

Bangladesh

FROM PAGE 20

gaps in highly qualified jobs, parliament and senior executive positions.

Bangladesh's 55 points rank it on the top among those countries with very low GEL, although 16 points above the South Asian average of 39, while the Maldives's got 63 and Sri Lanka 62 points.

The five levels according to which the index measures the gender gap are: critical, very low, low, medium and acceptable.

Bangladesh got 81 points for reaching a medium value in education, 18 points for critical value in empowerment and 65 in economic participation.

At a world level, the countries that have achieved a better score are Norway with 89 points, Finland 88 points, and Iceland 87, which places them as countries with a medium in GEL.

Of the 154 nations measured, five in the worst global situation are Congo 29, Niger 26, Chad 25, Yemen 24 and Afghanistan 15.

Social Watch measures the gap between women and men, not their wellbeing. Thus, a country in which young men and women have equal access to the university receives a value of 100 on this particular indicator.

In the same manner, a country in which boys and girls are equally barred from completing primary education would also be awarded a value of 100.

Ministers warn

FROM PAGE 1

while speaking at a programme in the capital.

Muktijoddha Jubo Command organised the programme at the Jatiya Press Club to accord receptions to female freedom fighters, reports our staff correspondent.

"It is the responsibility of the government to safeguard lives and properties of the people. The government will take necessary steps to resist any chaos on that day," Dipu Moni said.

The foreign minister also urged the opposition leaders to refrain from making any provocative remarks and hold the March 12 rally peacefully.

Home Minister Shahara Khatun, in another programme, said that none would be spared if found involved in any kind of chaos during the rally, reports BSS.

Coming down heavily on the opposition, she said, "The government under the dynamic and wise leadership of Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina is running the country in a proper way."

"But the opposition BNP could not accept it. They are out to create anarchy in the name of democratic programme," the home minister said while inaugurating the Dhaka Regional Bhaban Complex of the Directorate of Narcotics Control at Gandaria in the capital.

3 JMB men

FROM PAGE 20

member Anwar Hossain.

Asaduzzaman, a Majlish-e-Sura committee member of JMB, was arrested from Sayedabad, Wahab, a gayeri ehsar (part-time) member was picked up from Gabtoli while Anwar was arrested from Abdullahpur in Uttara, the Rab official said.

The arrestees were produced before a press conference yesterday at Rab Headquarters of Uttara where Commander Mohammad Sohail, director of Rab's Media and Legal Wing said Wahab and Asaduzzaman were arrested on information squeezed out of Anwar.

He said all three were fugitives in the series bomb attack cases of 2005.

There are a total five cases against Asaduzzaman with several police stations in Shatkira. He is said to have led the August 17, 2005 bomb attacks at Shatkira and was reportedly assigned by Shaikh Abdur Rahman.

Wahab is an accused in two cases filed with police stations in Savar and Anwar is an accused in two cases.

Rab officials are interrogating the arrestees for more information.

Commander Sohail said they are trying to find out if any banned outfits like JMB are plotting any subversive activities ahead of BNP's March 12 political programme as militants try to take advantage of mass political events for such activities.

Saudi embassy

FROM PAGE 1

This is the first time in Bangladesh's history that a foreign embassy official in Dhaka has been killed.

Identifying Ali as a "very soft spoken and polite" person, a Bangladeshi official at the Saudi embassy said everybody liked him very much.

Expressing his condolences, Minister of State for Home Shamsul Haque Tuku told reporters at his secretariat office that the ministry had already directed law enforcers to take necessary steps toward investigating the killing.

No case was filed as of 1:00am today.

Ali, 45, had been living alone at Flat A-4, House 22/A, Road 120 in Gulshan for the past two years, said Taposh Rema, a security guard of the building.

According to a Saudi embassy note verbale (diplomatic communication), some unidentified people attacked the official near his house.

