

DB team

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as detective personnel tried to enter her house around 1:15am. "But I asked them to come during daytime, instead of allowing them to enter."

"When some persons were knocking at the gate, I called the OC of Banani Police Station over phone. The OC informed me that a DB [Detective Branch] team went for a search at my house," she said.

Luna said as the residents of the house told the strangers that they were calling journalists, they left the spot.

She added that the investigation officer (IO) of the general diary, filed in connection with the missing incident of April 17, visited her house around 12:00 noon yesterday.

He confirmed her that a DB patrol team came to her house to see whether there were any hartal picketers in the house, Luna said.

Despite repeated attempts, the IO could not be reached for comments. The Banani OC once received the call and asked The Daily Star correspondent to call him later. He, however, did not receive calls later on.

Both the police and the Rapid Action Battalion (Rab) claimed that no detective or Rab personnel went to Ilias's house that night.

Asked, Mahbubur Rahman, DB deputy commissioner (north), ruled out the possibility of such an incident.

"We will investigate whether anyone did so in the guise of law enforcers," he told The Daily Star over phone.

Commander M Sohail, legal and media wing director of Rab, told The Daily Star that no Rab personnel went to the residence of Ilias yesterday.

One of the organising secretaries of the BNP and a former lawmaker, Ilias Ali, 51, and his driver went missing while returning to his Banani residence on the night of April 17.

Luna yesterday told The Daily Star that law enforcers could not unearth the mystery in a month, "rather now they are harassing us by conducting raid in night".

She said she was confident to get back her husband as the prime minister assured her of sincere efforts.

Meanwhile, BNP condemned the law enforcers' alleged attempt to enter Ilias's house in the dead of night.

In a press release signed by Mohammad Abdul Latif Jony, BNP's joint organising secretary, the party also demanded an explanation in this regard.

Russia moves 1,800 after arms stockpile fire

AFP, Moscow

Russian emergency workers evacuated about 1,800 people from their homes yesterday after a fire broke out at a military base in the country's far east, sparking an explosion of stored shells.

Russian Railways, the company that manages the country's vast rail network, said it had closed down a section of the Trans-Siberian Railway because of the incident and was expecting train delays.

Residents of two villages close to the base where Soviet-era shells were stored have been evacuated, and another two villages are being cleared, a spokeswoman for the far eastern branch of the emergency ministry told AFP.

The four villages have a total population of about 1,800 people, she said.

The blaze triggered a chain of blasts that left two soldiers slightly injured, the ministry said, with rescue workers unable to put out the flames as artillery shells continued to explode three hours later.

The defence ministry said there were about 489 train wagons containing 100-millimetre shells at the base.

The base lies seven kilometres (four miles) from a train station in the nearest village of Sungach, close to the Chinese border and about 200 kilometres north of the port city of Vladivostok.

Instigations

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express their opinions. Any kind of unrest can be averted or the damage minimised if factories have such platforms," he said.

Nazma Akter, president of Sammilito Garment Sramik Federation, a platform for garment workers, said her organisation trains workers on their rights and responsibilities.

"But such short motivational training programmes for two or three days are not enough," she said.

More than 3.5 million workers are employed in the sector but the federation can train on average 5,000 people a year, she added.

Factories themselves can also train workers on workplace behaviour and crisis management, she said.

AKM Nasim, a senior legal counsellor at the American Centre for International Labour Solidarity, terms it "difficult" to train so many workers, but says incidents of unrest can be reduced through formation of workers' union or committee at factories.

"If the workers have any complaints, they can raise those before the committee. Such committees can also contribute to improve the worker-management relations," he added.

Referring to the latest unrest at the Ha-Meem Group factory at Ashulia, Director General of Industrial Police Abdus

Salam said, "The issue in itself was small, but it became a big one for lack of proper communication between workers and officials."

On May 12 and 13, Ashulia industrial belt near the capital turned violent as workers of the group took to the streets following a rumour that one of their fellow workers was tortured to death by officials and security guards of the company.

The rumour later turned out to be false, but the agitating workers by the time damaged more than 150 vehicles while more than 100 people were injured as the workers clashed with police over the two days.

A decision on counselling of the workers by the industrial police was awaiting home ministry's approval, the industrial police DG said, adding that his force would start large-scale counselling programmes on the ministry's nod.

"We've failed to build good relations between workers and mid-level management as the garment industry has not developed in a planned way. But these days, maintaining good relations between workers and the management is very important in garment industry," said Shaiful Islam Mohiuddin, president of Bangladesh Garment Manufacturers and Exporters Association.

BNP in the soup

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waiting for Monday's hearing on bail petition of the detained leaders. BNP would be in trouble if the leaders were not granted bail, they added.

