

## Report likely

**FROM PAGE 20**  
conspiracy" in the \$2.9 billion project. The ACC has yet to identify any.

Meanwhile, wrapping up its three-day visit, the panel left Dhaka yesterday, said Mehri A Mahub, communication officer of the WB office in Dhaka.

The team will prepare a report in a couple of weeks and share it with the Bangladesh government, the ACC and the World Bank, said WB country director in Bangladesh Ellen Goldstein on Monday.

The WB assigned the team to assess ACC's inquiry and investigation into the Padma bridge graft allegation. The panel, headed by former Chief Prosecutor of the International Criminal Court Luis Moreno Ocampo, arrived in Dhaka on October 14 and met the ACC high-ups twice at the ACC headquarters.

"We feel our discussions have been fruitful. They have expressed satisfaction. They did not express disagreement about any of our activity and did not raise any question," ACC Chairman Ghulam Rahman told The Daily Star yesterday.

During the visit, the panel also wanted to know whether a corruption conspiracy is an offence as per Bangladesh laws. Moreover, it sought to know the legal and trial process and wanted some documents from the ACC, according to ACC sources.

The sources said the external panel may visit Dhaka again in December this year or January next year.

The WB in June cancelled its \$1.2 billion loan deal, saying it had proof of a corruption conspiracy in the project involving some Bangladesh officials and executives of a Canadian firm. In late September, the global lender announced its return to the project after the government took steps to fulfill the bank's conditions. The conditions included sending on leave all the public officials allegedly involved in the conspiracy and allow a WB team to assess the ACC investigation.

## Eid-ul-Azha

**FROM PAGE 1**  
Sighting Committee took the decision at a meeting after reviewing reports received from different parts of the country.

The meeting was held at the meeting room of Islamic Foundation at Baitul Muqarram National Mosque in the evening with Secretary of Religious Affairs Ministry Kazi Habibur Awal in the chair.

To commemorate this historic event, the Muslims from all over the world slaughter sacrificial animals.

They draw inspiration from the unique example of sacrifice as shown by two great prophets--Hazrat Ibrahim (AS) and Hazrat Ismail (AS).

## BCL spared

**FROM PAGE 20**  
Asked, why the university authority did not take any action against the BCL men, the proctor said, the allegation against BCL men was not proved yet.

"When the agitators misbehaved with the teachers, some BCL men rushed to the spot to tackle the situation," the proctor claimed.

He, however, added if they find any BCL activist's involvement in the attack on the students, they would take disciplinary action.

The students expelled for one semester (six months) are Rafiquzzaman Farid, organising secretary of SCF, its vice-president Ajit Das, assistant secretary Biplob Chowdhury, finance secretary Zinnia Hossain Anny, executive body member Zakia Sultana and SCF activists Nazmul Kaiser Shuvo, Nasima Akhtar, Roya Tripura and Swapna Biswas.

They are the students of different faculties of the university.

Contacted, Kishore Ahmed, secretary of SCF BAU unit said, the authority took the decision on "false allegations" only to quell movement against admission fee hike.

## Telecast news

**FROM PAGE 20**  
was a meeting of the Awami League Parliamentary Board at the Gono Bhaban on Monday. The other was the 26th convocation ceremony of the Islamic University of Technology in Gazipur yesterday, where Sheikh Hasina was present as the chief guest.

In a sudden move, the government imposed the restrictions on the grounds that a section of the media does not broadcast and publish the news of the head of the government with due importance.

However, the state-run Bangladesh Television and news agency BSS and private news agencies UNB and bdnews24.com were not restricted.

Following the restriction, the information minister yesterday sat with the owners of the TV channels at the information ministry to discuss a way out of this.

The minister will also sit with the owners, editors, eminent journalists and columnists of newspapers today to discuss the matter.

Inu suggested that the owners not "sell" news as a product and not portray

an isolated incident -- like the recovery of three people's cut-off heads in Kushtia -- as deterioration of the law and order situation, some of the meeting sources told The Daily Star, preferring not to be named.

At the meeting, the owners of the private media demanded that the minister formulate a policy on the broadcasting of foreign channels in Bangladesh, many of which are Indian channels gaining wide currency, added the sources.

