

# Help police tackle crime, terrorism

PM asks people

UNB, Dhaka

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina yesterday urged all irrespective of political opinions to cooperate with the police in resisting terrorist and subversive activities unleashed by BNP and Jamaat.

"I urge people to stand against terrorist and militant activities and extend all-out cooperation to Bangladesh police," she said while addressing the inaugural function of Bangladesh Police Week-2015 at Rajarbagh Police Lines in the capital.

Terming petrol bomb attacks on buses and thus burning people to death as heinous acts, Hasina called upon the BNP-Jamaat men to refrain from such subversive acts.

"I want people to live in peace, Bangladesh to become a peaceful country in South Asia, and there will be no place for violence, militancy and terrorism," she said, adding that a peaceful environment could ensure economic growth further.

The PM alleged that the BNP-Jamaat alliance has been tarnishing the country's image at a time when

Bangladesh is recognised globally with various awards and honours for attaining massive socio-economic development.

Hasina asked the members of police force to discharge their duties properly alongside winning the trust and confidence of people. "Police should be the friends of common people as they are their last resort."

The government has a plan to provide the police with necessary logistic supports to tackle cyber crime, money laundering and other offences.

Earlier, Hasina took salute at a parade performed by different units of the police.

The PM also adorned the badges of Police Padak-2014 to 86 officials and constables in four categories for their outstanding contributions to service for people and professional excellence.

State Minister for Home Affairs Asaduzzaman Khan Kamal and Inspector General of Police AKM Shahidul Haque, among others, were present.



People in their thousands attend the namaz-e-janaza of Arafat Rahman Koko at the Baitul Mukarram National Mosque yesterday. The younger son of BNP chief Khaleda Zia was later buried at Banani graveyard in the capital.

PHOTO: STAR

# SPs of trouble-torn districts skip Police Week programme

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

As the country has been hit by political violence, some superintendents of police have been asked not to join this year's Police Week that opened yesterday in the capital's Rajarbagh.

Mofazzal Hossain, superintendent of Gaibandha police, said he received verbal instructions from Dhaka about a week ago that he should not leave his area.

A couple of other SPs in the Rangpur range received similar instructions from the higher authorities, he told this correspondent over the phone last night.

Several northern districts including Rangpur, Gaibandha and Chapainawabganj have reportedly been identified as violence-prone areas by the government.

An official at the police headquarters said around seven to eight SPs

did not join a meeting with State Minister for Home Asaduzzaman Khan.

There are 64 SPs in as many districts in the country.

Police high officials in the meeting put forward different proposals regarding their facilities, said meeting sources.

Inspector General of Police Shahidul Hoque pointed out different problems in discharging their duties properly.

Several cops opposed the home ministry's decision to turn the police headquarters into a directorate general.

State Minister Asaduzzaman Khan praised the law enforcers for fighting violence, especially for their valiant role in curbing political violence across the country in 2013.

Seventeen cops had sacrificed their lives that year to maintain law and order, he added.

# Moving beyond cold war

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A joint India-US statement highlighted the need to safeguard maritime security in the South China Sea, where neither has territorial claims. That prompted a rebuttal from China, which said non-claimants should butt out.

**'CLOSER PARTNERS'**

More than anything, the Obama administration is billing the deepening relationship with India as aligning two large democracies in a battle for Asia's future.

In a speech yesterday, Obama said it once would've been "unimaginable" to see an American president as the chief guest for India's Republic Day parade. The US welcomes a "greater role" for India in the Asia Pacific as the two countries deepen defence ties, Obama said.

"My visit reflects the possibilities of a new moment," Obama said. "As I've said many times, I believe that the relationship between India and the United States can be one of the defining partnerships of this century."

For the US, India is a valuable counterweight to China, as both a strategic partner and an alternative political model for developing Asian nations. China's more-than-three-decade long march from North Korean-style poverty to a \$10 trillion economy has given state-run capitalism an attractive gloss.

