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SUSPENSION OF MAYORS

Selective use of law

Different treatment for people's representatives backed by ruling party and the opposition

SHAKHAWAT LITON

Abdul Baten is more fortunate than many other people's representatives.

The mayor of Pabna's Bera municipality, Baten was charge-sheeted in a corruption case, and the district court sent him to jail in May last year. He was then suspended by the LGRD ministry.

A few days later, he came out of prison on bail. The ministry scrapped his suspension and reinstated him in the post of mayor.

However, the legal provision on suspension of municipality mayors says a temporarily-suspended mayor cannot resume office until the case proceeding ends.

Baten functioned as mayor for the remaining tenure. He was re-elected in August 2016, and is now discharging duties as mayor. The case against him is yet to be disposed of.

He is president of Bera upazila unit of the Awami League and younger brother of AL lawmaker Shamsul Haque Tuku, also former state minister for home.

The Anti-Corruption Commission on August 27, 2015 filed the criminal case against him and some of his aides for embezzling Tk 1.85 crore from government funds through abuse of power. On March 31 last year, it submitted a charge

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HC stays order suspending Sylhet mayor

Rajshahi mayor to challenge suspension order today

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

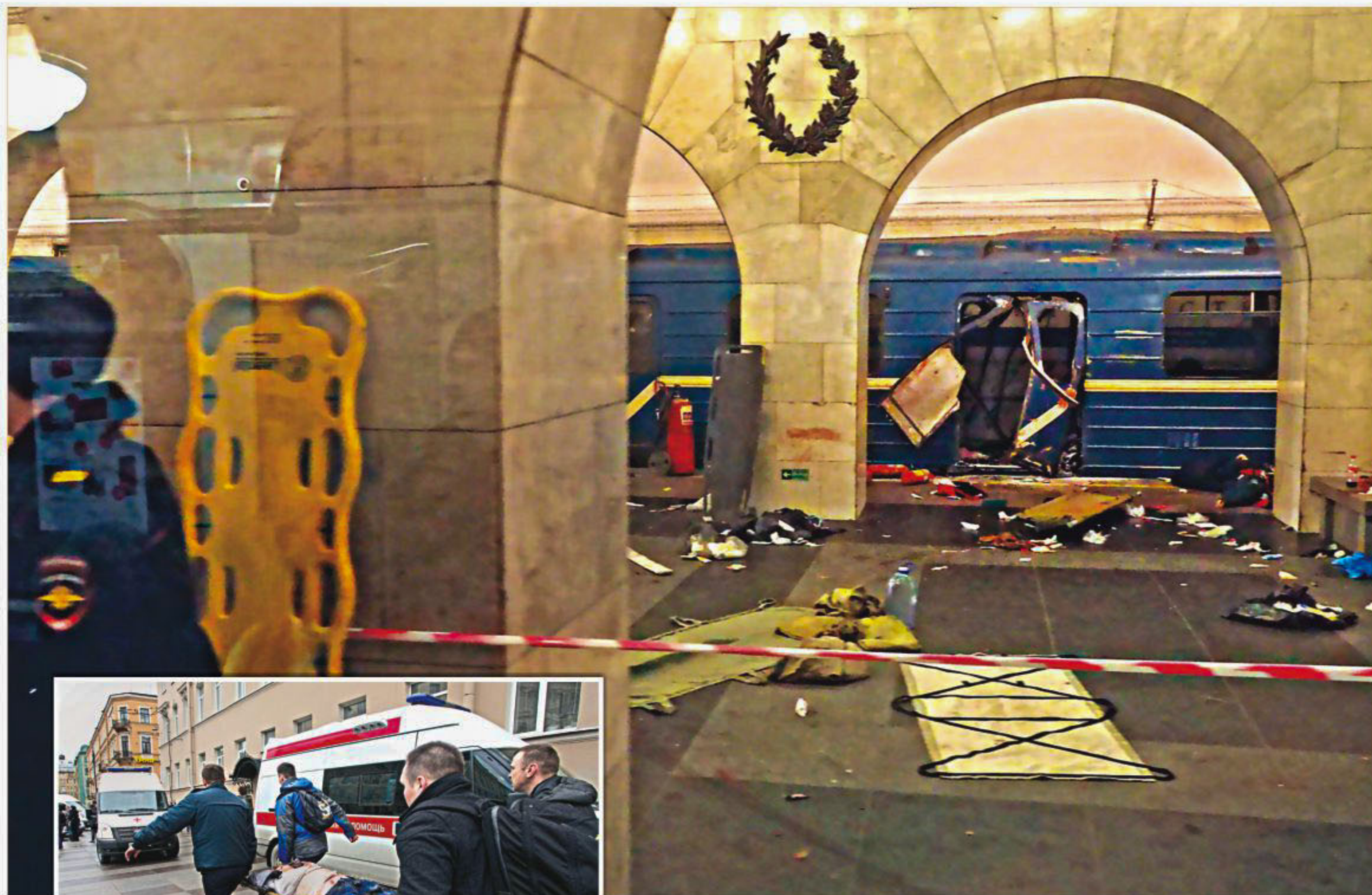
The High Court yesterday stayed for three months the government's suspension of pro-BNP Sylhet Mayor Ariful Huq Chowdhury.

Ariful along with pro-BNP Rajshahi Mayor Mosaddek Hossain Bulbul were suspended on Sunday, a couple of hours after they regained their posts through protracted legal battles ending a two-year suspension.

