Show maximum restraint, find a solution

Kuwait ambassador to Bangladesh parties

DIPLOMATIC CORRESPONDENT

Ambassador of Kuwait in Bangladesh Ali Ahmad Ebrahim S Al Dafiri has called upon the political parties for showing maximum restraint and finding a solution to the current political problems through consensus.

"Our position is not to interfere in domestic affairs of any country...we urge all political parties in Bangladesh to reach a greater consensus to establish peace in the country, he told The Daily Star yesterday.

Replying to a query whether the Arab Group had advised BNP Chairperson Khaleda Zia to participate in the last year's general election, the envoy said, "We did not say that. We put forward some suggestions, but we neither asked the BNP to join nor refrain from the election."

Asked about the OIC member countries' suggestion for banning the political organisations involved in terrorist activities in Bangladesh, Dafiri said, "Only one ambassador made the suggestion and it was his own or his country's position, but it is not the position of the

Organisation of Islamic Cooperation member countries or Arab Group." After briefing diplomats on

January 20, Foreign Minister AH Mahmood Ali told reporters that several member countries of the OIC, including Egypt and Palestine, had urged the government to impose the

Kuwait as the current head of the Arab Group wants to see a peaceful solution to the ongoing situation in Bangladesh, said the envoy.

Google street

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Shahed, chief executive manager of Mapping Bangladesh and regional expert reviewer at Google Map Maker, told The Daily Star.

"So far Dhaka city, Chittagong city and Dhaka-Chittagong highway have been included. We plan to cover the divisions and then the districts," Hasan said.

Hasan and the band of volunteers from Mapping Bangladesh worked relentlessly with Google to bring the best possible views for the Google

Street View Service. "We are always keen to expand the locations covered by Street View and are particularly excited about helping bring more of Bangladesh onto Google Maps. Pegman will be going on even more adventures in

Bangladesh over the next couple of weeks, so stay tuned," Zeff Yusof, chief of communications, Google Inc; Malaysia, Pakistan & Bangladesh, said in a statement.

Google officially started its Google Street View project of Bangladesh on November 5, 2012.

Alternative

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ministry during a meeting yesterday. The BIWTA also informed the committee that 25 percent of the dredging of the channel had been completed and the navigability would be restored by June for resum ing vessels' operation on the route.

An oil tanker sank in the Shela river inside the Sundarbans on December 9 with 3.58 lakh litres of furnace oil, posing a threat to the

forest environment. Even though the government banned plying vessels on the route following the incident, it reopened

the route few days later. The 31-kilometre Mongla-Ghasiakhali channel, which was introduced in 1974, started losing its navigability more than a decade ago due to lack of maintenance. Finally,

the channel was closed in 2011 and vessels were forced to take an alternative route through the Shela river. The meeting yesterday decided to hold a joint meeting of the shipping and environment and forest ministries to discuss the December 9 cap-

on the environment surrounding the However, the date of the meeting

size of the oil tanker and its impact

was not finalised. Meanwhile, Saber Hossain Chowdhury, chairman of the standing committee on textile and jute ministry, has requested the shipping ministry to stop plying vessels through the Shela until the UN-Bangladesh joint observation team

In a letter, dated January 8, to Rafiqul Islam, chairman of the shipping ministry parliamentary committee, Saber wanted to know whether the Shela river route would be closed after the reopening of the Mongla-Ghasiakhali channel.

submits its report to the government.

The standing committee on shipping ministry asked the BIWTA to come up with a reply in the next

meeting.

Incredible story

FROM PAGE 20 the animal walked all the way back from southern Russia to Devon, England.

It echoes the plot of War Horse, the Michael Morpurgo novel adapted into an award-winning West End play and Steven Spielberg film.

The incredible story was unearthed by Chris Chatterton, the curator of the Soldiers of Gloucestershire Museum, last week.

He said: 'I was reading a book about The Glosters and I came across a mention of The Sikh. I did some more digging and it really is a remarkable story. She was viewed by many men in the Battalion as an Omen of good luck. A statue to honour The Sikh would be great. We will certainly be doing something at the museum to commemorate her.'

