

# Khaleda backs

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Vice-chairman Shamsher Mobin Chowdhury told the media that Menon raised the issue of Bangladesh's proposal for a deep-sea port at Sonadia and expressed India's interest in the project.

Khaleda welcomed the idea for a consortium including India, China and other countries undertaking the Sonadia deep-sea port because of the huge amount of investment needed for it and said it would benefit Bangladesh, India, China and Thailand.

Mobin said Khaleda had taken up the deep-sea port issue with top Chinese leaders when she visited that country in the third week of October and Beijing was receptive to India's participation in the consortium.

India has already expressed keenness to join the proposed Sonadia deep-sea port project and sought details and data about it, Mobin added.

Mobin said the Indian foreign minister assured Khaleda that he would take a personal initiative to talk to all stakeholders, including West Bengal, and resolve the Teesta water-sharing issue, a deal on which could not be signed September last year due to Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee's last-minute opposition.

Khaleda said clinching an agreement on Teesta would be the "first step" before moving towards sharing of the water of other common rivers.

Responding to Khaleda's concerns over border killings, the Indian foreign minister emphasised such incidents had to be stopped and India would take all the steps to do that.

Khaleda referred to poverty in Bangladesh and said the two countries should work together to overcome the problem in order to stop illegal cross-border migration.

Asked if the BNP had made a tacit admission by assuring India that the party would not allow Bangladesh territory to be used by terrorists to target India, Khaleda's Press Secretary Sohul Maruf Kamal said, "Let us not look back at the era of proven and unproved allegations and counter-allegations and instead look ahead."

In the past, BNP had been in a denial mode about the problem of cross-border illegal migration and presence of militants in Bangladesh.

During her meetings with the Indian leaders, Khaleda signalled her intention to break from BNP's anti-India stance in the past.

Mobin and another senior BNP leader Tariqul Islam said Khaleda gave a clear message to the Indian leaders that the BNP "does not want to look back but want to look ahead and build a new era in relations between the two countries."

At a separate media briefing, the spokesperson of Indian external affairs ministry said Khaleda's message during her interaction with the Indian leaders was that "this marks a new beginning and let's not look back in the rearview mirror."

Mobin said all bilateral issues, including trade, terrorism, border killings and water-sharing, were discussed by Khaleda and Khurshid after which the Indian foreign minister hosted a lunch for the BNP chief.

Maruf Kamal said the main purpose of the visit was to dispel mistrust and suspicion and restore the trust between the BNP and India and claimed "we have been able to achieve the objective" by this visit.

He added resolving the problem of border killing would help lay the foundation for settling other issues between the two countries.

Tariqul Islam said, "We wanted to remove suspicion and bring a new dawn in relations with India."

Asked by a Bangladeshi journalist if he wanted to see ties to develop just between the BNP and India, Tariqul said, "No, we want relations to strengthen between the two countries, between the peoples of the two countries and between their parties irrespective of ideologies."

According to Mobin, Salman Khurshid told Khaleda that "we share your belief in a new dawn in India-Bangladesh relations".

Khaleda told Khurshid that there was no reason why India and Bangladesh would not have shared prosperity and said Indian entrepreneurs could consider investing in her country.

The Indian National Security Adviser conveyed to Khaleda that New Delhi would like the current momentum in bilateral ties to be maintained.

Mobin claimed BNP's engagement with India has "begun with a bang" and each event taking place during Khaleda's current visit "is a movement forward".

According to Mobin, Khurshid said he would visit Bangladesh and other neighbouring countries in the coming months.

Mobin added no date had yet been fixed for Khaleda's meeting with Indian President Pranab Mukherjee and that the Indian foreign ministry had "assured us" of its efforts to arrange a meeting between the BNP chief and Congress President Sonia Gandhi.

Khaleda is leaving for Jaipur today on her way to Ajmer Sharif and will return to Delhi on Thursday night. A dinner will be hosted in her honour by Rajasthan Industry Minister on Wednesday night in Jaipur. She is scheduled to return to Dhaka on November 3.

## Hall-Mark

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The notice has created further confusion among the factory workers as the top brass of the Hall-Mark Group including its chairman and managing director have been arrested recently by the Anti-Corruption Commission and nobody in the factory premises knows who are running the business.

