

Obama

FROM PAGE 20

the contest, although by a narrower margin than his opponent was perceived to have won the first.

But analysts say the race stays tight.

BBC North America editor Mark Mardell says Obama has stopped the panic in his camp.

What Team Obama would have dreaded was anything that contributed to a narrative of decline and defeat for the Democrat as he bids for a second term, our correspondent adds.

A CBS poll of undecided voters who watched the debate gave it to Obama, 37pc to 30pc with 33pc calling the debate a tie.

Meanwhile, a CNN poll of registered voters who watched - not just undecideds - gave the debate to Obama 46-39.

'SAY IT LOUDER'

In the town hall-style forum at Hofstra University on Long Island, the candidates roamed the stage, circling, interrupting and at times heckling one another as they took questions from an audience of 80 undecided voters.

The moderator, CNN's Candy Crowley, often had to intervene to keep order.

The 11 questions from the voters present ranged from gun control to Libya to immigration, but the main focus was on the economy.

The most dramatic clash came over foreign policy, and the attack last month on the US consulate in Benghazi, Libya, which left the US ambassador and three other Americans dead.

Romney sought to portray the attack as evidence of the Obama administration's failing foreign policy and he suggested Obama had dithered over admitting a terrorist attack had occurred.

Obama shot back that he had said so the day after the attack, in an appearance at the White House.

The Republican challenged this, saying: "It took the president 14 days before he called the attack in Benghazi an act of terror."

When Crowley confirmed that Obama had indeed called the attack an "act of terror" the day after the attack, the president told the moderator: "Say that a little louder, Candy."

The president also accused Romney of using the Libyan events for political purposes.

"While we were still dealing with our diplomats being threatened, Governor Romney put out a press release, trying to make political points, and that's not how a commander-in-chief operates," he said.

'ROAD TO GREECE'

Obama accused Romney of inconsistency, and contrasted his own bailout of the US car industry with the Republican's position that car-makers should have been allowed to go bankrupt.

In turn, Romney blamed the president for unemployment of 20 million and bloated federal deficits.

America, he insisted, could not afford another four years with Obama at the helm, warning that Mr Obama's policies would ultimately prove as disastrous as the euro debt crisis.

"We've gone from \$10tn of national debt to \$16tn of national debt," he said.

"If the president were re-elected, we'd go to almost \$20tn of national debt. This puts us on a road to Greece."

Obama said voters had heard no specifics on Romney's "sketchy" economic plan apart from eliminating Sesame Street's Big Bird and cutting funding for Planned Parenthood, a family planning organisation.

Republicans say promotes abortion.

But Romney insisted his budget would add up, and cited his experience in balancing budgets in business while running the 2002 Olympics and as governor of Massachusetts.

While answering a question about equality in the workplace, Romney said that he had sought out female employees as governor of Massachusetts.

"I went to a number of women's groups and said, 'Can you help us find folks,' and they brought us whole binders full of women," Romney said.

The remark quickly went viral online, prompting a deluge of commentary on Twitter and other social media.

Another facebook

FROM PAGE 20

Chittagong. He is an eighth-semester student of automobile department at Bangladesh Sweden Polytechnic Institute in Kapitai.

ASM Nizam Uddin, additional superintendent of police (ASP) of Hathazari circle, told The Daily Star that Nirjan had subscribed to a facebook page Uchcha Shikkhai Bidesh Jatra [Going abroad for higher education], where somebody had shared the anti-Islam image from another page named "I hate Islam".

The ASP said Nirjan had found the image two to three days ago. Below the photo, he had written a comment to the page administrator to delete it because this kind of images would get the members of the page into trouble.

What Nirjan did not know that writing a comment on any other facebook page would show the whole content on his facebook page, the ASP added.

He said when some facebook friends of Nirjan had seen the image, they informed him of it. He immediately deleted the image from his page, but in the meantime, the news had spread in his locality.

On Tuesday morning, some locals went to his house to enquire about the image. He told them the whole story but could not convince them. In the evening, police came to know about the matter and called Nirjan to Rangunia Police Station around 10:00pm.

Police had checked the "activity log" of Nirjan's facebook account and found the comment with the image, said ASP Nizam, adding that police also found that he had deleted the image from his account.

The law enforcers were convinced that the youth was innocent but the locals could not understand the technical matters involved with the incident.