The Sikh arrived at the front line with her devoted master Lieutenant A C Vicary, of the Gloucestershire Regiment Vicary, and the regiment's Second Battalion in Ypres.

She was one of the million horses sent to the Western Front during the als for his gallantry. First World War.

flict as only 67,000 returned home, after 933,000 tragically died.

The brave horse was bred in Australia and sold to India. She spending the remainder of her life in arrived in North China with the 36th Devon, was reminiscent of the hero Sikh Regiment where passed into the in best-selling Morpurgo's book.

ownership of Lt Vicary in 1913.

with him.

When the battalion was given orders to return to Europe for war in November 1914, Vicary obtained special permission to take The Sikh

She was the only horse to accompany the Battalion from China, braving a treacherous eight-week boat journey from China to Europe. The Sikh was a loyal companion

to Vicary throughout the entire the First World War, supporting him and his troops in the reserve lines and support trenches.

The courageous pair led the 16th Gloucestershire Regiment in their victorious march through Serbia and Bulgaria.

The Sikh proceeded with the

Regiment to South Russia, before

following them home through Turkey, Greece, Italy and France once the war ended in 1918. Vicary ended the war as a Lieutenant Colonel, having one a Military Cross and two

Distinguished Service Orders med-After her illustrious and adventur-She was lucky to survive the con- ous life as a war horse, The Sikh died in peaceful retirement at Vicary's

Museum curators have noted that

US, Cuba seek to reopen

no timeline has been given for the reopening of embassies.

US Secretary of State John Kerry warned Wednesday that the two sides still have much to negotiate before they can normalize ties frozen since 1961.

"When it is timely, when it is appropriate, I'll look forward to traveling to Cuba in order to formally open an embassy and begin to move forward," Kerry said in Washington.

Cuban officials have also downplayed expectations of major breakthroughs this week, stressing that normalizing ties will be a long and complex process.

After Jacobson had a working dinner with Cuban counterparts on Wednesday night, the two sides will negotiate how to turn their "interests sections" into fully functioning embassies with ambassadors in Washington and Havana.

The US mission to Cuba, a concrete and glass building along the capital's picturesque seawall, has been a symbol of the countries' animosity since it opened in 1977.

Across the main entrance, the Cuban government built a vast esplanade to hold anti-US rallies.

In 2006, then president Fidel Castro ordered 138 flagpoles erected mission was using to convey political messages.

Now, Washington wants Havana to reaccredit its diplomats; end travel restrictions for them within the island; ease shipments to the US mission; and lift a cap on US personnel.

For its part, the Cuban delegation has voiced "deep concerns" over the situation of the interests section in Washington, saying the US embargo has left its consulate without banking

services for almost a year.

home in Devon.

Arturo Lopez-Levy, an international affairs professor at New York University, said the talks are important to build trust as they seek new relations in the coming years. "Although Havana and

that they seek in the long term, today they are in the same bed. It doesn't matter that they have different dreams," he said. Lingering differences were on display on Wednesday, as Cuban and US officials remained at odds over US

Washington differ in the objective

policies that give Cubans who reach US soil quick access to permanent residency. But the two sides came out positive after Wednesday's first day of

Castro regime has blamed for the

country's economic woes. reaction, praising Obama while voicing concern that too much was

conceded to the regime. In Washington, some Cuban-American lawmakers have criticized to block a giant display screen the Obama, saying the administration had given up too much without secur-

> "As the administration pursues further engagement with Cuba, I urge you to link the pace of changes in US policy to reciprocal action from the Castro regime," Senator Bob Menendez, a fellow Democrat, said in

"very important to us."

Situation normal

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Earlier, Information Secretary Mortuza Ahmed said in the meeting that televisions were airing old news of violence with fresh ones, giving people a wrong picture of the situation.

In disagreement with the government's view, Chief Editor and Managing Director of Ekhattor Television Mozammel Babu said the television channels were airing stories on other aspects of the situation too but those failed to draw the government's attention.

