

West Africa in desperate wait for Ebola aid

AFP, Monrovia

Ebola-hit west Africa's governments were desperately counting on promises of urgent global aid to be effected yesterday as the World Health Organization announced desperately awaited vaccines could be ready early next year.

Liberia, the hardest-hit nation with almost 1,700 deaths, welcomed pledges of help from world leaders gathered at the United Nations on Thursday but warned it was losing the trust of its people as the crisis escalated.

"We are happy to hear that the entire world now understands the urgency of the reaction to threat of Ebola," Liberian Information Minister Lewis Brown told AFP.

"We hope that the commitment will be quickly followed by action because, if this drags for long, the populations of the various countries will begin to lose patience and they will blame our governments."

Health systems in Liberia, Sierra Leone and Guinea have been overwhelmed by the epidemic, which has killed 3,000 people since the start of the year, and are in dire need of doctors, nurses, medical equipment and supplies.

The WHO told reporters in Geneva it was working with British company GlaxoSmithKline (GSK) and American group NewLink Genetics to accelerate clinical trials on two vaccines.

Some trials of the GSK vaccine have begun in the United States and Britain, and others are expected to begin in Mali next week, said WHO assistant director general Marie-Paule Kieny.

Trials of the NewLink vaccine are

also set to start "imminently" in the US, and others are planned in Germany and elsewhere.

"If everything goes well, we may be able to begin using some of these vaccines in some of the affected countries at the very beginning of next year," Kieny said.

Currently, there is no licenced treatment or vaccine against Ebola, although drugs which have not been fully tested have already been given to a few infected health workers, with stocks extremely limited.

"This is not a vaccine, this is a candidate vaccine," Kieny stressed, pointing to the need for caution in rolling out the vaccines.

The two prototypes "have given very promising results in monkeys, but monkeys are not humans", she said, adding that people who receive them initially "should not consider themselves protected against Ebola".

WHO is trying to accelerate the development of around half a dozen treatments for Ebola, including the prototype ZMapp drug already given to US and Spanish aid workers.

Kieny said "a few hundred doses" should be available by the end of the year.

US President Barack Obama led calls for a ramped up response to the Ebola epidemic at the UN in New York on Thursday, urging governments, businesses and international organisations to join the fight.

Officials could not provide an immediate tally of the total pledges made at the meeting but the UN's coordinator for Ebola, David Nabarro, said countries had "responded with generosity".

Canada announced a contribution of \$27 million (21 million euros) while France said it had set aside 70 million euros in a battle that the United Nations estimates will require close to one billion dollars.

The European Union said it would add 30 million euros to the current 150 million euros it has provided.

But Obama warned: "We are not doing enough".

UN officials said a 20-fold surge in assistance is needed to come to grips with the outbreak.

Sierra Leone took the drastic step on Thursday of putting another three of its 14 districts under quarantine, meaning that more than a third of the population of six million can no longer move freely.

"My country is at the battlefield of one of the biggest life and death challenges facing the global human community," Sierra Leone's President Ernest Bai Koroma warned the UN by video link from Freetown.

A UN mission on Ebola set up last week is due to deploy in west Africa on Sunday, bringing supplies and equipment including protective suits, trucks, helicopters and other aircraft.

The United States has begun sending the first of a 3,000-strong military mission to Liberia to help battle the contagion and has mobilised its experts from the Centres for Disease Control and Prevention to help beat back the virus.

Cuba said on Friday it would send nearly 300 more doctors and nurses to help fight epidemic, raising to 461 the number of its medical personnel in the region.

Britain joins

FROM PAGE 16

Bow in east London, which has a large Muslim population.

"I am not confident that this military action will be effective in the short-term in just targeting the terrorists and not harming innocent civilians," she said.

Washington is eager to build the broadest possible coalition to tackle ISIS, which has captured large areas of Syria and Iraq and declared an Islamic "caliphate".

Denmark yesterday said it would send seven F-16 fighters to help combat IS militants in Iraq, joining Belgium and the Netherlands which also plan to deploy six aircraft each.

