

## Putin calls for renewal of Russian democracy

AFP, Moscow

Prime Minister Vladimir Putin yesterday called for a renewal of Russian democracy, in his latest manifesto before presidential polls where he will seek to extend his 12 year domination of the country.

In an apparent response to a protest movement that has swept the country since disputed parliamentary polls in December, Putin said that Russia's political system must adjust to the needs of a growing civil society.

But analysts expressed scepticism, noting that Putin himself was responsible for implementing Russia's highly-centralised political system and his comments appeared pre-election rhetoric aimed at calming disgruntled voters.

"Our civil society has become incomparably more mature, active and responsible. We need to update the mechanism of our democracy. They must fit in growing public activity," he wrote in an article published on his campaign website and in the business broadsheet Kommersant.

"The majority of people need to feel they are citizens and be ready to regularly pay attention and spend time and effort taking part in government," he said.

## Shahara

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raise a wide range of issues which include killing of and torture on Bangladeshis, border security and smuggling of drugs.

Review on the implementation of border management agreement which was signed last July, during the Indian home minister's visit to Dhaka, will also be discussed, ministry officials said.

At the meeting with P Chidambaram, Shahara will express deep concern over the recurring incidents of deaths of Bangladeshis at the border which are occurring despite repeated assurances by the Indian government to exercise maximum restraint by the BSF.

Home Ministry sources said they are working on detailed agenda for the discussion.

The purpose of Shahara's visit will be to further strengthen the bilateral relations between Bangladesh and India while several ministerial visits will take place from both countries, sources said.

Indian Finance Minister Pranab Mukherjee will visit Bangladesh soon followed by Foreign Minister Dipu Moni's visit to India, they added.

## Paloma's death

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officials concerned to respond to the question of why they should not be directed to ensure effective traffic management and taking necessary steps to reduce the number of accidents in the city.

On February 1, nine-year-old Paloma, a class-II student of the Ibrahimpur branch of Monipur High School and College, was killed when a bus rolled over her in Mirpur-14 while she was on her way to school. The following day, some newspapers reported that Paloma had been run over by a bus of Milk Vita, a co-operative enterprise.

The HC bench of Justice A H M S h a m s u d d i n Chowdhury Manik and Justice Jahangir Hossain Selim also directed the Milk Vita chairman to appear before it on February 14 to explain his conduct on the issue.

The home secretary, inspector general of police, joint commissioner (traffic) of Dhaka Metropolitan Police, chairman of Bangladesh Road Transport Authority and Milk Vita chairman were asked to respond to the rule in two weeks.

Following news reports, Manzill Murshid, president of Human Rights and Peace for Bangladesh, yesterday moved the writ petition as a public interest litigation seeking directives from the HC.

# Nazimuddin's act

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the governor general did not go down well. As Abdur Rahman Chowdhury, who was on the team and who subsequently would rise to the position of a judge of the Bangladesh High Court, would relate years after the incident, Mohammad Ali Jinnah committed the outrage of asking the young men if Bengal could point to any instances of great literature and aesthetics in the Bangla language. Abdur Rahman Chowdhury and Oli Ahad did not mince words in informing Jinnah that his knowledge of Bengali culture and heritage was indeed limited. It turned out, as Chowdhury would say, a moment of education for Pakistan's supreme leader. Was it? For his part, Jinnah thought the students were being led astray by the enemies of Pakistan.

On the eve of his return to Karachi on March 28, the governor general addressed the people of East Bengal over radio. It was a long speech, but amazingly Jinnah only repeated his

earlier stand on the language question. Sounding patronizing, he advised the students to take what he called the right course to the future. He stressed the need for unity and discipline among all the federating units of Pakistan. Jinnah's intransigence only emboldened Khwaja Nazimuddin into going back on his promise to introduce the question of Bangla as one of the state languages of Pakistan in the East Bengal legislature. On April 6, he did introduce a resolution on the status of Bangla in the provincial legislature, but only to the effect that Bangla be made the official language of East Bengal and that the medium of instruction in the province be Bangla. Nothing was mentioned about the position of the language vis-à-vis the entirety of Pakistan.

