

# Pak SC orders arrest of PM

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The cleric, Muhammad Tahirul Qadri, threatened to remain camped out near the federal parliament with thousands of supporters until his demands were met. Qadri recently returned home from Canada to lead a call for reforms that has made him an instant hit among Pakistanis disillusioned with the state.

It was not clear how much of a potent threat the two events posed for the US-backed civilian government, but the court order and the mass protest around the parliament complex are the latest in a series of challenges for the administration.

In a speech from behind a bullet-proof shield in front of parliament, Qadri praised the military and the judiciary, the country's two other power centers.

"(The government) has wasted and brought a bad end to our armed forces, those armed forces who are highly sincere, highly competent and highly capable and highly professional," he said, alternating between Urdu and English.

"Even they can't do anything because the political government isn't able to deliver anything from this land. Judgments are being passed by our great, independent judiciary but the government is not ready to implement them."

A spokesman for the cleric said protesters would remain camped around parliament until the government dissolved the legislature and announced the formation of a caretaker government.

At one point, security forces fired in the air and used tear gas to try and control the crowd. Interior Minister Rehman Malik later told local television channels the government would not cave in to Qadri.

"We will not accept Qadri's pressure because his demands are unconstitutional," Malik said.

Qadri's campaign has divided Pakistanis. Some hold him up as a champion of reform, others see him as a possible stooge of the military, which has a history of coups and interfering in elections.

But he can mobilize thousands of members of his Minhaj-ul-Quran religious organisation, which runs a network of schools and clinics and organises relief for victims of natural disasters.

"He's spent huge money and he's putting his life on the line, he's here to redeem the people," said Mohammed Waqas Iqbal, a local government official who had travelled from a village in northern Punjab to attend the rally in Islamabad.

Like many of the protesters, Iqbal is an active member of Qadri's organisation, attending daily prayers at a mosque it runs in his village.

Qadri, who holds a doctorate in Islamic law, has impressed his followers with his readiness to leave a comfortable life in Canada to brave the potential security threats associated with participating in Pakistani politics.

"He's an honest man, that's why we believe in him," said Waqas Ali, a garment wholesaler from

the eastern city of Lahore, who said he had spent his own money to fund the journey to Islamabad, and was sleeping on the streets.

Qadri also appeared to have found some supporters who are not members of his religious movement but who hope he may be able to tackle the corruption, economic stagnation and chronic power crisis that has festered under the government of President Asif Ali Zardari.

"Dr Qadri could have stayed in Canada with a luxurious lifestyle, but he came to Pakistan to fight for the people," said Hassan Khan, a bus conductor.

"If I run out of money I am willing to sell my blood for this struggle."

Pakistan's established political parties fear the military is backing Qadri's movement in the hope it will trigger a crisis that will provide a new opportunity for the army to meddle in politics ahead of elections due to take place this spring.

The government and opposition are poised to start negotiating the formation of a caretaker administration to oversee the run-up to the polls as soon as parliament is dissolved, which is due to happen in March. An election date has yet to be announced.

Qadri's platform hinges on a demand that the judiciary bars corrupt politicians from running for office and that the army plays a possible role in the formation of the caretaker government.

One senior military officer, who said he was speaking in a purely personal capacity, said there was no appetite in the military to repeat the coups seen in Pakistan's past, but added the standoff could be resolved if the army played a role as a "moderator".

"We should try as far as possible to abide by the constitution and law in looking for change. The army chief has made this clear," the officer said.

"But things seem to be moving beyond control," the officer added. "It is totally incorrect to say the army is behind Qadri. But if he brings thousands of people to the streets and things get worse, there may be very few options."

The rally began on Monday and many of the protesters had stayed on the streets overnight. The spokesman for Qadri said his supporters had prevented government forces from arresting him.

Besides the protest, the government is battling several other challenges.

Tens of thousands of Shia Muslims, a minority in Pakistan, began burying the victims of a sectarian attack in a mass grave on Monday, ending an extraordinary three-day protest over one of the worst such attacks in the country's history.

People from the Shia Hazara community had been holding a vigil next to the bodies of the 96 people killed in Thursday's bombings in the city of Quetta to demand better protection from a rising tide of such attacks.