Earlier, the government had formed a committee headed by a joint secretary of the commerce ministry to look into the affairs of workers' payments before the Eid-ul-Azha. The Upazila Nirbahi Officer (UNO) of Savar was made the member secretary of the committee.

The committee arranged a partial payment for the workers before the Eid and compelled the company management to announce that it would clear the rest of the dues on October 26.

Talking to The Daily Star yesterday, Savar UNO Kabir Hossain Sarder said he was totally unaware of the indefinite closure of the factories. "Neither the administration nor the committee has closed the units."

Local residents said the factories are now being guarded by a huge contingent of Ansar men.

In 2006, Hall-Mark bought 36 decimal of land from the Hemayetpur site of Janata Housing, a private realtor.

The following year, the group set up its first factory Hall-Mark Fashion and started banking with Sonali Bank's Ruposhi Bangla Hotel branch.

Hall-Mark now owns around 100 acres of land there.

Though the group claims that it owns 80 factories, at least 45 of those are still in papers only. Most of these units have been set up with short term loans from Sonali Bank, flouting the banking rules.

## Man survived

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And three others from Maheshkhali were rescued by a fishing boat after their boat with 128 passengers had capsized in the Bay on the night of October 27. They had started for Malaysia from the NafRiver.

The fishing boat, which was returning from the sea, had dropped the three other survivors in Maheshkhali and brought him to Teknaf, said Bakar. He, however, could not say what happened to his fellow passengers.

BGB 42 battalion Commanding Officer (CO) Lt Col Zahid Hasan told The Daily Star over the phone that informed, a BGB petrol team took Abu Bakar in custody in the morning and that they were going to hand him over to Teknaf police.

Bangladesh Coast Guard (BCG), however, could not confirm about the boat capsizing.

BCG (east zone) Staff Officer (Operations) Lt Commander Md Yusuf said they had also been informed about Bakar by the BGB.

## Road crash

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consciousness with his vehicle headed towards oncoming traffic, hitting another parked car head-on, they said.

The impact presumably dislodged the sweet from his throat and the taxi driver regained consciousness.

He and his 87-year-old female passenger, who were both wearing seatbelts, escaped the accidents unscathed.

## Landslide

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While they and other tourists were taking photos of surrounding areas of the waterfall, a chunk of mud from a nearby hill collapsed on them, leaving Amzad and eight other tourists injured, he said.

They were rushed to Cox's Bazar Sadar Hospital where Amzad succumbed to his injuries.

The eight injured are Leon 23, Rimon, 23, Md Sayed, 22, Nasim, 25, Akter Hossain Sumon, 26, Rahib, 3, his mother Layla Hanif Mousami and father Miraj, 45.

Rahib and his parents were later shifted to Chittagong Medical College and Hospital as their condition was stated to be critical.

# Sandy batters US coast

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and Hudson rivers in Manhattan were underwater, as were low-lying streets in Battery Park near Ground Zero, where the World Trade Centre once stood.

As the weakened but still sprawling storm system continued its trek inland, more than 1 million people in a dozen states along its path were still under orders to evacuate.

Sandy left behind a trail of damage - homes underwater, trees toppled and power lines downed - up and down the Atlantic coast.

The New York Stock Exchange says it will re-open today after two days' closure, as will the Nasdaq exchange. The last time the stock exchange shut down for two days was in 1888.

New York's subway system sustained the worst damage in its 108-year history, said Joseph Lhota, head of the Metropolitan Transit Authority (MTA).

New York City Mayor Michael Bloomberg said the subway system would likely be closed for four or five days.

Houses and businesses on the New Jersey shore sustained extensive damage from the storm's

onslaught. "The devastation is unthinkable," New Jersey Governor Chris Christie told reporters after seeing aerial pictures of the area.

In the storm's wake, Obama issued federal emergency decrees for New York and New Jersey, declaring that "major disasters" existed in both states.

Obama and Republican presidential rival Mitt Romney put campaigning on hold for a second day instead of launching their final push for votes ahead of the November 6 election.

Obama, who has made every effort to show himself staying on top of the storm situation, faces political danger if the federal government fails to respond well in the storm's aftermath, as was the case with predecessor George W. Bush's botched handling of Hurricane Katrina in 2005.

But Obama also has a chance to look presidential in a national crisis.

One disaster-forecasting company predicted economic losses could ultimately reach \$20 billion (12.4 billion pounds), only half insured.

