

## Indian Army chief in city

UNB, Dhaka

Gen Bipin Rawat, chief of Indian Army, arrived in Dhaka yesterday on a three-day visit.

Gen Rawat, accompanied by his wife Madhulika Rawat and a four-member delegation, arrived here by a special aircraft of India.

Maj Gen Ataul Hakim Sarwar Hasan, logistics area commander of Bangladesh Army, welcomed the Indian Army chief and the delegation, at Bangladesh Air Force Base Bangabandhu, Kurmitola, said an ISPR release.

Gen Rawat is paying the visit responding to an invitation of Chief of Army Staff of Bangladesh Army Gen Abu Belal Muhammad Shafiqul Huq as part of the ongoing high-level exchange between the armed forces of the two neighbouring countries.

The Indian Army chief will meet President Abdul Hamid and Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina and senior army officials during the visit.

The Indian delegation is expected to return on Sunday.



Maj Gen Ataul Hakim Sarwar Hasan, extreme right, logistics area commander of Bangladesh Army, welcomes Indian Army chief Gen Bipin Rawat, second from right, at Bangladesh Air Force Base Bangabandhu in the capital's Kurmitola yesterday.

PHOTO: ISPR

## Ball now in Tigers' court

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advantage because the batting team would get the best of conditions in the afternoon before the ball seamed around under lights at night.

Fortunately, today's third and series-deciding ODI is likely to be mostly free of elemental influence. There are no floodlights at the Sinhalese Sports Club ground in Colombo, so when the match gets underway at 10:00am Bangladesh time, neither the toss nor late swing should affect either side too much.

There is one caveat however, rain may play equal opportunity spoilsport. While the hosts will be desperate not to go down as the first Sri Lanka outfit to be winless through a home ODI series since 2006, Bangladesh will be eager to prove that they are deserved winners by adding a second victory after the 90-run win in the opening game, and remove the lingering doubts from the washout in the second game when they were set a chase of 311.

However, the forecast is only for passing showers in the late morning and afternoon, and it can be hoped in that event that the intrepid SSC grounds-men will be able to get the players back on the park with minimal fuss.

But barring rain, Bangladesh have the ball in their court in the endeavour to win their first ever series against Sri Lanka and their first away series win over a higher-ranked side, barring a 2009 series win over a West Indies side fielding its second eleven due to contract disputes. Ever since the humiliating 259-run defeat in the first Test in Galle, the Tigers have outplayed the Lions with bat, ball and on the field.

Even in the second ODI when Sri Lanka scored 311, a valiant bowling and fielding display from Bangladesh allowed the home side to score only 76 runs for the loss of six wickets in the last 10 overs. The last action from the match, which was abandoned due to rain that started during the innings break, was Taskin Ahmed getting a

hat-trick, so the momentum can still be said to be with Bangladesh.

On top of that, key players for Bangladesh are in form. Tamim Iqbal has been in red-hot touch throughout the tour and scored a match-winning century in the first game, Shakib Al Hasan chimed in with a blistering 72 and happily for Bangladesh, Mahmudullah Riyad seemed undimmed by his axing from the Test squad as he made the most of his short time in the middle by maximising Bangladesh's score along with newcomer Mosaddek Hossain, who was brilliant in his own right. Mushfiqur Rahim got out to a freak dismissal, but as always can be relied upon to come up with the goods.

On the bowling front, Mashrafe has looked dangerous with the new ball, Mehedi Hasan Miraz's addition has been as welcome as it was in the Test team and Taskin must be in high confidence mode after achieving only the fifth hat-trick by a Bangladesh bowler in ODIs.

And the confidence was palpable in the body language of the players yesterday during practice. Shakib chose to take a rest, perhaps because of the stifling heat, but the rest of the squad were in good spirits, even as the skies darkened and spots of evening rain caused the ground to be covered comprehensively.

It is likely that the team will remain unchanged from the second ODI, and Sri Lanka's will probably be unchanged too. There is a bit of green on the pitch that will help the new ball early on, but apart from that a good day of cricket beckons, with the toss not likely to be a major factor -- 22 matches have been won by the team batting first here, and 30 by those batting second; 24 have been won by teams that won the toss and 28 by those calling wrongly. It seems that both sides will have a chance to have a say on this series uninterrupted by the elements, if only the rain stays away.

## Big boost for South

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smallholders' competitiveness, observes Sue, who has recently replaced Mike Robson as the FAO Representative.

