

AL, BNP blame

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twice in the left leg and twice below the waist.

Doctors at the United Hospital yesterday operated on him to remove the bullets. He was said to be out of danger and was kept in the intensive care unit for observation.

Holding the BNP responsible for the incident, AL Joint General Secretary Mahbubul Alam Hanif claimed, "The attack on the former state minister for foreign affairs was part of the BNP Chairperson Khaleda Zia's blueprint. The BNP has carried out the attack."

Speaking at the party's Dhanmondi office, he alleged the BNP chief was once again conspiring to go to power through killing.

But the BNP alleged government agents were involved in the "cowardice and criminal attack". It said the attack was aimed at killing Reaz and intimidating the opposition party.

In a statement, the party said that in the face of a tremendous pressure by the ongoing "people's movement", the government formed committees across the country with secret and dangerous forces to give its last "poisonous bite".

"The present unrepresentative and repressive government has let loose secret killers in different parts of the country to eliminate opposition leaders and activists," said the statement, signed by BNP Joint Secretary General Rizvi Ahmed.

Reaz Rahman has become a victim of such brutal forces, it added.

The shooting happened around 8:40pm on Tuesday when Reaz was on way to his Bashundhara residence after meeting Khaleda Zia in her Gulshan office, where she remains confined for the past 12 days.

Witnesses said six people took part in the attack, which lasted no more than three minutes. All the six were wearing hooded jackets.

When Reaz entered lane no-46, just behind Hotel Westin, the attackers on three motorcycles followed him and then waylaid him with their bikes.

They first asked him to come out of the car. When he demanded their identities, they smashed the windshields with hammers and started shooting him. The BNP leader then got down from the car and crawled to a nearby building for safety. The attackers then firebombed the car and fled.

Contacted, Rafiqul Islam, OC of Gulshan Police Model Station, yesterday said they collected footage of the shooting incident recorded in a CC camera of a nearby building.

But he claimed they could not identify the attackers as yet.

Yemen's

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"The heroes were chosen and they answered the call," he said.

Speaking over footage of the attack that killed 12 people, Ansi said: "Today, the mujahedeen avenge their revered prophet, and send the clearest message to everyone who would dare to attack Islamic sanctities."

Ansi referenced a warning by the late chief of al-Qaeda, Osama bin Laden, who was killed by US commandos in May 2011.

"If the freedom of your speech is not restrained, then you should accept the freedom of our actions," he said.

The perpetrators of the attack, brothers Said and Cherif Kouachi, were known to have trained with AQAP.

Four Jews were killed when another militant later stormed a kosher supermarket in Paris.

AQAP has a record of launching attacks far from its base in Yemen, including a bid to blow up a US airliner over Michigan on Christmas Day in 2009.

The group recently called for its supporters to carry out attacks in France, which is part of a US-led coalition conducting air strikes against jihadists from the Islamic State group in Iraq and Syria.

AQAP's English-language propaganda magazine "Inspire" has urged jihadists to carry out "lone wolf" attacks abroad.

In 2013 it named Charlie Hebdo cartoonist and editor-in-chief Stephane Charbonnier, who was killed in the attack, among its list of targets.

Ansi noted in the video that the dead included "one listed among those wanted" in Inspire.

Charlie Hebdo had angered Muslims in the past by printing cartoons lampooning Mohammed and Islam.

Experts identify

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"It is taking time because we have to remain cautious, considering health risks," said the official, adding that after recovery, they would ensure safe storage of the radioactive material.

The highest level of radiation was found at 2000 microsieverts per hour, Kamal added.

A panel of nine experts of the US Department of Energy arrived in Bangladesh on January 11 upon Chittagong Customs House's request, to help recover the radioactive substance as the country's professionals lack the skills to do it on their own.

US-S'pore consortium

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According to the energy ministry's present estimate, the government will have to spend around \$2.7 billion annually for importing 500 million cubic feet per day (mmcf) LNG and using the floating terminal.

For the last one decade, the country faced a shortfall of around 500 mmcf gas. As per the forecast, this would persist even if the country adds new gas to the national grid from its own resources in the coming years.