Commerce Minister Tofail Ahmed, Water Resources Minister Anisul Islam Mahmud, State Minister for Home Asaduzzaman Khan and Jatiya Samajtantrik Dal lawmaker Mainuddin Khan Badal also attended the meeting to drive home the government's view of the media coverage of the ongoing blockade enforced by the BNP-led alliance.

movement is not against the government but against the country. And these [acts of violence] are part of a conspiracy to overthrow the government and foil the trials of war criminals, Khaleda Zia and Tarique Rahman," Amu told

reporters. Tofail Ahmed too said except for some acts of sabotage and criminal activities, a normal situation was prevailing in the country.

"This is not a movement ... This is Khaleda as saying. sabotage ... We will work together to

unite the nation against the sabotage," Mozammel Babu told journalists.

Chief Editor Monjurul Ahsan Bulbul of Boishakhi TV said they all agreed on talks, welcoming the meeting as

productive while vowing to meet Obama urged the Congress on Tuesday to end the decades-long embargo against Cuba, which the

The dissident community on the island of 11 million has had a mixed

ing human rights commitments.

a letter to Kerry. A US official said human rights will be on the table, saying it was

the point that politics and violence are

two different things and should not be mixed up. "Politics will reach a dangerous level

if violence takes over its place. We said we are in favour of welfare politics and against violence," he said after the meeting.

Anjan Chowdhury, owner of Masranga Television, said a big question that was discussed in the meeting was whether the ongoing incidents were a movement or sabotage.

"We have agreed that the two things are different. What is happening in the country is sabotage and it can't be sensationalised," he added.

Information Minister Hasanul Haq Inu, who chaired the meeting, sought the media's cooperation to contain the ongoing violence.

KHALEDA 'CONCERNED' BNP Chairperson Khaleda Zia yesterday

expressed her concerns over the govern-"What is going on in the name of ment's instructions to the private television channels not to air any sensational news on blockade and hartal. The BNP chief made the reaction

when a faction of Bangladesh Federal Union of Journalists (BFUJ) led by Shawkat Mahmood met her at the Gulshan office. "The ongoing blockade will con-

tinue until the demand for holding a fresh election under a nonparty administration is met," Shawkat quoted Describing the government's instruc-

tion as a threat to media, the journalist leader and an adviser to Khaleda said, "It has been done so that people cannot know the actual information.

A father's

FROM PAGE 20 examination, cancelled all examinations scheduled for Wednesday and Thursday considering students' security.

"Bijoy had Economics Unit-2 examination today [Thursday]. He took his preparation, but he got all confused over his exam," said Shykh Seraj.

As Seraj was concerned, he contacted an Edexcel official Wednesday noon. The official informed him that the exam would be cancelled in Dhaka but showed him a way saying that his son could still take the exam in Chittagong since the port city was out of the hartal's purview.

"We decided to go to Chittagong and started looking for options to get there," Seraj said. As there were risks involved in

bus and train journeys, he con-

tacted the Novo Air and managed

three tickets. "The flight was at 10:00am and we started around 9:00am. By that time I had also booked a room in a hotel. "At 10:10am, we had an announcement that the flight would be delayed. We were on our nerves and kept waiting as the exam was scheduled to begin at

3:00pm. Suddenly around

10:40am, the pilot announced that the flight will not take off due to technical glitches. It was like getting hit by a thunderbolt," he said. He kept trying nonetheless. He changed the tickets and went to Regent Airways. But he got a phone call from the Edexcel official who

Dhaka since there was a possibility

that the exams would be held in

then asked them not to leave

the capital. "We saw a ray of hope," he said. He left the airport and as his vehicle neared Radisson Hotel, he received another phone call from the official. Now he informed that the exam would not be held in Dhaka. By the time, all flights to

Chittagong had left. His son Bijoy, who was sitting behind him, asked: "I could not sit the exam. Who will take the responsibility?"

"'That's why I wanted to study abroad,' Bijoy told me," shared

Seraj. As Seraj was returning home from the airport, the question that kept buzzing in his head was: " I could go this far because of my position in the society. What will happen to those parents who spend their hard-earned money for their children's education? Who will take the responsibility for this?"

MPs clamour

Dipu Moni said, "What Khaleda Zia is doing is terrorism and it has no relations with politics."

