

TIB against whitening

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and trustworthiness of the sector," TIB Executive Director Iftekharuzzaman said in a press release issued yesterday.

The Bangladesh chapter of the Berlin-based organisation appreciated what it learnt from the media, namely, that the government this time would refrain from granting the scope for legalising of black money, he said.

"We reiterate our call to the government not to bow down to any pressure from any vested quarter," the TIB official said, adding that such an opportunity contradicted Section 20(2) of the constitution, according to which persons shall not be able to enjoy unearned incomes.

"Such unethical scope actually encourages irregularities and corruption and discourages honesty. At the same time, it portrays the government as the protector and helping hand of corruption," the TIB statement says.

Whitening of illicit money is an example of moral degradation and does not boost the country's economy at all.

It is not even generating any notable amount of revenue. Rather, those who are benefiting out of corruption get control over the policy structure, which is a matter of increas-

ing concern, the official of the anti-corruption watchdog said.

Keeping the provision to legalise undisclosed or black money also contradicts the ruling party's pledges in its current five-year plan and the long-term plan, Vision 2021, as well.

About the defence budget, TIB said only a tiny portion of the allocation for the sector was being made public every year but people had the right to know in detail, as the budget was meant to serve people's interests.

It urged the government not to consider that the defence sector was beyond everyone's reach. Rather, it is of great national interest, TIB said, adding that the government should arrange open discussions on the defence budget to gain public support.

TIB also demanded that the government publish a quarterly progress report on implementation of the national budget and expenditure of the annual development programme so that people get the scope to examine those.

"The government should upload on websites or other accessible medium detailed and updated information about the expenditure," the statement adds.

Limiting activities

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anything on whether the government had asked the Rab to stay away from performing additional duties.

On Monday, Rab officials announced that the force would give priority to its seven main objectives set when it was launched in 2004.

They would refrain from additional duties like stop-and-search by setting up checkpoints on streets, controlling traffic and guarding tender boxes, the officials said.

The elite force is specialised in ensuring internal security, recovering unauthorised arms, ammunition and explosives as well as busting armed criminal gangs.

It also assists other law enforcement agencies in maintaining law and order, gathers intelligence on criminals and crime, and investigates any offence as per government directives.

Yesterday, the state minister for home, the IGP and DG of Rab avoided giving any direct answer when they were asked whether the Rab's duties had been curtailed as it became contro-

versial for its recent activities or the move was aimed at curbing the authorities of the elite force.

IGP Hasan Mahmud Khandker said Rab would be operated as per the law while DG Mokhlesur Rahman said Rab, as usual, would be patrolling at railway and bus terminals during Ramadan.

The force, it may be mentioned, has always been under fire at home and abroad over allegations of its involvement in extra-judicial killings.

After the abductions and killings of seven people in Narayanjanj, it was alleged that some Rab members had received Tk 6 crore for committing the crime.

Three Rab-11 officials -- commanding officer Lt Col Tareque Sayeed Mohammad, Maj Arif Hossain and Lt Commander Masud Rana -- were forced into retirement following the allegations.

They were later arrested and placed on remand for their alleged involvement in the abductions and killings.



A member of staff takes a nap at a ticket counter of Gabtoli bus terminal yesterday morning during a 72-hour transport strike. This goods-laden vehicle, inset, was vandalised by bus workers at Puthia in Rajshahi en route to Dhaka yesterday. Because of the strike, kitchen market traders incurred losses as they could not carry their goods to the capital.

PHOTO: PALASH KHAN

Called off after 3-day suffering

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Bangladesh Sarak Paribahan Samity Secretary General Khandaker Enayet Ullah told The Daily Star the communications minister would sit with the transport leaders within a week.

Besides, State Minister for Home Asaduzzaman Khan Kamal has already directed law enforcers to launch an immediate drive against unauthorised vehicles like 'Nosimon', 'Korimon' and 'Bhotbhoti' in a move to meet one of their major demands, he added.

Vehicles started to ply in these districts last evening, said transport staff. Until then the southern people had to endure immense sufferings due to the around-60-hour-long strike as road communications between Dhaka and 16 districts remained suspended.

In absence of buses, passengers thronged the railway stations in large numbers, forcing disruption in the train schedule in Dhaka and other districts.

