

## 10 hurt in clash with stalkers at dental college

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

At least 10 students of Dhaka Dental College were injured in a clash between students and outsiders over alleged stalking of two female students of the college last night. Principal and Director SM Iqbal Hussain of Dhaka Dental College told The Daily Star that five of the injured were being treated at Dhaka Medical College Hospital while five others took first aid at the college in Mirpur in the capital.

He said a number of outsiders were stalking female students and yesterday they bothered two students. The clash ensued when male students protested.

The outsiders, along with a few family members of some college employees, attacked the male students, sources said.

Dentist Jyotirmoy Das said the stalkers bothered the female students yesterday when they were entering their dorm. The girls informed other students of the matter.

Officer-in-Charge Hosne Ara Begum of Bhasantek Police Station said she was aware of the incident. Students and outsiders threw brickbats at each other.

Police later brought the situation under control, she said, adding that none was arrested so far.

## Campus politics

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Other speakers also strongly criticised the current trend of the teachers' politics, which, they said, was damaging the image of the public universities. They noted that teachers should not get involved with politics of any particular political party to protect party interest.

Pointing out that DU's position on the list of global top universities has dropped, Nahid called on the teachers: "Bring a proposal on how to improve the quality of higher education and we will take steps accordingly."

The minister asked the public university teachers to keep in mind that they were accountable to the people as the universities were run by tax payers' money. "If you remember to be accountable even to a beggar, then you will be able to give the nation much more."

Prof Syed Anwar Hossain in his keynote speech said, "The blue-white political identity of teachers damages their academic excellence."

He also questioned the "quality" and "merit" of the teachers recruited recently.

Prof Anwar said no elections took place for the vice-chancellor panel for four years while elections to students' union were last held more than two decades ago. These are examples of "undemocratic" attitude of the university authorities.

Eminent educationist Abul Kashem Fazlul Haque said, "Every government makes unwritten laws to run public universities. Such interference is undermining the universities' autonomy."

DU Vice Chancellor Prof AAMS Arefin Siddique, DU Teachers' Association President Prof Farid Uddin Ahmed and columnist Syed Abul Moksud also spoke on the occasion.

D U J A website www.duja.bd.org was inaugurated along with a magazine Prostab at the seminar.

## Toll in spate of Iraq attacks rises to 29

AFP, Baghdad

The toll from a spate of attacks across Iraq on Thursday rose to 29 dead and 120 wounded, officials said, amid weeks of anti-government protests and a political crisis engulfing the country.

The attacks marked the third consecutive day of violence that claimed 88 lives overall, including that of a Sunni Iraqi MP killed by a suicide bomber and 33 others who died in twin car bombs in an ethnically mixed northern city.

## Algeria hostage

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abductors, al-Qaeda-linked "Signatories in Blood", said Islamists hostage-takers are still holding seven foreigners.

The sources gave a breakdown of three Belgians, two Americans, a Japanese citizen and a Briton as still being held by the hostage-takers.

The gunmen want to swap the American hostages for Islamist prisoners held in the United States, the ANI news agency reported earlier, quoting sources close to group leader Mokhtar Belmokhtar. The abductors have also demanded negotiations for an end to French intervention in Mali, the report said.

The United States refused to strike deal with the terrorists.

"The United States does not negotiate with terrorists," State Department spokeswoman Victoria Nuland told reporters when asked about the proposal, declining further elaboration.

Despite requests for communication and pleas to consider the hostages' safety, the UK, Japan and US said they had not been told in advance about the military assault.

Japan's foreign ministry summoned the Algerian ambassador to demand an explanation.

The Islamist militants had seized hundreds of hostages at the field deep in the Sahara on Wednesday, purportedly to avenge a French-led offensive in neighbouring Mali.

British Prime Minister David Cameron also said he was "disappointed" not to have been told in advance about the rescue bid, and said "significantly" fewer than 30 Britons remained at risk at the field, operated jointly by BP, Norway's Statoil and Sonatrach of Algeria.

Japanese officials were meanwhile cited as saying by the Kyodo news agency that at least 14 Japanese nationals were still missing. At least three managed to escape.

Norway said eight of its nationals were currently unaccounted for. One is being treated at a hospital in In Amenas, while four escaped unharmed.

French Interior Minister Manuel Valls said two French workers were safe. It was unclear if another two were involved, he added.

The Irish government confirmed that one of its citizens was free. Five Americans had survived and left the country, US officials told ABC News. Austria also said one of its nationals had been released and was safe.