Mohammad Ali Jinnah died on September 11, 1948. He was succeeded as governor general of Pakistan by Khwaja Nazimuddin, who in turn was replaced in East Bengal by Nurul Amin.

# Admin to turn

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the matter will be sent to the prime minister in a day or two for approval.

However, most of the promoted officers will discharge their duties as before, since the number of officers has already exceeded those approved in the formal structure of the civil administration.

They might be kept "in situ" (meaning the designation of an officer will be elevated, not his or her portfolio) as none will retire in the next two years, thanks to an extension of the retirement age to 59 years from 57, said the officials.

Now there are about 1,500 deputy secretaries against 830 approved posts, 500 joint secretaries against 250 approved posts and 148 additional secretaries against 108 approved posts.

However, Cabinet Secretary Muhammad Musharraf Hossain Bhuiyan does not see any problem with it. "We have already got a mechanism to promote the officers and reshuffle their positions," he told The Daily Star, without giving any details.

He said the government was going for their promotion that had remained due for quite a while.

Wishing anonymity, a senior official at the public administration ministry said, "The government is

considering promotion of nearly 700 officials at a time. Of them, 80 joint secretaries will be promoted to additional secretaries, more than 250 deputy secretaries to joint secretaries and 350 senior assistant secretaries to deputy secretaries."

The Superior Selection Board (SSB), a body of seven secretaries with the cabinet secretary at the head, has almost finalised a list of officers to be recommended for promotion.

It was in a dilemma over the officers' promotion as the two-year extension of the civil servants' service age blocked their retirement.

The SSB held a series of meetings in the last couple of weeks to find a mechanism for promoting them. They wrapped up evaluating the records of the officers who deserve promotion last week. It has almost finalised the lists of senior assistant secretaries, deputy secretaries and joint secretaries whose promotions are due.

Many officials at the Secretariat said they would be disappointed if they found themselves in the same position after being promoted.

Some officials at the public administration ministry said the government would be in another dilemma over giving the promoted officers their new portfolios.

# BNP forms

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Headed by Supreme Court Bar Association President Khandaker Mahub Hossain, the committee includes Jatiya Press Club General Secretary Syed Abdal Ahmed, former pro-vice chancellor of Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujib Medical University Abdur Mannan, lawmaker Hafizur Rahman and former additional district judge Abu Taleb.

On January 29, two BNP men were killed in Chandpur and two in Laxmipur as police fired on processions and a Jamaat-e-Islami activist was shot dead on January 30 during a clash with police in Rajshahi.

BNP Chairperson Khaleda Zia will visit Chandpur on February 13 and Laxmipur on February 18 to meet the bereaved family members of the four victims and address protest rallies there.

Besides, she will visit Lalmonirhat on Feb 27 and address a public meeting.

Meanwhile, the home ministry and the district administration and police administration of Chandpur have formed three probe bodies on the killing of the two -- Abul Hossain Mridha and Limon Choyal -- in Chandpur. And Abul Hossain's wife filed a case with the Chief Judicial Magistrate's Court on February 1.

No probe body on the killings in Laxmipur has been formed as yet.

At a press briefing at BNP central office at Naya Paltan yesterday, acting secretary general of the main opposi-

tion party Mirza Fakhru'l Islam Alamgir announced formation of the citizens' investigation committee, saying they have no confidence in the government probe bodies.

He said, "They [govt investigation bodies] will try to protect police. So, the real perpetrators of the killings will not be identified."

Asked about the ruling Awami League's allegation that BNP was responsible for the killings, Fakhru'l said, "They (ruling party) are creating a smokescreen to shift the blame onto others."

He also criticised the ruling party for announcing a counter-programme for March 12, the scheduled date for BNP's grand rally.

"Ministers and other ruling party leaders are resorting to falsehood apparently to foil the peaceful opposition programme," he added.

A correspondent from Chandpur reports: A probe body comprising two police officials have already completed its investigation and will submit its report to the higher authorities.