Two security guards -- Zulfikar Ali of House 19/B and Rabiul Islam of House 20/A -- told The Daily Star that they heard a gunshot around 1:15am. Rushing out, they found the Saudi official lying on the road in front of House 19/B.

Talking to The Daily Star, Taposh Rema said around the same time he saw from his building a white-private car leaving the place at a very high speed.

"We immediately switched the siren on from our house," Zulfikar said.

Hearing the siren, a police patrol came and took the bullet-hit Saudi official to United Hospital where doctors declared him dead.

After the incident, personnel from the Criminal Investigation Department of police and Rapid Action Battalion cordoned off the crime scene.

The body was taken to Dhaka Medical College morgue at 4:00pm for an autopsy.

The bullet entered near the left chest and went down to hit his right kidney, morgue sources said.

Taposh Rema said Ali used to go out of the house around 11:00 every night, roam around the city on his bicycle and return in around two hours.

"As his bicycle needed repairs, he went out on foot last night [Monday night]," he said, adding the Saudi official was wearing trousers, vest and boots and had a bottle of water in his hand.

The Saudi ambassador visited the crime scene in the afternoon.

Meanwhile, the Saudi embassy sent a note verbale to the foreign ministry, requesting the ministry and the authorities concerned to investigate the murder, said a foreign ministry source.

Senior foreign ministry officials, including the chief of protocol and director general (West Asia), phoned the Saudi ambassador in Dhaka and deputy chief of mission to convey their condolences.

In a statement, the foreign ministry expressed deep shock at the death and sympathy for the bereaved family and the Saudi mission in Dhaka.

The authorities concerned

had already been directed to conduct a full-scale investigation into the incident immediately and bring the perpetrators of the crime to justice, the statement said.

CONDEMNATIONS, SHOCKS

Opposition Leader in parliament Khaleda Zia, Foreign Minister Dipu Moni and Prime Minister's International Affairs Adviser Gowher Rizvi expressed their deep shock at the killing.

"This type of incident in our country is completely unwanted and unexpected," the foreign ministers said.

"Our relations with Saudi Arabia are excellent and this incident will definitely not have any adverse effect on our ties and neither will it lead to a deterioration in diplomatic relations," she added.

Khaleda Zia, also BNP chairperson, in a statement said this was for the first time that a foreign embassy official had got killed in Bangladesh, which proved the poor state of law and order.

Expressing concern, she condemned the killing and demanded exemplary punishment for the killer(s).

In a separate statement, BNP acting secretary general Fakhru Islam Alamgir also condemned the incident.

Prime Minister's International Affairs Adviser Gowher Rizvi termed the killing a "heinous act".

"I hope it will not create any problem in the relations between the two countries," he told reporters at the Liberation War Museum yesterday.

Islamic Andolon Bangladesh chief Syed Muhammad Rezaul Karim also condemned the killing.

Israel warns

FROM PAGE 20

He stressed that all options were on the table, but that containment - leaving Iran to develop its programme under monitoring - was "not an option".

"The Jewish state will not allow those who seek our destruction the means to achieve that goal. A nuclear armed Iran must be stopped," Netanyahu told Aipac.

He waved a copy of a 1944 letter in which the US War Department refused Jewish leaders' requests to bomb the Auschwitz Nazi death camp on the grounds that it "might provoke even more vindictive action by the Germans".

"Today, we have a state of our own," he said. "And the purpose of the Jewish state is to defend Jewish lives and to secure the Jewish future."

In his meeting with Netanyahu at the White House on Monday, Obama said the bond between their countries was "unbreakable".

He said the US believed there was "still a window that allows for a diplomatic resolution", on Iran, but added that the US would consider "all options".

Both Israel and the US understand the "costs of any military action", he said.

Netanyahu replied that Israel "must reserve the right to defend itself" and must remain "the master of its fate".

Bangabandhu

FROM PAGE 1

Bangalee nation was headed for political freedom. In a speech which encompassed the history of Pakistan over the preceding twenty three years, Bangabandhu spelt out in brief and yet great detail the many ways in which the people of East Bengal had been denied their political and economic rights by successive governments of Pakistan.

