

Safety net

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beggars in the city. The capital was divided into 10 zones and 10 NGOs were given the responsibility to conduct the survey.

The NGOs submitted reports based on which the 2,000 beggars were selected for the primary round of rehabilitation.

Meanwhile, the ministry is to present the current implementation status of all safety net programmes, including the beggar rehabilitation programme, at the inter-ministerial meeting this week to be chaired by Finance Minister AMA Muhith.

The social welfare ministry official told The Daily Star that a proposal would be made at the meeting to increase fund allocations for safety net programmes and raise the number of beneficiaries in the next budget.

Allocations for the five major safety net programmes in the country may be increased by 24 percent to Tk 2,139 crore in the next budget. The number of beneficiaries under these projects would then be raised by 11 lakh to a total of 48 lakh.

The social welfare ministry has prepared proposals for these increases. They include allowance for the elderly, allowance for widows and women abandoned by husbands, allowance for insolvent disabled people, honorarium for insolvent freedom fighters and maternity allowance for poor women.

The amount of allowances stands at Tk 300 per month at present, except for maternity allowance which is Tk 350 and freedom fighters, who get Tk 2,000 per month.

The ministry official said the allowances are unlikely to be increased at present due to fund constraints.

Truck ploughs

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road near Salamat Khan intersection and crashed into Selim's house.

Police recovered the dead bodies with the help of the locals.

Mahbub Morshed, officer-in-charge of Chandpur Police Station, said police seized the truck but the driver managed to flee.

A case has been filed in this connection, he added.

Selim moved in with his family in a shanty near the intersection after he lost his home in Baharia village to river erosion six years ago, locals said.

Ilias not held

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they should not be directed to produce Ilias before it or prove that he was not detained by them.

The petitioner's counsel Mahbub Uddin Khokon told this correspondent yesterday that he would pray to the HC today to fix a date for hearing the rule.

If Ilias Ali was in the custody of the law enforcers, they would produce him before the HC, the DAG said citing their reports.

The IGP said in his report this office had formed a three-member committee to investigate how Ilias Ali went missing and to find out his whereabouts.

In its report, the Rab said that acting on a list of mobile phone calls, they were trying to trace Ilias Ali.

In their reports, the CID, SB and Banani Police Station said they were working to find out the missing BNP leader.

Former lawmaker and BNP Organising Secretary (Sylhet Division) Ilias Ali along with his driver has been missing since the night of April 17. BNP alleged that government agencies had picked them up.

In her writ petition, Luna claimed the law enforcers had illegally kept her husband detained. She sought HC orders on them to produce Ilias before it.

After hearing the writ petition, an HC bench comprising Justice Farid Ahmed and Justice Sheikh Hassan Arif issued the rule.

US sides

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and a "very important tool for lifting people out of poverty".

"I can only hope that nothing is done that in any way undermines the success of what Grameen Bank has accomplished on behalf of many millions of poor women," she said.

Grameen has played a vital role in bringing changes to the lives of poor rural women, who own the bank. There is no other example in the world, she said, referring to 83 lakh Bangladeshi women who are stakeholders in the lender.

She said Nobel Laureate Muhammad Yunus and Sir Fazle Hasan Abed have created two of the world's best organisations--Grameen Bank and Brac.

She said she has known both Yunus and Abed for 25 years dubbing them as "national treasures" and that government should treat them accordingly.

Hillary, a staunch advocate of women's empowerment, said she met a woman who was able to attend university after her mother had earned a livelihood through a microloan.

"That's the story of America. I want it to be the story of Bangladesh," she said, calling on Bangladesh to preserve Grameen's independence and "unique organisational structure" in which loan recipients themselves are considered owners.

Ending her quick visit to Bangladesh, in which she signed a partnership dialogue and held talks with political leadership and civil society representatives, Hillary left for India in the afternoon.

Her special aircraft left at 12:50pm for Kolkata for a three-day visit to India. From Kolkata, she would fly to New Delhi on Monday to hold talks with External Affairs Minister SM Krishna on Tuesday. She is expected to call on Indian Prime Minister Manmohan Singh and meet National Security Adviser Shivshankar Menon.

**FOCUS ON DEMOCRACY**  
On democratic process and economic growth of Bangladesh, Hillary said they require a responsible government to deliver public services, private business sector to create employment and the civil society to pursue public interests.

Democracy has to sustain in Bangladesh despite various difficulties and challenges with the people's resilience and aspiration for it, she added.