Most of the attendees criticised the way cable operators run their business and demanded implementation of the laws regarding cable operators. They said the cable operators take the channel owners hostage.

Inu, also president of Jatiya Samajtantrik Dal said, "We kept an open mind and discussed how the government and the media could work together to safeguard and strengthen democracy."

The prime minister's press secretary Abul Kalam Azad termed the restrictions an isolated incident at the meeting, adding, however, that he knew nothing about it.

## India again pledges

**FROM PAGE 20**  
hands of BSF members last year will be completed soon.

Bangladesh Home Secretary CQK Mustaq Ahmed said Dhaka raised the issue of killing of innocent Bangladeshis on the border, and India reassured Bangladesh of bringing it down to zero.

RK Singh objected to the word "killing," and said the word should instead be "death" as these shootings took place within 300 to 400 yards of Indian territories.

He alleged that when challenged, cattle smugglers attack the BSF members even within Indian territories. Some 400 BSF men were seriously injured in the last one and a half years in such attack, he added.

The two sides agreed that increased patrolling by BSF and Border Guard Bangladesh would improve the ties between the two forces and would enable them to keep a watch on the vulnerable border areas to prevent criminal activities and border killings.

On signing an extradition treaty, Home Secretary Mustaq Ahmed said the draft of the treaty was ready and that it was now being scrutinised by various government agencies and ministries.

Asked about the handover of Ulfa leader Anup Chetia, he said this

remained unresolved as a case against Anup was pending in a court. "It is possible to extradite Anup Chetia even without an agreement because there are other legal mechanisms for it. In the past, we sent back criminals as the two countries have an excellent bilateral relations at the moment."

On this, the Indian home secretary said extradition treaty was not an obstacle to handing over Anup Chetia because it can be done under Saarc Convention on Mutual Legal Assistance.

Replying to a question about land boundary agreement ratification, he said the Indian government had a clear decision to ratify it to resolve the issues of enclave and adversely possessed land. "The cabinet has already approved the bill and is now waiting to be placed in parliament for final passes."

The two sides also agreed to simplify the visa process, and India agreed to issue long-term visas, especially for the patients and their attendances.

Bangladesh urged India that the latter immediately track, arrest and hand over the killers of Bangabandhu, to which India assured Dhaka of all-out help.

New Delhi also agreed to track Bangladeshi criminals hiding in India and hand them over to Dhaka.

## More than 600 killed in Sudan warzone

AFP, Khartoum

More than 600 people have been killed since rebels began an uprising in two Sudanese states last year, the interior minister said yesterday, but an analyst called the figure meaningless.

Ibrahim Mahmoud Hamed, giving a rare casualty count, said in a report to parliament that 296 people were killed in South Kordofan last year after fighting with rebels of the Sudan People's Liberation Movement-North (SPLM-N) began in June.

Another 147 have died this year.

"Most of them are civilians," Hamed said, but he did not specify who killed them.

In Blue Nile state, where the ethnic and religious-minority SPLM-N has been fighting since September 2011, there were 159 fatalities last year and 41 so far in 2012, the ministers said.

Analysts say casualty figures from both sides in the war should be treated with caution.

## Sue food

**FROM PAGE 1**  
seminar at Jatiya Press Club marking the World Food Day.

Prof ABM Faruque, dean of the pharmacy department at Dhaka University, in his keynote speech in the seminar said around 500 tonnes of formalin were being imported into the country every year although the required volume to meet the demand in sectors like laboratories, plastic, toy and Formica industries was 100 tonnes.

The rest 400 tonnes of formalin, which is one of the major elements used for food adulteration, goes into human body through fish, milk and fruits, he said.

The government should approve import of formalin fixing specific requirements and formulating specific laws, said Prof Faruque, adding that the government also had to ban the sale of formalin in open market.

"Chemical soaked food and fruit intake can cause diseases like cancer, kidney failure and lung and liver damages," he said.

Qazi Faruque, president of consumers association of Bangladesh, said due to the lack of proper action and exemplary punishment food adulteration was spreading widely.

