

BNP demands

FROM PAGE 16

ruling party criminals of trying to shift the blame of firebombing on the agitators after carrying out subversive acts in a bid to create an excuse for repressing the opposition activists.

"At all levels of the current movement, we have called upon the alliance leaders, activists and the countrymen to observe all programmes peacefully, but the ruling party has continued its conspiracy to malign the ongoing mass movement and brand it as the acts of militancy and terrorism," he said.

The BNP leader claimed that the ruling party criminals were released at the behest of the government although they had been held with petrol bombs, firearms and crude bombs from different districts.

The desire of the Awami League to cling to power was the main reason behind the current political impasse, he alleged.

"The unilateral decision of Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina to abolish the caretaker government system has brought in the miseries to national life," he said.

He called upon the party leaders, activists and countrymen to carry out the ongoing programme peacefully, and said the movement would continue until the victory of the people was not achieved.

2 war crimes

FROM PAGE 16

Salamat Ullah Khan, 80. Rashid is also a former BNP lawmaker.

The ICT issued the arrest warrants against the two for their alleged involvement in crimes against humanity during the Liberation War, said Bakhtiar Uddin Chowdhury, inspector (investigation) of Cox's Bazar Sadar Model Police Station.

Following the order, Salamat, a senior member of Cox's Bazar BNP, was held from his house in Cox's Bazar town in the afternoon, the police official added.

Police nabbed Rashid, who is also a senior member of Cox's Bazar BNP, from his home at Boro Moheshkhali village, said Alamgir Hossain, officer-in-charge of Moheshkhali Police Station.

Earlier in the day, the tribunal-2 issued the arrest warrants against them following the prosecution's prayer.

Investigation agency began probe into the allegations of war crimes against the BNP leaders on May 12, 2014.

A war crimes case was filed against the two with Moheshkhali Police Station in July, 2014.

Prosecutor Tapas Kanti Baul told The Daily Star that the investigation officer, Nurul Islam, has got primary evidence of mass killings and genocide against Rashid and Salamat.

Salamat and Rashid were president and general secretary of Moheshkhali Thana Peace Committee respectively during the Liberation War in 1971.

Salamat is the founding president of Cox's Bazar district unit BNP, while Rashid is the founding vice-president of the committee.

In the 1979 general election, Rashid was elected a lawmaker in a Cox's Bazar constituency.

Govt to formulate

FROM PAGE 4

He said although the oil spillage was a new disaster for Bangladesh, the country tackled it successfully.

On December 9 last year, oil tanker Southern Star-7 carrying 3.56 lakh litres of furnace oil sank in the river Shela, a sanctuary for endangered dolphins in the Sundarbans.

The Bangladesh-UN Joint Sundarbans Oil Spill Response Team comprising 25 experts from home and abroad visited the Sundarbans on December 22 for six days to evaluate the primary impact of the oil spillage.

Gains prove

FROM PAGE 5

Developing Societies, India, said genocide was committed not by strangers but by people known to victims.

Highlighting the history of genocide, he said famine has been used in many countries as a technique to carry out genocide.

Businesses

FROM PAGE 16

They urged the court to ask the government to waive interest on their bank loans, saying that they suffered immense losses due to the ongoing hartals and blockade.

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina told parliament on Wednesday that the country had incurred a loss of over Tk 1,20,000 crore in the first 52 days of the BNP-Jamaat's blockade.

The HC bench of Justice Quazi Reza-Ul Hoque and Justice Abu Taher Md Saifur Rahman started hearing the petition yesterday. Later, it fixed today for further hearing, Assistant Attorney General Jahangir Alam said.

Remain prepared

FROM PAGE 16

"In future they will also stand beside people in their needs," she added.

Hasina hoped that members of the 10 Infantry Division would always perform their duties with devotion, putting in their best efforts for development of the area, maintaining social harmony and coexistence of people of every faith and religion.

Addressing the Darbar, the PM said, the members of Bangladesh Army had played a praiseworthy role in reconstructing the Buddhist Pagodas in Ramu and maintaining communal harmony after the fateful incidents on September 29, 2012.

"Their activities earned huge acclamation from home and abroad at that time," Hasina, also chief of the ruling Awami League, said.

The PM reiterated her government's firm commitment to do everything necessary for development of the armed forces.

She also said the members of armed forces were discharging their duties not only at home, but also at international level in peacekeeping missions.

She hoped that they would perform their duties being loyal to their superiors on the basic principles of mutual trust, fraternity, sympathy, responsibility, dutifulness and above all discipline.

Discipline and peace are prerequisites

14 vehicles torched

FROM PAGE 16

The injured were admitted to Dhaka Medical College Hospital.