Meanwhile, the unprecedented flooding hampered efforts to fight a

massive fire that destroyed more than 50 homes in Breezy Point, a private beach community on the Rockaway barrier island in the New York City borough of Queens.

The storm weakened as it ploughed slowly west across southern Pennsylvania, its remnants situated between Pittsburgh and Philadelphia, with maximum winds down to 45 mph, the National Hurricane Centre said.

As residents and business owners began a massive clean-up effort and faced a long and costly recovery, US President Barack Obama yesterday said the crisis was not yet over and announced plans to go and view devastation in New Jersey today.

Obama said that he had ordered federal government officials dealing with the storm to short circuit normal government procedures to get help quickly to millions of people affected by the huge storm.

Sandy, which was especially imposing because of its wide-ranging winds, brought a record storm surge of almost 14 feet (4.2 meters) to downtown Manhattan, well above the previous record of 10 feet (3

meters) during Hurricane Donna in 1960, the National Weather Service said.

"Hitting at high tide, the strongest surge and the strongest winds all hit at the worst possible time," said Jeffrey Tongue, a meteorologist for the weather service in Brookhaven, New York.

Hurricane-force winds as high as 90 miles per hour (145 km per hour) were recorded, he said. "Hopefully it's a once-in-a-lifetime storm," Tongue said.

## One killed

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three around 9:00pm when they were listening to music on their mobile phones at Manda Khalpar near their house, said Babu Mia, father of Sagar.

The trio was rushed to the hospital where doctors declared Sagar dead.

Saifuddin Ahmed, sub-inspector of Mugda Police Station, said they were looking into the incident.

Quoting locals, police said there was a rivalry between some youths of Manda and its neighbouring Manik Nagar over establishing domination.

Police suspect the rivalry is behind the killing.

# Food, water shortage

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earlier clashes in June.

"With the new influx, these already overcrowded camps are being stretched beyond capacity in terms of space, shelter and basic supplies such as food and water," UNHCR said.

"Food prices in the area have doubled and there are not enough doctors to treat the sick and wounded."

UNHCR said more than 3,000 people have travelled in boats towards the state capital Sittwe in hopes of finding shelter at the camps on the coast near the outskirts of the city.

Many are now living on the barren shoreline, according to an AFP reporter who visited the scene.

"We have no home, no place to stay, no money -- that's how it is. The children are hungry from when the day starts and they cry," said Ahpu, who was separated from her husband and son as she ran for her life.

The 42-year-old, who gave only one name, told

AFP the attack on her village in Kyaukpyu was instigated by ethnic Rakhine Buddhists, with whom her Kaman Muslim community had lived "like family" in the past.

Human Rights Watch on Saturday released satellite images showing what it said was destruction of Kyaukpyu -- a mainly Rohingya Muslim area and the site of a major pipeline taking gas to China -- where virtually all structures appear to have been wiped from the landscape.

Decades-old animosity between Buddhists and minority Rohingya Muslims exploded in June.

Myanmar's 800,000 stateless Rohingya, viewed by the United Nations as among the most persecuted minorities on the planet, are seen by the government and many Burmese as illegal immigrants from neighbouring Bangladesh.

But other Muslims in Rakhine have also been swept up in the latest violence, including the Kaman,

one of Myanmar's officially recognised ethnic groups.

UNHCR raised concerns about reaching the displaced in "extremely hard-to-reach areas", and said unknown numbers had fled into the hills.

The agency said another 6,000 people were stranded on boats or on islets along Myanmar's west coast and "are looking for safe access to places where they can receive assistance".

Rakhine government spokesman Win Myaing indicated that the unrest could continue to flare.

"Some ask me how long the clashes will continue. We do not know. It could go on for about a month or two. It could even be as long as a year or two," he told AFP.

Myanmar has rejected an offer by the Association of Southeast Asian Nations to open talks aimed at quelling the conflict, the bloc's Secretary-General Surin Pitsuwan told reporters in Malaysia yesterday.

# Razakar was launched

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testified before Tribunal-2 that Yusuf formed the Razakar force.

According to the prosecution and historic documents, although the Razakar force started operation since May 1971, the then Pakistani government abolished the Ansar Bahini and turned it into "Razakar Bahini," proclaiming the Razakar Ordinance on August 2 that year.