## Teenager

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The rapists left the girl near her house around 4:00am, he added, quoting the victim.

It is the fourth reported rape case over the past one month in the country after the gang rapes in Tangail and Savar and the rape of a class-six girl in Patuakhali.

The seven Mirsarai culprits are Abu Zafar, 40, Rasel, 25, Zafar Iqbal, 25, Shohag, 26, Rahel, 27, Shahadat Hossain, 22 and Kamal Uddin 48 -- all from West Ichakhali of Mirsarai. Police so far arrested Zafar, Iqbal and Shahadat.

Iftekhar Hassan, officer-in-charge of Mirsarai Police Station, said they were trying to round-up the rest of the accused.

## Bodies of 13

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A flight of Emirates Airlines will carry the bodies to Dhaka. Upon receiving the bodies at the airport, the minister will hand over those to families.

Earlier, the minister said the government will give the families Tk 2 lakh each as financial support, in addition to Tk 35,000 burial costs for each.

On Thursday, three Bahraini parliamentarians in Dhaka assured the government of ensuring proper compensations for the victims' families.

The blaze swept a labour camp in the Bahraini capital of Manama on January 11.

Following the fire incident, several MPs and columnists of the Gulf state have come down heavily on the country's labour ministry and the owner of the building for their negligence.

They called for stringent action against the authorities responsible for the tragedy, reported The Gulf News on Monday.

Bahraini police also rounded up the owner of the building for his carelessness and greed, added the report.

## No death

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believes that counterfeiting is a serious criminal offence, it considers the threat of imposing the death penalty to be excessive."

"Unless Bangladesh clearly and irrevocably drops these plans, the Bundesbank will terminate the consultation project before it has begun," said the bank.

The statement from the German bank came after the media quoted Bangladesh Bank Executive Director Ashim Kumar Dasgupta as saying: "A law providing even death penalty for counterfeiting currency is under consideration."

However, Governor Atiur said inadvertently and without due review, Bangladesh's central bank had sent a proposal for imposing death penalty for counterfeiting to the finance ministry on January 2, 2013.

This came following arrests of 10 people in October, 2012, for allegedly printing 88,000 Indian rupees and Tk 2.5 crore of currency notes.

A Bangladesh Bank official said the central bank moved fast after Bundesbank threatened to pull out of the deal.

"This draft has gone to the ministry inadvertently. I have already asked the deputy governor concerned to recall the draft act immediately," the governor told Juergen Sterlepper, director of the centre for technical central bank cooperation of Deutsche Bundesbank, in an email correspondence.

"Germany is strictly against the death penalty," Sterlepper wrote to Atiur. "Therefore, we regret that we cannot continue our planned cooperation as long as death penalty for counterfeiting currency is considered or introduced," said Sterlepper.

The governor asked the German bank to consider the Bangladesh Bank's new position on the death penalty.

Bangladesh Bank plans to introduce an analysis centre in Dhaka for combating currency counterfeiting with assistance from the Deutsche Bundesbank in the framework of Technical Central Bank Cooperation.

## Bangladesh fared better

TABLE	SOUTH ASIA: RATES OF GROWTH OF REAL GDP, 2009-2014					
	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013 <sup>b</sup>	2014 <sup>b</sup>
<b>SOUTH ASIA</b>	<b>7.0</b>	<b>8.3</b>	<b>5.8</b>	<b>4.4</b>	<b>5.0</b>	<b>5.7</b>
<b>BANGLADESH</b>	<b>5.7</b>	<b>6.1</b>	<b>6.7</b>	<b>6.2</b>	<b>6.3</b>	<b>6.4</b>
<b>INDIA</b>	<b>8.2</b>	<b>9.6</b>	<b>6.9</b>	<b>5.5</b>	<b>6.1</b>	<b>6.5</b>
<b>IRAN, ISLAMIC REPUBLIC OF</b>	<b>4.0</b>	<b>5.9</b>	<b>2.0</b>	<b>-1.9</b>	<b>-0.9</b>	<b>1.5</b>
<b>NEPAL</b>	<b>4.5</b>	<b>4.8</b>	<b>3.9</b>	<b>4.0</b>	<b>3.7</b>	<b>4.0</b>
<b>PAKISTAN</b>	<b>3.6</b>	<b>3.5</b>	<b>3.0</b>	<b>3.8</b>	<b>4.2</b>	<b>4.4</b>
<b>SRI LANKA</b>	<b>3.5</b>	<b>8.0</b>	<b>8.3</b>	<b>6.5</b>	<b>6.7</b>	<b>6.4</b>

SOURCE: UN/DESA, BASED ON DATA OF THE UNITED NATIONS STATISTICS DIVISION AND INDIVIDUAL NATIONAL SOURCES.

