

# AL fanning communalism

Alleges Fakhrul

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Thakurgaon

BNP acting secretary general Mirza Fakhrul Islam Alamgir yesterday accused the ruling Awami League of spreading communalism in the country by carrying out terrorist activities.

Political conflicts led to the violence on the polling day (January 5) at different villages in Thakurgaon Sadar upazila, he added.

The BNP leader was talking to local people at Gopalpur Govt Primary School premises after visiting the family members of deceased BNP activist Abu Hanif at Shimuldhani village in the same upazila.

Earlier, he offered prayers at Hanif's grave and pledged to bear the livelihood costs of Hanif's daughter.

Fakhrul also visited some damaged shops of Hindus at Deunia Bazar of Gopalpur village.

He claimed that Awami League goons had stabbed Abu Hanif to death at Gopalpur village on January 5. The AL men and police also killed Joynal and Harun at Basudebpur village in Thakurgaon on the same day, he mentioned.

The government, he said, oppresses people by using the Rab, police and BGB. In the name of arresting unidentified accused, the police and security men have been extorting innocent people, he complained.

He demanded the police stop harassment of people immediately.

The AL is now running the country through

# US, Pakistan seek stability amid Afghan doubts

AFP, Washington

The United States and Pakistan resume talks next week after a three-year hiatus as they seek stability in often turbulent ties amid mutual concerns over Afghanistan's future.

Pakistan and the United States started a "strategic dialogue" in 2010 to work through their complicated relationship, but the talks were quickly frozen due to repeated crises -- including over the secret 2011 US raid that killed Osama bin Laden.

Secretary of State John Kerry, who announced a resumption of the talks during a visit to Islamabad in August, will hold the dialogue Monday in Washington with Sartaj Aziz, Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif's national security adviser.

A US official said that the talks would look at both security and economic cooperation and seek to build a "blueprint" for future ties.

"Having seen the highs and lows of this relationship," the official said on condition of anonymity, "both countries have put an enormous amount of effort into assiduously putting this relationship on firmer grounding over the last year and a half."

The United States, which formed an uneasy partnership with Pakistan after the September 11, 2001 attacks, is seeking Islamabad's assistance again as it pulls tens of thousands of troops from Afghanistan this year and Washington ends its longest-ever war.

US President Barack Obama's administration has grown frustrated as Afghan President

# Anti-government protests spread across Ukraine

AFP, Kiev

The anti-government protests in Ukraine yesterday spread to the north and east of the country as demonstrators sought to seize regional administration offices that have been occupied in over half a dozen regions in the west.

Demonstrators were still occupying regional administration buildings in Lviv and other regions across the pro-EU west of Ukraine that they have seized in a major blow for President Viktor Yanukovych.

But in a new development, protesters were seeking to seize buildings in regions north and east of the capital Kiev, in a sign the protest mood was spreading across the country.

Protesters were storming the regional administration in the region of Poltava east of Kiev, Ukrainian media reports said.

A similar attempt to seize control of the main local administration building was also

# 'No black holes'

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'Hole', Hawkins described an event horizon as the boundary of a black hole, "where gravity is just strong enough to drag light back, and prevent it escaping".

"Falling through the event horizon, is a bit like going over Niagara Falls in a canoe", he said. "If you are above the falls, you can get away if you paddle fast enough, but once you are over the edge, you are lost. There's no way back."

"As you get nearer the falls, the current gets faster. This means it pulls harder on the front of the canoe, than the back. There's a danger that the canoe will be pulled apart. It is the same with black holes."

But now, Hawking is proposing 'apparent horizons' could exist instead, which would only hold light and information temporarily before releasing them back into space in 'gashed form', Nature has reported.

The internationally-renowned theoretical physicist suggests that quantum mechanics and general relativity remain intact, but black holes do not have an event horizon to catch fire.

His work attempts to address the 'black-hole firewall paradox' first discovered by theoretical physicist Joseph Polchinski and his colleagues

repression trying to establish Bakshali in a new form as the party knows it well that it will not return to power through a free, fair and credible election, noted the BNP leader.

He added: The AL has formed an "illegal government" as nobody at home and abroad has said the January 5 election was free and fair.

Fakhrul urged people and party activists to continue the anti-government movement in a peaceful manner for restoring democracy and reclaiming people's voting rights.