In collaboration with the Pakistani force, the Razakar force committed killings, genocide and other crimes against humanity during the nine-month-long war.

On September 26, the investigation agency of the international crimes tribunal said it was conducting investigation into the allegation of crimes against humanity against Yusuf, incumbent nayeb-e-ameer of Jamaat-e-Islami, and hoped to complete its probe by December.

The three-member tribunal led by its Chairman Justice Md Nizamul Huq yesterday recorded the cross-examination of Matiur before adjourning the case proceedings against Ghulam Azam until today.

Defence counsel Mizanul Islam cross-examined Matiur, the 16th prosecution witness in the case, for four and a quarter hours and asked questions mostly on the Razakar force and the Shanti Committee, another collaborator force of the Pakistani army.

Mizanul asked, "Who was the chief of the Razakar Bahini before [the then Pakistan] government took

control over the [Razakar] force?"

"I don't know but I have found that Razakar Bahini was formed with 96 Jamaat activists at an Ansar camp at Khan Jahan Ali Road of Khulna under the leadership of AKM Yusuf," said Matiur.

"During investigation, I got the news from locals," said Matiur.

"What type of evidence do you have about the formation of the Razakar Bahini?" asked Mizanul.

"At this point, Prosecutor Zead Al Malum said formation and activities of the Razakar force, Shanti Committee and Al-Badr force, yet another collaborator force of the Pakistani army, was an "admitted fact."

"I have a lot of information about the formation of the Razakar Bahini," replied Matiur later.

"Who had become the chief of the Razakar Bahini after the [then] government took control over the Bahini," asked Mizanul.

"Mohammad Yunis, who was involved with Jamaat-e-Islami," said Matiur.

Replying to other questions, Matiur said the Shanti Committee was formed on April 9, 1971, and it had a 140-member central committee.

"On which principle the Razakar force was formed?" asked Mizanul.

"The Shanti Committee was formed to annihilate 'miscreants' [freedom fighters and pro-liberation people] terming the movement for the independence of

Bangladesh a movement of miscreants," said Matiur.

"Genocide '71", details the accounts of the wartime killers and collaborators.

The book says that in order to make decisions promptly and implement that swiftly, a 21-member working committee was formed under the Central Shanti Committee and the name of Ghulam Azam, the then ameer of East Pakistan Jamaat-e-Islami, was number three in that committee.

The book says that on August 14, 1971, Ghulam Azam addressed a meeting of the Central Shanti Committee at Curzon Hall of Dhaka University to mark Pakistan Day.

There, he urged the "peace-loving citizens of the country" to assist the Shanti Committee in "drawing out the enemies of Pakistan from each and every locality, and destroying their existence..."

In their opening statement on June 10, prosecution had said that Ghulam Azam was responsible for the crimes committed by the auxiliary forces of the Pakistani army during the Liberation War since he had control and influence over those forces.

On May 13, the tribunal indicted Ghulam Azam on five charges including involvement in the murder and torture of unarmed people; and conspiracy, planning, incitement for and complicity into committing genocide and crimes against humanity during the Liberation War.

## Lone Bengal Tiger

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was watching the dead tiger curiously when his father Rafiqul Islam said, "We have come here mainly to watch the tiger..."

"Now this zoo has nothing interesting," he added.

Purnima was brought to the zoo in 2003 along with another tiger named Chandra. Chandra also died of intestinal problems in 2006.

## Saran meets

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Azad said both Hasina and Saran also discussed the issue of importing 250 megawatt power from northern Indian state of Meghalaya through Sylhet.

The Indian envoy conveyed the eid greetings of the Indian President Pranab Mukherjee and Prime Minister Manmohan Singh to Hasina.

He mentioned that the farsighted decision of the present government under the leadership of Hasina helped the country to keep the inflation rate lower despite global economic meltdown.

Saran also discussed with Hasina the border demarcation issue as per the Indira-Mujib treaty and implementation of \$1 billion line of credit.

Ambassador at-large M Ziauddin was present during the meeting.

## BNP

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terrorists and separatists to use Bangladesh territory to harm India's interest.

"The opposition leader not only promised but also gave shelter to terrorists and extremists whenever she came to power," the foreign minister told reporters at a programme in Forakkabad High School in Chandpur.

"She [Khaleda] indirectly admitted the favour her government had for the global terrorism when she was in power... We are happy that she admitted her mistake. She acknowledged that her government followed wrong policies.