Chairman of parliamentary standing committee on labour and employment ministry Israfil Alam, Commissioner of Information Commission Prof Sadeka Halim and Upazila Nirbahi Officer of Dohar Mohammad Al Amin, among others, addressed the seminar.

## Mobile top-up

**FROM PAGE 20**  
from Tk 27 to Tk 100 for every Tk 1,000 recharged.

The other demands include distribution of recharge SIM only through the association; charging 25 paisa per minute round-the-clock for calls made from public-call-office SIMs; and no unregistered business would get permission to recharge.

They also asked for remuneration of their due amount from the three fixed phone operators who have folded up their operations.

The operators' officials said they were discussing the matter jointly as it is an industry issue, and would give a joint statement upon coming to a decision.

"We are observing the matter," said ATM Monirul Alam, the commissioner of Bangladesh Telecommunication Regulatory Commission (BTRC).

The vendors went on a strike on the issue earlier on September 20, as well.

## One unit's job

**FROM PAGE 1**  
Muhammad Abdur Razzaque told The Daily Star yesterday, adding the ministry would do so at the earliest.

Declining to share the draft with this correspondent before submitting it to the prime minister, Razzaque said, "Our aim is to establish a single authority with full power to address the menace. That agency will remain accountable to an assigned ministry."

The minister, however, said entrusting an agency with fighting adulteration -- like the Food and Drug Administration in the US -- does not necessarily mean other government bodies should shrug off their responsibilities.

"We'd rather recommend the proposed agency get expertise of all relevant ministries and agencies and use all the lab facilities, no matter under whom those operate."

The minister said the draft also has a list of laws that have been in effect since the Pakistan era and need updating.

Referring to the capital's Malibagh kitchen market, declared formalin-free by

Commerce Minister GM Quader on September 19, he said, "We must understand that keeping a single kitchen market formalin-free won't do. All people of the country have the right to safe food."

The Malibagh initiative was taken by the Federation of Bangladesh Chambers of Commerce and Industry.

"I come from a place [Tangail] where chemicals are applied at random to pineapples; people say traders even use burned Mobil for frying jilapi.

"We all know about the rampant use of formalin and chemical preservatives," he said. "Something must be done and immediately."

**BIGTHREAT**  
Unabated sales of adulterated foodstuffs posing high health risks worry consumers across the country.

The excessive use of chemicals like formalin, calcium carbide, pesticides and artificial growth regulators on a wide range of products from fruits to fish to vegetables keep consumers wonder where to buy safe food.

They have long been complaining about the use of formalin on fish and tomato,

and applications of carbide and growth regulators on banana, pineapples and other fruits.

"I tend not to buy banana, pineapples these days for my daughter because of harmful chemicals they [producers, marketers] use to forcibly ripen and preserve those," said SK Chowdhury, a resident in the city's Dhanmondi area.

"We also feel unsafe while buying fish like rui, katla and mrigel as the fishmongers apply formalin to fishes."

Agronomist Shahidul Islam, a consultant of UN Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), said environment pollution as well as the use of chemicals like formalin and carbide on food items poses serious health hazards to consumers.

Brac Executive Director Mahub Hossain, also an analyst of farm economy and food security, told The Daily Star that while Bangladesh showed much prospect in ensuring availability of food and keeping the prices within purchasing ability of people, food adulteration has become a big threat to food security.

**FAO ASSESSMENT**  
Under a project titled "Im-

proving Food Safety, Quality and Food Control in Bangladesh", the FAO two years ago assessed the capacity of the ministries and agencies involved in food inspection and enforcement.

The assessment revealed food inspection in Bangladesh is not based on risk assessment and inspection actions don't cover the entire food chain.

Participants at a FAO organised food safety stock taking meeting noted that food standards are certified by Bangladesh Standards and Testing Institution.

The existing standards are to a large extent obsolete, quality oriented and overlapping and don't cover the most common food products, they observed.

Limited coordination and communication between the enforcement agencies has been identified as one of the main food inspection challenges.

The lack of coordination between the agencies is considered a cause of both gaps in inspection and overlapping enforcement activities.

