

AL fears

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some ministers and lawmakers of greater Dhaka were present in the meeting that started at 7:00pm.

The premier asked the countrymen to remain alert as BNP might plot "genocide" like the Pakistani occupation forces had done in this month in 1971, in the name of anti-government movement.

Later at night she sat with the key leaders of her party to discuss remedy for the possible BNP-Jamaat plot. Hasina asked the leaders to keep contact with law enforcers on March 12 and inform them of any untoward incidents or blasts.

"We have information that BNP along with all the anti-liberation forces may go for destructive activities like the December 18 programme," said Mahbubul Alam Hanif, AL joint general secretary, after last night's meeting.

On December 18 last year, the day BNP arranged a reception for freedom fighters, activists of the party and its key ally Jamaat-e-Islami clashed with police at different points of the city. At least 50 homemade bombs were used that day leaving one man dead, many injured, 14 vehicles vandalised and city dwellers deep in panic.

Yesterday in the meeting, Hasina warned that if the opposition party creates chaos in the name of the grand rally, it will be dealt with iron hand.

"It is fine with us if they [BNP] hold the rally peacefully. But if they do otherwise or stage violence like December 18, we will reply to them appropriately," she said.

Hasina said she was shocked that BNP had declared antigovernment movements in March, the month of independence. "It is painful that the opposition chose this month to protect the Razakars (collaborators of Pakistani occupation force)," she added.

She said the trial of the war criminals is on and it must be completed.

Referring to the country-wide violence after the election in 2001, the premier said legal actions would be taken against those who were involved in the aggression, none would be spared.

She urged her party leaders and activists to make the rally on March 7, human chain on March 11, public meeting at Bangabandhu Avenue on March 14, National Children Day on March 17 and the Independence Day on March 26 successful.

Meeting sources said AL men would be on the streets of the capital to help law enforcers if BNP created any chaos centring the grand rally. The party would not let any anti-liberation force break the peace in the month of March.

"If the BNP-Jamaat men engage in any destructive activities on March 12, it will be handled firmly," reiterated the AL joint general secretary.

Bike-riding

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at DMCH told reporters he was on his way to Rajarbagh Police Lines on a motorbike for a haircut when he found that some locals were chasing the gang in front of Eastern Plus Market in Shantinagar.

He started following the trio's bike and overtook them near the police lines hospital where one of the criminals shot in his throat, Lutfar said.

Md Asaduzzaman, assistant commissioner of Motijheel zone of Dhaka Metropolitan Police, told The Daily Star on duty policemen at a check post near the hospital managed to catch Nazmul Alam Khan, a resident of Mirpur area.

During preliminary interrogation, Nazmul said they were hired by a Jatityabadi Chhatra Dal (JCD) activist to kill another JCD man of Paltan area in the capital, Asaduzzaman said.

He, however, said they were verifying the information.

DB men

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The other arrestee is auto-rickshaw driver Saiful Islam, 36, of Motihar area.

All four were taken into custody after Bhupoti Kumar Barman, an inspector of Department of Narcotics Control, filed a case against them with Rajpara Police Station under the Narcotics Control Act of 1990.

Acting on a tip off, the taskforce led by Executive Magistrate Md Alamgir Kabir caught the four in an auto-rickshaw at 2:40am with the bottles of Phensidyl.

They seized the Phensidyl bottles from Tangon, a drug-smuggling zone under Motihar police station, and instead of going to DB office and bypassing other police stations they took the bottles to the drug trading spot, alleged Bhupoti in the case.

"They took the Phensidyl to sell to local drug peddlers and we were informed that they do it frequently," he told The Daily Star.

Bhupoti said the policemen claimed the bottles were seized in a raid but they could not produce any command certificate or seizure list.

Moreover, the plainclothes officers did not have any kind of identity card with them, he said.

However, a Special Branch (SB) report following the incident held Tofazzal Hossain, officer-in-charge

(OC) of DB, responsible for it.

"If he was not negligent, the crime would not have taken place," said M Ronouzzaman, assistant commissioner of SB.

Ronouzzaman, also assistant commissioner of DB, told The Daily Star that Tofazzal took verbal permission from him on Thursday morning to conduct the raid but did not update after sending eight DB constables for the raid.