The AEC and two other companies - Hiranandani Electricity Private Ltd, India and Samsung C&T Corporation, South Korea -- submitted proposals to Petrobangla through an open tender more than three years ago to build the terminal.

However, Petrobangla's tender evaluation committee had found all the proposals "non-responsive", said energy ministry officials.

Though the LNG terminal is among the government's top priority projects, Petrobangla could not make any headway with it. Finally, it picked the AEC's offer as the other two missed many details.

Muhith yesterday also admitted that the LNG terminal project took much time to reach the final stage.

The AEC proposed building the terminal for around \$300 million and operate it for 15 years before handing it over to the government.

According to the AEC proposal, if four million tonnes of LNG is

imported from Qatar a year, the price of per mmcf LNG would be \$14 that includes delivery and shipping costs. With duty, tax and other expenses added, the cost would be \$17.1 per mmcf at the delivery point.

The AEC sought a service charge of 56 cents per mmcf gas for utilising the LNG terminal and shipping services. The consortium also proposed that it be given a service charge for sitting idle in case the government does not import LNG after the terminal's construction.

The energy ministry analysed the AEC proposal and explained the cost implication.

In its proposal to the cabinet committee, the ministry noted that the estimated diesel import price was Tk 74 a litre. When a combined cycle power plant uses it, the cost of electricity stands at Tk 16.13 per unit.

If diesel was replaced by LNG in producing electricity, the price would be Tk 9.4 per unit. And if LNG was mixed with local gas, electricity price would be Tk 4.37 per unit.

Qatar tops the list of countries supplying LNG. Japan, South Korea and India had been importing LNG from Qatar under 15-20 year agreements, the ministry said.

It also noted that the government had already decided to set up a transmission line from the LNG terminal at Maheshkhali to Anwara in Chittagong for supplying gas. The project is now in progress.

21 kg gold seized

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The officials recovered the gold bars from the cargo hold at the rear of the aircraft during a three-hour search. The value of the gold is estimated at around Tk 7 crore.

A Customs official, preferring anonymity, told The Daily Star that it is not possible to conceal gold or other things in such a place of the plane without the help of Biman staff. The gold might have been smuggled into the country from Dubai.

None was arrested in this connection.

In another incident, police arrested two gold smugglers along with 65 gold bars, weighing over 7 kg, in the port city early yesterday, reports our Chittagong correspondent.

They are Paritosh Dey, 33, of Cox's Bazar and Dulal Dhar, 36, of Banshkhali of Chittagong.

Nezam Uddin, inspector (investiga-

tion) of Kotwali Police Station, said finding a patrol team of police, the duo suddenly halted their car at Anderkilla around 12:30am.

On suspicion, when the policemen asked the two to get down from the vehicle for a search, the duo refused.

The police frisked them and recovered the bars from their possession.

The value of the gold bars is about Tk 3 crore, according to police.

During interrogation, the duo admitted they were taking the gold bars to Dhaka after getting those from one Narayan Kumar Chowdhury in Hathazari upazila, said Nezam, who is investigating the case.

Police suspected the gold bars were smuggled into the country from Dubai.

A case has been filed against the three, including Narayan.

Narayan absconded, said police.

Healthcare, drug

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long-term treatment, are on the rise, said Jahangir AM Khan, head of the health economics unit at the International Centre for Diarrhoeal Diseases Research, Bangladesh (icddr).

Against this backdrop, the authorities should undertake strategic programmes and set guidelines to encourage people to exercise regularly, reduce smoking and improve food habits, he added.

There is a lack of regulation in drug sales and many buy drugs without any prescription, Jahangir told The Daily Star.

Though non-communicable diseases are increasing, government spending in the health sector has fallen.

In 2012, people spent 63 percent of healthcare expenditure from their pockets against only 23 percent by the government. A little over 8 percent came from development partners while the rest from voluntary healthcare schemes like health insurances and employers, said Ashadul Islam, director general of the Health Economics Unit (HEU) of the health ministry, while presenting the survey report.

The HEU conducted the study with support from the World Bank, Rockefeller Foundation, World Health Organisation and German development agency GIZ.