Deputy Inspector General of Police Biswas Afzal Hossain, a member of the team, said yesterday police had opened fire to control the situation as two factions of Juba Dal, youth front of BNP, resorted to a show of strength against each other.

"At least 10 persons would have been killed had police not gone for action," he told journalists.

## Inflation

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10.63 percent.

The country's general inflation has also stubbornly been in the double digit for the last eleven months, which was last seen in the early 1980s.

Food inflation also went up to 10.9 percent in January from the previous month's 10.4 percent.

"Inflation has gone up due to rise in prices of electricity and fuel oils," BBS Director General Md Shahjahan Ali Mollah told reporters in his office in the capital yesterday.

"Devaluation of taka against the US dollar has also contributed to the rise," he added.

He said the government has been forced to spend thousands of crores of taka in subsidies for imported petroleum products. Fuel prices were increased to cut spending in subsidies.

"However, people's purchasing power has also gone up despite the inflation. Commodities are also available on the market," said Mollah.

He said amid high inflation, the government sold 31,500 tonnes of rice for Tk 24 a kilogramme, and 23,700 tonnes of wheat for Tk 17 a kg in January among the poor.

Zahid Hossain, a senior economist of the World Bank, said in addition to price hike of electricity and fuel oils, and devaluation of taka, the rise in government's spending and credit growth in both public and private sectors have also contributed to the hike in inflation.

He said the government has been cutting its spending since December last year. "It has to be continued to reduce inflation."

Zahid said through its latest monetary policy, Bangladesh Bank has expressed its intention to tighten money supply. "This intention has to be materialised," he said.

There are also good signs in the economy, he noted.

"Opening of letters of credit has decreased, which will slow down import growth. Besides, remittance inflow has gone up."

"As a result, the pressure on exchange rate could go down in the coming months," he told The Daily Star.

The country's currency has lost 20 percent of its value against the greenback in the last one year till January.

On December 29 last year, the government hiked prices of all fuel oils by Tk 5 per litre, the second time in less than two months, and the third time in less than four months.

## Traffic jam

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traffic flow due to the ongoing Secondary School Certificate (SSC) examination in various educational institutions in the capital.

Gridlock and slow traffic movements lingered for hours in the morning in Gulshan, Uttara, Mohakhali, Tejgaon, Moghbazar and Farmgate areas.

Deputy Commissioner Traffic (North) Md Masudur Rahman Bhuiyan said the suspension of traffic movement from Phoenix road to Aarong Bridge in Gulshan-1 link road for installation of pipeline of Dhaka Water Supply and Sewerage Authority (Wasa) is the main reason of yesterday's traffic jam.

Masudur Rahman said they diverted the traffic flow of the Phoenix road to an alternative road -- from Satrasta to Love road -- and stopped left turning at Mohakhali from Moghbazar to Mohakhali direction traffic to reduce the gridlock.

He said they will have to continue the traffic management as the work of the Wasa will take around three months to complete.

Installing of sewerage pipelines on Mirpur road near Dar-us-Salam crossing made the road too narrow for general traffic flow. Heavy congestion is visible on the road during the day-time.

Amzad Hossain, a resident of Uttara, said it took two and a half hours to come to Farmgate from Uttara-sector five at noon which usually takes one and half hours.

Lintu Michial Corraya, a private job holder, said he had to wait for a public bus at Mohakhali rail crossing from 8:45am to 9:15am.

# Criminals on the prowl

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Those injured in the shooting at Elephant Road were Shahinur Alam, 32, an electrical engineer, and Amjad Ali Russel, 32, logistic support executive of the private company Chicks and Feeds Limited at West Panthapath of the city. Both of them received a bullet each and were admitted to Dhaka Medical College Hospital (DMCH).

Shahinur told this correspondent that he along with his two colleagues was about to get into their car after withdrawing money from an NCC bank branch around 2:45pm.

"As soon as I pulled the car door to get in, two persons dragged me from behind. They shot at me when I fell on the ground," he said.

Russel was just behind him with the bag of money. The muggers fired at him too and ran away with the bag, Shahinur added.