"You are on the right track of democracy though it is messy," she observed.

She said she had told both Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina and Leader of the Opposition Khaleda Zia, during her meetings with them, that political actors should seek resolution of disputes through dialogues.

The political actors need to realise that they cannot do politics as usual any longer, it has changed, she noted.

She stressed "national unity and consensus" to meet people's aspirations for economic and political development.

Admitting time and again that the Americans too had to fight civil wars to establish democratic process, human rights and dignity, she said her government was ready to be helpful to the Bangladeshi people for liberty, democracy and rights.

The US is investing a significant amount of money in Bangladesh for development in health, combating climate change impacts and in the energy sector.

Referring to the recent killing of labour organiser Aminul Islam, Hillary said such killings and oppression on labour leaders were a threat to labour rights.

"Islam's killing has to be investigated and the perpetrators must be brought to book," she said.

She said it would give a wrong message to the Americans if the government failed to probe the murder and find the culprits.

An independent investigation has to be carried into the murder and it is a "real test" for the government, she said without elaborating further.

"You don't want to get a reputation as a place where labour activists are murdered or taken advantage of, because in today's world that

will cause big manufacturers of clothing to be afraid to stay or come to Bangladesh," Hillary added.

She also said her government was ready to help bring the factory owners and labour leaders to a better dialogue.

Aminul Islam went missing in the first week of last month and his body was found later.

In reply to a question on whether Bangladesh was getting duty-free access of readymade garments to the US market, she said her country first wants to accomplish an agreement on trade and investment and then go for such trade advantages.

She said cross-border issues, historical enmity and a lot of mistrust among the regional countries including Bangladesh, India, Pakistan, Afghanistan and the Central Asia have held back development in the region.

According to Hillary, Bangladesh has opportunities to become a crossroad in the South Asian region and has opportunities to play a role in resolving regional problems. Regional grouping like the Asean for cooperation in trade, business and development could be helpful.

The USA is very interested in anything in Bangladesh, particularly in the emergence of young leadership. Young people are vital to realise the country's potentials of economic growth and democratic sustenance, she said.

She said her government had already asked the US embassy in Dhaka to facilitate study for more and more Bangladeshi students in America.

She said she got a sense of potentials of this country when she first came here 17 years ago as the US first lady. After 17 years, she met many development changes.

When asked about the view that the US was an anti-Muslim country, Hillary said, "That hurts me so much."

"It's a painful perception to hear about and I deeply regret that anyone believes that or propagates it."

Hillary said while individual prejudice exists in all societies, it is not an institutional policy of the US. On the contrary, she said, the US has gone further "than anywhere else in the world in trying to guarantee legal protections" for minorities.

Talking on women advancement, she said good education was a must to pursue one's dream. Women have every right to go as far as their hard work and talent might take them to.

Education, determination, tolerance, stamina, parental support and encouragement helped her achieve her own successes, she said.

Students from universities, colleges and schools and members of different youth movement organisations like Bangladesh Youth Leadership Centre and Jaago Bangladesh took part in the session fashioned "A Conversation with Bangladesh".

**BREAKFAST MEETING**  
At a breakfast meeting with Prof Yunus and Sir Abed at the Gulshan residence of the US ambassador, Hillary reiterated her calls for a peaceful solution to the current political impasse in Bangladesh so that a peaceful election could be held.

"We have talked about political scenario in the country," Prof Yunus said.

"It would be good to move forward in a peaceful manner so that a peaceful election could be held," Yunus quoted the US secretary of state as saying.

Speaking to the media after the one-hour meeting, Prof Yunus said they discussed Bangladesh's possibilities and what the country has achieved so far.

"She talked about what the direction of Bangladesh is and what its potential is. She also shared her personal experience with us, especially about the health sector."

"She came here 17 years ago. At that time, we took her to so many places and she talked to a number of women. We recalled those memories," Prof Yunus told reporters.

"We expressed our gratefulness to her as she is now visiting the country."

Ctg BNP leader

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residence in Daumya Pukurpur area around 11:00pm following an argument with his wife, family sources said.

Following the incident, his brother, Md Ilias filed a general diary with Double Mooring Police Station on Saturday afternoon.

Mohiuddin Selim, officer-in-charge of the police station, said they had information that Zia went to Dhaka that night.

"He bought a bus ticket from the counter of Baghdad Paribahan in Goribullah Shah Mazar area on Friday night," he said.