And then Bangabandhu came to the immediacy of the moment. Referring to the political crisis caused by the theatrics resorted to by Zulfikar Ali Bhutto, followed by the postponement of the national assembly session, which again was followed by General Yahya Khan's invitation to political leaders to a round table conference in Rawalpindi, which subsequently was rejected by Mujib and then a rescheduling of the national assembly session for March 25, Bangabandhu spelt out his preconditions before his party could join the session. Altogether these conditions were four in number: one, martial law would have to be withdrawn by the regime; two, an inquiry must be initiated into the killings of

Bengalis by the Pakistan army since the beginning of the month; three, the army would have to be taken back to the barracks; four, power would have to be transferred to the elected representatives of the people.

But a probable fulfillment of the demands, as the Bengali leader pointed out soon enough, was no guarantee that the Awami League would join the session. Bangabandhu merely told the million-strong rally at the Dhaka Race Course that he would see if he could or could not join the national assembly session. He left the door open for negotiations with the regime and yet gave out the very strong message to his people that independence was the eventual goal for them. It was oratory at its sublime as Bangabandhu concluded his address. "This time the struggle is for emancipation", he declared. "This time the struggle is for independence."

March 7, 1971 was to change the course of history for the people of what would soon be a free, sovereign Bangladesh.



Saudi Ambassador to Bangladesh Abdullah Al Bussairy, second from left, visits the spot in the capital's Gulshan where an official of the embassy was shot dead yesterday.

PHOTO: PALASH KHAN

5 students

FROM PAGE 20

from across the country will contest the divisional round from March 16.

Among them, the top 72 will qualify for the final round (TV round). Each of them will be allowed to bring a parent and a teacher with them.

Satellite television station Channel I will air The Daily Star Spelling Bee.

The top three spellers will win cash prizes of Tk 5 lakh (1st), Tk 2 lakh (2nd) and Tk 1 lakh (3rd).

The champion will also receive an all-expense-paid trip to Washington DC along with a parent.

Indian HC

FROM PAGE 20

take up his diplomatic assignment.

He is expected to meet the press at Hazrat Shahjalal International Airport on arrival.

Pankaj succeeds Rajet Mitter who retired from Indian foreign service and left Dhaka on November 1, 2011.

Before his appointment as high commissioner, Pankaj Saran was joint secretary to Prime Minister Manmohan Singh from 2007 to 2012.

A career diplomat, he has served in Indian missions abroad as well as headquarters.

His overseas assignments were to Moscow, Washington DC, Cairo, and India's Permanent Mission to the United Nations, Geneva.

Pankaj Saran had earlier served in Bangladesh from 1989 to 1992 as the first secretary (political).

He joined the Indian foreign service in 1982 after completing his masters in economics from Delhi University.

The high commissioner is expected to present his credentials to President Zillur Rahman at Bangabhaban sometime this month, sources said.

Pankaj Saran is married and father of two sons.

Passes away

FROM PAGE 20

He was 83 and suffering from old age complications. The former minister had been living in Lebanon for the last few years and was laid to rest there.

He left behind two sons, five grandchildren, relatives and many friends and well-wishers.

In the 1970 Pakistan general elections, Doha contested the seat from Rawalpindi on Awami League ticket. At that time he founded and ran the weekly Inter-Wing. He was arrested and jailed thrice by the then Yahya Khan government for his views on politics. He also founded and ran the Dhaka-based weekly Dialogue Publications.

After the independence, Doha rendered excellent service as the Bangladesh ambassador to Yugoslavia, Iran and the United Kingdom. In 1982, he became the information minister and then the foreign minister of the country.

He was also conferred the Yugoslavia Order of the Flag and the South Korean Order of Diplomatic Service Merit.

Thrashing defeat

FROM PAGE 1

House. The SP has won 224 seats.