The per capita spending on health was equivalent to \$27 in 2012, which is well below the \$54, the minimum per-head healthcare expenditure recommended by the World Health Organisation.

Total healthcare expenditure in 2012 was Tk 325.1 billion, up from Tk 153.9 billion in 2007. However, 3.54 percent of the gross domestic product (GDP) was spent on healthcare in 2012, from 3.63 percent in 2007.

In 2012, Dhaka division had the highest per capita spending of Tk 2,722 crore on healthcare, followed by Khulna (Tk 2,371 crore) and Chittagong (Tk 1,930 crore). The lowest per capita spending was in Sylhet division -- Tk 1,379 crore.

Ravi Rannan-Eliya, an international health expert, said the present healthcare spending was not consistent with the goal of achieving the Universal Health Coverage (UHC) by 2032.

The countries that have already achieved the UHC spend more on healthcare, he said at the programme.

As development partners are funding less, the money should come from taxation, Ravi added.

State Minister for Health Zahid Maleque said though public spending on healthcare was not impressive, Bangladesh saw great achievements in the sector, like a drop in child and maternal mortality rates and an increase in life expectancy.

The country is facing environmental issues like water and air pollutions that have impacts on public health, he said.

Maleque stressed the need for improving healthcare services, and pledged to introduce social health insurance schemes soon.

Europe's Muslims feel heat of backlash after Paris terror

AP, Paris

Firebombs and pig heads thrown into mosques. Veiled women subjected to insults in the street. The Internet awash with threats against Muslims. Europe's Muslims are feeling the heat of a fierce backlash following last week's terror attack against French satirical newspaper Charlie Hebdo.

An official who keeps track of Islamophobic attacks in France said there were 60 incidents -- attacks and threats -- in the six days since that attack.

A climate of fear is taking hold in Europe, stoked by rightist rhetoric equating the millions of peaceful Muslims with the few plotting murder and mayhem.

Hebdo, 26 places of worship around France were attacked by firebombs, gunshots or pig heads, with a mosque in Le Mans hit with four grenades. There were 34 insults and threats.

The three-day terror spree in Paris claimed the lives of 17 victims, and traumatized a continent already brimming with anti-immigrant sentiment. Brothers Cherif and Said Kouachi -- the al-Qaida-linked suspects in the magazine attack -- were killed in a shootout at a printing plant north of Paris; their apparent accomplice Amedy Coulibaly was shot dead in a near-simultaneous raid at a Jewish market, where he had holed himself up with hostages, killing four.

French authorities are warning the nation against linking French Muslims with terrorists.

World piracy continues to fall but SE Asia a worry: watchdog

AFP, Kuala Lumpur

Piracy on the high seas fell last year to an eight-year low worldwide but the number of successful ship hijackings increased due to rising numbers of attacks in the waters off Southeast Asia, a piracy watchdog said yesterday.

The International Maritime Bureau said in an annual report that 245 pirate attacks were recorded globally in 2014, down from 264 the year before, and nearly half of the 445 reported in 2010 when piracy off Somalia was raging.

Global piracy incidents have tumbled since then due to a multi-national naval patrol effort launched off East Africa, as well as improved onboard security.

But the seas off Southeast Asia, particularly the waterways between Indonesia, Singapore and Malaysia, have steadily emerged as a new hotspot, with attacks on small tankers rising.

Worldwide, 21 vessels were hijacked last year -- 16 of which were in Southeast Asia -- compared to 12 in 2013, according to the report released by the IMB's Kuala Lumpur-based piracy monitoring centre.

Pirates killed four crew members, injured 13 and kidnapped nine from their vessels globally, it said.

"The global increase in hijackings is due to a rise in attacks against coastal tankers in Southeast Asia," IMB Director Pottengal Mukundan said in a statement accompanying the report.

"Gangs of armed thieves have attacked small tankers in the region for their cargoes, many looking specifically for marine diesel and gas oil to steal and then sell."

Implement

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"Any kind of protest activities of the Paharis faces obstruction from the local administration and extremist Bengali organizations or otherwise is subject to atrocious attacks," it said.