Kitchen market traders have also incurred huge loss as they could not carry their goods to the capital. Some of them have managed to transport their goods but had to pay more than

double in fares.

Imported goods at Hilly land port in Dinajpur also got stranded due to the strike. Besides, a section of transport labourers allegedly collected toll from private cars and minibuses.

Many people had to walk several kilometres to get transport in vain and were seen returning home, report our correspondents from different districts.

Transport workers and owners in Rajshahi division enforced the strike Sunday morning to press home their six-point demand including a ban on unauthorised vehicles on the highways and stopping toll collection by police and harassment by BRTA.

Besides, Dhaka division unit of Bangladesh Road Transport Samity on Monday called the strike in Mymensingh, Netrakona, Jamalpur, Sherpur, Kishoreganj, Tangail, Gazipur and Dhaka from 6:00am yesterday in protest against an attack on their leaders and workers in Netrakona by Ansar members on May 24.

They raised a seven-point demand including immediate withdrawal of

the Netrakona deputy commissioner, stopping extortion by police, and banning unregistered pick-up vans, auto-rickshaws and other vehicles on the highways.

CNG STRIKE

CNG-run auto-rickshaw owners went on a 72-hour strike in the capital from 6:00am yesterday to press home their five-point demand that includes increasing economic lifespan of the vehicles to 15 years.

In a development last night, Nazrul Islam, chairman of BRTA, said the government has taken a decision to extend the economic life of CNG-run auto-rickshaws from 11 years to 15 years.

The communications ministry issued a notice in this regard yesterday.

"We have talked to the auto-rickshaw Malik Samity Oikya Parishad and we hope they will withdraw the strike," the BRTA boss said.

Earlier in the day, the city dwellers suffered heavily as very few auto-rickshaws were seen on the streets. Buses were overcrowded, while taxicab

drivers charged extra fares from the commuters to cash in on the situation.

Hundreds of commuters were seen waiting for buses standing in long queues on different bus stops in the city.

Auto-rickshaws were introduced in Dhaka in 2002 with an economic lifespan of nine years. Later, the government increased its lifespan by two more years that expired last December.

Following their movement, the BRTA and Communications Minister Obaidul Quader last month assured the auto-rickshaw owners to increase the lifespan further.

"But, the decision has yet to be implemented due to bureaucratic tangles," said ATM Najmul Hasan, member-secretary of Dhaka Mahanagar CNG-Auto Rickshaw Malik Samity Oikya Parishad, an alliance of three organisations of auto-rickshaw owners.

Bangladesh Passengers Welfare Association along with several other drivers' association of CNG-run auto-rickshaws have meanwhile strongly criticised the strike and demanded its

River, where?

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rainfall in the Sylhet region. It was 2.69m and 2.78m in the previous two years.

Though the Teesta, the fourth major river of Bangladesh, usually flows at around 4,000 cusecs in the lean period, its water went down to 416 cusecs from March till the beginning of this month.

The Ghagot and other tributaries of the river are running dry too with the northern region waiting for rain.

Dr Ainun Nishat, climate expert and hydrologist, said there could be several reasons behind the fall in the river water levels. Lack of rain is one of them.

The effects of climate change are very much noticeable in Bangladesh. For instance, October now sees rainfall that was usual in July. Such changes are greatly affecting our rain-fed agriculture.

"We all know *Sheuli* is a flower of autumn, Bangla Ashwin month. But just today, I saw a tree full of *Sheuli* in this sultry summer weather," he told The Daily Star on May 14.

In April, the country had rain that was 79 percent less than usual and around 60 percent less in March. Weathermen say such a situation will continue in June and July.

"If the current situation prolongs till June," said Wais Kabir, former chairman of Bangladesh Agricultural Research Council, "it will affect the production of jute. Cultivation of aman will be delayed."

Most importantly, the groundwater will not be recharged if it does not rain in the monsoon, and the Boro production next year will be hampered as irrigation for Boro is mostly dependent on groundwater, he added.

Md Shah Alam, director of Bangladesh Meteorological Department, said, "If it does not rain in June, it will be a dry monsoon in Bangladesh and agriculture will be hurt severely."

And the whole South Asia is going to be affected, he added.