**CHINA SUSPICIONS**

"India is a democracy despite all its faults," said Siemon Wezeman, a senior researcher at the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute. "It's a country the US can easily work with; it's relatively close to the Middle East which is handy; and it shares no love for China."

India has developed more slowly than China, with growth falling below a 5 percent annual rate under the previous government. Modi was elected in May after a campaign that centred on a pledge to overhaul the economy and jump start growth. Next year, as China's economy slows, India is expected to become the fastest-growing major economy in the world, according to the International Monetary Fund.

Obama sought to open the door for US companies in India with deals on civilian nuclear cooperation and defence production. Under Modi, India sees

defence cooperation with the US as a way to acquire more advanced technology while boosting local manufacturing.

**DEFENCE DEALS**

In July he raised the limit on foreign investment in Indian defence companies to 49 percent from 26 percent, catching the interest of companies such as BAE Systems Ltd in London. Agreements were reached with the US this week for production of drones and airplane parts, and to study technology for aircraft carriers and jet engines.

The deals represent a shift for India, which relied on the Soviet Union and later Russia for about 70 percent of its arms imports since 1950, according to data compiled by the Stockholm institute.

The emerging US-Indian partnership will not become a full-fledged alliance, according to Indian foreign policy specialists. The country's long tradition of freedom of action in foreign affairs precludes it.

Along with his embrace of Obama, Modi has welcomed Russian President Vladimir Putin and Chinese President Xi Jinping to New Delhi. And he has refused to back US economic sanctions on Russia.

**STOPPING BULLIES**

While India concentrates on economic development, it needs to avoid entanglement in foreign conflicts.

"India's not going to wave the red flag at the China bull," said WPS Sidhu, a senior fellow at the Brookings India Center in New Delhi. "India's never going to be a formal military ally of any country."

Obama has said often that the US isn't trying to prevent China's rise, an assertion that many Chinese officials question. With more than \$560 billion in annual Sino-US trade, the US has a sizable economic stake in China's prosperity.

In a likely reference to both Russia's actions in Ukraine and China's maritime assertiveness, Rhodes said he wanted to prevent countries from acting like a "bully" on the world stage.

"Nobody's aiming for confrontation with China or trying to contain China," Rhodes said. "At the same time, the US and India are committed to a rules-based order. We just want to make sure that all countries are following the rules of the road."

# Koko buried

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was kept.

The former premier burst into tears on seeing the motionless body of her son inside the coffin.

Flanked by close relatives, Special Assistant Shimul Biswas and Adviser Mosaddek Ali Falu, the septuagenarian mother was wailing inconsolably beside the coffin. The last time she met Koko was one and a half years ago in Singapore.

The office and its surrounding areas were packed with BNP leaders and activists during this time with verses from the Holy Quran being recited on loudspeakers.

At one point, Shimul Biswas all of sudden took the microphone and started lambasting Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina and her government for over half an hour, to the shock of mourners present there.

Around 2:45pm, Koko's coffin shrouded in a black piece of cloth embroidered with Quranic texts was put aboard a freezer van for taking it to the Baitul Mukarram Mosque.

Khaleda was holding the coffin while it was being taken to the van.

Even after the coffin was put inside, she placed her hands on the doors of the van and kept shedding tears with intermittent muffled cries.

It took two good hours for the freezer-van to reach the national mosque due to a large number of BNP men escorting the car all the way.

Hundreds of thousands of people, including politicians, professionals and commoners, attended the janaza.

Rows of mourners could be seen from Paltan intersection to Janata Bank building at Motijheel and from GPO intersection to Gulistan roundabout with their hands up in the air praying for eternal peace of Koko's soul.

Khatib of the mosque Prof Mohammad Salahuddin conducted the janaza at 5:10pm. Before the funeral prayer, Khaleda's brother Shameem Iskandar urged people to forgive Koko if he had offended anyone.

Then the body was taken to Banani graveyard where he was buried at 6:10pm.