On Tuesday night, police called four of the locals, who had visited Nirjan's house, to brief them about what had actually happened. Of the four, one person has an account in the facebook.

"I explained to them how the image came to Nirjan's page by performing the same actions in my facebook account and convinced them," said the ASP.

Since the issue is quite sensitive, police kept Nirjan in safe custody. They would free him once law enforcers became sure that nothing untoward would take place, said Monjurul Morshed, officer-in-charge of Rangunia Police Station.

HC ON UTTAM'S FAMILY MEMBERS

The High Court (HC) in a suo moto rule yesterday expressed anxiety over the detention of Uttam's

mother and his aunt, if they had been arrested illegally and were not released by 10:30am today.

The bench of Justice A H M Shamsuddin Choudhury Manik and Justice Farid Ahmed also asked the deputy attorney general (DAG) to inform it about the legal status of the detained members of Uttam's family by the stipulated time.

Madhu Barua, 40, mother of Uttam whose fabricated facebook page was used to stir up the September 29 attacks on the Buddhists in Ramu, and his aunt Adi Barua, 26, were arrested on the next day of the violence in connection with a case that was actually filed on October 1, a day after the arrest.

Anisha, two-year-old daughter of Adi Barua, is now in custody with her mother.

The HC bench passed the order verbally following the reports published yesterday in a few national dailies including The Daily Star over the detention of Madhu, Adi and Anisha.

It also said the rule would not be executed if the detainees were released by 10:30am today [Thursday].

Meanwhile, a Cox's Bazar court yesterday sent Madhu and Adi to jail after a day's remand cancelling their bail, reports our Chittagong correspondent.

DAG Amit Talukder told The Daily Star that he had informed the superintendent of police in Cox's Bazar of the HC order over the phone.

The inspector general of police (IGP) yesterday submitted a report to another HC bench saying that additional forces of police, Rapid Action Battalion and Border Guard Bangladesh had been deployed in Ramu to avoid further untoward incidents and so that the non-Muslim minority could perform their religious activities smoothly.

According to the IGP, a total of 211 people had been arrested in 16 cases filed in connection with the incidents and many of them had been placed on remand.

The bench of Justice Mirza Hussain Haider and Justice Kazi Md Ejarul Haque Akondo ordered the government to submit the investigation report on Ramu violence in two weeks.

A correspondent from Cox's Bazar reports that three more cases had been filed with Ukhiya Police Station last night on charges of torching, vandalising and looting Buddhist and Hindu temples on September 30.

Muhith berates

FROM PAGE 1

said, requesting anonymity.

No other BB officials commented about the finance minister's observation.

Meanwhile, Pradip Kumar Dutta, managing director of Sonali Bank, said the state-run bank had already appointed two lawyers to file money recovery case against the Hall-Mark.

The Anti-Corruption Commission invited him yesterday to discuss the ongoing probe into the embezzlement.

The managing director told reporters at the ACC office in Segunbagicha that the Hall-Mark had refunded Tk 232 crore from its total outstanding loans of Tk 2,667 crore. The repayment of another Tk 48 crore is under process.

"We've also ordered steps to halt payment of Hall Mark's LC amounting Tk 300 to 400 crore pending with us," said Pradip, who joined as MD of the bank

on June 17 this year.

ACC Commissioner Md Shahabuddin also briefed journalists on the issue.

On whether the ACC will arrest ex-Sonali MD Humayun Kabir, the commissioner said the investigation officer would look into the matter.

Humayun stands accused in 11 cases filed by the ACC against 27 officials of Hall-Mark and Sonali Bank for misappropriating Tk 1,568 crore.

Shahabuddin said the ACC was trying whether the misappropriated money is in the country and how much of the money taken by Hall-Mark was invested and spent on buying properties.

Hall-Mark MD Tanvir and General Manager Tushar Ahmed and AKM Azizur Rahman, the suspended manager of Sonali Bank Ruposhi Bangla branch have already been taken into custody.

They are on their 24-day remand and being grilled by the ACC.

JHENIDAH BORDER

BSF kills one, injures five

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Jhenidah

Indian Border Security Forces (BSF) shot dead a Bangladeshi cattle trader and injured five others near Chapatala border at Moheshpur in Jhenidah on Tuesday.