CHTC said the "loss of Pahari land rights" was at the root of all the problems.

"The government will acquire land for the college, as a result of which the Paharis may be adversely affected," read the statement, adding that government decisions in violation of the accord triggers protests by indigenous people, particularly the youth, who desired to express their objections on the basis of their constitutional rights.

CHTC also urged the government to amend the articles of the land conflict resolution commission act, incorporate both Adivasis and Bangalees in the police and village defence forces, bring to justice instigators of the communal violence, engage in dialogue with all the communities and provide suitable treatment and compensation to those injured or harmed.

CHTC comprises civil society members from home and abroad who look into the civil, political and land rights of the indigenous communities of the three hill districts and implementation of the accord.

Bubble

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themselves in a secure and enclosed space.

The pod was designed by London-based designer Lee McCormack.

Described as a 'corporate wellness facility' or like using a 'mind gym', individuals access an online account when they first enter.

Here they can choose from a selection of wellness routines under the banners of relax, learn, test and boost, in either 10, 20 or 30 minute allocated time slots.

Aside from being confined to an office, developers also see Orrbs possibly being placed in airports, universities and public spaces.

Devices are currently being hand-finished in the US and UK, the two initial territories targeted by the company, and Orrb is set to launch officially in Spring with the subscription service Orrb X.

"We've been hearing back from the wellness training industries and it's all positive," said McCormack.

Orrb investor Khajak Keledjian, Chief Executive of Interxim, said: "Taking a moment out, for 10 or 20 minutes a day, is vital in business."

"You need a moment to close up, to see and feel for yourself, and in order to do that you need somewhere to go; you need the tools to be able to do that."

Keledjian cited the stresses of running a successful business as the key factor in seeking out meditation and then further investigating how wellness could be incorporated into our environment.

BNP expels

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senior staff of BNP chairperson's media wing, confirmed The Daily Star yesterday evening that BNP Joint Secretary General Rizvi Ahmed sent expulsion letters to the duo.

At the briefing Khoka said Zahid Sardar and Mojibor Rahman were appointed as special envoys to BNP's US chapter but they were removed following charges of fraudulence.

Khoka also said BNP could not hold a press briefing in this connection in Bangladesh as the party headquarters and BNP chairperson's office in Dhaka were under siege by law enforcers.

The journalists present at the briefing were served a copy of the expulsion letter signed by Rizvi Ahmed.

Khoka, also a former Dhaka City mayor, has been staying in the US since last year's May for cancer treatment.

Bangladesh-born American citizens Zahid F Sardar and Mojibur Rahman Majumder were appointed foreign affairs advisers and party lobbyists on November 17 in 2013, according to party sources.

On January 8, International Business Times UK, an online news portal, ran two separate statements

attributed to the US House Committee on Foreign Affairs and six Congressmen, which were said to have been obtained from an aide of Khaleda Zia's elder son and BNP Senior Vice-Chairman Tarique Rahman.

Days later, the portal withdrew the statement and published a fresh one in which the US body on foreign affairs blasted those working behind this "fake" statement.

A number of Bangladesh newspapers also published the statements.

At first the BNP denied involvement with circulating those statements to media. But following strong criticism that those statements were fake, the party launched an investigation and took organisational actions against the persons responsible for this.

Asked about a report aired on Bangladesh private TV channel that BJP Chief Amit Shah told them that he had no conversation with Khaleda Zia, Khoka said BNP had doubt whether the recorded voice aired by the channel was Amit's.

"It was obvious that the two leaders [BJP chief and BNP chief] had a conversation on January 5," Khoka added without elaborating.

Facebook restricts

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to any user who has identified himself as being under 18 years old.

It follows pressure for the move from its own safety advisers.

But one psychologist said the measure still did not do enough to protect young, vulnerable members of the social network.

Among the first posts to be affected are uploaded files containing video footage of policeman Ahmed Merabet being shot dead in Paris by a terrorist involved in last week's Charlie Hebdo attacks.

Facebook has faced repeated criticism over recent years for allowing violent and graphic images that it deems to be of public interest or concern to remain on its pages.

The US firm's guidelines ban material "shared for sadistic pleasure or to celebrate or glorify violence".