"Susan, a passenger of the same bus tipped us off and his description of Zia was a perfect match," he added.

The BNP leader arrived home yesterday morning bringing a sigh of great relief to his family.

"Zia left home following an argument with his wife and did not inform anyone of his whereabouts, which made us anxious," Ilias told The Daily Star.

He criticised BNP leaders for overreacting centring a family matter.

Jubo League men

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Later local journalists laid siege to the office of superintendent of police (SP) of Jessore for 30 minutes protesting the assault, reports our Narail correspondent.

The victims said that while they were gathered at a local ferry terminal to cover the hartal event, a gang of Jubo League members, who allegedly work for Whip Abdul Wahab, came to the spot in a microbus and started assaulting the journalists in the presence of policemen.

They destroyed video cameras and took away cassettes and CDs from the news-men where Abul Kalam Azad, ASP (B circle), Jessore, was present, they added.

As the news spread, local journalists besieged the office of SP Kamrul Ahsan and demanded immediate recovery of the cassettes and CDs.

They also demanded removal of the SP and Officer-in-Charge of Abhoynagar Police Station Ahsan Habib as 'they failed to maintain law and order during the strike'.

The journalists gave the SP a 24-hour ultimatum for arresting local Jubo League leader Alamgir Hossain Shimul, also the alleged chief of a local gang named Shimul Bahini, on charge of attacking them.

When asked, Whip Wahab denied his or any of his followers' involvement in the incident.

The Abhoynagar OC said police were trying to arrest the attackers.

Abhoynagar upazila unit of BNP in Jessore called a daylong hartal yesterday in the upazila demanding immediate arrest of killers of Rafiqul Islam, organising secretary of the unit. Rafiqul was killed Friday night.

Supermoon

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The phenomenon, known as a perigee full moon, means the moon appears up to 14% bigger and 30% brighter than when it is furthest from the planet.

The optimum effect was seen - cloud permitting - at 04:30 BST.

The Royal Astronomical Society's Dr Robert Massey said the Moon's size may be more obvious than its brightness.

"The eye is so good at compensating for changes in brightness that you simply don't notice (that element) so much," he said.

When the moon appears at its biggest it will be just 356,400km away, compared to its usual distance from Earth of 384,000km.

Dr Massey said: "When the moon is closest to the earth and full or new, you get an increase in the tidal pull in the ocean because the gravity of the moon and the sunline up."

He added: "The Moon is always beautiful and a full moon is always dramatic."

Scientists have dismissed the idea the perigee could cause strange behaviour - like lycanthropy - or natural disasters.

The moon's distance from earth varies because it follows an elliptical orbit instead of a circular one.

BNP leaders sneak into HC

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including its acting secretary general Mirza Fakhrul Islam Alamgir, standing committee members Mirza Abbas and Goyewshwar Chandra Roy, Ruhul Quddus Talukder Dulu and few others entered the court premises in separate groups.

Dulu, a central leader of BNP and a former deputy minister, told The Daily Star at 8:45 last night that they would appear before the court today.

"We are here," he said when asked about their whereabouts inside the court building.

BNP standing committee member MK Anwar, pro-BNP student organisation Chhatra Dal President Sultan Salauddin Tuku, Jatiyatabadi Swachchhasabak Dal President Habibunnabi Sohail and its General Secretary Sarafat Ali Suvo, among others, were seen in the court.

Unlike other holidays, about 100 pro-BNP lawyers including a number of senior lawyers were present at their

offices late into the night inside the court.

The BNP leaders were accused in two cases filed with Tejgaon and Shabbagh police stations in connection with vandalising buses and blasting cocktails inside the Secretariat during hartal hours on April 29.

BNP chairperson's adviser Khandaker Mahbub Hossain, also a former president of Supreme Court Bar Association, told The Daily Star at 8:30 last night that they would move petitions before the court for the BNP leaders' bail.

He also said the accused BNP leaders had already signed Okalatnama (appointment of lawyers) for moving their bail petitions.

Asked about the whereabouts of accused BNP leaders, Mahbub said, "Everyone has the right to enter the court premises to get shelter of the law."

BNP Lawmaker Mahbuddin Khokon, who was awarded bail on Thursday, however, denied the presence of his party

leaders inside the court building.

"It is absolutely a rumour," said Khokon, also a Supreme Court lawyer.

However, an official of an intelligence agency confirmed that some BNP leaders took cover inside the chamber of a lawyer. But the law enforcers could not trace them, he said.