Security guards at the bank said the injured were taken inside the bank building to save their lives. Later, the driver of the car rushed them to DMCH.

Traffic constable Azharul Islam, who was on duty a few yards off the spot, said he saw two youths with a

bag running away on a motorbike. Another youth was waiting for them on the motorcycle.

This correspondent noticed two bullet marks on the back door of the victims' car. Witnesses said they heard 5-6 rounds of shots being fired.

Mohammad Mohiuddin, Manager of NCC Bank, said, "Our Dhanmondi Branch referred them to this branch as it had a shortage of money. The victims received the money in two packages from the branch."

"The director of the company, Golam Mostafa, took a packet containing Tk 5 lakh and another official took the other bag with Tk 23.12 lakh," he said.

New Market Police said muggers snatched one of the bags containing Tk 23.12 lakh. But, Russel told police that the director had put his packet in the bag while coming down the stairs.

Meanwhile, a gang of armed muggers yesterday hacked three fish traders on a Farmgate-bound bus at Bijoy Sarani and snatched Tk 1.65 lakh from their possession around 5:30am.

The muggers then drove them out of the bus at Bijoy Sarani.

# Rapid bus project

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Siddique told The Daily Star, adding that the tentative target to finish the work was 2015.

He said articulated buses would ply on the route and every 10 minutes, as had been discussed primarily, would touch a station so that passengers would not have to wait in long queues.

Apart from the airport-Gazipur route, the authorities would start work on three other BRT lines -- airport to Saidabad via Malibagh, Saidabad to Gabtoli, and airport to Sadarghat within the present government's tenure, added Siddique.

The communications secretary said work on implementing Mass Rapid Transit (MRT) line-6 was under process and the government was working to implement two other MRT lines to ease the capital's traffic congestion.

Asked how people would

move from the airport to other parts of the capital, including Motijheel, he said they could use the MRT-6, also known as Metro Rail, which would ply from Uttara Third Phase to Saidabad and the elevated expressway that connects airport with Chittagong Road.

There are two proposals for dedicated routes for articulated buses -- through the fast lane and along the slow lane, said Siddique, adding that most experts recommended the fast lane of the road.

However, there is opinion against this recommendation. According to some experts, if buses use the middle of the road, they would have to stop at stations every 10 minutes crossing lanes which might have a negative impact on the traffic situation.

"Considering these aspects, we will go for a test trial soon and then take the

Police detained two suspected muggers in this connection. Mahbubur Rahman, officer-in-charge of Tejgaon Police Station, said Tejgaon patrol police chased a bus hearing the screams of the victims and managed to stop it at Bijoy Sarani.

Police managed to arrest one of the robbers and the driver of the bus. The driver might have been involved in the robbery, the OC said.

Injured fish traders Mohammad Hanif, 30, Abdul Quader, 32, and Shah Alam, 35, were treated at DMCH.

In West Rampura's Wapda Road, a gang of 10-12 muggers at 4:30am tied up the security guards of a market and robbed gold and silver ornaments and cash from Sumon Jewellers.

Joynal Abedin, the owner of the shop, told this correspondent that the muggers came in a pick-up van and entered the market in the guise of labourers. They broke the locks of the shop open and went away with a steel locker. Local residents chased them but could not get hold of them.

Joynal later filed a case with Rampura Police Station.

final decision," said the secretary.

The cabinet meeting also approved the Members of the Bangladesh Public Service Commission (Terms and Conditions of Service) (Amendment) Act 2012, yesterday, aiming to increase the salary of the PSE chairman and members equivalent to the cabinet secretary and secretaries.

It approved the draft of Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujib Maritime University Act 2012, the list of 476 items, to give preferential tariff facilities to OIC member countries under the Protocol on Preferential Tariff Scheme for TPS-OIC.

The cabinet also approved a proposal for ratification of the Framework Agreement on the Promotion and Liberalisation of Trade Services among APTA Participating States and the Bilateral Trade Agreement signed with Kuwait.