The killing took place only a day after New Delhi had reassured Bangladesh during a home ministry-level talks of bringing down the border killing to zero.

The deceased was identified as Rabiul Islam, 35, of Matpara village under the upazila.

The injured -- Razu Ahmed, Mohor Ali, Shonkor Ali, Imran Hossain and Abdullah Mamun -- were rushed to Jessore Medical College and Hospital.

Subedar Amir Khashru, company commander of Border Guard Bangladesh (BGB), said the BSF personnel of Fatepur camp opened fire on a group of eight cattle traders along the border around 11:30pm, leaving Rabiul spot dead.

Five others sustained bullet injuries. The group was going to India to receive a consignment of cattle.

The BSF dragged the body into Indian territory. The BGB yesterday sent a letter to BSF for returning the body, Amir Khashru added.

US plans to help Libya build commando force

AFP, Washington

The United States plans to help Libya build a commando force to fight extremists like those that staged the deadly attack on the US consulate in Benghazi, officials said Tuesday.

President Barack Obama's administration is seeking congressional approval for \$6.2 million in Pentagon funds and \$1.6 million from the State Department's budget for the initiative, according to documents from each department.

Plans to train a Libyan security force were already in the works before dozens of heavily-armed militants laid siege to the American mission in Benghazi last month, killing the ambassador and three US staff.

The initiative is designed to "train and equip Libya Special Operations Forces to counter and defeat terrorist and violent extremist organizations," said an August 24 Pentagon document.

According to the Pentagon document, the proposed funding for the Libya commando force was part of a larger plan for counterterrorism assistance to the Philippines, Nigeria, Bangladesh, Hungary, Romania and Slovakia.

Cambodian ex-king returns home

AFP, Phnom Penh

Tens of thousands of mourners yesterday lined the streets of the Cambodian capital to pay their last respects to revered former king Norodom Sihanouk on his final journey home.

The body of the mercurial ex-monarch, who steered his country through turbulent decades of war, genocide and finally peace, returned on a special flight from Beijing, where he died of a heart attack on Monday aged 89.

Draped with flowers and a royal blue flag, his coffin was borne through the streets of Phnom Penh on a golden float shaped like a mythological bird with robed monks seated in front and behind.

Muhith hopes

FROM PAGE 1

secretariat.

The minister said the implementation of the project was no longer a problem.

His comments came a day after the WB's external panel concluded its maiden Bangladesh visit to assess the conduct of the ACC probe into the corruption allegations over the Padma bridge project.

"They [the WB team] have taken quite a lot of material and will perhaps give a preliminary report on their visit in several days," said Muhith and hoped the report would help rebuild the confidence.

The minister appeared before the media after a gap of nearly two weeks. He was in Tokyo to attend the annual meeting of the WB and International Monetary Fund this month. He visited China last month to attend the World Economic Forum meeting.

Muhith said it wouldn't be wise to talk much on the Padma bridge project.

Apart from the project, the minister talked about some national and international economic issues.

He said the country's economy has expanded 25 percent in the last three years. He is also worried about the slow growth in export and foreign investment in the country.

Speaking again on the Padma bridge project, he said, "I am saying the same thing again that we should have the tender by November." And there should be some visible progress in the project by February next year.

To put it simply, the bridge will be built, he said.

The minister said the government and the WB had a spell of "mistrust", which he believed no longer exists. The WB has reengaged considering the importance of such a big project, he said.

The WB external panel's meeting with the ACC was quite satisfactory and hoped it would help regain the confidence, said the minister.

"They [the WB] demanded to look into the investigation and its process, and we complied."

He said another WB team was supposed to visit Dhaka on October 24-25, but they

rescheduled the visit for next month because of the long vacation.

"We can talk simultaneously on the project's implementation and its revision after the second team's arrival."

The minister reiterated his government's position that it wants to take forward the project from where it was in September last year.

The global lender had cancelled its \$1.2 billion credit for the \$2.9 billion project on June 29, saying it had credible evidence of a corruption conspiracy involving Bangladeshi officials, executives of a Canadian firm and some private individuals.

The WB, which decided to revive its loan on September 21 after the Bangladesh government agreed to its terms and conditions, appointed a three-member external panel early this month to assess the conduct of the ACC investigation.