The Shia leaders only agreed to hold the burials

after Prime Minister Raja Pervez Ashraf travelled to the provincial capital and agreed to some of their demands.

The government is also struggling to control Taliban insurgents based near the border with Afghanistan. Six paramilitary soldiers were killed in a gunbattle with militants in northwest Pakistan overnight, military officials said.

## BSF fired

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of the two countries would open fire along the border, but they can open fire only in self-defence.

"And the recent firing along the border took place in that line of self-defence," he said.

The home minister was talking to reporters while inaugurating a power supply facility to six villages in Kachua upazila of Chandpur.

On the recent incidents of killings of Bangladeshis, Alamgir said all were gunned down by BSF members in Indian territories, not in Bangladesh.

"We're looking into the incidents and have lodged our protest with the Indian authorities. They [India] have also expressed sorrow for that," he added.

On Monday, Director General of Border Guard Bangladesh (BGB) Major General Aziz Ahmed said "The border killings are not acceptable in any way, our position is clear."

"We have told the BSF to arrest Bangladeshi nationals who enter Indian territory illegally, and hand them over to police instead of killing them," he said.

The BGB chief was talking to journalists at a press briefing held at BGB's Pilkhana headquarters in the capital.

## Abdus Shakur

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in the capital yesterday. He was 72.

He died around 4:45pm due to old age complications, said Ishtiaq Ahmed, elder son of the litterateur.

Shakur will be laid to rest at Mirpur Martyred Intellectuals' Graveyard after his daughter's return from Canada on January 17, said Ishtiaq.

Born in Noakhali on February 25, 1941, Shakur is the author of five novels, several storybooks and essay books. He also edited books on different subjects.

Golap Sangraha, a collection of essays by Abdus Shakur, had won the "Prothom Alo Best Book of the Year" award among the books published in Bangla Year 1410.

Abdus Shakur also won Bangla Academy Award in 1979 and Amiobhushon Award from West Bengal in 2003, Alokt Sahitya Puroshkar in 2008 for his contribution to Bangla literature.

He had done his honours from Dhaka University in English literature in 1963 and master's in the next year. Later in 1980 he obtained another master's in development economics from the Netherlands.

He started his career at Dhaka University as a lecturer in the English department and later joined the then Pakistan Civil Service. He retired in 2000 as a secretary of the Bangladesh government.

# Meeting on city bus fare brings no result

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A two-hour meeting on transport fare hike ended inconclusively last night as transport owners pressed for an unrealistic hike in fares.

Some illogical arguments put forward by the bus owners for raising fares were dismissed at the meeting, said sources.

Presiding over the meeting at his ministry, Communications Minister Obaidul Quader asked the costing committee to review the fare hike proposal and hold another meeting on Sunday.

The costing committee is comprised of representatives from the communications ministry, Consumers Association of Bangladesh and transport owners association.

"This is the last year of the government. Consider public interest first so that they do not suffer for the fare hike," the minister told the meeting.

A representative of the passengers welfare association ruled out the bus owners' claim that prices of spare parts had skyrocketed and the number of passengers decreased.

He pointed out that most of the buses run on CNG, and thus fare hike for those would be unacceptable.

On January 3, the government increased prices of diesel and kerosene by Tk 7 a litre, and octane and petrol by Tk 5 a litre.

Diesel and kerosene now sell at Tk 68 a litre, and octane and petrol at Tk 99 and Tk 96 respectively.

## Rejoinder

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time, the vacant positions have been filled up by few part-time teachers, officers and staffs. The recruitment did not hamper the smooth journey of the university, rather it enhanced the speed of its journey. It is also noted that the Parliamentary Audit Committee has been working here with three disputed issues of the year 2003-2004 which is relevant to the activities of the last Vice Chancellor. The authority thinks that the news is quite intentional as the authority could not meet the demand of recruiting their recommended candidates."

**Our Reply**  
Our report was based on official audit documents of the Local and Revenue Audit Directorate and official sources at the PSTU. We stand by our report.

## Record tourists visited Myanmar last year

AFP, Yangon

A record one million foreign visitors surged into Myanmar last year, official figures showed yesterday, as dramatic reforms lured travellers to the long-isolated nation as it opens to the world.

The tourism ministry reported an almost 30 percent rise in arrivals in 2012 to 1,060,000, from around 800,000 the year before, as tourists and business travellers flocked in.