## Release 'soon' for 29 Chinese

Say Sudan rebels

AFP, Khartoum

The 29 Chinese workers captured by rebels more than a week ago in southern Sudan should be released soon, a spokesman for the insurgents said yesterday.

"We believe this will be very soon," Arnu Ngutulu Lodi of the Sudan People's Liberation Movement-North (SPLM-N) told AFP from Kenya. "It's not going to take long."

He said the rebels are in communication with the Chinese government, though not through a six-member mission sent by Beijing to Khartoum to help secure the release of the captives, who were involved in a road-building project.

They have been held since January 28 when SPLM-N destroyed a Sudanese military convoy between Rashad town and Al-Abbasiya and took over the area, the rebels said.

Lodi said the Chinese -- whom the Sudanese military refers to as hostages -- are safe.

According to China's official news agency Xinhua, the workers were taken after a rebel attack on their camp.

SPLM-N chairman Malik Agar last week discussed the workers' case with a Chinese diplomat and asked China to use its influence with Khartoum to help badly needed aid reach the country's war zone, Lodi said.

Agar held the talks in the Ethiopian capital Addis Ababa with Beijing's ambassador there.

China is Sudan's major trading partner, the largest buyer of Sudanese oil and a key military supplier to the regime in Khartoum.

## MP Shaon

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plex on August 13, 2010.

The plaintiff brought an allegation against the law-maker of plotting the murder.

The court, however, yesterday took into cognisance the charges against Shaon's bodyguard Delwar Hossain, driver Kamal Hossain Kala, personal secretary Sohel Ahmed, Jubo League activist Golam Mostafa Shimul, Mazharul Islam Mithu and Nur Hossain Munna.

Khondaker Mohammad Abdul Halim, assistant superintendent of police of CID and the investigation officer of the case, on January 11 submitted the charge sheet against six people, excluding Shaon, in connection with the killing.

Driver Kala filed an unnatural death case the following day with Sher-e-Bangla Nagar Police Station, claiming that the gun went off when Ibrahim was handling it in the lawmaker's car.

Shaon felt threatened as the Jubo League leader had become more popular than him in Bhola-3 constituency, according to the statement of the case filed by Masum.

The lawmaker asked Ibrahim over the phone to give up the dream of becoming a ward councillor of Dhaka City Corporation.

Masum claimed that the accused killed his brother and later filed the unnatural death case to divert the investigation.

## Families tell

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Haque of Criminal Investigation Department is maintaining underhand dealings with the culprits and earning a hefty amount of money.

Aminur Rahim, father of Shamam, told The Daily Star hundreds of people of Amin Bazar and Bardeshi village have mentioned the names of a number of killers. Many of the accused have openly admitted their involvement but the police are mysteriously unable to find any killers, he added.

Rahim alleged the investigation is not making headway as policemen were behind the incident.

Sources say seven people have so far been arrested since the brutal incident and five of them were remanded for six days in two phases.

Of them, Farid Khan, Mohammad Wasim and Mohammad Rajib admitted their involvement before the police.

Talking to The Daily Star, investigator Sirajul said Farid, Wasim and Rajib admitted their involvement before police but denied it before the court.

Asked, the CID investigator said, "We are facing difficulties in managing witnesses as no-one agrees to come forward."

He denied all the allegations of the families of the victims and said the investigation needs more time.

## Briefing

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Cabinet Secretary M Musharraf Hossain Bhuiyan, who is spokesperson of the committee.

Talking to journalists after a meeting of the committee at the Supreme Court yesterday, he said it will again sit at 5:00pm today before sending the names to the president.

Musharraf declined to give the names on the list.

He avoided a direct reply when asked whether there are any legal complexities in reappointing the just retired CEC ATM Shamsul Huda, saying the committee is reviewing the legal aspects of all issues.

On the basis of the Search Committee's recommendations, the president will appoint a new CEC and election commissioners as per Article 118 of the constitution.

On January 22, the government formed the committee to suggest two names against each of the posts.

Headed by a judge of the Supreme Court, the committee includes a High Court judge, the Public Service Commission chairman and the comptroller and auditor general.