Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina sees Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas off at Hazrat Shahjalal International Airport yesterday. PHOTO: PID

Machete attacker shot at Louvre

French PM says attack 'terrorist in nature'

AFP, *Paris*

A French soldier patrolling at the Louvre museum in Paris shot and seriously injured a machete-wielding man yesterday who yelled "Allahu Akbar" ("God is greatest") as he attacked security forces, police said.

Hundreds of tourists were confined to secure areas of the world-famous art gallery in central Paris after the attacker was shot five times around 10:00 (1100 GMT) in a public area inside the complex.

Prime Minister Bernard Cazeneuve called the attack "terrorist in nature."

One soldier was "lightly injured" and has been taken to hospital, while the knifeman is in a serious condition but is still alive, security forces said.

Two backpacks carried by the assailant were checked by bomb disposal specialists at the scene and were found not to contain explosives.

The incident sparked fresh jitters in a country still reeling from a string of terror attacks over the last two years and under a state of emergency since November 2015.

Thousands of troops have been deployed to guard the capital, with groups of soldiers with automatic rifles a regular sight inside the Louvre and around its sculpture-filled gardens.

"It's so sad and shocking... we can't let them win, it's horrible," British tourist Gillian Simms, who was visiting Paris with her daughters, told AFP.

The huge former royal palace in the heart of the city is home to the Mona Lisa and other renowned works of art but also a shopping area and numerous exhibition spaces.

The attacker was shot in a shopping area that leads to the museum.

"The people who were in the museum -- there were about 250 of them -- were held at a distance and confined in secure areas of the Louvre," city police chief Michel Cadot told reporters outside.

A second man whose behaviour was "suspicious" has been arrested, Cadot said, without giving further details.

France has suffered a string of attacks in recent years, beginning in January 2015 when jihadist gunmen killed journalists at the Charlie Hebdo satirical newspaper in Paris in revenge for publishing cartoons of the Prophet Mohammed.

Another attacker went on to kill shoppers in a Jewish supermarket, with a total of 17 people dead in three days of bloodshed.

Ten months later, gunmen and

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Dhaka still 'high-threat' location

Says US State Dept report

DIPLOMATIC CORRESPONDENT

The US State Department has assessed Dhaka as a "high-threat" location for political violence, terrorist activities and crimes directed at or affecting Washington's "official interests".

The department, which deals with America's global policies, made the assessment on Bangladesh in the 2017 Crime and Safety Report prepared and released by the Overseas Security Advisory Council (OSAC) on Wednesday.

This is an annual report produced in conjunction with the Regional Security Office at the US Embassy in Dhaka, which touched upon vital issues on Bangladesh including travel health and safety, transportation security, terrorism, political violence, crime, maritime, anti-American sentiments, religious violence and employee health safety.

On terrorism threats, the report says the State Department alerts US citizens to concerns about ongoing potential for extremist violence in

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Russian envoy praises Dhaka's anti-terror efforts

UNB, *Dhaka*

Russian Ambassador to Bangladesh Alexander Ignatov has said his country is happy to note that the authorities of Bangladesh are actively dealing with the threat of terrorism.

"These efforts already gave results." He also stressed that only through united efforts it is possible to defeat terrorism.

Responding to a question, the envoy said Russia has "the necessary legal basis to develop cooperation with Bangladesh in this sphere and assist it in fighting terror".

During the visit of Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina to Moscow in January 2013, Russia and Bangladesh signed a Memorandum of Understanding on Cooperation in Counter-Terrorism that is fully relevant nowadays, he told UNB in an interview on the occasion of the 45th anniversary of establishing diplomatic relations between Russia and Bangladesh.

Describing the Rooppur Nuclear Power Plant (RNPP) as the major bilateral project, Ignatov said Russia provided an almost $12 billion credit to Bangladesh for this purpose.

"Not too many countries do we give such a big credit. Russia has its own development tasks inside the country, but we trust Bangladesh and we trust its leadership," he commented.

"And we are paying a lot of attention to the safety aspects of this project. Quite a number of Russian experts will take part in the top phase of the RNPP construction. This is the biggest project in the history of Bangladesh," he said.

Regarding the questions raised by some quarters that Russia will not take back wastage from the RNPP plant, Ignatov said this information is "completely baseless and misleading".

He said the spent-fuel, all of it, will be taken back to Russia. "We are expecting

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Ex-bureaucrat

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For the first time, the country may get a female election commissioner, and someone with a background in the judiciary may get selected for the post, said the official seeking anonymity.

The age of all the commissioners would be below 70, added the official.

On Thursday, Additional Cabinet Secretary Abdul Wadud told journalists that the panel's next meeting would be held at the Supreme Court Judges' Lounge on Monday.

On January 25, President Abdul Hamid formed the search panel, headed by Justice Syed Mahmud Hossain, after holding a series of talks with 31 political parties on EC formation.

According to a gazette issued that day, the panel would recommend two names each for the posts of the EC chief and four election commissioners. It would present its recommendations to the president in 10 working days.