**ROW OVER GRAVEYARD**

Koko's family and the BNP yesterday claimed that they had sought permis-

sion for the burial at the army graveyard but they were "refused" due to "the government's naked interference."

Being a son of late president and army chief Ziaur Rahman, Koko deserved to be buried at the army graveyard, they argued, adding that no reason was shown to explain the refusal.

According to the policy of the use of the graveyard, any incumbent and retired army officer, their spouses, children, parents, and parents-in-laws can be buried there.

Sayrul Kabir, a staff of the BNP chief's media wing, said applications to this end were sent to the Cantonment Board office and "the [army] station headquarters concerned" on Monday.

Contacted, an official of the Inter Service Public Relations (ISPR) last night told The Daily Star that he would come up with a reply after "discussing the whole matter with the higher authorities".

When this correspondent again phoned him an hour later, the ISPR official only repeated the earlier statement.

# Shibir man dies

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around 4:00pm on Monday and seized 23 jihadi books from their possession.

After primary interrogation, Tuhin admitted his involvement in some recent subversive activities in the town, claimed the Rab official, adding that Tuhin used to bring crude bombs from Ramchandrapur in Chapainawabganj Sadar upazila for supplying those to Shibir activists to create anarchy.

Rab members then decided to conduct a drive in Ramchandrapur to recover crude bombs.

As the Rab team along with Tuhin reached Lalapara around 3:00am yesterday, the detainee jumped from the Rab's vehicle to escape. In the process, he was hit by a truck coming from the opposite direction and injured seriously.

Law enforcers sent Tuhin to Chapainawabganj Adhunik Sadar Hospital where he died of his wounds around 4:20am, said Kamruzzaman.

The body was sent to the hospital morgue last evening for an autopsy.

Dr Shafiqul Islam, residential medical officer at the hospital, said Tuhin was brought dead to the hospital. There were several injury marks on his body, added the physician.

Jasimuddin, officer-in-charge of Chapainawabganj Sadar Police Station, said none of the five arrestees has any criminal records.

**'IT'S A MURDER'**

Tuhin's father Emadul Haque said Rab men picked up his son around 2:30pm on Monday when he was asleep at home at Char Mohonpur under Chapainawabganj municipality.

"We had no idea about the reason behind Tuhin's detention. We came to know about his death from our neighbours this [Tuesday] morning," Emdadul told The Daily Star.

Al Amin, elder brother of the victim, said a team of around 25 Rab men reached their home on Monday afternoon by three pick-up vans.

The law enforcers blindfolded Tuhin with his shirt and took him away in presence of his parents, sister-in-law, nephews and nieces.

Kamela Begum, mother of the victim, said: "I saw the Rab men beating up my son with cricket stumps while they were taking him away." She accused the Rab men of killing his son after torturing him brutally.

The four other arrestees -- Al Amin, 18, Shahriar Zaman Rafi, 14, Sajid Hasan, 19, and Mehedi Hasan, 20, -- were handed over to Chapainawabganj Sadar Police Station, said Rab.

Golam Mostofa, president of the town unit Chhatra Shibir, alleged that Rab personnel killed Tuhin as the government is afraid of the ongoing anti-government movement by Jamaat-Shibir.

Earlier around 9:20am on Monday, suspected Shibir activists attacked an escorted convoy of 60 trucks at Shantir More in the town and smashed windshields of at least eight vehicles during the countrywide hartal enforced by the BNP-led 20-party alliance.

Violence in Chapainawabganj has left two people killed and about 10 others injured so far since the combine enforced a nationwide indefinite blockade from January 6.

# Robber killed in 'gunfight' with police

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Benapole, Jessore

The chief of an inter-district robber gang was killed in a "gunfight" with police in Monirampur upazila of Jessore early yesterday.

The dead, Mahbubur Rahman Mahbub, 36, was the son of Kabil alias Motaleb of Garbhanga village in Keshabpur upazila. The robber gang was named after Mahbub.