The Ministry of Local Government, Rural Development and Cooperatives (LGRD) served the suspension order on Ariful, citing that a Sunamganj court on March 22 accepted a charge sheet against him in a case over a grenade attack on an Awami League rally in Sunamganj in 2004.

The HC also issued a rule, in response to a writ petition filed by Ariful,

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The damaged train carriage at Technological Institute metro station in Russia's Saint Petersburg yesterday. Around 10 people were killed and dozens injured after an explosion rocked the metro station. *Inset*, men carry an injured person on a stretcher outside the station.

PHOTO: AFP

10 killed in Russian metro station blast

Explosion tears through train in St Petersburg; 47 injured; Russian PM terms it terrorism; unexploded device found at another station

AFP, Saint Petersburg

Russia opened a probe into a suspected "act of terror" yesterday after 10 people were killed and dozens more injured in a blast that rocked the Saint Petersburg metro.

Authorities shut down the metro system in Russia's second city for several hours as security services said they had also defused a bomb at a second metro station.

Russia's Investigative Committee said it was probing an "act of terror" but added it would look into all other possible causes of the blast.

Pictures screened on national television showed the door of a train carriage blown out, as bloodied bodies lay strewn on a station platform.

Above ground, emergency services vehicles rushed to the scene at the Technological Institute metro station, a key transport hub in the city centre.

Health minister Veronika Skvortsova said the blast had killed seven people on the spot, with three more succumbing to their injuries later.

Thirty nine people were hospitalised, including a 15-year-old girl, Skvortsova said.

"I will be afraid to take the metro now," said Maria Ilyina, 30, standing near the station, where people improvised a memorial by bringing flowers to the scene.

"Before we thought that this would not come to Saint Petersburg, now our city is under threat," she said.

Pensioner Vyacheslav Veselov told AFP he had seen four bodies at the station.

"A station attendant in tears called on the men to help carry the bodies," he said.

SECOND DEVICE 'NEUTRALISED'
The blast occurred in a train carriage as it was

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IPU to propose anti-terror actions

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Parliamentarians across the world believe that democratic practices can ensure development and social justice.

They also proposed that no member countries of Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU) would finance or assist in any kind of militant and terrorism activities.

IPU, the global forum of lawmakers, yesterday also said it would come up with an action-oriented proposal to enable the parliamentary community worldwide to combat terrorism and religious extremism.

Martin Chungong, IPU secretary general, disclosed the plan at a press briefing at the Bangabandhu International Conference Centre (BICC) yesterday.

The action plan will be announced on



Inter-Parliamentary Union

for democracy for everyone.

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RELATED STORY ON PAGE 16

PM'S DELHI VISIT

Muhith hints at \$5b fresh Indian credit

OUR CORRESPONDENT, New Delhi

India is likely to announce a \$5 billion line of credit, most of which will be spent on Bangladesh's railway sector as well as road and waterway projects, during Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina's visit to New Delhi this month.

A portion of the Indian concessional loan will also go to the development of a cancer hospital being built in Dhaka, Finance Minister Abul Maal Abdul Muhith told The Daily Star yesterday in New Delhi where he was to attend the first meeting of finance ministers of seven South Asian countries.

He spoke of possible agreements and proposals

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6-HOUR FACEBOOK BAN

BTRC doesn't think it realistic

MUHAMMAD ZAHIDUL ISLAM

After daylong outbursts and dismay expressed in social media over the government's move to ban students from using Facebook for six hours from every midnight, the BTRC wrote to the telecom division yesterday to say that it should not be done.

Bangladesh Telecommunication Regulatory Commission (BTRC) recommended getting parents, educational institutions and the media involved instead of imposing a ban on the social network site.

Following a cabinet division letter that said students' and young people's studies were being hampered by their excessive use of Facebook, the BTRC in its letter mentioned four issues the government should consider before making its decision of the ban.

The BTRC said there was no effective way to determine the age of a Facebook user and if Facebook was blocked from the gateways, users could use virtual private networks and proxy servers to get around the block.

It said blocking Facebook would be ineffective since

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The brush makers who changed many lives

3 Tangail entrepreneurs transform their village

MIRZA SHAKIL with ANDREW EAGLE

Introducing three entrepreneurs: Ramjan Ali, Rokon Mollah and Abdul Mannan; they have things in common. All hail from Herendrapara village of Lauhati union in Tangail's Delduar upazila. Each owns a brush factory. Combined, their efforts brought industry to their village, a community's fortunes irrevocably brightened. The initiatives of these three have transformed the lives of hundreds.

It began quite humbly. In search of an income, Ramjan left the village first, decades ago at age 15. He travelled to Dhaka and found a job in a Lalbagh brush factory. A few years later, Rokon and Mannan followed. Sacrificing village tranquillity for Lalbagh's hum, bustle and salary, they too found brush factory jobs.

It wasn't unusual to leave Herendrapara in search of work. The remote village on the bank of the Dhaleswari river had few employment opportunities. Even a decade ago, beyond earthworks or working as a boatman, independent jobs were hard to find. The economic situation was so bad that many families remember what it means to go hungry.

To leave Herendrapara isn't unusual; but it's not at all common to return.

CHANGE MAKER

A worker fixes nylon bristles on a wooden brush handle at Herendrapara in Tangail's Delduar upazila. A wide range of brushes are produced in the village. *Top right*, workers cutting and shaping brushes at a factory in the village. *Bottom right*, handles made with kodom wood are being shaped. The photos were taken recently.

PHOTO: MIRZA SHAKIL

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