Mayawati was relegated to the second position ending up close to 80 seats.

Indian ruling Congress suffered a heavy blow as it failed to improve strength in the politically most crucial state of Uttar Pradesh and regain governance in Punjab. The party also lost power in Goa, our New Delhi correspondent Pallab Bhattacharya adds.

The only relief for Congress is its emphatic victory in northeastern state of Manipur where it retained power for the third consecutive term.

The Congress, which was hoping to do well after Rahul Gandhi's extensive campaigning in 207 constituencies, improved its previous tally of 22 seats by winning 26 seats and was leading in another two.

The BJP, which had 51 seats, has won 47.

The polls were a mid-term popularity test for Prime Minister Manmohan Singh's government ahead of 2014 parliamentary elections and a first real appraisal of Rahul Gandhi viewed by many as the future Prime Minister of India.

"I stood in front, so it is my responsibility," 41-year-old Rahul told reporters as he conceded defeat. "All of us in the Congress party fought. We fought well but the result which came was not so good." Rahul, the scion of Nehru-Gandhi family, had led the party's charge in Uttar Pradesh in a bid to revive Congress in what constituted his biggest challenge yet in a state where it has been out of power for 22 years.

The SP has crossed the half-way mark in the 2012 Uttar Pradesh assembly elections and looks all set to form the next government in the state.

Earlier in the day, state unit president Akhilesh Yadav said party chief Mulayam Singh Yadav will be the chief minister.

Akhilesh said the party's Parliamentary Board will meet tomorrow to decide on issues like staking claim before Governor BL Joshi to form the next government. "I have answered this question several times.... We all want netaji (Mulayam) as the chief

minister," Akhilesh said seeking to put a lid on speculation that he would be the next chief minister of the state.

Replying to questions on the possibility of SP seeking support of independent MLAs, the party's state unit chief said his party will not take support of "mafia".

On possibility of removing statues of elephants (BSP's election symbol) as also of outgoing chief minister Mayawati, he said SP has already made it clear that the statues would not be removed.

SP state president and star campaigner for the party Akhilesh Yadav said that after formation of the government, the first priority of the SP would be to provide relief to the farmers through loan waivers and improvement in power supply.

He said the BSP got five years to develop the state but it squandered money on parks and stones. However, he also said that SP will not touch dalit memorials built by Mayawati. "They will be safe."

What seems to have gone in favour of SP is its image makeover by Akhilesh. Previous SP rule in 2003-07 was known for poor law and order but Akhilesh promised to change the order this time. While Mulayam worked to get back Muslims who were angry after he shook hands with Kalyan Singh in 2009, Akhilesh worked to woo different castes and communities. He was also able to attract youth.

The BSP is expected to remain second despite a loss of over 100 seats in comparison to the 206 it got in 2007.

Congress and BJP are likely to improve but are fighting for third and fourth place.

Congress's ally RLD is also expected to increase its number, according to Times of India.

SP seems to be getting support across the state and all castes and communities, while BSP has suffered losses everywhere but seems to have retained its Dalit base.

However, Mayawati's social engineering failed as Brahmins and Muslims do not seem to have voted for BSP in large number as they did in 2007. Congress and BJP seem to have excelled in some pockets of UP.

While celebrations have begun in SP head quarters in Lucknow, an eerie silence prevailed in BSP head office and gates were closed for visitors. Disappointment was palpable in Congress office, whereas BJP camp was hopeful of getting more than 100 seats, double of what it got in 2007.

Reacting to result trends, SP general secretary Ram Gopal Yadav said that people have voted against five years of misrule in UP. He said SP is gaining because it took up public cause for five years while sitting in opposition.

UP Congress President Rita Bahugana Joshi said that though her party does not seem to be doing well, she would improve its tally. She said there is a strong anti-incumbency wave against Mayawati regime.