Meanwhile, the opposition alliance has decided not to declare any tougher programmes, as it might prompt the government to go even tougher on them and hinder the preparation for the rally.

BNP Chairperson Khaleda Zia recently in a meeting chose not to go for any radical movement so that the party can get ready to make the June 11 rally a success.

"Some of the alliance partners tried to convince the chairperson to opt for tougher programmes, including non-stop hartal, but she did not agree to it," said a senior BNP leader who was present in the alliance meeting at Khaleda's Gulshan office Thursday night.

"We should not weaken ourselves before the rally," said sources quoting Khaleda as saying in the meeting.

Asked about the party's preparation, BNP standing committee member Lt Gen (ret'd) Mahbubur Rahman told The Daily Star that the already-declared programmes, including mass hunger strike, would help them get organised for the rally.

Khaleda, also leader of the opposition, in a rally on March 12 issued the 90-day ultimatum to the government saying that agitation programmes to oust the government would be declared from June 11 if their demand for reinstating the caretaker government system was not met by June 10.

The party had already started preparing for the rally as the ruling Awami League has been repeatedly rejecting the opposition's demand.

As part of the preparation, BNP had constituted 40 sub-committees comprising central leaders to tour across the country ahead of the

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Oppela Raju Naha, officer-in-charge of Ukhia Police Station, confirmed the incident and said the body was sent to Cox's Bazar Sadar hospital for an autopsy.

The situation is under control now, added the OC. Jalal Uddin, camp in-charge of Kutupalong Rohingya refugee camp, said around 70 thousand Rohingya refugees are living in the adjacent hills outside the camp area illegally.

Focus on power

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The power sector will get the highest allocation -- Tk 7,911 crore. The second highest -- Tk 7,764 crore -- will go to the communications sector, reflecting the emphasis on infrastructure development, in particular, construction of the long-awaited Padma bridge.

In the current fiscal year, the budget support from the development partners has been cut almost by half. The ministry has estimated the support at Tk 2,050 crore for the next fiscal year.

Despite criticisms in the past years over inclusion of numerous projects in the ADP, the government is including a lot of projects in the ADP for FY 2012-13.

Allocations have been proposed for 1,037 projects. Besides, 720 unapproved projects have been included with a lump sum allocation of Tk 1,938 crore.

Another high official of the planning ministry said the Finance Division has fixed Tk 54,300 crore for the new ADP against Tk 67,367 crore demanded by various ministries and divisions.

To appease the ministries, many projects will be given small allocations, he added.

Economists, however, suggest the government take up a limited number of projects and give priority to resource-savings schemes.

A list of 10 projects has been added to the ADP proposal for implementation under public-private partnership.

ACC probe

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(ICX) licence from the government.

ACC Chairman Golam Rahman said this while talking to The Daily Star over telephone yesterday.

Bangladesh Telecommunication Regulatory Commission issued the ICX licence to Sengupta Telecommunication Ltd on April 12 this year. Soumen is the managing director of the company.

The ACC chairman said the commission decided to exempt Soumen from the allegation of irregularities over the sources of the licence fee as the investigation officer found no irregularities committed by Soumen.

He said the investigation officer found that Soumen and his company had made all bank transactions in a transparent way and following the law.

Sengupta Telecommunication Ltd's authorised capital was Tk 2 crore. Its six partners paid Tk 60,000 each and the rest of the money was borrowed from New Generation Construction Ltd, the ACC chairman said.

The chairman of Sengupta Telecommunication Ltd was the owner of New Generation Construction Ltd, he said, adding that the other partners of the company were information technology experts.

Gulam Rahman said the borrowed money was sent to the account of Sengupta Telecommunication Ltd through Jamuna Bank's Gulshan and Dilkusha branches.

The ACC had formed a committee in April to probe how the company gathered the money for the licence fee after a newspaper report raised questions about the funding.

Soumen's father Suranjit received plenty of media attention this year. Members of Border Guard Bangladesh on April 9 had detained then railways minister Suranjit's assistant personal secretary and two top railway officials with Tk 70 lakh in their possession.

They were detained after the driver of the assistant personal secretary drove the microbus carrying them into the BGB headquarters and told the guards there that there was illegal money in the car.

The scandal led to the resignation of Suranjit from the ministry on April 16 but the government kept him in the cabinet as a minister without portfolio.

At last night's award ceremony, Anwar Hossain, chairman of Anwar Group of Industries, won the "Business Person of the Year" laurels as the septuagenarian tirelessly continues to turn a nearly 200-year-old comb-making family business into a business empire that now

Biggest-ever Yaba

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Rab's Legal and Media Wing Director Commander M Sohail told The Daily Star that it was the biggest ever Yaba seizure in the country.