Secretary general of district unit BNP Toimur Rahman, joint secretary Obaidullah Masud and convener of district Jubo Dal Abu Nur were present, among others.

On January 5, three BNP activists were killed and around 60 people, including several police and Ansar men, were injured as BNP-Jamaat activists clashed with law enforcers and ruling party men at different unions of Thakurgaon Sadar upazila.

Of the dead, Joynal and Harun of Khagrabi village were killed when police opened fire on a group of BNP-Jamaat activists who tried to occupy the Basudebpur Govt Primary School polling centre around 1:00pm.

Abu Hanif, another BNP activist from Shimuldhani village, died during a clash between the ruling party and BNP-Jamaat men at Goreya Gopalpur Govt Primary School centre around 3:00pm. The clash ensued when the opposition tried to stop polling at the centre.

# Rafsanjani's daughter jailed in Iran

AFP, Tehran

Iran yesterday handed a daughter of former president Akbar Hashemi Rafsanjani a suspended jail sentence for spreading lies about the authorities, her lawyer told the official IRNA news agency.

"The verdict was issued by the court and my client has been sentenced to a six-month suspended jail term," Vahid Abolmoalayee said.

Fatemeh Hashemi's sentence was suspended for the next two years, said Abolmoalayee, adding that he would appeal against the sentence.

Her trial was held at a branch of Tehran's revolutionary court on January 18.

The media reported that she made comments against the powerful Larijani brothers who head Iran's legislative and judiciary bodies.

Her father is an influential cleric who was president from 1989 to 1997 and is seen as a moderate figure close to the reformist camps.

Faezeh Hashemi, another of Rafsanjani's daughters, was arrested and imprisoned in late 2012 for six months for "propaganda against the regime".

Her brother, Mehdi Hashemi, was also arrested in 2012 after he returned from abroad. He was later freed on bail.

Both Mehdi and Faezeh Hashemi were accused of involvement in 2009 street protests that erupted after Mahmoud Ahmadinejad was given a second presidential term in an election the opposition said was marked by fraud.

As per the schedule, yesterday was the last day for filing nomination papers, while scrutiny of the nomination papers will be done tomorrow. The last day for withdrawing candidature is February 3.

On Thursday, the EC announced that elections to 117 upazila parishads will be held on February 27.

Moreover, the EC plans to hold elections to 74 upazila parishads on March 15, 72 on March 25, 65 on March 31, and 57 upazila parishads on May 3.

The last election to 479 upazila parishads was held on January 22, 2009.

BY-POLLS TO UNION PARISHADS

# Japan's PM defends dolphin hunting

AFP, Tokyo

Prime Minister Shinzo Abe has defended Japan's dolphin hunting and asked the world to understand that the controversial tradition is part of its culture and financially supports fishing communities.

The annual catch, in which residents of Taiji village corral hundreds of dolphins into a secluded bay and kill them, sparked renewed global criticism after US ambassador to Japan Caroline Kennedy tweeted her concern earlier this month at the "inhumaneness" of the hunt.

But Abe defended the traditional catch.

"The dolphin fishing that takes place in Taiji town is an ancient fishing practice rooted in their culture... and supports their livelihoods," he told CNN in an interview uploaded onto the broadcaster's Japanese website late Friday.

"We hope you will understand this," he added, noting that he was aware of criticism of the hunt.

"In every country and region, there are practices and ways of living and culture that have been handed down from ancestors," the premier added. "Naturally, I feel that these should be respected."

Activists from the international militant environmental group Sea Shepherd have streamed live footage of the dolphin capture in Taiji, which caught the worldwide spotlight in 2010 when it became the subject of the Academy Award-winning documentary "The Cove".

Defenders of the hunt say it is a tradition and point out that the animals it targets are not endangered, a position echoed by the Japanese government.

# Pir's surviving son

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The criminals had spared the women, including Abdullah's mother Salma, sister Runi and sister-in-law Bithi, who were at home at that time.

They told journalists after the December 21 incident that before leaving the house the killers had searched for Abdullah.

"We have come here to kill six people and we have done so. But it is Abdullah we have meant to kill," the killers had told the women.

Talking to The Daily Star, Abdullah refused to reveal his whereabouts.

The surviving members of the family have moved out of the house in Gopibagh.