Britain's Royal Air Force would join warplanes from the United States, France, Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates, Bahrain and Jordan hitting ISIS targets.

Following the vote, British action is expected within days at the latest despite planned anti-war protests.

In recent days, Washington and its allies have carried out bombing targeting the funding sources of what US President Barack Obama has branded a "network of death".

In the latest airstrikes, US planes destroyed four tanks operated by militants in Syria as well as several vehicles and jihadist positions in Iraq, the Pentagon said.

The US-led coalition also bombed oil refineries in east and northeast Syria where ISIS jihadists extract crude for sale on the black market, according to the Syrian Observatory for Human Rights, a British-based monitoring group.

Experts say sales of oil from Syria and Iraq usually earn ISIS between \$1 million and \$3 million a day.

But now, according to activists in Deir Ezzor, pumping has stopped.

The coalition strikes in Syria are reported to have killed at least 140 jihadists as well as 13 civilians.

ISIS's brutal abuses against civilians, rival fighters and Arab and Western hostages, as well as its success in recruiting Western members, have triggered international alarm.

Britain and France have both been careful to rule out launching strikes in Syria at the hub of the IS group's power, unlike the Arab allies taking part in the aerial campaign.

2 killed

FROM PAGE 16

Akbar Ali, chairman of Charpakhimari Union Parishad, said a tense situation was prevailing in the area following the murders.

All the family members of Azer fled the home while a pall of gloom descended on the house of Faruk after the incident.

No case was filed yet over the killings, said Majharul Karim, officer-in-charge of Sherpur Sadar Police Station.

The bodies were sent to Sherpur Sadar Hospital morgue for autopsy.

Mehedul Karim, superintendent of police in Sherpur said the situation was under control and a woman named Josna was detained in connection with the incident.

Additional law enforcers and members of Border Guard Bangladesh (BGB) were deployed at several points to avert post-polls violence, he added.

58 Jamaat, Shibir

FROM PAGE 16

Kolaujan and Bora Hatiya unions in Lohagara upazila, said Provat Kumar Kar, sub-inspector of Lohagara Police Station.

They are accused in several cases for vandalism and arson attacks, the police official mentioned.

Meanwhile, law enforcers detained 40 Jamaat activists, including 38 females, from Kaliganj upazila headquarters in Jhenidah yesterday morning. They also seized Jihad books and other Islamic booklets from their possession, our district correspondent reports.

Anwar Hossain, officer-in-charge of Kaliganj Police Station, said acting on secret information, a police team surrounded the house of Jamaat leader Abdus Sabur around 11:30am and caught the Jamaat activists while they were holding a meeting there.

Wishing not to be named, a Jamaat leader said Muslim women from different parts of the upazila gathered at the house on every Friday and held discussions on the holy Quran and Hadith.

Decision

FROM PAGE 1

Asked why the government thought about a new act, he said it was the demand of those concerned who forced the government to think about it.

The Press Council has been formed to protect citizens from any abuse by the press, he added.

The minister reiterated that the government, which had introduced the Right to Information Act, would act in the same vein to ensure a vibrant press.

Earlier, he said updating laws is a continuous process for any government in a developing country.

Rule of law

FROM PAGE 1

Let us look at a few instances.

According to police description, Moudud Ahmed, MK Anwar, Rafiqul Islam Mia and Abdul Awal Minto along with some other opposition men vandalised vehicles, beat up bus drivers and hurled brick chips at them in an attempt to kill them. They indulged in all these rowdy activities on the city streets in broad daylight on September 24 last year in Motijheel.

Moudud was 73, Anwar 81, Rafiqul 71 and Minto 65, according to the police report, when they carried out those disruptive activities. Does it not show their extraordinary physical fitness? They, however, landed in jail on November 8.

Police further imagined that the BNP leaders had planned to carry out subversive activities and to kill people. So they each were placed on an eight-day remand by a Dhaka court on November 14 in two cases filed in connection with hartal violence. Later, they were released on bail. The cases are now under investigation.