"She [Khaleda] created instability on the border by giving shelter to separatists and also allowed using of our land for destruction to our neighbour," Dipu Moni said.

Khaleda, now in India on a one-week visit, had nearly an hour-long meeting with the Indian premier at the latter's official residence in New Delhi on Monday.

The BNP has always been known for its anti-India stance, and it concerns New Delhi that anti-India insurgents get shelter and support in Bangladesh with this party in office, reports the BBC Bangla.

Analysts say Khaleda's assurance at the meeting could be an indication of change in her anti-India policy.

# Eid brings life

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distributed cash and meat of sacrificed animals, report The Daily Star correspondents from different districts including Rajshahi, Natore, Dinajpur, Kurigram, Brahmanbaria, Munshiganj, Tangail, Barisal and Sylhet.

Eid time political activities have been more intensified this year as there will be one more Eid-ul-Azha to celebrate before the country goes for the tenth parliamentary polls likely to be held by the end of 2013 or early 2014.

The ruling Awami League MPs are apparently in a comfortable position as they don't need to spend time like the opposition in making their activists pull their socks up for any movement. Instead, they have been busy highlighting the government's achievements and trying to convince the electorate to vote for the ruling alliance once again.

They have also been holding series of meetings with the party's local leaders and workers to prepare

them for the next parliamentary polls.

"It's the appropriate time for us to highlight the government's success and seek people's mandate again," ruling AL MP Biren Shikdar from Magura told The Daily Star.

Shikdar, who is now in his constituency, said he launched an extensive campaign in his area to inform the voters about the government's success and his own activities for them.

Another AL MP Capt (retd) Ghyiasuddin of Mymensingh echoed the same and said: "We have only a year in hand before the next election. So, we are also putting pressure on the local administration to complete various incomplete development projects."

The BNP-led opposition has already announced they would gear up street agitations to force the government restore the election-time caretaker government system.

As part of the plan, the BNP-led 18-party alliance

on Monday announced fresh agitation programmes including holding of a grand rally in the capital on November 21.

"We are in contact with people and are discussing the country's present situation. We are talking about the government's failure to run the country," BNP MP Nazrul Islam Manju told The Daily Star yesterday.

Manju, also president of Khulna city unit BNP, said they have also been trying to buck up grassroots leaders and activists to beef up the anti-government movement.

"Movement first, then election," Manju said in response to a query whether they are taking preparation for the next parliamentary polls.

BNP policymaker Lt Gen (retd) Mahubur Rahman, who is now in his constituency in Dinajpur, also said the party leaders and activists would be urged to take preparations for the movement during views exchange meetings.

# ACC finds it difficult

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request to Canada for allowing an ACC team and we are expecting their reply."

An external panel of the World Bank recently visited Dhaka to monitor the ACC enquiry. The commission has delivered the documents the panel had asked for.

Meanwhile, an ACC notice on Monday asked Mashur Rahman, prime minister's economic affairs adviser, to appear before it to face questioning in connection with the graft allegations.

The same notice was served upon Deputy Managing Director Mohammad Mostafizur of Engineering and Planning Consultant. His company is the local consultant of SNC-Lavalin.

ACC Chairman Ghulam Rahman said, "The ACC

issued notices asking the two to appear in its Segunbagicha office on November 6."

In September, Mashur was sent on leave to fulfil the condition of the World Bank for reviving its funding for the Padma bridge project.

The ACC so far interrogated 29 people, including former communication minister Syed Abul Hossain, in connection with the graft allegations.

Another top ACC official preferring anonymity said the ACC on September 19 sent mutual legal assistance request to Canadian authorities to allow its team to quiz SNC-Lavalin officials Ramesh Shah and Ismail.

Ramesh 61, of Oakville and Ismail, 48, of Mississauga are accused of trying to bribe officials in

Bangladesh. Ramesh had been a vice-president and Ismail director of international projects at SNC-Lavalin in Toronto.

Both of them were arrested by the Royal Canadian Mounted Police.

The ACC official also said they wanted to obtain a copy of the diary seized from the duo. Their enquiry will not be completed unless they talk to the duo or see what was in the diary.

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

The global lender, however, decided to revive its loan on September 21 after the Bangladesh government agreed to its terms and conditions.