On the prime minister's advice, the president will then appoint the CEC and four commissioners.

The tenure of the Rakibuddin-led EC expires on February 8.

In its first meeting on January 28, the committee requested 31 political parties to propose five names each for the posts of CEC and commissioners by January 31.

The panel then shortlisted 20 names from 125 names proposed by 26 political parties. It, however, didn't disclose the names.

The panel has already collected information on the 20 persons and is analysing those to pick the names for the next five-member commission.

Unlike the previous search committee, this panel held meetings with civil society members to get their views on EC formation.

Suggestions made by 16 civil society members were included in a draft, which would be placed at Monday's meeting for finalisation. The suggestions may be made public later, said the official.

Headed by Justice Syed Mahmud Hossain, the search panel includes Justice Obaidul Hassan, a High Court judge; Muhammed Sadique, chairman of Bangladesh Public Service Commission; Masud Ahmed, comptroller and auditor general of Bangladesh; Prof Syed Manzoorul Islam, trustee board member of Transparency International Bangladesh; and Shireen Akhter, provice chancellor of Chittagong University.

Chandpur

FROM PAGE 1

event on January 30 went viral on social media, triggering outrage and criticism.

TENSE SITUATION IN HAIMCHAR

A tense situation was prevailing in Haimchar upazila following a clash on Thursday between the supporters of Nur Hossain and upazila AL President Abdul Motaleb.

Yesterday, police foiled two separate rallies organised by the supporters of Nur and Motaleb at two parts in the upazila headquarters. Motaleb's supporters organised a rally in protest at Nur's walking on the "human bridge", while Nur's men held a rally protesting the vandalism of a local AL office during Thursday's clash.

On Thursday, a clash broke out when supporters of Nur prevented Motaleb and his men from forming a human chain in the upazila headquarters. A group of criminals vandalised the upazila AL office during the clash.

Additional police were deployed in the area to avert any untoward incident, said Syed Mahbubur Rahman, officer-in-charge of Haimchar Police Station.

Police said Mizanur Rahman Patwary, a local AL leader, yesterday filed a case over the vandalism of the AL office.

Journo dies

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Abdul Hakim

She died.

Protesting the killing, local journalists called a half-day hartal for today in Shahzadpur, said Shafiul Hasan, president of Reporters' Club in the upazila.

Around 12:30pm Thursday, supporters of Shahzadpur Municipality Mayor Halimul Haque Miru, also organising secretary of Sirajganj AL, reportedly beat up AL activist Bijoy Hossain, who was a former vice-president of Shahzadpur College unit Chhatra League, over a previous enmity, police said.

Around 5:30pm, Bijoy and his men brought out a procession in Monirampur area in Shahzadpur upazila town, protesting the assault. When the procession reached near Mir's house, bullets were fired from the licenced shotgun of Miru inside his house. Then the followers of Miru and Bijoy were locked into a clash, said SP Miraz.

At least 10 people were wounded in the clash. Four of them, including Shimul, suffered bullet injuries. Shimul had gone there to cover the incident.

He was rushed to Shahid Ziaur Rahman Medical College Hospital. The other injured were also admitted to different hospitals and clinics.

Police later seized the firearm from Miru's house.

Bijoy filed a case against Miru and his two brothers on Thursday night.

Police then arrested two brothers of Miru. They are Habibul Haque Mintu, secretary of Pabna district unit Jatiya Samajtantrik Dal (JSD-Inu), and Halimul Haque Pintu, an AL activist.

SP Miraz said police were trying to arrest Miru, who went into hiding soon after the incident.

Talking to The Daily Star, Mohammad Azad, elder brother of Shimul, demanded that the culprits are caught and punished.

Several journalists also demanded immediate arrest of the killers.

8 killed as truck rams crowd

FROM PAGE 1

When Sumon reached the spot, which was steep, he lost control of the truck and rammed into the crowd.

According to locals, several thousand people gathered outside Dhatu Chottya Bihar (monastery) to attend the funeral of a Buddhist monk, who was the founder of the monastery. He died around four months ago. Small shops were set up by the roadside on the occasion.

"We came from Mohalchori upazila to attend the programme. Soon after we got down from our jeep, we saw a truck coming towards us," said Amau Marma, a relative of an injured.

Nayanmoy Tripura, resident medical officer of Khagrachhari General Hospital, said seven people were brought dead while another died of his injuries later.

Of the injured, condition of two people was critical and they were transferred to Chittagong Medical College Hospital, he said.

Police were searching for the driver. A case was filed in this regard.

In another incident, two students were killed and another was wounded when a bus hit a pick-up van carrying the students at Paglarmukh Matiapara in Sherpur's Jhinaigati yesterday.

The dead are Abu Hamja, 11, a class-IV student of Brac School, and Shamshul Islam, 13, a class-VI student of Chakkauriya Madrasa.

Injured Sohel Mia, 14, a class-VI student of Shamsul Haque Memorial School, was admitted to Sherpur District Sadar Hospital.