On May 2, a High Court judge felt embarrassed to hear the bail petitions of 27 BNP men, including its acting secretary general in the two cases.

The judge, however, did not mention any reason for his embarrassment.

On the same day, another HC bench refused to hear the bail petitions of some opposition leaders, who have remained on the run since April 29 night, fearing arrest.

Police even searched the house of Mirza Alamgir at that night but could not find him there. Since then all the leaders accused in the cases went into hiding to avert arrest.

Land deal too to take time

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the protocol to the 1974 Land Boundary Agreement, but the ruling party has only single majority in the Lok Sabha, the lower house of the bicameral Indian parliament.

The protocol was signed during Indian Prime Minister Manmohan Singh's visit to Dhaka in September last year to settle the long-pending land issues.

According to media reports, the opposition BJP and West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee's Trinamool Congress, a component of the ruling coalition, have taken a stance against the Dhaka-New Delhi land boundary agreement.

Also, a deal on sharing of Teesta water could not yet be inked due to opposition of Mamata.

Pranab, who arrived here on Saturday night, told the editors that India would convert \$200 million of its \$1 billion line of credit to Bangladesh into a grant. "India will treat the amount as grant, not credit."

During his brief stay, the Indian minister attended the joint celebration of the 150th birth anniversary of Rabindranath Tagore.

He met Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina, Leader of the Opposition Khaleda Zia, Foreign Minister Dipu Moni and the editors before leaving for New Delhi yesterday afternoon.

In response to a question, Pranab informed the editors that ratification of the land

boundary agreement protocol would take time, and his government would keep working towards a greater consensus among the parties in parliament, meeting sources said.

As per the protocol, Bangladesh's 51 and India's 111 enclaves will be exchanged.

The issues of illegally and adversely possessed lands, perpetual lease of Tin Bigha corridor to Bangladesh and demarcation of a 6.5-km boundary with three Indian states -- West Bengal, Tripura and Assam -- will also be settled under the agreement.

Earlier, coming out of the meeting with Pranab, Foreign Minister Dipu Moni told reporters that India was "very sincere" about implementation of the land boundary agreement and signing of the Teesta water-sharing deal.

"He [Pranab] has assured us and Inshallah those will be done," she added.

Asked about progress in disbursement of the \$1 billion line of credit from India, Dipu Moni said the matter was in process.

Replying to a query from The Financial Express Editor Moazzem Hossain, Pranab said New Delhi had already relaxed the rules of origin criteria for various projects and would consider terms that are more flexible.

Asked if the relations between the two countries improve when Awami League is in power and they deteriorate with BNP in

power, the senior Congress leader said India's relationship with Bangladesh is people to people.

"We will have equal relations whoever is voted to power in Bangladesh," Pranab was quoted as saying by an editor, who was present at the meeting.

Armenia votes to tests fragile democracy

AFP, Yerevan

Armenians yesterday voted for a new parliament in the biggest test of the ex-Soviet state's fragile democratic credentials since disputed presidential elections in 2008 ended in fatal clashes.

The elections are largely a straight fight between the governing Republican party of President Serzh Sargsian and its current coalition partner led by the charismatic and super-rich former arm wrestling champion Gagik Tsarukian.

Campaigning came to a chaotic finish on Friday when scores of gas-filled balloons exploded at a Republican party rally in Yerevan led by Sargsian, unleashing a fireball into the air and injuring almost 150 people.

The authorities promised an unprecedentedly clean contest for the 131-seat National Assembly in the hope of avoiding any turmoil after battles between riot police and opposition supporters four years ago left 10 people dead.

All deals to be implemented

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During the meeting, Hasina stressed resolving the pending issues at an early date. She said the proposed construction of Tipaimukh dam on the cross-border Barak river and the river interlinking project were raising concerns in Bangladesh.

She also hoped India would make an effort to expedite the signing of an agreement for water sharing of the Teesta and other common rivers.

"My government has taken several bold decisions for a vis-a-vis relations with India over issues including security, transit and access to Chittagong and Mongla ports."

The PM hoped the Indian government would "demonstrate political will in addressing the pending issues".

PM's Press Secretary Abul Kalam Azad said Pranab told the premier that under the Joint Rivers Commission a sub-committee comprising experts of both countries would be formed to analyse everything related to the Tipaimukh project. It would remove confusions in the public mind.

Talking on the Teesta issue, Pranab said, "All countries will get due share of water of the rivers coming down from the Himalayas."