A statement on the website of

Bangladesh met office reads: during the 2014 summer monsoon season (June-September), "below-normal rainfall" is likely over broad areas of western, central and southwestern parts of South Asia and some areas in the northeastern-most parts of the region.

This statement issued from the fifth South Asian Climate Outlook Forum (SASCOF-5) in Pune last month is the consensus outlook for the 2014 southwest monsoon rainfall over South Asia.

The forum was attended by experts from eight South Asian countries, including Bangladesh, from the World Meteorological Organisation (WMO). There was a consensus among them about the potential for adverse impacts of El Nino on the monsoon rainfall over the region.

However, the intensity of El Nino is uncertain. Other regional and global factors also can affect monsoon rainfall patterns over the region, the statement says.

Modi talks terror, trade with Pak PM

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on India".

Sharif, a pro-business industrialist, said he saw the talks as an "historic opportunity" to improve ties between the South Asian countries, which have fought three wars since independence in 1947.

"We should rid the region of instability and insecurity that has plagued us for decades. Consequently, it was important for us to work together for peace, progress and prosperity," he told reporters.

But he said he also told Modi that engaging in "accusations and counter-accusations would be counter-productive."

Modi held bilateral meetings with Sharif and other regional leaders who attended his swearing-in ceremony on Monday, including Afghan President Hamid Karzai and Sri Lankan President Mahinda Rajapakse.

In an unprecedented move, Modi invited Sharif and the other leaders to his inauguration, signalling his inten-

tion to be a strong regional leader after his right-wing party's landslide general election victory.

It gives him a powerful mandate to reach out to Pakistan to try to mend strained relations, which completely broke down after attacks in Mumbai in 2008 by Pakistani militants that killed 166 people.

Although ties have improved slightly, tensions remain amid mutual distrust and regular skirmishes along their disputed Kashmir border.

During yesterday's talks Modi also underlined his desire to improve commercial ties, Singh said.

"There was discussion on trade and we noted that we were fully ready to fully normalise trade and economic relations. Both prime ministers expressed their interest in having this done as early as possible," Singh said.

Trade between the two countries is presently around \$2.5 billion, with Indian exports accounting for \$1.75 billion.

In his other meetings, Modi called on Sri Lankan President Mahinda Rajapakse to speed up reconciliation with the island's ethnic Tamil minority after a decades-long separatist war that left at least 100,000 people dead.

"Sri Lanka should expedite the process of national reconciliation in a manner that meets the aspirations of the Tamil community for a life of equality and dignity in a united Sri Lanka," Singh said of the meeting.

Modi also thanked Afghan President Hamid Karzai for his country's help in repelling an attack last week on an Indian diplomatic mission in the west of his country.

The attack "only strengthened our resolve to work together for the development and reconstruction of Afghanistan, a sovereign Afghanistan, Afghan-led and Afghan-controlled", Singh said.

Karzai blamed Lashkar-e-Taiba for Friday's attack on the consulate in Herat, the latest of several assaults on Indian targets in Afghanistan.

When an immigrant's nightmare comes true

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Lawrence, where the lampposts were painted red, white and blue.

"We are going on a walk," Salaty said, narrating the video, focusing the camera on her husband, Zunu Zunaid, 37. He turned back to her and smiled.

For the past five months, she had been documenting the gradual unravelling of their lives, in moments both mundane and monumental: the first visit to their home by immigration officers, the delivery of Zunaid's deportation orders, his final trips to eat American ice cream and watch American basketball. Now only four days remained before he would be sent off to Bangladesh, a deportation that would upend not just one life but two. Zunaid would be forcibly separated from the United States after 20 years; his wife, an American citizen, would be forcibly separated from her husband.

Zunaid stuffed his hands into his pockets and surveyed the neighbourhood. He had come to Kansas on a student visa in 1994 to study petroleum engineering and stayed illegally for more than 15 years after his visa expired. He had been making an annual salary of nearly \$60,000 as the

manager of a Best Buy when he was pulled over for a DUI in 2009, which began his slow procession toward deportation. Now he was relearning Bengali, scheduling immunisations against common Third World diseases and searching for a place to live with relatives in Dhaka, many of whom he hadn't spoken to for decades.