Another Rome-based UN specialised agency, the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD) along with the Bangladesh government is funding SACP to support smallholder farmers in 12 southern districts to increase their incomes and livelihood resilience through demand-driven productivity growth, crop diversification and marketing in a changing climate condition.

Sue Lautze believes such an initiative came in good synchronisation with the government's own south-bound agricultural development plans.

The southern region of Bangladesh is generally perceived as disadvantaged in terms of frequent extreme events, poverty, food insecurity, environmental vulnerability and limited livelihood opportunities.

The agriculture ministry in league with the fisheries, livestock and water resources ministries has chalked out a 'Master Plan for Agricultural Development in the Southern Region of Bangladesh' with FAO's technical support to implement as many as 85 interventions involving Tk 57,000 crore by 2021.

The FAO Representative reckons once the bridge over the river Padma is built, the south's potential to endow the country's food basket could be fully tapped. She underscores the need for enhancing the competitiveness of the southern smallholder farmers.

More than 40 percent work of the Padma Bridge construction has so far been accomplished.

Sue Lautze, who's immediate past duty station was in war-ravaged nation South Sudan, praises

Bangladesh's development transformation in just one generation considering the fact that like South Sudan this country has passed through the days of war, famine and helplessness.

Sue, a PhD, served as a senior advisor in the Emergency and Rehabilitation Division at FAO headquarters in Rome. She also served as the UN's Deputy Humanitarian Coordinator in South Sudan (2014-2106) and also was FAO's Representative for South Sudan (2012-2014).

Her nearly three decades of work has focused principally on the effect of shocks on livelihood systems. A co-founder of the Feinstein International Center at Tufts University, she holds academic degrees in agriculture economics, public affairs and international development from UC Davis, Princeton and Oxford respectively. She has worked in both humanitarian and development functions in Africa, Europe and Asia.

Sue, an American national, acknowledges that Bangladesh has been losing farmland fast but "loss of arable land doesn't necessarily mean loss of arable space." She explains that she does not like to see empty rooftops. There should be gardens on all the rooftops; there should be efforts to create greenery in urban settings.

The FAO representative observes that safe food, safe water and safe air are getting prerogatives of those who could afford those. "But that shouldn't be the case. Safe food, safe water and safe air are our rights."

With firm conviction, she further adds, "We shouldn't poison our water, we shouldn't pollute our air."

Efforts are continuing from the FAO's part to help Bangladesh's safe food authorities build an institutional capacity to check unsafe food, she observes.

## AL's defeat

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leader on condition of anonymity.

Talking to The Daily Star yesterday, AL Joint General Secretary Mahubul Alam Hanif said they had already asked Comilla district AL to find out the reasons behind the defeat and send a detailed report to the party high-ups.

Addressing a programme in the capital earlier, Hanif warned of tough action against the party men who acted against the party's interest in the CCC election.

AL General Secretary Obaidul Quader said they had failed to unite the party in Comilla.

"Our main target was to hold a free and fair election. The people decide who wins or loses... The Comilla City Corporation election has once again proved that a free and fair election is possible under Sheikh Hasina-led government," he told reporters after a programme in Gazipur.

In the maiden CCC polls in 2012, Monirul Haque Sakku defeated AL-backed Afzal Khan by 36,000 votes. In Thursday's polls, Monirul on the BNP ticket defeated Afzal's daughter Anjum by around 11,000 votes.

Talking to this newspaper yesterday, Anjum said she was upset that she had to suffer defeat because of "the conspiracy of some party men".

Many residents of Comilla city said rowdy behaviour by ruling party men and controversy surrounding Afzal Khan's family also played a big part in Anjum's defeat.

ASM Foysal, a resident of ward-9, said anti-AL sentiment grew among voters due to aggressive attitude of ruling party men.

Khairul Azam Shimul, a resident of ward-10, said, "Every day several hundred AL men came to the city from nearby areas and staged show-downs that the voters didn't like."

Seeking anonymity, a freedom fighter living in Comilla city said Afzal Khan, ex-general secretary of Comilla district (south) AL, and his family don't have a clean image.

Meanwhile, senior BNP leaders claimed that the Comilla polls result was a manifestation of people's protest against the government's "misdeeds."

**COUNCILLOR POSTS**  
AL-backed candidates won 15 councillor posts while BNP-supported candidates secured eight posts in Thursday's election, Returning Officer Rakibuddin Mandal said at the Town Hall Auditorium in Comilla city yesterday.