"We just could not live anymore in the house where our father and brother had been killed," Abdullah said.

He even left his job as a banker in Bank Asia. Asked why he had quit the job, he said he feared to go out.

Abdullah added a cousin of him was supporting his family now.

But police did not take any step for his security.

"I still have faith that they [police] will be able to catch the killers. But if they fail I may need security."

The investigation officer of the case, Inspector Abual Khayer Matabbar of the Detective Branch of Dhaka Metropolitan Police said, "We have some suspects and are communicating with them. A few suspects are on the run. I believe if we can find them, the investigation will gain momentum."

In line with the initial hunches about the motive of the murders, Matabbar said he too suspected that the killings were committed over religious differences.

"Lutfar was known to be a deviant for his religious practice and preaching of faith. He had made many enemies in the process," he added.

Lutfar Rahman Faruque had published three books on his interpretation of Islam.

# Of a heartless

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However, Ayesha denied having tortured the girl and said she did not order Tamanna to boil water.

"I once beat her lightly as she has a habit of frequent urination," said Ayesha adding, "I treat her as my daughter and will bear the expenses of her treatment."

Tamanna is the second among four children of Saleha and rickshaw van driver Md Momin.

# Yemen marks end of thorny nat'l dialogue

AFP, Sanaa

Yemen's feuding factions wrapped up months of national dialogue yesterday aimed at drafting a new constitution and establishing a federal state in a country where southerners are clamouring for independence.

Secessionists boycotted the talks launched in March 2013 as part of a UN-backed transition that saw president Ali Abdullah Saleh step down after 33 years in power following massive Arab Spring-inspired protests in the region's poorest country.

"All (sides) have made painful concessions," Hadi said of the dialogue which had been due to last six months but was extended for another four in the face of bitter disagreements over key issues.

"This is a historic day," said UN Secretary General Ban Ki-moon in a recorded video message played during the ceremony.

His envoy to Yemen, Jamal Benomar, who

has been overseeing the implementation of the peace deal, hailed the outcome of the dialogue as a "clear roadmap".

"The dialogue was not a picnic, and faced tough challenges," said Benomar, adding that the Yemeni people "should be proud of this achievement".

EU foreign policy chief Catherine Ashton in a statement called the process "a unique and historic achievement".

"It has brought Yemen closer to democracy and to the aspirations of its people for a more secure and prosperous future," she said.

Southerners have strongly opposed proposals for a federation of six units -- four in the north and two in the south -- instead of one each for the formerly independent north and south, fearing that their influence would be diluted.

"We will work as soon as possible to form a regions committee and another to draft a constitution," Hadi said at the ceremony attended by representatives of the United Nations, the Arab League and Gulf states.

"We still have a long way to go to implement the document," said the president, who is himself originally from the south.

# 690 chairman hopefuls

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certain number of women members from reserved seats, chairmen of all union parishads and the municipality mayor, if any.

The EC on January 19 announced that elections to 102 upazila parishads out of 487 will be held on February 19 in first phase. However, it later postponed elections to four upazila parishads of Rangpur due to complications over demarcation of boundaries.

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BY-POLLS TO UNION PARISHADS

# Govt's days are numbered

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chiefs of the other alliance components, was present in last night's programme, where Zafar presented a bouquet to Khaleda.

In her speech, Khaleda welcomed Zafar's Jatiya Party for its "right decision" to join the alliance. "He [Zafar] is a veteran politician. We will get good advice from him," she observed.

"From now on ours has turned into a 19-party alliance. You all know 19 is a very lucky number. The 19-party will bring good news for the country and ensure welfare of the people in the year 2014. People will reward us if we can work together."

Terming the BNP and its allies "pro-liberation force", Khaleda said, "We're the party of freedom fighters who had fought on

# Raped before they reach 14

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month after being raped by her uncle.

In late November last year, a 13-year-old girl from Lakshmpur was mutilated after her cousin hurled acid at her because she had refused to enter a relationship with him.

A four-year-old child was raped in Nilphamari in November by her neighbour.

The Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics conducted the survey titled "Violence Against Women Survey 2011" in collaboration with the United Nations Population Fund (UNPF).

The survey interviewed 12,600 women randomly chosen across all seven divisions with equitable distribution to ensure nationwide coverage.