Mollah Khabir Uddin, officer-in-charge of Monirampur Police Station, said acting on a tip-off, a police team raided Bagaritala around 3:00am after Mahbub along with his aides had blocked Jessore-Monirampur road with logs to commit a robbery.

Sensing the presence of the law enforcers, the criminals opened fire. Police also fired back, triggering a "gunfight". Mahbub was hit by bullets and died on the spot. Others fled, the police officer said.

Police recovered the body and sent it to Jessore Medical College Hospital morgue for an autopsy.

According to police, Mahbub stood accused in 20 criminal cases.

# Anxious, vexed

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hope the blockade will be withdrawn considering the future of the students.

"We are all set to hold the examination as per the schedule and we would again request them [BNP-led alliance] to withdraw the blockade and hartals," Education Minister Nurul Islam Nahid said yesterday.

"Calling off the ongoing blockade is the only solution. The BNP has gained nothing from it, except for killing so many people and hampering the entire education system," he told this correspondent.

At least 33 people have died and scores have been burned and injured in violence since January 5.

Replying to a question, the minister said they could not postpone the exams because they did not know when the blockade would end.

"Please, don't push the future of millions of students in further uncertainty."

In 2013, the education ministry had to reschedule tests on at least 37 papers of SSC and 35 of HSC exams due to shutdowns called by the BNP-

led alliance.

Last year, the primary terminal, JSC and equivalent exams also had to be rescheduled because of blockades and hartals.

Ministry officials say they are decided to hold the exams despite the blockade, but they are also concerned about the safety of the students.

"Let's see what decision we reach tomorrow [today]," said a top official, requesting anonymity.

If the BNP at least kept the tests out of the blockade's purview, the exams could be held on time, the official added.

Equally worried are the guardians. They say their kids will be in constant fear to take the exams even if these are kept out of the purview of the blockade.

Criticising the opposition political parties, parents said students already suffered a lot due to the blockade, as for these past three weeks their kids could not go to their private tutors or coaching centres for last-minute tips.

"How will the safety of our chil-

DAVID BERGMAN

# 15 eminent personalities apologise for statement

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Fifteen eminent personalities have apologised while nine others regretted for a statement they issued expressing concern over the punishment of Dhaka-based British journalist David Bergman for contempt of court.

In response to an order of the International Crimes Tribunal-2, the dignitaries made the apology and expressed regret in separate replies to the court either through their lawyers or in person yesterday, sources said.

Meanwhile, 25 other signatories of the statement yesterday sought time to give their replies and the tribunal asked them to give their replies by February 8, their lawyer Anisul Hassan said. Three-member tribunal led by Justice Obaidul Hassan also fixed February 8 for passing next order in this regard.

On December 2 last year, the tribunal found Bergman, the editor (special reports) of the daily New Age, guilty of contempt for his write-ups posted to his personal blog and sentenced him to imprisonment "till rising of the court" on that day and fined him Tk 5,000.

On December 20 last year, the Daily Prothom Alo ran a report titled "50 people express concern over Bergman's punishment" on the basis of the statement which observed that the tribunal's order would restrict the freedom of expression.

Later, one signatory, Khushi Kabir, withdrew her name.

The tribunal on January 14 asked 49 eminent individuals to explain by January 27 a statement they issued for Bergman as the statement "prima facie" appears to intend to "belittle the authority and institutional dignity of the tribunal in the mind of public".

dren be ensured? Can the government provide security to all the 14 lakh students?" said Khorshed Alam, guardian of an SSC examinee.

"How will our children get to the exam centres amid such vicious spate of violence and arson attacks?" he asked.

Things would be even more difficult for the students in rural areas.

A teacher of a high school in Dinajpur said, "Many children would take the exams in centres several miles away. And many students would travel by bus or other transports. How would the pickets distinguish the bus carrying students?"

He said the opposition should withdraw the blockade on the exam days.

This newspaper contacted five BNP leaders and asked them if the blockade would be lifted during the exam. Most of them declined to comment.

Only Rafiqul Islam Mia, a standing committee member, said he did not know if there was any decision yet in this regard.