Terming Khaleda a killer, Nanak said no discussion could be held with her.

Bablu said people want safety and security of their lives and properties and "the government must act tough to make the situation normal."

In response, State Minister for Home Asaduzzaman Khan Kamal said the government would follow the dictates of law to take actions against the BNP chief.

Hazi Selim said he would give his one month's salary to the mother of student Ovi, who died yesterday six days after being burnt in an arson attack. He urged other parliamentarians to do the same for the hartalblockade victims.

Viber, four other

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Viber and Tango were blocked the same day while the services of WhatsApp, Mypeople and Line were shut down the following day.

The government has specific information that subversive activities, including bomb and arson attacks, were being carried out under directives issued by the BNP high-command using Viber and Tango, claimed a police official.

Intelligence agencies have recommended that the government block the popular services temporarily based on proof, the official added. "We have information that those

who had been issuing directives through mobile phones to carry out subversive activities had stopped using their phones and were using Viber and Tango instead," the policeman said, adding, "We have had proofs of such instructions for carrying out subversive activities." State Minister for Home Affairs

Asaduzzaman Khan Kamal earlier said Viber and Tango had been blocked based on an intelligence report. "Now criminals and militants interact using these [Viber and Tango] that

cannot be monitored widely by our intelligence agencies," he said. The intelligence agencies can locate any caller when a regular call is made from a mobile phone but they cannot get the location when the caller is

using Viber or Tango, claimed an

official of the telecom regulator.

World's poor headed for better lives in 2030

Says Bill and Melinda Gates

AFP, New York

The lives of the poor will improve faster in the next 15 years than at any time in history, billionaire philanthropist Bill Gates and his wife Melinda say.

In their annual letter released Thursday, the couple laid out their upbeat vision for a technology-driven wave of change that will lift hundreds of millions out of poverty by 2030. The major breakthroughs will be

agriculture, digital banking and

online education, where the Gates Foundation is planning to pour in resources. "Our big bet is that in the next 15 years, the lives of the poor are going to improve more than at any time in the history of the world," Melinda

Gates told AFP in an interview. Child deaths are predicted to be cut by half, polio will be wiped out while the fight against malaria, a major killer in Africa, will make strides with vaccines and a single-dose

Africa can achieve food security by 2030 with access to innovation in agriculture to help farmers, the Gates the worst-off countries will continue said in their letter, a vision statement to struggle."

that has been released annually since 2009

'Seven out of 10 adults in Africa are farmers. When they get new seeds that are drought-resistant and as the

climate changes, they can still get more yield off their farms," said Melinda.

"It means they can feed their families and put the crops on the market." Mobile banking has been popularized in Kenya, but the Gates Foundation is working to bring the most noticeable in health, but also in financial tool to the poor in Tanzania, India, Bangladesh, the Philippines

> and Uganda. She sees potential for poverty reduction through online education and the development of software, especially for cell phones to help teachers and students.

The Gates' "big bet" that the world will be a better place in 2030 comes at a time of gloom in international circles with humanitarian agencies struggling to help a record number of people displaced by conflicts.

The letter acknowledges that there are skeptics and that "we shouldn't lose sight of the fact that a handful of

He also offered his "apologies to

There had been hope the crisis

In return for concessions over the

the patient people of Yemen" and said:

would be resolved after the nine-

point deal was struck late on

disputed draft constitution, the

Huthis agreed to vacate the presiden-

tial palace, free Mubarak, withdraw

from areas surrounding the resi-

dences of Hadi and Bahah, and aban-

But officials yesterday said they

The UN envoy to Yemen,

Moroccan diplomat Jamal Benomar,

had arrived in the country yesterday

for talks with the political rivals, but

they were swiftly overtaken by the

ity since an uprising forced strong-

man Ali Abdullah Saleh from power

in 2012. Saleh has been accused of

backing the Huthis -- who are from

the same Zaidi sect of Shiite Islam as

the ex-leader -- as has Shiite-

The turmoil has raised fears that

Yemen, which neighbours oil giant

Saudi Arabia and lies on the key ship-

ping route from the Suez Canal to the

Gulf, may become a failed state simi-

iPhone can spy

Yemen has been riven by instabil-

don checkpoints across the capital.

were not yet honouring the deal.

flurry of resignations.

dominated Iran.

lar to Somalia.