Around 20 students of different schools and madrasas were on their way to Gazni tourist spot in Jhinaigati for a picnic, he said.

Sohel said they started from Sribardi upazila at 10:00am by the pick-up van. As they reached Paglarmukh Matiapara on Sherpur-Jhinaigati road, a bus coming from the opposite direction hit their vehicle.

Police said Hamja and Saiful died on the spot.

Locals rescued the injured students before sending them to the hospital.

Mizanur Rahman, officer-in-charge of Jhinaigati Police Station, said they seized the bus, but its driver fled.

He said the bodies were sent to the hospital morgue.

Meanwhile, a head-on collision between a bus and a microbus left three people dead and nine others injured at Chakaria on the Chittagong-Cox's Bazar highway Thursday night.

Police said the accident took place around 11:30pm. All the victims were passengers of the microbus. They were going to Cox's Bazar for a picnic.

Those killed were identified as Afia Begum, 54, Yeamin, 5, and microbus driver Mohammad Arif, 30.

The injured were Masud Rana, 28, his wife Smriti, 20, their son Bayezid, 5, Sahinur Akther, 25, Saiful Islam, 30, Boby Akther, 14, Sabia Akter, 27, Toshmin Akter, 26, and their domestic help Rumana, 30. They were receiving treatment at Chittagong Medical College Hospital.

Abul Hashem, sub-inspector of Chiringa Highway Police in Chakaria upazila, said police seized both the vehicles, and that the bodies were handed over to their families.

Malaysian activists hold placards during a protest against Trump's immigration order outside the US embassy in Kuala Lumpur yesterday. PHOTO: AFP

Liquid waste pollutes river

FROM PAGE 16

that the colour of her gold ornaments also changed recently.

Another local Asma Aktar said she had breathing problems and had to cover her nose with a handkerchief while passing through the area.

Yusuf Ali, a resident of Munshipara, alleged that tanneries were discharging liquid waste in the Dhaleswari.

The local environment "changed" after some tanners started production at the industrial estate, he said.

Mohammad Shamsul Haque, general secretary of NoPUP, said the authorities should monitor whether the tannery estate's Central Effluent Treatment Plant (CETP) was in use.

The authorities should be careful so that the livelihoods of local people are not in jeopardy like those of the people in Hazaribagh, he added.

He called upon the government to take steps to stop pollution in the Dhaleswari.

Syeda Rizwana Hasan, chief executive of Bela, said the locals' complaints were similar to those raised earlier by the residents in Hazaribagh.

"It would be a pity if the Dhaleswari dies due to pollution," she told the public hearing.

It is the government's duty to make the CETP operational, the green activist observed.

Sanjay Kumar Thakur, a technical consultant of Bangladesh Tanners Association, a platform of factory owners, said there was no scope for the tanneries to dump waste in the river without treating it at the CETP.

Local Awami League lawmaker Enamur Rahman said the government was working sincerely to make sure that people do not suffer due to the functioning of tanneries.

He assured locals of raising the issue of their sufferings in parliament so that the problems are solved.

ALRD Executive Director Shamsul Huda, among others, spoke at the programme.

Trump hits Iran

FROM PAGE 16

Shortly after Trump's tweet Iran's Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif said via the same platform that the his country is unmoved by US threats following its missile test launch and Tehran will never initiate war.

"Iran unmoved by threats as we derive security from our people. Will never initiate war, but we can only rely on our own means of defence," Zarif tweeted.

Referring to the previous administration of Barack Obama, Trump added that the Iranian government didn't appreciate how "kind" that the US had been to them - a potential reference to the nuclear deal struck with the US and other world powers in 2015 where Iran's nuclear capability was reduced in return for a loosening of sanctions. Trump said that he would not follow a similar path.

In a letter to Trump Thursday, a bipartisan group of senators encouraged aggressive action against Iran as a rebuttal to its missile launches and support for terror organizations.

"Iranian leaders must feel sufficient pressure to cease deeply destabilizing activities, from sponsoring terrorist groups to continued testing of ballistic missiles," the lawmakers wrote.

"Full enforcement of existing sanctions and the imposition of additional sanctions on Iran for its ballistic missile program are necessary," the letter said.

Speaking to reporters Thursday in Tehran, the Iranian adviser, Ali Akbar Velayati, dismissed what he called the US leader's "baseless ranting" and said that even Americans were not satisfied with "Trump's extremism," according to Iran's semi-official Fars News Agency.

Velayati blasted Trump as lacking sufficient experience, saying he should take lessons from his predecessor, Barack Obama. He added that those who threaten the Muslim world should take a look at US failures in Afghanistan, Iraq and Syria.

He also said that all test-fired missiles were defensive and that Iran did not need to seek permission to carry out such activities.

Meanwhile, Iran yesterday banned US wrestlers from participating in the Freestyle World Cup competition in response to Trump's executive order forbidding visas for Iranians, according to an official IRNA news agency report.

Earlier this week, Iran said it would take retaliatory action. Ghasemi said the policy of the new US administration left Iran no other choice but to ban the wrestlers.