NOTE: <sup>b</sup> BASELINE SCENARIO FORECASTS, BASED IN PART ON PROJECT LINK AND THE UN/DESA WORLD ECONOMIC FORECASTING MODEL.

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percent in 2012. The rate was second to Sri Lanka's, which was the fastest in the region at 6.5 percent.

According to WESP, Bangladesh will post a 6.3 percent growth in 2013 and 6.4 percent in 2014.

India's economy, which represents almost three quarters of the region's GDP, slowed markedly in the past two years. Annual growth declined from more than 9 percent in 2010 to 5.5 percent in 2012.

Economic growth in South Asia during 2012 fell to its slowest pace in a decade, but it is projected to recover in 2013, the report says.

Gross domestic product in the region expanded by only 4.4 percent last year, after growing by 5.8 percent in the year before. Going forward, growth is projected to accelerate to 5.0 percent next year and 5.7 percent in 2014, led by a gradual recovery in India.

"Persistent high inflation, political uncertainties, and transport and energy constraints weighed on household consumption and business investment in 2012. At the same time, the exports of most countries in the region were hit by the slowdown in developed and emerging economies," the report adds.

GDP growth in India will accelerate in 2013 and 2014, because of stronger growth of exports and capital investment, notes WESP.

Nepal and Pakistan continued to experience sub-

dued growth as ongoing political instability and security concerns weighed on domestic demand, the report says. In Pakistan, total investment has fallen for four consecutive years.

Consumer price inflation averaged 11.6 percent in the region in 2012, slightly up from 11.2 percent in 2011. The report attributes the renewed rise in inflation to several factors: droughts in parts of the region; higher world food prices; significant depreciation of local currencies; and increases in administered fuel and electricity prices.

However, Bangladesh and Pakistan experienced moderate declines in inflation in 2012.

In the outlook, consumer price inflation is projected to decline slightly in most economies, averaging 10.6 percent in 2013 and 9.9 percent in 2014 for the region. More stable local currencies, lower global food prices and slower money supply growth are expected to reduce price pressures. However, persistently high inflation expectations, severe supply bottlenecks and the need to further raise administered energy prices will limit progress in reducing inflation.

Workers' remittance flows to Bangladesh, Pakistan and Sri Lanka continued to increase rapidly in 2012, partially offsetting the large trade deficits.

The report notes that South Asia struggled with

deep-rooted structural challenges in its labour markets. These challenges include the dominance of low-productivity jobs in the large informal sector, high shares of working poor, low female participation rates and high youth unemployment.

According to WESP, downside risks to the economic outlook for South Asia were related to continued global weakness and to regional or domestic vulnerabilities. A further economic downturn in the US or Europe or a hard landing of China's economy would further weaken South Asia's exports, while also reducing inflows from workers' remittances. Widening current-account deficits, coupled with lower portfolio capital inflows, could add pressure on the balance of payments, possibly requiring contractionary policy adjustment. Political instability and deteriorating security conditions represent downside risks for several countries, notably the Islamic Republic of Iran, Nepal and Pakistan.

The report -- jointly produced by Development Policy and Analysis Division, the UN Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD) and the five United Nations Regional Commissions -- is one of the most highly anticipated economic reports from the UN. It provides an overview of recent global economic performance and short-term prospects for the world economy.

## Add in Abul, get WB fund

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assigned to review the probe into the graft allegation in the project.

After a year-long enquiry into the allegation over the much-talked-about project, ACC sued seven people for conspiring to commit corruption.

The accused include former Bridges Division secretary Mosharraf Hossain Bhuiyan but ex-minister Abul Hossain and ex-state minister Abul Hasan were left out.

World Bank President Jim Yong Kim told Mukesh that if the external panel gives a positive report, the lender would start the implementation arrangement for the funding the following day, a top government source told The Daily Star yesterday.

Gowher Rizvi declined to make any comment.

On Thursday, Muhith also told reporters that the World Bank chief held meeting with Mukesh and some senior management officials a couple of days ago.

"He [Mukesh] got the impression that the WB president is very keen that the project should go ahead. They are waiting for the panel report," the minister said without going into details.

Meanwhile, an official of the Anti-Corruption Commission (ACC) said there is no scope for the inclusion of Abul in the first information report (FIR).