Piarul Islam, one of the eight constables, told this correspondent that they seized the bottles from a paddy field after the smugglers fled from the spot.

Samad and Lalon, who were communicating with the OC over the cell phone, stopped the policemen at Katakali while they were returning from the raid.

"At Katakali, Samad and Lalon quoting the OC told us to go home and they would take the seized goods to DB office. We went home and a few hours later learnt the three were arrested," Piarul said.

OC Tofazzal Hossain could not be contacted for comments.

However, Ronouzzaman said Tofazzal told him that he ordered the police officers to bring the goods back to DB office but was not aware that they had gone to the drug trading spot.

Students lose interest

DECLINE IN 20 YEARS		
Year	Exams	Science Students of the total examinees
1990	SSC	42.18%
2010	SSC	22.35%
1990	HSC	28.13%
2010	HSC	18.34%

Source: BANBEIS

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Although the government envisages building a "Digital Bangladesh," its apparent failure to address the problem has frustrated the scholars.

They fear this trend would create a huge dearth of human resources education in science and technology in near future unless urgent steps are taken to attract more students in science education.

"It's alarming that the number of science students in the country is becoming fewer," educationist Prof Jamilur Reza Choudhury told The Daily Star.

If the government does not give utmost importance to science education and take proper steps, the number would reduce even further, he mentioned.

He also blamed poor teaching quality and infrastructure for the declining number of science students.

"Many teachers do not clearly understand science and thus fail to make the students understand their lessons properly in classrooms," he pointed out.

Citing an example Jamilur said the Indian government is providing scholarship to the youngsters who are interested in science from primary to post-graduation levels. "We need to take a similar initiative to attract more students to science studies."

He suggested training the teachers and building up laboratory and other infrastructures.

Prof Mohamad Kaykobad of Bangladesh University of Engineering and Technology (Buet) stressed the importance of arranging competitions to popularise science and making the science books easier and attractive.

He also recommended creating more jobs for the science graduates. "To do so, the country has to be production-oriented and the labour market should be expanded."

Admitting the problem, Education Minister Nurul Islam Nahid said, "We've launched a campaign in schools to popularise science education. We are updating the science curriculum to make it attractive and enjoyable to the

learners."

The ministry has also introduced mobile laboratories equipped with scientific materials to visit different schools, he added.

He laid emphasis on increasing budgetary allocation for the development of science education.

To identify the obstacles in science studies and find ways to popularise it among the students, the education ministry in September 2010 had formed a 27-member committee.

Contacted, Prof Sirajul Hoque, member secretary of the committee, said they have prepared a draft report and will submit it to the ministry soon.

Buriganga

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days, the grabbers, many of them Awami League and BNP men, return to fill up the channel and erect structures again.

"One cannot recognise that it was once a river channel," says a local, demanding strong action against the encroachers.

At the press conference, environment activists said tannery, dyeing and other factories in Old Dhaka continue to dump untreated waste in the channel. Dhaka Wasa and city corporation are also contributing to its pollution.

Sharif Jamil said the household wastes collected by the city corporation are being dumped in various canals and drains, which end up in the Buriganga channel.

"Death of a river destroys livelihoods of many people living by it," he said, asking, "Who will protect the channel if Rab encroaches on it?"

The city dwellers will face water shortages if the channel eventually dies, other speakers said, adding that the authorities are busy doing their personal business instead of focusing on the issue.

On the one hand, India is blocking waters of the common rivers while on the other hand, the Bangladesh government is not doing enough to protect the existing rivers, they noted.

Bapa Joint Secretary Shahjahan Mridha Benu said not only the Buriganga but almost all the rivers in the country are drying.

Famed British chef of Bangladesh origin, Tommy Miah, expressed solidarity with the environment activists, saying he would create awareness at the global level for saving Bangladesh's rivers.

Environmentalists demanded demarcation and dredging of the channel and demolishing the structures built on it, reconstruction of the bridge and ensuring treatment of industrial wastes before emptying those in the channel.

Muggers

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they have recovered Tk 1.26 lakh of the snatched amount and arrested three people in this connection.

Over the last two months, an alarming number of mugging incidents took place in the capital. The gravest ones were committed by the muggers on bikes.

