruption in India had cost billions of dollars and threatened to derail growth.

BTRC-operators strife

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submarine cable, open up VoIP to prevent illegal call termination or help the sector get a good share of the business provided by foreign companies through outsourcing their departments.

The BTRC, however, claimed to The Daily Star that it was preparing to issue the third generation (3G) telecom licence in the second half of next year.

Owing to conflicts between the regulator and the operators, the government could not even renew the existing 2G licences for the latter although the deadline expired in November.

However, the government did reach a milestone in the sector by introducing a low cost laptop computer, the first to be made in Bangladesh. It also reduced the price of internet bandwidth, which led to a three-fold increase in internet use in the last three years.

Things could have been much better, though.

Relations between the BTRC and the telecom ministry reached a thorny stage soon after an amendment was brought into the telecommunication law in 2010, stripping the BTRC's power to issue licences and vesting such power in the ministry.

According to a survey published last May, Bangladesh ranked sixth out of seven south and south-east countries, on regulatory and policy environment in the telecom sector, because of uncertainties over policies, laws and other recent developments.

The other surveyed countries were India, Thailand, Sri Lanka, Pakistan, Malaysia and

the Philippines. A country worse off than Bangladesh in this regard is Malaysia, according to the survey conducted by LIRNEasia, a regional think tank based in Sri Lanka.

The hostilities between the BTRC and the operators have manifested themselves through a number of anti-operator steps, which have forced operators to go to court.

One such legal dispute is the BTRC's with Grameenphone and Banglalink over payments for their licence renewal and spectrum charge. The feud stopped the BTRC from renewing the licences of four operators, Grameenphone, Banglalink, Robi and Citycell.

The BTRC resorted to an extreme measure in May, 2010, when it cancelled the licences of five fixed-phone companies on the ground of their involvement in illegal call termination business by using VoIP technology. The regulator in July returned their licences but the companies could not resume their business.

When the BTRC cancelled these five licences over illegal use of VoIP, the illegal call termination market did not stop at all. In fact, it continued to boom and it was found recently that the state-owned mobile operator Teletalk and fixed phone operator Bangladesh Telecommunications Company Ltd (BTCL) were now leading the wrongdoing process.

The government initially had expressed keen interest in providing business process outsourcing (BPO) considering its huge potential. But for the absence of a back up facility such as a second submarine cable or

any other international cable the sector could not flourish.

The move to have a second submarine cable came from the caretaker regime but it still remains a dream. Recently a consortium of five local telecom companies applied to build a new submarine cable on their own finances but the government did not respond. Instead, the government is now issuing six terrestrial cable licences that will act as backup cables. All of them go through India.

The use of internet bandwidth tripled in the last three years as international voice and data traffic has increased manifold during the period, according to submarine cable company officials.

In 2008, bandwidth use was 7.5 Gigabits per second (Gbps) but now it is 22 Gbps. At the same time bandwidth price was slashed almost to one third. The price of 1 Megabits per second bandwidth, now Tk 10,000, was Tk 27,000 in 2008.

But the exact number of internet users is still unknown though the government recently said that almost 15 percent of the people are using the internet through mobile.

In the last three years, the number of mobile phone subscribers has risen from 44.74 million to 82.44 million. The government reduced SIM tax to Tk 600 from Tk 800 in the last budget.

Finally, the Telephone Shilpa Shangstha (TSS) released the first ever Bangladeshi-owned brand laptops after establishing an assembling plant at Tongi near Dhaka.



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INVITATION FOR TENDER

Sealed tenders are hereby invited from the experienced contractors/firms for supplying & installation of 5 (five) nos. window type air cooler machine (1.5 TR each) from ready stock of specified brand (General/Equivalent) at different offices/branch of Janata Bank Limited at Dhaka, Comilla and Jamalpur. Necessary information about the tender is followings :

1.	Tender invitation & date	§	JBL/Estate/AC/11/66, 26/12/2011
2.	Procuring Entity	§	Janata Bank Limited
3.	Source of funds	§	Janata Bank Limited's own fund
4.	Description of the work	§	Supplying & installation of 5 (five) nos window type air cooler machine at Janata Bank Limited, Divisional Office, Comilla, Area Office, Jamalpur, Comilla University Branch and Lift machine room, 48 Motijheel, Dhaka.
5.	Time for completion	§	15 (fifteen) days, after issuing work order
6.	Warranty period	§	2 (two) years, from the date of completion of the work.
7.	Earnest money	§	Tk. 10,000/- (Ten thousand) only, in the form of Bank Draft/Pay order from any scheduled Bank in favour of Janata Bank Limited, Head Office.
8.	Price of the tender document	§	Tk. 500/- (five hundred) only in cash (non-refundable)
9.	Place for purchasing & submitting tender document	§	Estate Department (5th floor), Janata Bank Limited, Head Office, 110, Motijheel C/A, Dhaka.
10.	Last date and time for purchasing tender document	§	15.01.2012 up to office hour.
11.	Date and time of submitting & opening tender	§	16.01.2012 within 2.30 P.M (submission) 16.01.2012 at 3.00 P.M (opening)
12.	Eligibility of Tenderers	§	The contractors/ firms should have minimum 2 (two) years experience in supplying & installation of air cooler machine at any organization and should have experience of a similar work of value not be less than Tk. 2.5 lacs in a single order.
13.	Purchase of tender document	§	Intending tenderers may purchase tender document applying in company's letter head pad. No tender document will be sold on the tender opening date.
13.	Special terms & conditions	§	Equivalent brand will not be acceptable, if the "General" brand is available , The Procuring Entity is not bound to accept the lowest tender and reserves the right to accept or reject any or all tenders without assigning any reason whatsoever . For more details visit our web site www.janatabank-bd.com

(Purmendu Kumer Roy)
Deputy General Manager