## Don't blame the messenger

**FROM PAGE 1**  
Here is a story that our PM, the Speaker and the agriculture minister may wish to recall. In May, 2009, The Daily Telegraph of London broke the story of a scandal about British members of parliament making false and questionable expense claims siphoning off millions of pounds of public money for personal use. This scandal involved almost all MPs and from both sides of the aisle, as it does in our case. When the story broke, the government was not focusing on the "motive" of the newspaper but on what it revealed. On May 11, UK Prime Minister Gordon Brown apologised to the British people "on behalf of all politicians". On the following day, May 12, opposition leader David Cameron said all MPs should apologise for the expense scandal which were "unethical and wrong" (Our opposition leader is silent on the TIB report and Moudud Ahmed shamefully said "it only applies to the Treasury Bench").

The following year, in October 2010, The Guardian of London published a Transparency International (TI) report saying "Britain is seen as an increasingly corrupt country" because of the scandal by the MPs and it dropped from 12th rank to the 20th among countries perceived as cleanest in the world.

Neither Gordon Brown nor the present Prime Minister David Cameron saw any "conspiracy to destroy democracy" in the media's revelation or TI's report which significantly corroded public trust in UK MPs and even led to the resignation of the Speaker of the House of Commons. The British leaders, MPs and politicians took it, as it was meant to be, as an opportunity to clean UK's politics of corruption and corrupt elements, for which new laws ensuring ethics of MPs were passed and their

overall performance brought under greater scrutiny.

Was Britain's democracy strengthened or weakened by the media revelation and the subsequent report by Transparency International and its UK chapter?

It may be said that unlike the UK, Bangladesh is a place where democracy has been thwarted many times by unconstitutional means, and therefore we need to be more careful about protecting the image of our parliament and of our elected representatives. Agreed. But doesn't the same argument put greater onus on our members of parliament to uphold the highest standards of ethics, commitment, transparency and accountability? Do they?

Let us recall some of the more sensational reports concerning our lawmakers published in most major national dailies, including this one, over the last few years:

- AL MP Nurunnabi Chowdhury Shaon of Bholash 3 constituency was sued over the killing of party leader Ibrahim Ahmed in August 2010, reportedly by the licensed pistol of the former;

- In January this year, AL lawmaker Kamal Ahmed Majumdar assaulted a female journalist while she was doing a story on Monipur High School;

- In July 2011, AL MP Abdur Rahman Bodi of Cox's Bazar assaulted a local schoolteacher when the latter protested against Bodi's move to grab part of the school land. In January 2009, he assaulted three assistant presiding officers during upazila parishad elections. In May the same year, he manhandled advocate Rakha Mitra, a rights activist of the area;

- Jatiya Party lawmaker of Rangpur-1 Hossain Makbul Shahriar, a nephew of the party chief HM Ershad, led five truckloads of stick-wielding JP activists against

government employees when his demand that his nominees be given jobs at the Rangpur Medical College Hospital was not accepted;

- AL MP of Pabna-5 Golam Faruk Khandaker Prince, in September 2010, demanded of the deputy commissioner that his Chhatra League and Jubo League men be recruited in government service. Rebuffed, the ruling party men attacked the administration officials, including a female magistrate, when the recruitment examination was going on;

- On May 18 this year, AL MP of Mymensingh-10 Ghiasuddin Ahmed opened fire on a crowd to thwart demonstration against him.

In addition, there have been incidents galore in which MPs have publicly slapped officials, abused them or had them sent on punitive assignments because some of them refused to bow down. The truth is that in most cases government officials do the MPs' illegal and corrupt bidding and permit abuse of public wealth. In many cases, they become partners of the process, getting a cut for themselves.

In none of the above cases was any action taken against any of the above MPs, save perhaps some mild cautionary comments.

The real issue here is one of mindset. If the prime minister keeps on insisting that there is no corruption in any part of her government, then it is only natural that her MPs will feel safe and be encouraged to do what they have been doing. As a result, no corruption investigation will ever take place. Not only that, if our elected head of government castigates those who bring her the unpleasant side of reality as "conspirators" then the real conspirators -- and we believe that those who incited the Ramu vio-

lence and burnt down the 300 years old Buddhist temples are conspiring against Bangladesh -- will not only get away but will be further strengthened.