Meanwhile, 10 percent of bus helper Mohammad Ratan's body was burnt when criminals set fire to his parked vehicle at a bus stop in Joypurhat yesterday. He was sleeping inside the bus.

The arson attack was made about half an hour before the BNP-led 20-party alliance's 72-hour nationwide hartal began around 6:00am. Ratan was at Shaheed Ziaur Rahman Medical College Hospital in Bogra.

Police said six youths riding two motorbikes started smashing the windows of two buses parked at the bus stand.

They torched the buses after pouring petrol and left the scene, said Abul Kalam Azad, officer-in-charge of Akkelpur Police Station.

In Dhaka, two buses were torched at Gulistan, one at Rayerbagh, one in front of Baitul Mukarram Mosque, one at Gabtoli, one at Banasri, and one in front of Jagannath University.

A microbus was also torched in Dhanmondi.

Five people were injured in two crude bomb attacks in the capital's New Market and Farmgate areas.

Yesterday, most businesses and offices were open. Like other hartal days, rickshaws dominated the thoroughfares and a significant number of minibuses, cars and CNG-run three-wheelers plied the streets.

A number of long-route buses also plied the Dhaka-Aricha highway.

In Rajshahi, police shot an alleged activist of Jatiyatabadi Chhatra Dal and held two others in connection with hurling two petrol bombs at buses in the city.

Rinku, 25, was injured in police firing when he along with his two associates were "fleeing the scene" after hurling the petrol bombs at two

Foreign envoys call for end

FROM PAGE 16

European Union, Australia, Canada, France, Germany, Japan, the Netherlands, Norway, Korea, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, and Turkey attended the briefing.

Meanwhile, the foreign minister while briefing the diplomats said the BNP-Jamaat alliance was directly inciting extremists in order to challenge the democratic, non-communal and non-confrontational ethos of the country, a foreign ministry press release said.

While stressing that violence does not have any place in democracy, he said, "Some of their recent cowardly acts like throwing petrol bombs at passenger laden vehicles are almost akin to the terror tactics used by the ISIS and others."

There would be no dialogue with "terrorists and killers", he said.

Minister Ali urged the international community to condemn such violence and atrocities in unequivocal terms. He

Bride 'market'

FROM PAGE 16

And surrounding them are young men whose family hope to find them a wife at a good cost.

The families gathered in Stara Zagora are part of a community of about 18,000 Roma known as Kalaizhi, who traditionally make a living as coppersmiths.

They are among the most poverty-stricken people in a deeply impoverished region and seek to forge mutually beneficial unions that will help them weather Bulgaria's economic downturn.

The 'bride market' -- held four times a year on various religious holidays during the spring and summer -- is a chance for the Roma's nomadic tinkers to meet and not only catch up on gossip, but also play matchmaker for their adolescent sons and daughters.

It starts, like a high school dance, with groups of boys and girls in separate clumps, occasionally shaking hands

for taking forward the development activities, she said, adding that terrorist and militant activities not only dash down the development but also pose threat to the country's integrity and law and order.

Hasina also said her government was making relentless efforts to build time-befitting and modern armed forces in light of the defence policy, which was introduced by the Father of the Nation Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman in 1974.

After the independence, she said, Bangabandhu had taken steps for raising Bangladesh armed forces on a strong foundation as a watchful safeguard of the country's independence and sovereignty.

"Within a very short span of time Bangabandhu established Bangladesh Military Academy, Combined Arms School and other important organisations," she told her audience.

The PM said her government was implementing various pragmatic programmes under the National Defence Policy and the Forces Goal-2030 for development, expansion and modernisation of the armed forces.

Cabinet members, chiefs of Bangladesh Naval Force and Bangladesh Air Force, parliament members, diplomats and senior military and civil officials, among others, were present.

14 vehicles torched

buses of Hanif Paribahan at Shiroil Bus Stand around 6:30am, Iftekhar Ali, assistant superintendent of Rajshahi Metropolitan Police, said.

Rinku is a nephew of ward councillor and BNP leader Toriqlul Islam Poltu.

He was admitted to Rajshahi Medical College Hospital (RMCH).

The two others -- Rajibul Hasan, 35, and Mahmud Ishtiaq, 19, -- were being interrogated at Boalia Police Station, Iftekhar added.

The interiors of the coaches were burnt, but none was injured.

At the RMCH, Rinku's mother Rehana Bewa claimed that her son went to the bus stand to board a Natore-bound bus to visit his father-in-law.

In Chandpur, a clash between pro-BNP Chhatra Dal activists and police left at least five people injured at Chittalekha intersection in the town.

The clash erupted around 4:00pm when Chhatra Dal activists started hurling brick chunks from a procession, prompting police to disperse them, said Abdul Qaium, OC of Chandpur Model Police Station.