"This is a very outstanding year for the industry. We have never experienced it before," said Phyo Wai Yar Zar of the Myanmar Tourism Board.

Booming visitor numbers have raised fears that the industry will be unable to cope with the influx, with hotels raising prices as rooms become ever scarcer.

The tourism ministry figures said the country has just 28,000 rooms in around 800 hotels.

But Phyo Wai Yar Zar said the sector was not yet overwhelmed.

"Our current capacity can handle it very well. It is not the optimum yet," he said, adding that the ministry expects a further increase of 15 percent in 2013.

Myanmar has become the darling of the travel industry as it burnishes its international standing with a raft of changes under a reformist government, including the election of democracy champion Aung San Suu Kyi to parliament.

# \$1b defence deal sealed

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The two countries also signed two other agreements and six memoranda of understanding (MoU) on cooperation in different fields like agriculture, public health, medical science, education, counterterrorism, culture, law, justice and parliamentary affairs.

A part of the agreements saw Russia assign \$500 million to finance the construction of Bangladesh's first nuclear power plant to be built at Rooppur.

"The 2,000-MW nuclear power plant in Bangladesh, with Russian technical and financial support, is a shining example of our deeper engagement," Hasina said at a joint press briefing.

Referring to the agreements and MoU, she said, "I believe, they would place our relationship on a firm footing and help in taking practical initiatives in the future."

The preparatory work on the nuclear power plant would now allow us to make arrangements for the establishments of the plant, Hasina said.

The friendship between Bangladesh and Russia would reach to a new height, the PM said, adding, "A new door of prospect has opened by this visit."

Sheikh Hasina, who left for Russia on Monday, said she talked to President Putin in an atmosphere of great warmth.

"Our discussion was between two friends. I assured him of Bangladesh's friendship and cooperation in mutually beneficial areas. We realise that the result-oriented economic cooperation should be on the basis of our engagement with Russia in the WTO."

"We requested for duty-free quota-free access for Bangladesh exports to the Russian Federation and in the Customs Union. It would open up doors for our private sector to explore new potentials for collaboration," she added.

Hasina recalled the help and assistance provided by the then Soviet Union during and after the Liberation War.

In recognition, last year Dhaka bestowed Bangladesh Liberation War honour and Friends of

Liberation War honour to many of those who were involved, she noted.

The PM, who is on a three-day trip, said she invited the Russian president to visit Bangladesh and he accepted it.

Addressing the press, Russian President Putin said they had constructive talks and hoped that the bilateral relations of the two countries would reach a new height.

The economic relations between the two countries, he said, had grown 23 percent and now it stood at more than \$700 million. "We are placing emphasis to reach one billion dollars."

The Russian president mentioned his country is interested to increase cooperation in other energy sectors. In this connection, he mentioned of gas sector, reports BSS.

During a previous meeting in November 2010 in St Petersburg, Hasina and Putin agreed to take additional steps to bring the bilateral relations to a new level, according to a statement posted on the official website of Kremlin.

"Our countries are implementing various major joint projects, including in the energy sector," Putin said, adding that Russian state nuclear corporation was getting ready to build the Rooppur nuclear power station, the first NPP in Bangladesh.

"In fact, Russia will not only supply the latest technology, which is natural, just as we do in our own country and in other countries, but we will also provide financial support at the initial stage of construction."

"It will be a loan for \$500 million, and you have just witnessed the signing of the relevant agreement," added the president.

Talking on cooperation in other energy sectors, he noted, 20 percent of all electricity generation capacity in Bangladesh was built with the assistance of Russian experts.

Putin said his country is expanding ties in the oil and gas sector.

Russian energy giant Gazprom has signed a contract with the Petrobangla for drilling ten gas wells, he mentioned. "This project

will increase gas production in Bangladesh to 56 million cubic metres of gas per day."

Space is another promising area of cooperation, he told journalists, adding that during the talks they discussed the possibility of providing assistance to Bangladesh in launching telecommunications satellites.

The two countries are united in their efforts on tiger conservation, he said. "Let me remind you that Madam Prime Minister took an active part in the preparation and holding of the St Petersburg International Forum on Tiger Conservation in 2010."

The two leaders have agreed to hold the Days of Culture of Russia and Bangladesh in 2014-2015.