Desperate for a remedy, Dhaka Metropolitan Police Commissioner Benazir Ahmed in February directed all the eight deputy commissioners of crime division to take measures so that banks save the footage caught on their CCTV cameras, said a detective.

Besides, law enforcers have intensified vigilance in the capital to track down biker gangs, he added.

Several detectives admitted that preventing such gangs is tough as they mug people leaving almost no clue behind and make swift escape through narrow lanes on motorbikes. Police vehicles are not suitable for this kind of chase.

Assistant Commissioner (AC) Golam Mostafa Russel of Snatching and Robbery Prevention Team of DB said, "The motorbike gangs usually target those who arrive in banks in cars. One of the gang members keeps watch on the target, sometimes inside the bank, and then informs his cohorts over the phone about how the person is carrying his money out of the bank."

The other members of the gang intercept the target outside, snatch the money and speed away on motorbikes, added the AC.

As for the incident on Elephant Road, one of the arrested muggers, Shimul, went inside the bank, kept an eye on the private firm officials and informed his associates outside over the phone, he said, adding that Shimul's cohorts Sagar and Sultan shot the victims just to create panic and make an easy exit.

The AC said they had gone to the bank to examine the CCTV footage but the bank authorities had no footage whatsoever. If the bank authorities concerned monitor their clients they will be able to detect those who enter the bank in guise of a customer.

He said so far they have traced seven to eight such gangs.

Another high-placed DB official, preferring anonymity, said the DMP authorities may introduce several teams equipped with motorbikes to curb such crime.

Indian defence

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Mukherjee when snooping devices allegedly were found from there.

An inquiry was ordered by the Finance Ministry after adhesive-like substances were recovered from his office, raising suspicion that they might have been used to implant electronic listening devices.

March 12

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of days since the current session of the parliament will end on March 8.

On Thursday, the party high command asked all the opposition lawmakers to be in the capital by tomorrow [Sunday].

"We will comply with the instruction," said Mazibar Rahman Sarwar, a lawmaker from Barisal-5 constituency.

Meanwhile, BNP leaders have been reserving the city hotels and community centres for the accommodation of those who will join the rally from outside the capital. However, problems are being created centring the bookings, alleged Khoka at a press briefing in the party headquarters.

He hoped that Dhaka will be flooded with people on the rally day.

The party's senior- and mid-level leaders, lawmakers, and central committee leaders are holding meetings across the country to make the March 12 rally a success. BNP Chairperson Khaleda Zia is overseeing the programme preparation, said the insiders.

On January 9, Khaleda called for the rally from a huge rally in Chittagong to mount pressure on the government for reinstating the caretaker government system.

Yunus unwilling

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no longer existed.

Earlier on February 22, Hasina requested the visiting European Parliament delegation that the EU put forward Yunus's name for the top position at the Washington-based anti-poverty lender.

Robert Zoellick, the incumbent president of the World Bank, will step down at the end of his five-year term on June 30.

In his statement, Yunus said that he had been a regular critic of the World Bank for its policies and programmes. His criticism also included the fact that this bank's top position is always reserved for an American citizen. "But I never had any interest in stepping out of the work that I have dedicated my life to, to take up the highest responsibility of the World Bank."

The Grameen Bank founder said that in 1995, the then US president Bill Clinton had requested him to be the WB president, but he declined the offer, saying he would rather like to concentrate on his own work.

Yunus also mentioned that in 2005, the then prime minister Khaleda Zia had wanted to propose his name as secretary general of the United Nations. When her office approached him for his consent, he conveyed his thanks to the prime minister and said he should instead be allowed to continue with his work.

In the statement yesterday, Yunus expressed hope there would be a "World Social Business Bank" sometime soon, and if requested, he would take the presidency of that bank with great pleasure no matter what his age might be then.

Below is the full text of Prof Yunus's statement:
MY SINCERE THANKS TO THE HONOURABLE PRIME MINISTER

On February 22, 2012, Honourable Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina made a very important proposal about me to the visiting European Union's parliamentary delegation. She proposed that the EU should put forward my name as a candidate to become the next President of the World Bank. She also presented a strong statement regarding my competence for this job to the EU delegation. Since then, there has been a lot of animated discussion about this proposal in the media.

This proposal was an unexpected good news for me. I would like to sincerely thank the Honourable Prime Minister for the kind gesture that she has shown by requesting to propose my name for the top job in such a prestigious and influential global institution.