Besides, candidates backed by the Jamaat-e-Islami won three councillor posts, and independent candidates secured six posts, according to the RO's office.

The CCC has 36 councillor posts, including nine seats reserved for women.

Election to two councillor posts and two seats reserved for women was suspended due to deterioration in law and order at two polling centres.

## 17 Bangladeshis

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immediately. But we have documents of every incident," he told The Daily Star over the phone yesterday.

Meanwhile, at least six Bangladeshi workers along with a Pakistani and a Myanmar were arrested by the Malaysian immigration authorities allegedly for falsifying documents, including passports, work passes and immigration cards, in Kuala Lumpur.

The unidentified workers' ages range from 30 to 50, reports Malaysian newspaper, The Star.

Malaysian Immigration Department Director General Mustafar Ali said the foreigners had been held in three separate raids in the city.

"The syndicate operated behind the scenes of a travel agency in Jalan Silang, Kuala Lumpur. Our investigations found that it has been falsifying documents for three years," Mustafar told a press conference yesterday in Putrajaya.

## Splinter injuries caused death

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Action Battalion's legal and media wing.

Earlier on Wednesday night, Azad was flown back to Dhaka on life support from a Singapore hospital where he had been taken on Sunday for better treatment.

Doctors at Mount Elizabeth Hospital in Singapore found him unfit to be operated on.

Azad had been kept at the CMH since he was brought back.

With his demise, the death toll in the twin blasts near the militant den at Sylhet's *Atia Mahal* rose to seven.

The explosion in which Azad was hit took place around an hour after a bomb went off about 400 metres north

## Blast near mosque

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Tehrik-i-Taliban Pakistan (TTP), often referred to as the Pakistani Taliban, said the blast was part of its operation Ghazi, named after a radical Islamist leader killed by Pakistani security forces in 2007.

Following a string of earlier incidents this year, the latest attack adds to fears of an increase in sectarian violence in Pakistan, a nuclear-armed state of some 200 million people.

Last month, more than 80 people were killed and dozens wounded in an attack on a crowded Sufi shrine in southern Pakistan that was claimed by Islamic State.

In January, at least 21 people were killed when an explosion hit a vegetable market in Parachinar, capital of the Kurram tribal region, where Pakistani security forces have battled militant groups for years.

That attack was claimed by the TTP and a branch of another militant group, Lashkar-e-Jhangvi Al Alami.

Authorities said a military rescue helicopter had been sent to the scene to help evacuate the injured.

Mumtaz Hussain, a doctor at the Agency Headquarters Hospital in the

region, said five bodies, including a woman and two children, and more than three dozen wounded had been brought to the hospital and an appeal for blood donors had been made.

"Patients are being brought to us in private cars and ambulances and we have received over three dozen patients so far," Hussain told Reuters.

The attacks have shattered hopes that Pakistan may have come through the militant violence that has scarred its recent history and increased pressure on Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif's government to show it was improving security.

Sharif condemned yesterday's attack and said the government would keep up efforts to "eliminate the menace of terrorism".

In a statement, he said: "The network of terrorists has already been broken and it is our national duty to continue this war until the complete annihilation of the scourge of terrorism from our soil."

In the wake of last month's attack in southern Sindh province, security forces launched a major crackdown across Pakistan, killing or detaining hundreds of suspected militants and closing off the border with Afghanistan for several days.

of *Atia Mahal* in Shibbari area where militants were holed up since March 24.

The two blasts left two police officials and four civilians dead and 44 others injured. Four militants were later killed in the operation led by army commandos.

**BURIAL OF AZAD**

Azad was laid to rest at Banani army graveyard in the capital yesterday afternoon.

Bangladesh Army gave him a guard of honour before the burial after Asr prayers.

Earlier, the first namaz-e-janaza of the Rab official was held at Dhaka Cantonment Central Mosque and later the second one at the Rab Headquarters where Rab also gave him

a guard of honour.

Home Minister Asaduzzaman Khan Kamal, Inspector General of Police AKM Shahidul Hoque, Rab Director General Benazir Ahmed, Dhaka Metropolitan Police Commissioner Asaduzzaman Miah and Azad's family members, friends and colleagues were present there to pay their last tribute.

The home minister said law enforcers were working together to combat militancy. "We have lost not only an officer, but also a patriot."