The prime minister, more than anyone else, must realise that there is no mechanism to oversee the conduct of our MPs. There is really no effective mechanism to audit how government funds are being used at the village and upazila levels. Nobody is monitoring the activities of our elected representatives. Many MPs have told this writer that to maintain the loyalty of the local Chhatra League, Jubo League and party activists they are forced to look the other way when corruption is being indulged in. In addition, there are the MPs' own henchmen who need to be kept happy. Otherwise, they say, they cannot maintain their grip on their constituency.

It is our belief that the government knew much earlier what the TIB report brought out. In fact, intelligence reports over most of the last year have alerted the government of the dire picture at the grassroots. Tragically, corruption is eating up the credits of some significant achievements of the government namely in agriculture, food production, education, regional connectivity, expanding export, controlling extremism and power production.

It is high time the prime minister and her government took the issue seriously. Even if the TIB message is only partially true, it is still big enough, serious enough and urgent enough to demand the immediate attention of the government, the ruling party and all those who support and wish them success.

And the start can be made by not condemning the present messenger but by sincerely heeding the message.

## Innocent kept in police custody

**FROM PAGE 1**  
on the September 29 attacks on the Buddhists in Ramu.

An investigation by The Daily Star recently proved beyond doubt that the image of Uttam's facebook page, with the photo derogatory to the holy Quran, was fabricated.

The Daily Star probe suggested that he was framed.

Police in the early hours of September 30 jumped the gun and picked up Uttam's mother Madhu Barua, 40, and his aunt Adi Barua, 26, in connection with a case that was actually filed a day later.

The two were not even accused in the first information report.

Adi is Madhu's cousin and she came to her father's home at Hightipuri of Ramu, which is near Madhu's home, said family sources.

Uttam had been living with his wife and child separately. He had married a girl his family had not approved of. His mother did not maintain

communication with him for five years for this reason.

Uttam neither lived with his mother nor the aunt in question.

Uttam ran away with his wife and child soon after the mayhem on September 29.

Madhu and Adi were later shown arrested and a court sent them to jail.

Since then Anisha, the two-year-old daughter of Adi, had been separated from her mother.

On Monday, Detective Branch of police sought remand for them after producing them before the Senior Judicial Magistrate's Court of Cox's Bazar.

Tarun Baura, father of Anisha, said Anisha was crying for her mother all the time. Later, on Monday, lawyer Arup Barua Topu, counsel for Madhu and Adi, drew the court's attention to the child being separated from the mother and asked the court for directives in this regard.

The court ordered the child

to be sent to the mother.

The Court of Senior Judicial Magistrate Towhidul Haque also placed Adi and Madhu on one day's remand.

The two would be grilled today in custody by Cox's Bazar Police, said Ilut Mish, additional superintendent of police of Chittagong, who is working in Cox's Bazar on deputation.

He claimed that Ramu police escorted them to the police station during the violence for their own safety.

On Monday, while talking to newsmen on the court premises, Madhu said neither she nor her sister was involved in the mayhem on September 29.

Ekattorer Ghatak Dalal Nirmul Committee, a forum which advocates secularism and trials of crimes against humanity committed during the Liberation War, yesterday condemned the arrest of Uttam's mother and aunt. It demanded immediate release of the arrestees and security of

Uttam's family, said a statement of the organisation.

Meanwhile, a Cox's Bazar court on Monday fixed tomorrow for hearing on a seven-day fresh remand prayer for Omar Faruk and Abdul Moktadir, alleged key instigators behind the attacks on Buddhists in Ramu.

Only four cases were filed with Ukhia Police Station even though seven Buddhist and Hindu temples were set ablaze.

The cases were filed in connection with the torching of Jadimura Buddhist monastery, Pashchim Ratna Sudarshan Buddhist monastery, Morichcha Dipankur Buddhist monastery and Palongkhali Goyalmara Hindu temple.

Appela Raju Naha, officer-in-charge of Ukhia Police Station, said no cases were filed in connection with the other three arson incidents as none filed a complaint with them.