"There are special marks on the sacks which had Yaba inside. They brought Yaba in a few sacks and the others were filled with plum so that nobody could suspect."

For the last four days, a joint team of Rab-1 and personnel of an intelligence agency had been watching the movement of the Yaba peddlers in Teknaf, Asadganj and Khatunganj areas, he said.

"The consignment came to the country from Myanmar Thursday night," he added.

Rab handed over the arrestees to Kotwali police around 6:30pm, said officer-in-charge at the station, Rafiqul Islam. A case was filed.

Political unrest

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"The business climate has not improved and we now have more challenges," said Amjad Hossain Chowdhury, president of Metropolitan Chamber of Commerce and Industry in Dhaka.

Amjad, also chief executive of Pran-RFL Group, said hike in prices of fuel and electricity, and high inflation were hurting the business community badly.

Problems of infrastructure still trouble them along with traffic congestion. Law and order has not improved either, he observed adding that a couple of his company trucks were hijacked recently. "The hijackers have even killed one of my trucks."

Recurring hartals have become an additional burden, he observed adding, "We cannot transport raw materials or finished goods when there is a hartal. It creates a lot of stress. We are trying to find out ways to keep the business running."

"Political strife has to be removed and energy, power and other infrastructures have to be improved," Saiful Islam, former presi-

dent of Bangladesh-German Chamber of Commerce and Industry, said local and foreign investors were worried over the recent political turmoil.

Terming the political instability a man-made problem, he said political unrest was becoming a burning issue.

"Bangladesh is globally competitive and everyone wants to enhance competitiveness to tap into the huge opportunity that has opened up for the first time since our independence in 1971," said Saiful, also chairman of Western Marine Shipyard Ltd, which makes vessels for mainly European buyers.

Lack of infrastructure did not allow local entrepreneurs to attain desired growth in exports and in businesses, he added.

Credit crunch in the financial sector and the stock market debacle last year hit businesses hard. Though those problems have eased a little, increased interest rates on bank loans have raised the cost of borrowing, he said.

Despite the problems, he noted, business did not fold, but growth was limited.

Business heroes

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Advanced Chemical Industries, popularly known as ACI, which champions the quality of its products.

M Anis Ud Dowla, chairman of the group, received the award on behalf of the company.

"Our company has come this far as we -- from the very beginning -- have focused on making our employees more productive," he said in his instant reaction.

The posthumous Lifetime Contribution Award went to MA Samad for his contribution to the insurance industry. His Bangladesh General Insurance Company Ltd is the country's first private sector insurance company.

Towhid Samad, chairman of the company, received the award on behalf of his father. "I really think that he is present here," an emotional Samad said.

He thanked the organisers for awarding his father.

Prime Bank Ltd, one of the fastest growing private commercial banks in the country, scooped the award in the financial institution category.

Accepting the award, Ehsan Khasru, managing director of the bank, said his bank was one of the top banks of the country for its "customer-first" focus and creating excellence within the company.

Thriving entrepreneur Sharmin Hossain picked up the Outstanding Woman in Business award, as she rose to a greater height of success by launching Fresh and Safe Agro Ltd, which sells fresh vegetables and fruits at a time when chemically-treated and spurious food items abound.

The aspiring agriculturist said the government should provide funds if any woman entrepreneur comes up with any innovative ideas.

"Also, banks should come up with more investment aimed at women entrepreneurs," she said.

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employs 14,000 people. "I am not happy with the workforce of 14,000 people. I want to make it 50,000," he said.

Hossain urged the government to improve infrastructure, ensure gas and power supply and maintain law and order. "We do not want money from the government. If the government can ensure infrastructure and stability, then nobody will be able to hold the country back."

Business leader Mahbubur Rahman, president of International Chamber of Commerce Bangladesh, was given the Lifetime Achievement Award for his work to protect the interest of the country's businesses in numerous roles in national and international organisations over the last five decades.

The 70-year-old said there was no alternative to sticking to social values and ethical practices to be a successful entrepreneur, although it was difficult to maintain ethics in Bangladesh.

Speaking as the chief guest, the finance minister said Bangladesh is a land of impossible things and immense potential and possibilities. "I have experienced it in the last three to four years in a big way. We have achieved things which are not normal and are not expected of us, but we have achieved it. We have achieved it simply because of our determination."

The country is back on track, and this feeling is moving Bangladesh forward, Muhith said. "In the next 20 years, Bangladesh would be the 20th largest economy in the world."