## Bahrain fire

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responsible for the building and out of the country, will be summoned for police questioning, reported UAE-based Gulf News on Tuesday.

Several MPs and columnists of Bahrain have called for stringent action against those responsible for the tragedy -- through negligence or greed.

Meanwhile, the cabinet in Bahrain said laws would be toughened to ensure better compliance with rules and safety standards and avoid similar tragedies.

Earlier, Bahrain lawmaker Abdul Halim Murad criticised the negligence and carelessness of government agencies and the owner of the downtown building for the deaths of the workers.

According to officials in the Bahraini capital Manama, 135 labourers, mostly from Bangladesh, lived in 27 rooms of the three-storey building where no maintenance work had been carried out for 35 years, Gulf News added.

Officials, diplomats and non-government organisations have been working to secure shelter, clothes and food for the dozens of survivors left homeless by the fire.

The foreign ministry of Bangladesh has confirmed that all the 13 people, who were burned to death at the labour camp in Manama, are Bangladeshis.

# Concerned about fair probe

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ACC to these queries in order to move ahead with our assessment," he added.

However, WB Country Director Ellen Goldstein said the dissatisfaction the external panel had expressed was completely of its own.

"This is an external independent panel," she said. "They do not speak for the World Bank and we do not speak for them."

Goldstein was talking to journalists about ACC's investigation and the external panel's opinion at the capital's Sonargaon Hotel yesterday.

She also said the WB is waiting for the external panel's report, which is expected by the end of this month, before it makes any comment or reaches a decision.

On January 9, Ocampo sent a letter to ACC Chairman Ghulam Rahman putting eight queries on the Padma graft probe and the FIR filed on December 17 last year.

In the letter, he urged the anti-graft body to send a written reply to the questions as soon as practicable.

Earlier on many occasions, WB said after having opinion from its external panel that the investigation is being conducted in impartial manner, the global lender will decide on financing the bridge project.

Regarding the case, Ocampo in yesterday's statement said, "The external anti-corruption panel has appreciated the frank discussions that we have held with the ACC during our visits to Dhaka."

"We recognise that the lodging of the First Information Report in order to initiate an investigation is an important step forward in addressing evidence of corruption under the Padma Bridge project."

Meanwhile, the ACC chairman said due to lack of corroborative evidence, the commission could not accuse Syed Abul Hossain as it found no evidence against the ex-minister while filing the case.

He was talking to reporters at the ACC's Segunbagicha head office in the capital yesterday.

Asked whether Abul Hossain will now be included in the list of accused as the external panel in its recent letter to ACC mentioned his name, Ghulam Rahman said, "Now investigation is going on."

Regarding WB Panel's reaction to the ACC case relating to the Padma bridge project, he said "The panel took the FIR as a positive step."

Though earlier ACC Commissioner Shahabuddin on Monday claimed that the external panel had expressed satisfaction at the filing of the case, the chairman said the panel had expressed neither "happiness" nor "unhappiness" in its letter written to the anti-graft body.

The ACC commissioner came up with the claim when criticism spread over the news that the WB panel is unhappy with the exclusion of Abul Hossain from the list of accused.

The World Bank had cancelled its \$1.2 billion funding on June 29, 2012, saying it had proof of a "corruption conspiracy" involving Bangladeshi officials, executives of a Canadian firm and some individuals.

The global lender on September 21 decided to revive the loan after Bangladesh agreed to the bank's terms and conditions.

## JS body

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aviation and tourism ministry asked Biman Chairman Air Marshal (retd) Jamal Uddin Ahmed.

The House body also asked him to submit a detailed report within a month on the steps the national flag carrier had taken to prevent its regular loss.

Civil Aviation Minister Col (retd) Faruk Khan said, "Authorities of the Biman are not taking appropriate steps to recover the losses that the airways have incurred over the years."

Lawmakers reacted sharply when Jamal informed the parliament watchdog that the Biman incurred a loss of Tk 632 crore in the last one year.

The Biman chairman cited the rising fuel prices in his effort to justify the loss, meeting sources said.

"The Biman cannot increase ticket fares on different routes due to a competitive market," Jamal was quoted by a committee member as telling the committee.

The committee then observed it was totally unacceptable for the Biman to incur loss in almost all the routes.