Legal experts say additional names could be included in the list even after

the submission of the FIR. But the court will have to approve it.

The names could be included in the supplementary FIR through court, Mahboob Ahmad, a senior lawyer, told The Daily Star yesterday.

According to sources, the external panel through its January 9 letter to the ACC chairman made it clear that it would not go ahead with the financing unless the former minister is included in the list of accused.

The issue has long been a moot point between the ACC and the panel.

The panel during its Dhaka visit in the first week of December had a heated argument with the ACC, when the anti-graft body said the inclusion of Abul in the list would cause a political uproar.

Luis Moreno Ocampo, head of the three-member panel of experts, was so furious that he walked out of a meeting with the ACC, said a source at the ACC.

The letter also said there is enough evidence to implicate Abul.

A finance ministry official said the WB funding to the project could falter again due to the persisting Abul issue.

In September 2011, the World Bank said if Abul is removed from the communications ministry it would finance the project. But the government did not agree.

On Thursday, the finance minister also urged the WB to give a quick decision about

the financing.

The finance minister also said if the WB does not eventually agree to finance the project the government would go ahead with other co-financiers -- Asia Development Bank and Japan International Cooperation Agency.

But an official from a co-financier said, "It would not be possible. If the World Bank does not agree ultimately the agreement with Bangladesh will break down ineffective."

"If the WB does not want to finance the project for the corruption allegation, the co-financiers might also not be interested to make any new commitment as governance is a key condition before they agree to finance any project."

The co-financiers -- ADB, Jica and WB -- sat in Manila last November to prepare a draft for the arrangement of quick implementation of the project.

But the process did not go too far as Abul was not included in the FIR, said the official.

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.

## BSF fires rubber bullet

5 injured

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Kurigram

Five Bangladeshis were injured when India's Border Security Force shot rubber bullets at them on Khalisha Kotal border at Phulbari upazila in the district yesterday.

One of the injured Shafiqul Islam, was admitted to Rangpur Medical College Hospital in a critical condition.

BSF members of Bashkotal camp in Cooch Behar district of West Bengal chased some cattle traders and opened fire. Of the traders, who were trying to cross the border with their cattle around 5:00am, five were hit, said Firoz Alam, commander of 45 Battalion of Border Guard Bangladesh.

The four other injured are Ariful Haque of Lalmonirhat Sadar upazila, Aminul Islam of Balatari village and Krishna Chandra, Jahangir Alam and Shafiqul Islam of Khalisha Kotal village under Phulbari upazila in Kurigram, locals said.

"Shafiqul was hit in the left leg by several bullets. He was referred to the Rangpur Medical College Hospital as he was bleeding profusely," said Ershadul Haque, residential medical officer of Phulbari Health Complex, where Shafiqul was first taken.

Makbul Hossen, commander of Shimulbari BGB Company, said they sent a protest letter to the BSF authorities about the shooting.

## 4 robbers

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Ziauddin and also secretary of Dublarchar Fishermen Group, said Zia along with others reached Bagerhat from Khulna with supplies for his fishermen and employees yesterday morning.

They then got on a cargo vessel to head for Alorkol area. When they reached Charaputia area around noon, a gang of pirates supposedly loyal to Mortuza Bahini attacked the vessel forcing them to retaliate, said Kamal Uddin Ahmed.

The pirates had a faster boat.

After a 30-minute gunfight, four pirates were dead and several others of both groups were injured, Kamal Uddin Ahmed claimed, adding that the pirates retreated.

The coastguard and Rab admitted the shooting incident and that Major Ziauddin was hurt but they could not confirm if four pirates had died.

Our Barisal correspondent adds that a helicopter ambulance of Square Hospitals Ltd went there to rescue the major but failed to land due to thick fog.

## Australia, Britain boost defence links

AFP, Perth

Australia yesterday signed a defence treaty with former colonial power Britain designed to further boost cooperation on military and security issues.

Australia's Defence Minister Stephen Smith said the treaty was designed "to underpin the ongoing strategic and practical cooperation" between the nations, as well as to reflect their historical relationship.

It will see the two countries share information, technology, policy and personnel in a bid to minimise costs, as well as strengthening ties in the fields of cyber security, defence reform, equipment, and science and technology.

Smith said the idea for the accord had arisen during Australia-UK ministerial talks two years ago, to ensure all "practical cooperation measures, arrangements, protocols, and memorandums of understanding that we have... be put under a broad strategic framework".

He described the Defence and Security Cooperation Treaty as "deeply significant", adding that the relationship between the two countries "has always been first class".