



WITH TODAY'S ISSUE

A Weekly Publication of The Daily Star
the STAR
stories behind the news



CHARM OF THE SILK ROAD

Chinese opera troupe due in Dhaka to mark 40yrs of China-Bangladesh ties

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RAUL CASTRO WARNS

Cuba will not accept any interference from the US

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Anomalies rife in govt audit office

Auditors take Tk 10,000 to Tk 5 lakh in bribe, says TIB survey

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Small projects, small bribes; big projects, big bribes. That is how government auditors go about taking bribes between Tk 10,000 and 500,000 during audits.

TIB RECOMMENDATIONS

- Enact audit laws and rules for organogram and recruitment
- Free OACG from all sorts of political interference
- Disclose wealth statement of all OACG officials once a year
- Increase cadre officers by 30 %

The finding came in a survey by the Transparency International Bangladesh. The study has revealed various corrupt practices at the Office of the Comptroller and Auditor General (OACG), the highest

audit body in the country.

"The OACG is responsible for detecting anomalies in the spending of taxpayers' money. But it is sunk into irregularities itself. This is unacceptable," TIB Executive Director Iftekharuzzaman said yesterday, after the findings were presented at his office in the capital.

The survey results highlight how the constitutionally independent office has become tainted with irregularities for external and internal factors, when its job is to prevent financial anomalies in government offices, statutory bodies and foreign-funded projects.

The research was done between March 2013 and December 2014 and is based on interviews of 68 government and semi-government officials, 24 incumbent and former officials of the OACG and ministries and also two experts.

Iftekharuzzaman said the draft report was shared with the OACG in December last year in the presence of Comptroller and

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Unable to recognise his father, three-year-old Arif sticks to his mother at the burn unit of Dhaka Medical College Hospital yesterday after his father Nawshad, in the background, was moved there from Feni. Mason Nawshad was severely burnt when the CNG-run three-wheeler he was travelling on was attacked with a petrol bomb.

PHOTO: ANISUR RAHMAN

Political unrest casts shadow on economy

Central bank worried at disruptions of economic activities

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Bangladesh Bank sees the ongoing political turmoil as a major threat to the economy as the country's longest blockade in about two decades is disrupting economic activities and putting investors at bay.

"The central bank is concerned as disruptions from political unrest have reemerged, casting [a] shadow on expectations [of achieving the projected GDP growth]," said BB Governor Atiur Rahman.

"I earnestly hope that peace and calm will return soon, enabling realisation of the growth prospects projected earlier," he said while releasing the Monetary Policy Statement (MPS) for the second half of the 2014-15 fiscal year.

"Even as Bangladesh economy's resilience against debacles is well known, overcoming from the prevailing disruptive situation is of extreme urgency for maintaining the growth momentum

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SSC EQUIVALENT EXAMS

Total examinees (10 boards)	14,79,266
BOYS	7,63,339
GIRLS	7,15,927
SSC	11,12,591
Dakhil	2,56,380
Vocational	1,10,295

Withdraw blockade for students' sake

Education minister urges BNP-led alliance ahead of SSC exams

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

As the country's ongoing political crisis seems to be far from over, the education minister yesterday once again pleaded with the BNP-led alliance to withdraw its indefinite blockade for smooth holding of the SSC and equivalent exams.

Over 14 lakh students from 27,808 educational institutions are set to take the exams at 3,116 centres from February 2 against the backdrop of political violence that has so far claimed 35 lives, burned scores and injured several hundred since January 6.

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Go tough on arsonists

President asks law enforcers

UNB, Dhaka

President Abdul Hamid yesterday urged the law enforcement agencies to take stern legal action against those killing people by hurling petrol bombs at vehicles.

"You know the people of Bangladesh love democracy. Having differences of opinion in a democratic society is normal and that's the beauty of democracy. That's why it's important to practice democratic norms and values," he said.

Hamid was addressing police officials at the Darbar Hall of Bangabhaban on the occasion of Annual Police Week-2015.