On bilateral trade, he said New Delhi had already granted duty-free access for 46 Bangladeshi products to

India to bridge the widening trade gap between the two countries.

At the meet, Hasina welcomed Pranab, who is in the city on a two-day tour, and also greeted Indian PM Manmohan Singh through him.

The prime minister underscored the need for early ratification of the Land Boundary Agreement, 1974 and implementation of decisions over demarcation of land boundary, exchange of enclaves and areas in adverse possession.

Appreciating Indian steps to address border killing, Hasina said there was also a "need for greater sensitivity from the Indian side" while responding to concerns raised by Bangladesh.

In this context, she referred to the proposed Tipaimukh dam construction and the river link project, saying both have become big concerns for the people in Bangladesh.

On Teesta, she said, "The issue assumed a greater political and emotive significance, and further delays could make it even more difficult for the two countries to reach a mutually beneficial arrangement."

Hasina mentioned that only a few people in Bangladesh understand the centre-state relations or the dynamic of coalition politics.

The prime minister called for early implementation of the projects under the \$1

billion Line of Credit.

She expressed satisfaction over "small but significant development" regarding 24-hour unfettered access and laying of electric cables across the Tinbigha Corridor, electrification of Angorpotadahagram and signing of agreements for 1320MW coal-based power plant in Bagerhat's Rampal and for purchasing 250MW power from West Bengal.

Hasina said since Pranab's last visit to Bangladesh in August 2011, her government had been working towards deepening the emotional bonds and removing the mistrust between the two countries.

Deputy Leader of the House Syeda Sajeda Chowdhury, Finance Minister AMA Muhith, Home Minister Shahara Khatun, PM's advisers Mashur Rahman, Gowher Rizvi and Professor Modasser Ali, Ambassador-At-Large M Ziauddin, Bangladesh High Commissioner to India Tarik A Karim, Indian High Commissioner to Dhaka Pankaj Saran, PM's Principal Secretary Sheikh Md Wahid Uz Zaman and PMO Secretary Mollah Waheeduzzaman were present at the meet.

The veteran politician of India landed in Dhaka Saturday to join the 150th birth anniversary celebrations of Rabindranath Tagore.

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Man in Afghan uniform kills Nato soldier

AFP, Kabul

A soldier with Nato's US-led coalition in Afghanistan was killed by a man in Afghan army uniform yesterday, a spokesman for the mission said, in the latest so-called "green-on-blue" attack.

The death takes the number of foreign troops killed by Afghans they were working with to at least 19 this year, in at least 13 separate attacks.

The attacker was killed in the incident, sources said.

The shooting is the latest in an increasing number of attacks by Afghan soldiers turning their weapons against Nato troops who are helping Kabul fight a decade-long insurgency by hardline Taliban Islamists.

MLM bosses

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policesaid. Acting on a tip-off, Mohammadpur police captured Muntasir Hossain Emon, the MD, from the capital's Uttara and Jamsheer Rahman, the GM, from Bangla Motor around 4:30am, said Abu Zafar Manik, sub-inspector of the station.

Produced before the Chief Metropolitan Magistrate's Court, they were placed on a six-day remand each, Mahmudul Islam, officer-in-charge of the station, told The Daily Star.

The government suspended operations of the MLM firm in January last year after hundreds of investors took to the streets in Dhaka and elsewhere in the country demanding their money back.

In the same month, the Anti-Corruption Commission filed a case accusing the company officials of making money through cheating people.

Around the same time, the central bank froze 110 bank accounts of the company over illegal banking.

Subsequently, two investors filed two fraud cases against the company officials with Mohammadpur police in October and December last year.

Paraded before the media at Mohammadpur Police Station, Muntasir said, "We collected Tk 1,200 crore from around six lakh clients and the money was deposited in separate bank accounts. Of the amount, Tk 419 crore is still in one of those accounts. But the government has frozen the account."

The company bought lands in Cox's Bazar, Narsingdi, Narayanganj and Bashundhara, he added.

Jamsedur claimed one of company advisers, Mithu Chowdhury, went into hiding with Tk 200 crore.

On April 9, Home Minister Shahara Khatun asked the additional inspector general of police (Special Branch) to stop top officials of unipay2u from leaving the country.

She also ordered the additional IGP to submit a report on the company.

Meanwhile, on information of the arrests of the MD and the GM, hundreds of investors thronged the police station and staged demonstrations there, demanding their money back and exemplary punishment of the