Wednesday.

"We pray to Allah to protect Yemen."

President, PM resign sibility for the actions of others".

FROM PAGE 20

be part of the collapsing country. The shock announcements

came after the militia, known as Huthis, tightened their grip on Sanaa this week after seizing almost full control of the capital in September. They had maintained fighters

around key buildings yesterday and

continued holding a top presidential

aide they kidnapped on Saturday,

despite a deal to end what authorities called a coup attempt. The potential fall of Hadi's Western-backed government will raise serious concerns of strategically important but impoverished Yemen

collapsing into complete chaos. After heavy fighting between government forces and the Huthis this week that killed at least 35 people, the UN Security Council and Yemen's Gulf neighbours had all voiced support for Hadi's continued rule.

The Huthis swept into Sanaa last year from their stronghold in the far north, demanding a greater say in the country's affairs, and refused to abandon the capital despite a UNnegotiated deal.

The situation escalated on Saturday when the militiamen seized top presidential aide Ahmed Awad bin Mubarak in an apparent bid to extract changes to a draft constitution, which the Huthis oppose because it would divide Yemen into six federal regions.

The militiamen say it would split

the country into rich and poor areas. In the ensuing days pitched battles erupted, with the Huthis eventually seizing Hadi's offices in the presidential palace, attacking his residence and surrounding the home of the law.

prime minister Bahah. In his letter of resignation, seen by AFP, Bahah said that from the time of his nomination in November and his confirmation by parliament in December he had tried to serve the country.

"But the situation has evolved in a different manner and we decided to stay away from unconstructive policies that do not respect the rule of law," Bahah said.

"We do not want to be a party to

what is happening and what is about

to happen," he said, adding that the

government refused "to take respon-

FROM PAGE 20 also been active in campaigning for privacy reform after the Snowden

revelations, joining with Facebook and Google to call for changes to the But recently published files from the NSA showed that British agency GCHQ used the phones UDIDs the unique identifier that each iPhone has — to track users. While

there doesn't seem to be any mention

of such spying software in any of the

revelations so far, a range of docu-

ments are thought to be still unpub-Snowden opts not to use the phone for professional reasons, but Kucherena said that whether or not to use one was a personal choice,

Sputnik News reported.

Loss Tk 36,445cr

FROM PAGE 1

Asked if business bodies would take any step to help resolve the political impasse, he said as a trade organisation it was their responsibility to stand for business, economy, the state and the people. "The government and the political

parties will have to choose which option they will pick.... But talks are the only solution to coming out of this

allowed, to highlight how businesses were bleeding due to the unrest. Khaled said no country in the world could achieve its desired goal by apply-

ing force. "So, our political parties must reach a consensus through dialogue." He also spoke against violent and destructive activities. "Any political

with the stance of the FBCCI, which

has recently sought legal remedies to

movement should be peaceful and should not turn violent. "The Federation of Bangladesh Chambers of Commerce and Industry is the apex trade body and we agree

get rid of destructive political programmes like hartal and block-

According to the survey, garment sector counts a loss of Tk 842.5 crore for a day's countrywide blockade or shutdown.

The daily loss is Tk 300 crore in transport sector, 288 crore in agriculture, 250 crore in real estate and Tk 210 crore in tourism. The wholesale and retail markets suffer losses of Tk 150 He added they might sit with the crore while the manufacturing sector major political parties, if they were Tk 100 crore. Referring to the government's

> income country and achieving 8 percent GDP growth, Khaled said to do so Bangladesh needed investment equivalent to 30 percent of the GDP, which was 26 percent at the moment.

Vision-2021 of becoming a middle-

"A business-friendly environment must be ensured to attain that goal." The DCCI president requested the

political parties to keep the exportoriented industries out of the purview of shutdowns and blockades.

"We also urge the government to provide special security to the exportrelated transport," he said.