The high-profile panel was headed by Luis Moreno Ocampo, former chief prosecutor of the International Criminal Court.

Passport office

FROM PAGE 1

(DIP) on Tuesday evening.

"We came to know that the proposal has been sent back. We can now say that we will continue issuing the MRPs only if the proposal is approved unchanged," Noor A Alam Chowdhury of Dataedge Ltd, the local partner of the Malaysian firm.

"We didn't demand any extra money from the government.... We wanted our payments are made in current rate of US dollar as almost all pieces of the equipment are imported from several countries."

Noor questioned, "Can you buy anything from abroad with the dollar rate of 2010 when a US dollar was equivalent to Tk 69?"

The Malaysian firm

pulled out its entire staff on Monday as the government failed to renew the contract.

Meanwhile, Director General of DIP Abdul Mabud and Project Director of MRP project Brig Gen Refayet Ullah met Home Secretary CQK Mustak Ahmed at the home ministry yesterday afternoon to convince him to approve the proposal.

"We explained everything to him [secretary]," mentioned the DG, adding that the proposal was sent back for fine-tuning in line with the Public Procurement Regulation (PPR).

Asked whether the proposal was prepared without following the PPR, he said, "We followed the PPR but the secretary wanted a recheck of it."

The DG hoped that the

problem would be resolved soon.

The government appointed IRIS in 2010 with Tk 526 crore for two and a half years to introduce MRP in the country. The deal expired on March 31 this year.

As per the contract, the government was supposed to create trained manpower to take over the project from the firm.

But the authorities are yet to start any recruitment for the project.

About 12,000 MRP are issued every day and the demand for the modern passport is increasing.

Any halt in the MRP project will have adverse impact on the overseas travellers, especially the business people and expatriate workers.

TIB-bashing

FROM PAGE 1

the full survey report, the minister added.

His comments came three days after the TIB report said 97 percent of the 149 sitting MPs surveyed were involved in "negative activities" while 70 percent of them were engaged in "criminal activities". Of those surveyed, 53.5 percent MPs directly took part in criminal activities.

The negative activities include involvement in or being supportive of criminal activities, misuse of government funds and influencing government decisions while the criminal activities include killing, land and river grabbing, extortion, tender manipulation and cheating, according to the report.

Of the 149 lawmakers, 141 are male and eight female while 136 are treasury bench lawmakers (27 ministers or state ministers) and 13 opposition lawmakers. The report, however, did not

name the MPs.

Speaking at a function at the Jatiya Press Club, Commissioner of Information Commission Prof Dr Sadeka Halim yesterday dismissed the TIB report as "nothing but rubbish".

"As a student of social science, I can say the sampling process was not followed properly while preparing the report. It's not a qualitative report either," she told the programme organised by Protasha 2021 Forum, a social organisation.

Meanwhile, minister without portfolio Suranjit Sengupta urged the Speaker to form a committee to probe the TIB report, reports BSS.

"I will appeal to Speaker Abdul Hamid Advocate to constitute a committee with senior members of the two major political parties exercising the special power vested upon him in the rules of procedure [of parliament]," he said.

ment]," he said.

Describing the TIB report on lawmakers as "motivated, fictitious and malicious," he said the TIB report was prepared based on a hollow and immature research work with a bad intention.

Suranjit, who was made minister without portfolio after he resigned as rail minister taking "full responsibility" of the railwaygate scandal, was speaking at a programme marking the 25th death anniversary of former Speaker Abdul Malek Ukil at Shilpakala Academy.

The railwaygate scandal involves the recovery of Tk 70 lakh from the microbus of Suranjit's former assistant personal secretary on the night of April 9. The money is said to be part of the bribe taken from railway jobseekers, and it was being taken to Suranjit's residence in the capital, a claim Suranjit has all along denied.

Bus fare not fair

FROM PAGE 20

Nusrat Jahan Swapna, a Rajshahi-bound passenger, said, "I had to pay Tk 450 at the Kalyanpur counter of National Travels for a ticket of October 21. But I could buy the same ticket for less if I would travel by today [Wednesday]."

In response to the anomalies, Abdul Mannan, a staff at the counter, said they had increased the fare as per the direction of Bangladesh Bus-Truck Owners' Association (BBTOA).