However, it allows news reports and other documentary images depicting beheadings and other types of murder to remain online despite the potential for distress.

The firm permits children as young as 13 years old to be members. But some even younger children circumvent this age limit by providing false details when joining up.

Last August, controversy over images showing people's heads placed on spikes in Syria prompted the Family

Online Safety Institute (Fosi) - a member of Facebook's safety advisory board - to demand the social network change its practices.

Stephen Balkam, the charity's chief executive, told the BBC he wanted cover pages to be placed over graphic material to prevent people from seeing distressing images without warning, and an age-gate system implemented to make it harder for under-18s to find the material.

Facebook has now confirmed it began rolling out such a scheme in December. It applies to graphic material reported to the firm by its users that is judged to have been posted in an irresponsible manner.

"When people share things on Facebook, we expect that they will share it responsibly, including choosing who will see that content," a spokeswoman told the BBC.

"We also ask that people warn their audience about what they are about to see if it includes graphic violence."

"In instances when people report graphic content to us that should include warnings or is not appropriate for people under the age of 18, we may add a warning for adults and prevent young people from viewing the content."

The spokeswoman added that the firm's engineers were still looking to further improve the scheme.

Normalcy yet to return

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On Saturday, Section 144 was clamped on the district after Pahari Chhatra Parishad (PCP), backed by Parbatya Chattagram Jana Sanghati Samity (PCJSS), clashed with pro-Awami League student and youth bodies Chhatra League and Jubo League during a blockade enforced by the PCP to protest the inauguration of a medical college in Rangamati.

The political clash triggered ethnic tension with reports of sporadic violence between the indigenous and the Bangalee settlers the next day, forcing the administration to clamp night-time curfews in Rangamati.

The local administration, however, was hopeful of restoring normalcy soon.

"Everything will be normal in a day or two," Samshul Arefin, deputy commissioner of Rangamati, said in a meeting with journalists yesterday afternoon.

The political parties were asked not to hold rallies or processions without informing the administration, and law enforcers were deployed at important and strategic points of the town, he said.

A three-member committee was formed to probe the violence and it would submit a report in 10 days, he added.

The DC, however, declined to comment on rumours that the medical college might be relocated to Bandarban.

Meanwhile, a top leader of the PCJSS praised the role of the local administration in containing the

situation.

"Some vested quarter was trying ... to trigger an ethnic clash here. But the army and the civil administration played a positive role and saved people's lives and properties," said lawmaker Ushatun Talukder, also vice president of the PCJSS.

During a conversation with this reporter yesterday afternoon, he explained why the PCJSS was opposing the establishment of the medical college.

"We want the government to postpone it for now ... The hill people are facing many problems due to the CHT Peace Accord not being fully implemented. So we want the government to take care of other basic problems of the indigenous people of the Chittagong Hill Tracts before launching the medical college."

"Of course, we want the medical college. But the indigenous people would not be able to use this opportunity as they are not ready yet," he said, arguing that this does not mean his party was against the government or opposing development.

Pointing to the fact that only four students from the district got GPA-5 in the last Higher Secondary Examination, the Rangamati MP said the government should improve the basic infrastructure of lower-level education first.

Meanwhile, visiting Rangamati Medical College yesterday, this correspondent found no students or administrative staff but heavy police presence on the campus.

Russia, Ukraine trade blame for bloody bus attack

AFP, Kiev

The death toll from a stray rocket that hit a Ukrainian bus climbed to 12 yesterday as Moscow and Kiev traded blame for the separatist war's bloodiest incident since a September truce.

The long-range Grad rocket exploded on Tuesday near a commuter bus travelling towards the pro-Russian rebel stronghold of Donetsk from Ukraine's southeast coast.

frame standing in a field of bloodied snow underscored how distant a truce in the nine-month uprising remains after the death of 4,700 people and effective destruction of Ukraine's industrial base.

Ukrainian President Petro Poroshenko told the nation the rocket was fired by rebels while responsibility rested on "those who stand behind them -- those whose hand feeds them and arms them, drills them and inspires them to commit bloody crimes."