Criminals blasted a crude bomb on the ground floor of the district's Roads and Highways Department office and hurled a petrol bomb at its executive engineer's car parked inside the office compound around 7:00pm.

None was hurt.

In Bogra town, BNP-led 20-party men vandalised a car and seven CNG-run auto-rickshaws.

Police recovered 10 petrol bombs in Akbar Shah area of Chittagong city and held a person in this connection.

In Jamalpur, eight petrol bombs were recovered from a shanty at Birpakerdah village in Madarganj upazila.

Important documents at the surveyor's room of Magura municipality office were torched in an arson attack on Saturday night.

EXPLOSIVES SEIZURE

Six militant suspects sued

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Ctg

A case has been filed against six militant suspects, including the four who were arrested at a militant hideout in Chittagong city, in connection with the seizure of a huge cache of explosives on Saturday.

The arrestees are Fayzul Haque, 30, Rahima Akhter, 21, Jahedullah Jahed, 19, all from Mognama of Cox's Bazar's Pekua upazila and Abdul Hai, 35, from Morrelganj of Bagerhat.

Two other accused -- Abdul Aziz from Mognama of Pekua and Md Parbez, 28, of Chotopul area in the port city -- were shown absconding in the case.

MG Rabbani, deputy assistant director of Rapid Action Battalion-7, lodged the case under the anti-terrorism act yesterday afternoon, said Sub-Inspector Sajal Das of Halishahar Police Station.

In an overnight drive on Saturday, Rab personnel arrested the four at a building in Halishahar and seized a huge cache of bomb-making materials and explosives.

The elite force members also recovered a number of books and documents on jihad and a copy of the constitution of Islami Chhatra Shibir, the pro-Jamaat student body.

Are militants

FROM PAGE 1

assistance from the FBI that offered cooperation in probing the murder case.

Frustrated over the state's failure in protecting freethinkers like Avijit, speakers at the programme questioned the role of law enforcers. They, however, expressed their resolve to strengthen their movement for building a secular and democratic Bangladesh.

Jurist Dr Kamal Hossain said the murders of writer Humayun Azad, and bloggers Rajib Haider and Avijit Roy were attacks on the country's independence.

"Why should people like Avijit be killed in an independent Bangladesh? Did lakhs of people sacrifice their lives for this?" he said.

He urged a fair probe into the killing and appreciated the FBI's offer of help in the investigation.

Freedom fighter and cultural activist Nasiruddin Yusuf Bachchu demanded judicial probe into these killings.

The war criminals and their followers have found a place in politics and administration, and they should be removed from all these places to eliminate communalism, Bachchu said, vowing to continue their fight against religious fanaticism.

DU VC Prof AAMS Arefin Siddique and Nijera Kori Coordinator Khushi Kabir, among others, were present at the programme.

All remained silent for a minute in tribute to Avijit. From there, Avijit's body was taken to Dr Ajoy Roy's residence at Ramna before being handed over to the Dhaka Medical College Principal Prof Dr Ismail Khan.

Meanwhile, people and students marched in their droves to the spot where Avijit was attacked and laid flowers. Many chanted slogans demanding exemplary punishment to his killers and pledged to continue the fight against fanaticism and militancy.

Rallies were held in different parts of the capital and elsewhere demanding immediate arrest of his killers.

A banner erected by the Gonojagoron Mancha near the Shahbagh intersection, read: "Bangladesh will fail if free thinkers like Avijit fail."

Avijit, founder of the website Muktomona (freethinker) is well known for his books Biswaser Virus (Virus of Faith) and Sunyo theke Mahabiswa (From Vacuum to the Universe).

Effortless win for Lankans

FROM PAGE 16

shared an unbroken second-wicket partnership of 212 in Wellington.

The 37-year-old Sangakkara went to three figures off 70 balls, including ten fours and two sixes.

It was the quickest of all the veteran left-hander's 23 one-day international hundreds and second in as many matches after he marked his 400th ODI with an unbeaten 105 against Bangladesh.

Yet Sangakkara insisted he still planned to retire from white-ball cricket after the World Cup as he was "getting old".

"Everything I tried came off," he said after a win that left 1996 champions Sri Lanka, losing finalists at the last two World Cups, on course for the last eight.

England opened this World Cup with a 111-run loss to Australia before suffering an even more humiliating eight-wicket defeat by New Zealand, the other tournament co-hosts, before defeating non-Test nation Scotland.

What made Sunday's nine-wicket loss all the worse was that they posted a total of 309 for six, with the 24-year-old Joe Root becoming the youngest England batsman to score a World Cup century on his way to 121.

England were unable to gain much movement on a ground where New Zealand's Tim Southee took seven for 33 when they were bowled out for just 123 last week, although Root, distracted by wicketkeeper Jos Buttler, dropped Thirimanne, on three, in the slips off Stuart Broad.