Visiting Gabtoli bus terminal, it was noticed that the BBTOA-approved fare chart varied in terms of bus companies for same routes and same distances.

Sohag Paribahan fare chart showed that the fare from Dhaka to Jhenidah was Tk 309.70 for 51-seat buses. But the chart of Eagle Paribahan stated it as Tk 444 for the same route and for the same type of bus.

Asked, a staff of Eagle Paribahan told the correspondent: "Ministers and other governmental high-ups are indulging in massive corruption. But you have no headache about it. You are much more enthusiastic about our small irregularities."

Talking to The Daily Star, BBTOA Treasurer Kamal Hossain denied the allegations.

"The bus operators are charging as per the government-set fare, and in many cases, less than the rate. If there is any difference in the fare charts that could have happened mistakenly," he claimed.

However, state-run Bangladesh Road Transport Corporation (BRTC) will operate special bus service from October 22 up to two days after the Eid day. The BRTC started selling its advance tickets from last Monday.

A total of 850 buses will ply during the special service, said Nikhil Ranjan Roy, director (admin and operation) of the organisation.

KAMALAPUR RAILWAY STATION

On the last day of selling advance train tickets, people were seen waiting in queue at the Kamalapur railway station since Tuesday night. Many passengers, however, did not get tickets.

Bangladesh Railway sold advance tickets for October 22 to October 26 since October 13.

LAUNCH TERMINAL

Private launch owners started selling advance tickets for cabin from last Monday and they will start special service from October 20.

The state-run Bangladesh Inland Water Transport Corporation (BIWTC) will start their service from October 22.

Robbers loot Tk 77 lakh from bank

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Barisal

Unidentified men robbed a bank, after making unconscious the bank's night-time security guard in Jhalakathi, of Tk 77 lakh early yesterday.

The bank is the Jhalakathi branch of Islami Bank Bangladesh Limited located in Aratdarpotty area of the district.

Opening the bank around 9.00am, the staff saw the closed circuit television (CCTV) cameras had been damaged and the cash stolen from the lockers of different sections in the bank, said Branch Manager Sarwar Hossain.

Then they started looking for the security guard Shamsul Huq. They found him unconscious in a toilet on the third floor of the building although the bank is on the second floor.

The bank authorities were preparing to file a case in this connection, the manager added.

Abdul Mannan, officer-in-charge of Jhalakathi Sadar Police Station, said they were hunting for Mohidul Islam, who lived on the third floor where the guard was found.

Police detained the owner of the building for interrogation while the bank authorities formed a probe team.

The guard was unconscious at the time of filing this report.

Taliban defend

FROM PAGE 20

She was flown to Britain on Monday, where doctors said she has every chance of making a "good recovery".

She "remains stable", according to doctors monitoring her at the specialist Queen Elizabeth Hospital in Birmingham, central England, which treats British soldiers wounded in Afghanistan.

"She spent a second comfortable night at the hospital and continues to be cared for," the hospital said.

Pakistan's Taliban described Yousufzai as a "spy of the West".

"For this espionage, infidels gave her awards and rewards. And Islam orders killing of those who are spying for enemies," the group said in a statement.

"We did not attack her for raising voice for education. We targeted her for opposing mujahideen and their war," said the Taliban. "Shariah (Islamic law) says that even a child can be killed if he is propagating against Islam."

"We targeted her because she would speak against the Taliban while sitting with shameless strangers and idealized the biggest enemy of Islam, Barack Obama," the statement added.

Yousufzai, a cheerful schoolgirl who had wanted to become a doctor before agreeing to her father's wishes that she strive to be a politician, has become a potent symbol of resistance against the Taliban's efforts to deprive girls of an education.

Pakistani surgeons removed a bullet from near her spinal cord during a three-hour operation the day after the attack last week, but she now needs intensive specialist follow-up care.

Authorities have said they have made several arrests in connection with the case but have given no details.

Israel launches airstrike on Gaza

AFP, Jerusalem

Israeli airplanes carried out a sortie in the Gaza Strip early yesterday morning, the army said, hours after a rocket from the enclave exploded in southern Israel.

Military "aircraft targeted a terror activity site in the northern Gaza Strip. A direct hit was confirmed," a statement read.

"The site was targeted in response to the rocket fire at southern Israel," the army explained in the statement.

There were no immediate reports of injuries from Gaza.