According to the charge sheet submitted by police in another case, some BNP senior leaders, including MK Anwar, Mirza Fakhrul Islam Alamgir, Brig Gen (ret'd) Hannan Shah and Khandaker Mosharraf Hossain, had made plans to torch a bus at a meeting with other party leaders.

The party's senior leaders Mirza Abbas, Goyeshwar Chandra Roy and some other opposition men executed the plan on April 29, 2012 in front of Falcon Tower, near the Prime Minister's Office at around 9:00pm. Consequently, the senior leaders were incarcerated in May 2012 in connection with an arson case. They are now facing charges of arson.

According to another charge sheet submitted by police in another arson case, Moudud, Mirza Abbas, Goyeshwar Roy and many mid-level leaders and activists of BNP and Jamaat-e-Islami, vandalised a private car and set it ablaze in front of BNP's Naya Paltan office in the capital on March 6 last year.

It was also claimed in the charge sheet that BNP men threw crude bombs and brickbats at law enforcers as the latter tried to pacify them. A Dhaka court on September 2 framed charges against them.

Now take another example of a conspiracy case.

Fakhrul, Hannan, Mosharraf, LDP chief Oli Ahmed and more than two dozen opposition leaders were charged by police with conspiring and abetting a cocktail blast inside the secretariat during hartal hours on April 29, 2012. Interestingly though, the investigation officer could not trace the prime accused of the case, prompting a Dhaka court to question the

legality of the probe.

More stories are there, similar in nature, which led the police to file a huge number of cases against BNP men.

Police filed more than 500 cases only in Dhaka district against around 24,000 BNP leaders and activists in 2013 alone, when the anti-government agitation was at its peak, according to counsels of BNP leaders accused in the cases.

Over the last eight months, police have submitted 59 charge sheets against BNP men.

The accused were charged with creating anarchy, vandalising and torching vehicles, hurling crude bombs at policemen and obstructing them from discharging their duties. Most of the cases are now at the stage of charge framing.

All these cases will deal a further blow to the BNP, which has been almost paralysed organisationally.

Everything suggests the AL that assumed office in a one-sided parliamentary election will face no strong opposition in the coming days. In parliament, the handmaiden main opposition Jatiya Party is unable to hold the government accountable for its activities.

And outside the parliament, the BNP-led alliance has been trapped in cases that may not allow it to wage any fresh agitation on the streets in the near future.

The government has been successful in its strategy of subduing the opposition with police force. It, however, is not a new strategy altogether. The AL leaders themselves had faced it when they were the main opposition during 2001-2006.

At the time, a large number of cases were filed in a similar fashion against AL men who had waged street agitations against the then BNP government.

Of the cases, the majority were filed under the Speedy Trial Act enacted by the BNP-led government in 2002. The AL had termed the law as a "black law."

The AL-led government, having assumed office in 2009, immediately freed its party men from all those charges by withdrawing more than 7,000 cases filed against its leaders and activists, terming them "politically motivated".

Now the AL-led government is using the same Speedy Trial Act in a rather intensified manner against BNP leaders and activists arrested almost on similar charges.

The BNP too has termed these cases "politically motivated".

The thing in common is that both governments for their political purposes have abused the police force, which is run by taxpayers' money and supposed to ensure people's security.

Dhaka wants to contribute

FROM PAGE 1

working on a National Peacekeeping Strategy to pursue evolving pledges and capabilities to UN peacekeeping."

The PM extended Bangladesh's full support to the UN secretary general's strategic review on peacekeeping.

"We value our partnership with the US and other co-hosts to carry our pledges forward," she added.

PM FOR MORE US INVESTMENT
Sheikh Hasina urged the US investors to create a new business partnership to help Bangladesh become a middle income country.

"As we aspire to become a middle income country by 2021, I call upon the US entrepreneurs to create new business partnerships by investing more to take Bangladesh-US relations to newer heights," she told a luncheon hosted by US Chamber and US Business Council at Grand Hyatt Hotel in New York on Thursday.