Another special reason for me to be happy on hearing this good news is that this proposal itself, and the generous list of my qualifications for the job that the Honourable Prime Minister presented to the delegation, make clear that the impressions she previously had about me and Grameen Bank no longer exist. Now I am hopeful that the government's policy towards the Grameen Bank and me will be in line with the Prime Minister's latest position. This will remove a huge burden of pain and worry from me, also from many others in the coun-

KL plans crackdown

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can apply for regularisation.

Under the amnesty programme, Malaysia started registering the irregular foreign workers and the immigration authorities started regularisation from October 10 last year. Since then, they extended the deadline thrice, last time from February 15 to April 10.

The country has so far registered around 1.3 million irregular foreign workers but regularised only around four lakh of them. Mantu Kumar Biswas said the Malaysian authorities did not mention the number of Bangladeshis regularised until now.

"The deadline for regularisation has been extended. I expect all Bangladeshis applying will be regularised," he said.

Meanwhile, Nazrul Islam Ajith, a Bangladeshi working

in Kuala Lumpur, said he estimated there would be 1 to 1.5 lakh Bangladeshis who either did not get registered or did not maintain proper procedures in applying for work permits.

When the Honourable Prime Minister's proposal was published in the media, many came forward expressing their strong support for the proposal. Honourable US Ambassador assured that the US Government would give special consideration to such a proposal, if I agree to be considered for the position. I would like to thank the US Ambassador and all others who supported the proposal, for their confidence in me.

I never thought of taking up the top job of the World Bank or any other such multi-lateral institutions. I have been a regular critic of the World Bank for its policies and programs. My criticism also included the fact that this Bank's highest post is always reserved for an American citizen. But I never had any interest in stepping out of the work that I have dedicated my life to, to take up the highest responsibility of the World Bank.

In the past I found myself at the centre of a similar discussion about WB top job. In 1995, President Bill Clinton had invited me to the Oval Office. Among other issues, he discussed the role of the World Bank and asked for my advice. Then he said that a new president was to be appointed for World Bank and asked whether I had any interest in this. I earnestly requested him to allow me to concentrate on my own work. Later, I gave a description in my autobiography "Banker to the Poor" of an interesting interview with an irritated American journalist, after my name was mentioned in the press as a possible World Bank president.

I was asked by the journalist, what steps would I take after becoming President of the World Bank. Sensing his negative feeling about the proposal, I told the journalist that my first step would be to move the headquarters of The World Bank from Washington D. C. to Dhaka, Bangladesh. The journalist was shocked at my response.

President Clinton appointed James D. Wolfensohn as the President of the World Bank. Mr. Wolfensohn probably was not aware of the conversation I had with President Clinton. After taking up his position at the World Bank, Mr. Wolfensohn offered the second highest job in the World Bank, the position of one of the Managing Directors at the Bank. I could not accept it either, for the same reason.

In late 2005, the then Prime Minister, Khaleda Zia decided to nominate me for the position of the Secretary General of The United Nations. I was approached for my consent. According to the UN convention, this post was to go to an Asian in the coming term. A few European and Asian countries were encouraging me to get interested in the position. When approached for my consent by the office of the Prime Minister, I conveyed my thanks to the Honourable Prime Minister for her kindness in wanting to nominate me for this post and requested her to let me continue with my work. The Prime Minister's office followed up with the request a number of times on this matter. But I could not change my mind. Those who are feeling encouraged by the present proposal from the Prime

Minister Sheikh Hasina, may become disappointed with me that I am not giving importance to such a big opportunity for the country. I am requesting them to consider my situation and have sympathy for my position.

All my life, I have dedicated myself to do things in my own way, and do things which I thought important for me to do. Making the world aware of the potential of social business, the successful implementation of social business, making the next generation across the globe optimistic about the future of humanity and encouraging them to take the leadership in creating a new, and better world, is the work that I am involved in. I want to remain completely focused to these tasks. I hope some time soon, there will be a "World Social Business Bank" and this bank will have an important role in solving the fundamental economic, social and environmental problems faced by the world today. When this bank is created, if someone requests me to take the Presidency of the bank, I'll accept that responsibility with great pleasure, no matter what my age will be at that point of time.