Muhith said the Daily Star-DHL Express awards are recognition of hard work. In his speech, Mahfuz Anam, editor and publisher of The Daily Star, focused on the inner strengths of the business community, and said: "They are resilient, hardworking and innovative."

"Bangladesh's entrepreneurs are entering the global market. Our products are being exhibited in the most famous stores of the world. This is a huge achievement. But some of us may not know the hurdles needed to overcome to achieve this feat."

Bangladesh's business

Chhatra League (BCL) of Patiya upazila in Chittagong.

Asked, Nurul told The Daily Star, "The warehouse is not mine. It belongs to my father. As far as I know he rented it out few years ago."

Malek claimed that Ataul rented the warehouse for three years upon a deed three months ago. "He also gave me 2 lakh 40 thousand taka in advance for one year and said they will store imported items like plum-pickle and various jam and jelly."

"But I could never suspect that they were importing Yaba tablets," he said.

'RELEASE YABA' Captain Rashid of Rab-7 on his mobile phone around 8:00pm received a call from a non-local phone asking him to release the seized Yaba tablets or face dire consequences, Maj Ziaul told The Daily Star.

"Man-made calamity stagnates business...We have to create resistance against it. We have to say that we will work and ship our products even if there is a hartal."

"If we can do that at an increasing rate, hartals will be ineffective and political parties will rethink," said Saiful.

Syed Alamgir Hossain, executive director of ACI Ltd, said apart from hartals, businesses were bearing high operational cost due to increased exchange rate of taka against the US dollar, and hike in fuel and electricity prices.

The company was in a dilemma over whether to raise prices of products.

He said that raising prices would have negative impact on sales as consumers had tightened their belts in the face of high inflation and increased cost of living.

Ashraf Bin Taj, business director of ACI, said, "Consumers have become cautious...It appears they have rationalised their spending."

"That's why we have to look into areas where we can increase our efficiency."

BNP leaders

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in two phases around 1:00pm yesterday.

They were: Mirza Fakhrul, BNP Standing Committee members Khandker Mosharrar Hossain, ASM Hannan Shah, Self Reliance Affairs Secretary Ruhul Kuddus Talukder Dulu, Students Affair Secretary Shahiduddin Chowdhury Annie, Liberal Democratic Party President Oli Ahmad and Bangladesh Jatiya Party President Andaleeb Rahman Partha.

BNP's Education Affairs Secretary Khairul Kabir Khokan and three others, detained during Thursday's general strike, were also sent to Kashimpur Central Jail.

"Those held in Dhaka Central Jail are: BNP Vice-Chairman Sadeque Hossain Khoka, Standing Committee Members MK Anwar, Goyeshwar Chandra Roy, Mirza Abbas, Joint Secretary General Amanullah Aman, Organising Secretary Fazlul Haque Milon and International Affairs Secretary Nazim Uddin Alam," said Masud.

On Wednesday, a Dhaka court sent Fakhrul and 32 other opposition leaders to jail after refusing them bail in a case filed over torching of a bus in front of the Prime Minister's Office during a countrywide shutdown on April 29.

UN chief

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on May 10, killing at least 55 people and wounding nearly 400.

Syria has accused al-Qaeda of orchestrating attacks in the country in recent weeks, adding to the strife caused by the uprising against Assad.

"More than 9,000, at least maybe 10,000 people have been killed during the last 15 months. It has reached an intolerable situation now," Ban said.

US and Russian officials have also said they believe al-Qaeda and other violent militants are now operating in the country.

This month, Syria sent the United Nations the names of 26 mainly Tunisian and Libyan nationals it said had been detained. About 20 had confessed they were members of Al-Qaeda, according to a letter sent with the list.

Ban also highlighted two bomb attacks against convoys of UN ceasefire monitors in Syria.

The UN secretary-general said that apart from the deployment of the monitors, no part of the six-point Annan plan has been implemented.

"We are trying our best efforts to protect the civilian population," Ban said.

The deployment of the monitors has had a "dampening effect" and reduced the violence, "but not enough, not all the violence has stopped. So we will continue, as much as we can, to protect the civilian population," he added.

BSF kills

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According to witnesses, the incident took place when Chiku along with other cattle traders was returning home around 4:30am. On the way, BSF of Gobindapur camp under 29 Battalion of Dakkhin Dinajpur of Paschimbanga hurled a cocktail at them injuring Chiku.

BSF members then caught Chiku and shot him dead on the spot, they added.

Hili police of Paschimbanga sent the body to Balurghat Hospital.

Lt Col Tayed UI Haque, commanding officer of Phulbari 40 Battalion, said he heard about the incident but there has been no confirmation so far from his Indian counterpart.

Since January 2012, four Bangladeshi cattle traders have been killed and seven wounded by BSF members.