Rab chief Benazir said, "With his demise, we have lost a man with tremendous courage who was always loyal to his duties. His demise will create a vacuum never to be filled by anyone."

## Focus on ending social

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Founded in 1889, the IPU, a global organisation of parliaments, works to establish democracy, peace and cooperation among people.

According to the IPU, the consequences of inequality are unsustainable, causing instability and undermining human rights, said the release.

"During the IPU's Assembly, parliamentarians will concentrate on the impact of inequality on the poor, women and vulnerable groups."

Nobel Peace Prize laureate Kailash Satyarthi will be the keynote speaker during the opening session of the debates tomorrow.

IPU members would adopt a resolution to guarantee the financial inclusion of women as drivers of development, said the release.

Joining the assembly, women MPs from different countries in their session of the Forum of Women Parliamentarians would focus on "ending the gender gap in access to financial services", it said.

Participants are also expected to make recommendations for parliamentary action to further promote the values of democracy and to strengthen the exercise of democratic government, according to an agenda of the conference.

The IPU Standing Committee on Peace and International Security will further examine, and possibly adopt a resolution of the issue of non-interference in the internal affairs of the states in the context of world today, added the release.

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina will inaugurate the assembly this evening at South Plaza of parliament building. She will release a commemorative postage stamp and launch IPU web television.

The next sessions of the assembly will be held at the Bangabandhu International Conference Centre (BICC).

Since its inception, the IPU has been staunchly committed to promoting stable and diverse democratic traditions by fostering parliamentary dialogue. It believes good governance and democracy are fundamental for progress in all areas of life, and parliaments have a critical role to play in promoting a better world.

According to IPU President Saber Hossain Chowdhury, every conference of the IPU offers MPs to learn from others how parliaments should function to ensure good governance, rule of law and human rights.

"Parliaments play a significant role in every country. They hold their governments accountable for their activities. So, if we maintain good relations with MPs of other countries, it will supplement our government's diplomatic efforts in international arena," Saver, who was elected president of IPU in 2014, told The Daily Star recently.



Currently, the IPU has 171 members and 11 associate members. Bangladesh got the membership in 1972, but its membership was stripped off thrice for martial law and emergency regimes.

Addressing a press conference at BICC yesterday, Saber told journalists that the IPU assembly would create a unique opportunity for Bangladesh to showcase its economic progress and potentials before the international communities.

In the briefing, IPU Secretary General Martin Chungong said the assembly would discuss on the role of lawmakers in combating militancy and tackling climate change.

He said inequality and the culture of impunity were the prime reasons behind the rise of militancy.

IPU President Saber said the executive committee of the IPU would decide on devising strategies on how MPs could play their roles in tackling terrorism.

He said they decided to hold the assembly as a green assembly this year.

"The delegates are arriving in Bangladesh by aircraft, which emits carbon dioxide. The total amount of carbons emitted in the process of carrying delegates will be calculated and neutralised," he said.

As the Higher Secondary Certificate examination starts tomorrow, the travel time of VVIPs and VIPs for the assembly would be set in a way so that the movement of HSC candidates is not hindered tomorrow and on April 4, he said, adding that there would be no movement of VVIPs and

VIPs between 8:00am and 10:00am on those two days.

According to the IPU convention, Speaker Shirin Sharmin Chaudhury, as Speaker of the host country, will act as the assembly president.

She said successful holding of the assembly would be a milestone for Bangladesh in its forward march towards flourishing democracy, and it would bring a rare honour for the country.

A four-tier security measures have been taken in and around Hazrat Shahjalal International Airport.

**RESTRICTION ON VEHICULAR MOVEMENT**

According to a notice of Dhaka Metropolitan Police, vehicular movement will be suspended on Manik Mia Avenue -- from Aarong crossing to Khejur Bagan crossing -- from 5:30pm to 10:00pm today.

Vehicular movement will remain suspended on the road in front of BICC -- from BICC crossing via Gono Bhaban School to Pratirakkha intersection -- each day from 7:00am to 10:00pm during the five-day assembly.

City dwellers are advised to use Sher-e-Bangla Agricultural University to Agargaon road through Rab-2 office as an alternative route. However, dwellers going to different government and non-government offices in the area will be allowed to go through the BICC road.

Vehicles plying Agargaon Link Road will not be allowed to pass the BICC crossing. Instead, they will have to use the Agargaon Light crossing.