What he worried about most was his wife, a preschool teacher who had lived in Los Angeles and New York before moving back home to quiet and trustworthy Kansas, because she thought it offered the version of America she liked best. Now she had been diagnosed with acute insomnia and situational anxiety, and she kept a book on her nightstand called "Full Catastrophe Living." She was seeing a therapist for the first time in her life and had started taking an anti-anxiety medication and an antidepressant, neither of which had halted the anxiety rashes spreading across her hands and arms.

She had tried to calm herself by using breathing exercises and doing yoga, but her preferred coping mechanism was to chronicle every vanishing moment on video, even now, as the dog circled a tree, sniffed a patch of dirt and began to lift its leg. "Oh, here

he goes," she said.

"This is always his favourite spot," Zunaid said as the camera continued to record him.

Salaty had started documenting their last months together at the suggestion of the therapist, after Zunaid's deportation became all but certain during the last days of 2013. "Immigration Nightmare," she had titled a new journal, because even though she had seen nothing of Bangladesh beyond the photos of rickshaws and textile factories in their coffee-table book, this deportation felt at least half hers.

She had met Zunaid late one night at her favourite bar in Lawrence. He was tall and handsome and called everybody "buddy." She was talkative and emphasized her points by touching his shoulder. He told her he was undocumented and facing deportation, but she said that didn't matter. "We can deal with it," she told him, and she surprised him at their wedding by arriving in a sari and henna tattoos. She helped him quit smoking; he volunteered to do yard work for her 71-year-old mother. They bought tickets to watch professional soccer and took a road trip to Texas. They were just beginning

to research adoption when he learned that his final appeal had been denied. His case did not meet the government's dismissal standard of "extreme hardship," since he had a signed removal order, no children at home and a recent DUI. At that point, their lives became a countdown to May 17.

Twenty-eight people had taken him to the airport when he left Dhaka for the United States, a goodbye celebration befitting an only son who had aced his math placement tests and earned a chance at a college degree. But during Zunaid's junior year, his father ran out of money and stopped making tuition payments, and Zunaid dropped out of school and started working at Best Buy. He stopped calling home and drank hard on the weekends. When his father died, he didn't find out until a few months later, over e-mail. Now he was going back to Bangladesh with no degree and less than \$2,000 in cash, leaving the rest with Salaty. Departed from one country and a disappointment in another, that was how he sometimes felt. "What is happening with you?" his mother had asked, but the answer was complicated, and he no longer possessed the energy or the

Bengali to give it.

THE DEPARTURE

He awoke at 3:00am, and she awoke at 4. He rolled back into the pillow and tried to quiet his thoughts. She turned on her phone, and her mind started spinning. She logged into her support group, took an anxiety pill, e-mailed a lawyer, put on makeup, considered a second anxiety pill, and checked her congresswoman's daily schedule. "Do you think I could somehow talk to her today?" she asked Zunaid as they walked to the car for their trip to the airport.

They parked at the airport, and he brought his luggage to the counter, 20 years divided into three suitcases. He had photos from their wedding, a suit to wear for job interviews, a small Kansas Jayhawk statue, and a copy of a written decision made by an immigration judge. "Ordered removed," it read.

He checked in for his flight, and Salaty paced the terminal. She took a picture of his gate and rechecked his flight time on the airport monitor. An hour left. Thirty minutes. Twenty. "It's time," he said, finally, and she took out her camera to film again. "Look at me," he told her, and so she put the camera down. For a moment there

was nothing to do and no one to see other than her husband, leaning down to rest his forehead against hers. She grabbed the strap of his backpack, holding on.

"We will be okay," he told her. "I want you to say it."

"We will be okay," she repeated.

"We will be okay," he said, slower this time.

"We will be okay," she said.

She waved to him as he walked through security, watching until he turned a corner and disappeared from her view. She stood for a few moments longer, not sure what to do, until eventually a text message arrived on her phone.

"We will be okay."

By then he was on the plane, in a seat near the back. He pressed his head against the window as the plane gained altitude, picking out the places that were familiar to him: a park, a soccer stadium, the river, some big-box stores, the cornfields outside Kansas City. "Twenty years," he said as the plane continued to climb. He would go first to Washington, then to Dubai and finally into Dhaka, where his mother had said she would be waiting. "I hope she recognizes me," he said.