Broad and James Anderson, England's senior bowlers, saw their combined 18 wicketless overs cost 115 runs.

Indian foreign secretary

FROM PAGE 1

will travel to Islamabad tomorrow and Kabul the following day.

His discussion will focus on sub-regional level cooperation involving Bangladesh, Bhutan, India and Nepal (BBIN).

In Dhaka he will hold official talks with his Bangladesh counterpart Md Shahidul Haque and call on Foreign Minister AH Mahmood Ali and Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina. During this time Jaishankar will discuss an entire range of bilateral, sub-regional and regional issues on common interest.

Discussions will also include bilateral issues including a Land Boundary Agreement (LBA) and the Teesta water deal. The LBA is expected to be tabled in the Indian Parliament for clearance. West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee assured Dhaka of her support for the Teesta deal during her visit to Dhaka on February 19-21.

Diplomatic sources in Dhaka and New Delhi also said Jaishankar would initiate discussion with the government high-ups on Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi's visit to Dhaka during his visit.

They said if everything went fine, Indian External Affairs Minister Sushma Swaraj would also pay a visit.

"He [Modi] is very keen on visiting Bangladesh at the earliest, and he is looking forward to it," said an Indian diplomat, adding, "Modi has earlier

In Brisbane, Pakistan just got the better of Zimbabwe.

Before the match, skipper Misbahul Haq sought inspiration from Imran Khan's Pakistan side who, on the brink of elimination, "fought like cornered tigers" to win the 1992 World Cup -- the last time the tournament was staged in Australia and New Zealand.

Pakistan came into this match bottom of Pool B and without a win after defeats by archrivals India (76 runs) and the West Indies (150 runs).

Zimbabwe, whose only win of the tournament to date has come against the amateurs of the UAE, restricted Pakistan to 235 for seven after Misbah won the toss.

Misbah again played the anchor role with 73 before tail-ender Wahab Riaz boosted the total with a timely 54 not out, his maiden one-day international fifty.

It was the first half of a fine all-round display by left-arm seamer Riaz, whose return of four for 45 saw him become the first Pakistani to score a fifty and take four wickets in a World Cup match.

Mohammad Irfan, another left-arm pacesman, rocked Zimbabwe early on his way to an ODI best four for 30.

Brendan Taylor (50) and Sean Williams (33) batted well but couldn't finish the job.

Zimbabwe captain Elton Chigumbura, restricted after injuring himself while fielding, kept going but a target of 24 off the last over, bowled by Riaz, proved too steep with the skipper last man out as Zimbabwe were dismissed for 215 with two balls to spare.

Chigumbura will have scans on his injured quadriceps on Monday.

announced his acceptance of Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina's invitation."

However, a prime ministerial visit could not take place without at least deliverables on the two key issues with Bangladesh, the LBA and Teesta deal.

Jaishankar's visit to the region comes at a time when India is pushing ahead with a sub-regional connectivity project with Bangladesh, Nepal and Bhutan to provide easier transit of passenger, personal and cargo vehicles among the four Saarc nations.

The Joint Working Group (JWG) of BBIN at a meeting on January 30-31 in New Delhi reviewed the existing cooperation and discussed the scope for power trade and inter-grid connectivity between the four countries as well as potential for closer cooperation in future power projects.

India's offer to start electricity trading among BBIN will also come up for discussion during his meeting with the Bangladeshi dignitaries.

The four nations have also agreed that joint efforts would be made to explore harnessing of water resources including hydropower and power from other sources available in the sub-region.

Jaishankar's visit to Bangladesh comes at a time when the country is in the throes of continuing political unrest spurred by the BNP-led 20-party combine.

UK girls seen

FROM PAGE 16

They are seen wearing winter coats on top of their niqabs, two of them with hoods pulled up and carrying luggage as they sit and wait, according to footage on the Aksam newspaper's website, which cited security sources.

The footage was recorded in the early hours of February 18, less than 24 hours after the girls left their homes in east London, telling their families they were heading out for the day.

At one point they can be seen leaving the waiting lounge of the busy terminal along with other passengers and walking through a snow-covered path into the departure lounge.

The time codes on the images sug-

gest that the girls waited at the terminal for nearly 18 hours before taking a bus to the southeastern Turkish city of Sanliurfa close to the Syrian border.

Aksam said that Turkish police were trying to identify the passengers in the footage helping the girls carry their luggage at the bus station.

Turkey, which has been under fire from its Western allies of failing to do enough to stop jihadists crossing into Syria from its territory, accused Britain of failing to provide information about the girls sooner.

An estimated 550 Western women have travelled to join the militants in Iraq and Syria.

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