Congress leader Rajiv Shukla said that Rahul Gandhi created a favourable atmosphere for the party through his work and campaign in UP. But, he said, party could not convert it into seats because of absence of party cadre at the ground level. He claimed that in any case Congress would emerge as key player in UP.

BJP national vice president and candidate from Lucknow East Kalraj Mishra said that party would do better than 2007. He admitted that induction of sacked BSP minister Babu Singh Kushwaha, who is prime accused in NRHM scam and has been arrested by CBI, damaged BJP's prospect upto some extent in UP.

The BJP has received a strong drubbing in Lucknow, which used to be its stronghold for long. The party has lost in Lucknow constituency for the first time since 1991. This was the first elections in which former prime minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee was not in the picture. And this resulted in crushing defeat for the party.

The BJP also lost in the rural areas of Lucknow. It was in a miserable state at the start of election but entry of fire brand Hindutava leader Uma Bharti galvanised cadre and brought party back in contest.

BJP was also able to polarise votes on communal lines at few places on the issue of Muslim quota.

Investment

FROM PAGE 1

"If economic hardship intensifies, popular discontent could raise political instability, especially as we get closer to the 2014 elections," said the release.

Bangladesh's relative political stability received a small jolt with reports of a plan by a small group of serving and retired army officers to topple the government, which was foiled by the army, it noted.

Bangladesh had started to conduct sovereign rating since 2010 in a bid to show case the country accurately and avoid arbitrary rating by different entities.

"The stable outlook reflects strong growth prospects and ongoing donor support, which ensures low-cost and long maturity external debt that minimises refinancing risk," maintained the statement.

Bullish about the government's measures to stabilise the economy, the rating agency said exchange rate flexibility is a key plank of this response, with the central bank allowing the taka to depreciate 15 per cent over the past year to January, keeping foreign reserves loss to a minimum.

It further pointed out that the planned three-year IMF extended credit facility programme of \$1 billion would make funds available on a concessional basis for Bangladesh. "A planned maiden sovereign bond issue in conjunction with the IMF programme would also boost the reserve cushion and market confidence."

Bangladesh can have its rating upgraded if it can expand revenue base and improve administrative and collection efficiency, observed the firm.

HC asks

FROM PAGE 20

the order.

During the hearing of the petition, it also ordered the authorities concerned to demarcate the river, situated near Barisal city, as per Central Survey (CS) and Revisional Survey (RS) records and to submit the demarcation report before it in three months.

The HC bench of Justice A H M Shamsuddin Choudhury Manik and Justice Jahangir Hossain Selim also issued a rule upon the government to explain in three weeks why it should not be directed to save the river from earth filling and encroachment.

Bangladesh Human Rights and Peace for Bangladesh (HRPB) Secretary Asaduzzaman Siddiqui submitted the writ petition yesterday following a report published in the Bangla daily newspaper Prothom Alo on March 2.

According to the report, some land grabbers have encroached on a big portion of the river. They have filled earth in it and are distributing it as plots.

Appearing for the petitioner, counsel Manzill Murshid prayed to the court to issue necessary directives upon the authorities concerned to take immediate steps to save the river.

Help arrest

FROM PAGE 1

to occupy all the hotels and community centres in the capital aiming to execute militant activities, he added.

He also asked the law enforcement agencies to remain alert.

The state minister was speaking as the chief guest at a discussion titled "Opposition's programme to protect war criminals" organised by Bangabandhu Sangskritik Jote at the National Public Library auditorium. Pijush Bandyopadhyay, presidium member of the organisation, chaired the discussion.

Qamrul, also a joint secretary of Dhaka city unit AL, alleged that BNP Chairperson and Leader of the Opposition Khaleda Zia had been patronising various militant outfits, including Harkat-ul-Jihad, Hizb ut-Tahrir, JMB (Jama'atul Mujahideen Bangladesh) and Lashkar-e-Taiba, and now she was up to using them in the rally.

Ahmed Hossain, AL organising secretary, said, "No matter what BNP tries, the trial of war criminals will definitely be held on this soil."