Terming the current \$331 million US investment in Bangladesh much under its potential, she said, "We need more diverse group of US investors taking advantage of Bangladesh's liberal investment policy ... I would personally want to see these numbers go past the billion-dollar mark within the next three years."

Hasina said her government created seven Exclusive Economic Zones for foreign investors.

"We have more than 80 million young energetic workforce available for industrial recruitment as labour and we also have 160 million consumers as your market."

The current government, the premier said, is keen on increasing foreign investment in the booming shipbuilding and recycling sectors, chemical fertilisers, automobile and light engineering, agro-processing, pharmaceuticals, ceramic, plastic and jute goods, ICT, marine resources extraction, tourism, medical equipment and telecommunication.

The government, said Hasina, in last one year has made significant reforms to improve wages, health, safety standards and working condition of RMG workers. And it has recruited about 1,000 inspectors to oversee these.

PM INVITED TO SAARC SUMMIT

Nepalese Prime Minister Sushil Koirala invited Sheikh Hasina to the next Saarc Summit in Kathmandu in November, reports BSS.

Koirala extended the invitation

Making quick bucks

FROM PAGE 1

will not cancel the exams."

Also yesterday, police detained seven aspirants who received answers on mobile phones at different centres during Jagannath University's admission test.

Earlier this month, the DU authorities caught 32 aspirants with answers in their mobile phone inbox during the admission test. Last year, 17 people were sued in connection with the same crime.

On September 19, police detained 13 aspirants resorting to forgery during Jagannath University admission tests and a vice president of the university unit Chhatra League helping them from outside.

Commander Mufti Mahmud Khan, Rab's legal and media wing director, at the battalion's headquarters yesterday told the press that the arrestees had confessed to the crime and hunt was on for other members of the gang.

During interrogation, some of the arrested 13 said invigilators hired by the gang take snaps of question papers

with their smart phones shortly before or after the examinations to send those to an expert group through SMS or email.

The expert group, which is assigned to solve the questions within the shortest possible time, is sometimes sent photocopies of the question papers through office bearers, Rab officials said.

Another group texts the answers to the cell phones of examinees who have contracts with the gang. The night before the exam, the applicants are given new phone numbers.

For this, an examinee has to pay Tk 1.5 lakh to Tk 2 lakh. The Rab has a list of over 100 DU admission seekers who had made such deals.

Of the arrested 13, Khaledur Rahman alias Khaled, who introduced himself as an activist of Tejgaon Jubo League, used to manage seats for their selected aspirants on back benches with the help of office bearers and text answers to examinees during tests.

Jamil Khan Mitul, a third-year student of Shaikh Burhanuddin Post

Graduate College, collected question papers from their selected invigilators while Sukur Ali alias Nirob, a second-year Jagannath student, coordinates solving of questions.

Zubayer Ahmed, a lecturer of Begum Anwara Girls School & College, is one of those invigilators who ensure selected examinees can carry and use cell phones at the exam halls.

Mozammel Haque, international affairs secretary of DU Chhatra League and a senior officer of Agrani Bank, makes deals with the admission seekers, Rab officials said.

Khaled said before last year's DU admission tests, he earned Tk 80,000 after ensuring admission of three applicants through a person named Alamgir. Thus, he found an "easy way" of making money and formed his gang this year.

He added at least 30 such gangs now operate centring on admission tests of DU, Jahangirnagar University and Jagannath University. Most of the gangs operate from different DU halls and adjoining areas.

Poor English teaching quality

FROM PAGE 16

Of the 40,565 examinees, only 1,364 took the 'Elective English' test.

The two students who qualified for studying English in DU this year are Jannatul Ferdous Dola and Shahbaz Amin Bhuiyan.

The students did not do good in English in the previous university admission tests as well.

In 2013-14 session, 56 percent of 36,836 students failed in the subject in the 'Kha' unit admission test, records show.

In the same year, 57 percent of 62,917 students did the same in the 'Gha' unit admissions test. It was 76 percent in the 'Ga' unit tests for the same year.