He said, "But I'm shocked at the way innocent people have been killed recently by hurling petrol bombs at vehicles. The people who are involved in the atrocities are the enemies of democracy, humanity and civilization."

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Biranganas to be included in war hero list

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Parliament yesterday unanimously passed a proposal to include Biranganas (war heroines) in the list of freedom fighters.

"Through this, Biranganas will get their long overdue recognition as freedom fighters and subsequently enjoy all government facilities of a war hero," Monirul Islam, a treasury bench lawmaker who placed the proposal, told The Daily Star.

His proposal was passed through voice votes.

The lawmaker said the government was considering providing

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A number of the surviving fortune seekers on a coast guard boat heading for the shore yesterday. The fortune seekers were going to Malaysia illegally on a boat when it sank near Kutubdia.

PHOTO: STAR

More than 50 feared dead

Boat on illegal trip to Malaysia sinks in Bay; 43 rescued

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Cox's Bazaar

More than 50 overseas jobseekers are feared drowned after a fishing trawler with about 100 people on board sank off the Kutubdia coast in the Bay of Bengal yesterday morning.

Bangladesh Coast Guard and police have so far rescued 43 victims, including three alleged human traffickers, in several phases, sources said.

The vessel was pulled out of water but there was no one inside it, said Lieutenant Commander Fazlul Karim, operation officer of the coast guard (East zone).

Tarek Mostafa, contingent commander of Kutubdia Coast Guard, said three of the rescued victims were traffickers. He said Coast Guard and Bangladesh Navy officials had continued their search for the missing fortune seekers but chances for their survival were getting slimmer with every passing minute.

The trawler that set off from Chittagong in the early hours was carrying the hapless passengers to a cargo vessel anchored in the deep waters that would have made the illegal, perilous voyage to Thailand and from there to Malaysia, sources said.

The passengers aboard were lured by traffickers with the promise of lucrative jobs in Malaysia, according to one of the rescued victims.

Sources at the Kutubdia Police Station said the trawler had sunk 7 to 8 kilometres off the Kutubdia coast.

Mohammad Ismail, 35, a resident of Paschim Pokkhali village in Cox's Bazaar Sadar, was one of the victims rescued within an hour of the incident.

The wooden-trawler left the Sadar Ghat area of the Karnaphuli river around 1:00am for Malaysia, said Ismail.

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Pro-govt rally at the cost of production

RMG workers 'forced' to join Shajahan Khan's rally today

REFAYET ULLAH MIRDHA

Production in many garment factories in and around the capital is set to be halted today as their workers are allegedly forced to join a rally in the capital.

Led by Shipping Minister Shajahan Khan, the Garment Sramik Samannay Parishad will host the meeting at the Suhrawardy Udyan protesting the indefinite blockade enforced by the BNP-led alliance.

Factory owners said they will suffer the most as thousands of their workers would abstain from work to attend the rally.

"We've been counting losses every day since the blockade has been on as we can hardly transport our raw materials

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SAFETY ON HIGHWAYS

Govt to deploy 12,000 Ansars

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The government has decided to deploy 12,000 Ansar personnel at 993 risky points on highways across the country to ensure safe and smooth transport movement and to prevent acts of sabotage.

Initially, the Ansar men will be deployed at 216 vulnerable points on different highways from today.

The decision came amid the ongoing

indefinite blockade, which stepped into 25th day, enforced by the BNP-led 20-party alliance. At least 35 people were killed and around a thousand injured during the blockade. Of the dead, 23 had no link with politics.

Besides, long distance passenger and goods-carrying vehicles are coming under attack regularly. At least 360 vehicles were torched since the BNP-led alliance

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9 injured in indiscriminate blasts in city

5 vehicles torched across country

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

At least nine people were injured in crude bomb blasts in the capital's New Market area yesterday, the 24th day of the BNP-led alliance's nonstop country-wide blockade.

Five hawkers, two students, a rickshaw puller and a pedestrian were hurt in the incident.

They are undergoing

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