## 3.2 lakh listed

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relation office of the expatriates' welfare and overseas employment ministry.

The number of applicants from Dhaka division alone is about 2.6 lakh.

After a primary selection through lotteries, the names of the lucky ones will be announced at the offices of local deputy commissioners today.

However, there was a demand for time extension for the registration as in some places information centres could not provide the service in the first two days for absence of internet connection.

In Manikganj, Satoria Chairman Abul Bashir Sarker said many job seekers in Satoria union could not register.

In some other districts, including Tangail, Narayanganj, Munshiganj and Barisal, the registration process was hampered due to slow speed Internet. The authorities responsible, however, worked till late night to give service to all.

Time extension for these two divisions was not possible as the other divisions were to be covered, Expatriates' Welfare Secretary Zafar Ahmed Khan told The Daily Star.

Whip of the national parliament and local lawmaker Shagufta Yasmeen Emily yesterday visited some service centres at Tongibari and Lahajang upazila, said our Munshiganj correspondent.

Meanwhile, the registration of job seekers in Rajshahi, Rangpur and Sylhet divisions is scheduled to begin today, which will continue till January 18.

Initially, Malaysia will recruit 10,000 Bangladeshis in its plantation sector. Through this registration process, the government will make a database of 35,000 people, out of whom 11,500 will be selected.

## BNP threatens

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wall programme in the capital.

BNP coordinator Tariqul Islam yesterday said they were observing the programme peacefully in all district headquarters to press for the demands. "We will be bound to declare tough programmes if those demands are not met."

Tariqul, also a BNP standing committee member, made the comments while speaking to reporters at Raisaheb Bazar in Old Dhaka.

The programme was earlier scheduled from 11:00am to 12:00pm. In the capital, however, it continued until 2:05pm to coincide with BNP Chairperson Khaleda Zia's appearance in a Dhaka court yesterday.

The human wall stretched along the route that the opposition leader took on her way to the court.

At about 12:00pm Khaleda Zia left her Gulshan residence and reached the Dhaka Metropolitan Sessions Judge's Court at 2:10pm.

Commuters using the route from Mohakhali to the court via Tejgaon, Satrasta, FDC intersection, Moghbazar, Kakrai, Matsya Bhaban, Shikha Bhaban, Nagar Bhaban, Golap Shah Mazar, Bongshal and Dholai Khal suffered tailbacks for nearly four hours.

One side of the roads where the human wall was formed was heavily congested, particularly at Tejgaon, Satrasta, and Mohakhali and in the court area.

Participants forming the human wall occupied almost half of some roads, causing sufferings to commuters.

The Jamaat-e-Islami, one of the key components of the alliance, took the programme as an opportunity to press home its sole demand for the release of its top leaders facing war criminal charges.

A good number of Jamaat and Shibir leaders joined the human wall with banners, festoons, placards, caps and posters, most of which communicated their demand.

Leaders of the other components of the 18-party alliance were almost absent in the programme.

# Stolen train crashes

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morning crash and was flown to a Stockholm hospital, police spokesman Lars Bystrom said. No one else was injured.

Bystrom said the woman was arrested on suspicion of endangering the public.

Tomas Hedenius, a spokesman for train operator Arriva, said the woman, born in 1990, stole the four-car train at a depot outside Stockholm.

She then drove it about a mile (1.6 kilometres) to the end station on the railway line, where it jumped off the tracks, careered for about 30 yards (25 metres) and crashed into a three-story

building. Photographs from the scene showed the crumpled front car of the train buried deep into the structure.

"There were three families inside the apartment building, but no one was injured. At least not physically," Hedenius said.

The motives of the woman, who worked for a company contracted to carry out cleaning for the train operator, were not immediately clear.

"We have only heard good things about her. We're investigating how this could happen, and why she did what she did," Hedenius said.

He said it's unclear how she got the keys to the train, but added that driving it is not that complicated.

"Generally speaking that's possible even if you're not a train driver," he said. "You can read about it on the Internet, or observe how others do it."

## Correction

The World Bank external panel' letter to the Anti-Corruption Commission published yesterday in the print edition of The Daily Star inadvertently stated that "PADMA PCC -- 40% Min". Actually, the figure will be 4%. We regret the unintentional error.