In 2012, a total of 23,040 examinees failed in English in Kha unit, while 33,180 in GA unit and 28,799 in GHA unit.

Many in the social media criticised the applicants' poor performance saying the quality of education was

going astray.

The poor performance by the students did not shock him, said Professor Serajul citing the fact that a majority students failed in the same subject in different units' admission test as well.

"Students will continue to do bad in English unless they are encouraged to learn it properly," he said.

The academic curriculum till the HSC does not focus on the English skills of the students who want to get admitted to the English department, said one of the teachers, preferring not to be named.

"We look for something better from them [students] but in most of the cases we are disheartened."

"The number of GPA-5 scorers is increasing but the quality of education is not. Two decades ago, the students had more aptitude for English than the current ones," she added.

"There is a kind of grade inflation in our country. Grades don't reflect the

performance of those students who achieved that particular feat," Prof Syed Manzoorul Islam of the department told The Daily Star recently.

Prof Tahmina Ahmed, English department chairman, said they would contact the faculty dean soon to reconsider the qualifying marks so that no seat remains vacant.

English department sources said they proposed the authorities to enrol applicants considering their marks in general English section, while candidates who got pass mark in the elective English section may be considered eligible for the enrolment in the department.

The English department is to enrol 150 students for the session, and 125 among them are to come from those who sat the 'Kha' unit tests under the Arts Faculty.

The rest would be taken in from those who took the 'Gha' unit test yesterday.

PM to address UNGA

FROM PAGE 1

new height through solving the pending issues.

Hasina in her speech at the UNGA will highlight international peace and security, democracy and good governance, empowerment of women, poverty alleviation and climate change, according to officials. As usual, she will address the UN meeting in Bangla.

The PM, who is leading a 185-member delegation to the US, will speak about Bangladesh's position on the theme of the general debate of the 69th UNGA -- "Delivering on and Implementing a Transformative Post-2015 Development Agenda".

Her speech will also cover Bangladesh's achievements in establishing democracy and good governance, its leading role in women empowerment, steps taken by the present government to alleviate pov-

erty and face the challenges of climate change and progress on MDGs.

On Hasina-Modi talks, diplomatic sources said substantive issues will come up for discussion at the meeting.

"Since this will be the first meeting between the two leaders, they will discuss issues which are substantive in nature," Syed Akbaruddin, spokesman of Indian external affairs ministry, told a press briefing in New Delhi recently.

Officials said PM Hasina at the meeting is expected to raise the issues of implementing the Land Boundary Agreement and early signing of the Teesta water sharing deal.

They added: Bangladesh and India know each other's concerns well and the two leaders will exchange views on them. Political and economic issues will also come up for discussion.

Hasina and Modi will talk about the Saarc summit slated for November in

Kathmandu. They are likely to discuss expanding India-Bangladesh cooperation in new areas like nuclear energy and outer space. India has offered to share its expertise in civil nuclear energy and facilitate the launch of Bangladesh's satellite Bangabandhu 1.

They are also expected to make a final decision on Bangladesh's request for a fresh line of credit from India. Foreign Minister AH Mahmood Ali raised the issue of new line of credit during the Joint Consultative Commission meeting in New Delhi on September 20.

India during Hasina's visit to New Delhi in January, 2010 had announced a \$1 billion line of credit, the highest foreign assistance by India to any country, for improving infrastructure in Bangladesh. Out of the amount, \$200 million was converted into grant-in-aid.

Explosion kills

FROM PAGE 16

Swapan dead on the spot," Abdus Salam, OC of Kadamtali Police Station, told The Daily Star yesterday.

The nearby closed shops were also damaged after being hit by the van parts, the police official said adding the number of casualties was less as the explosion took place during the Friday prayers.

Rony was being treated at a hospital, he added.

The van, which came from a factory in Gazipur, caught fire soon after the explosion. The fire was doused later.

Neither Mostafa Mohsin, senior station officer of Postogola Fire Station, nor the police could confirm the reason behind the explosion.