Oxygen

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gas giants.

The study has been published in Geophysical Research Letters. According to co-author Andrew Coates of University College London, Dione has no liquid water and so does not have the conditions to support life. But it is possible that other moons of Jupiter and Saturn do.

"Some of the other moons have liquid oceans and so it is worth looking more closely at them for signs of life," Prof Coates said.

The discovery was made using the Cassini spacecraft, which flew by Dione nearly two years ago.

Instruments on board the unmanned probe detected a thin layer of oxygen around the moon, so thin that scientists prefer to call it an "exosphere" rather than an atmosphere.

But the discovery is important because it suggests there is a process at work around the solar system's gas giants, Saturn and Jupiter, in which oxygen is released from their icy satellites.

It seems that highly charged particles from the planets' powerful radiation belts split the water in the ice into hydrogen and oxygen.

Dione's sister moon, Enceladus is thought to harbour a liquid ocean below its icy surface. The same is thought to be true of Europa, Callisto and Ganymede which orbit Jupiter.

Prof Coates is among a group of scientists lobbying the European Space Agency to send an orbiter to explore Jupiter's icy moons -- known as the Juice mission.

"These are fascinating places to look for signs of life," he said.

As is Titan, Saturn's largest satellite. Its nitrogen and methane atmosphere is reminiscent of the early Earth, according to Prof Coates.

"It may be an Earth waiting to happen as the outer Solar System warms up," he said.

Nasa is developing a proposal to send a landing craft, or lander, to float on one of the planet's oily lakes.

Suicide blast hits Nato convoy, 7 wounded

AFP, Kandahar

A suicide bomber on a motorcycle attacked a Nato convoy in Afghanistan's southern province of Kandahar yesterday wounding seven people including four soldiers, an official said.

"A suicide attacker rammed his explosives-laden motorcycle into a convoy of Nato troops in Dand district injuring four foreign soldiers, one policeman, one translator and one civilian," provincial governor Torkyalai Weesa told AFP.

The attack bore the hallmarks of Taliban insurgents, who on Monday targeted Nato troops in a suicide car bombing at an airport in eastern Afghanistan, killing nine people but no foreign soldiers.

The Taliban said that attack was in revenge for the burning of Qurans at a US military base at Bagram north of Kabul, an incident that ignited days of violent anti-US protests and led to an apology by US President Barack Obama.

The only Nato soldiers reported killed in Afghanistan in the 10 days since the demonstrations erupted have died at the hands of Afghan colleagues.

55 killed

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"All law enforcement agencies' posts in the area were intact and the situation was stable," the official said, blaming the Lashkar-e-Islam group for attacking the outpost.

Pakistan's seven tribal districts near the Afghan border are rife with home-grown insurgents and are strongholds of Taliban and al-Qaeda operatives.

Islamist militants have killed more than 4,900 people across Pakistan since government troops raided an extremist mosque in Islamabad in July 2007.

US special

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suggested.

But a US Security team is scheduled to be in the capital on a three-day tour from March 11 to take part in a workshop, he told The Daily Star without going into details.

Lt Col Ziaul Ahsan, intelligence chief of Rapid Action Battalion, said "All year round personnel from different US agencies, including the FBI and the US Security, come to Bangladesh and provide training to the army, navy and others."

They training programmes cover different issues including counterterrorism, he added.

WORKING CLOSELY
"We are working very closely with India with regard to their counter-terrorism capabilities and in particular on the maritime domain but also government to government, not necessarily department of defence but other agencies assisting them in terms of their internal counter-terror and counterinsurgency challenges."

Adm Willard said Lashkar-e-Taiba was a "very dangerous organisation... so it is a very important threat, and we're working very closely with the nations in the region to help contain it."

He said the group was "responsible for many attacks in India, including the horrific attacks into Mumbai, Lashkar-e-Taiba is headquartered in Pakistan, affiliated with al-Qaeda... and contributes to terrorist operations in Afghanistan and aspires to operate against Asia, Europe and North America."

Bangladesh, he said, has emerged as a particularly effective partner in the fight against terror, cooperating with India as well as the US to counter VEO activity by actors such as LeT, The Times of India reports.

Further, Bangladesh's military is advancing its capabilities and contributes broadly to UN peacekeeping operations, he added.