



Former British Prime Minister David Cameron calls on Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina at the Gono Bhaban yesterday. He also visited a garment factory in Dhaka, and attended a closed-door roundtable of the International Growth Centre.

PHOTO: BSS

Cameron sees 3 challenges

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Cameron, who resigned as PM last year after Brexit voting, met Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina, visited a garment factory in Dhaka and attended a close-door roundtable of the International Growth Centre during his less than 24-hour stay.

Delivering a key-note speech on "Global Challenges in 2017" at Hotel Four Points in Gulshan in the afternoon, the former British PM also touched upon various other issues.

Cameron was addressing a select group of audience comprising Commerce Minister Tofail Ahmed, other political leaders, civil society representatives, economists, business leaders, educationists and journalists before departing Dhaka.

The British-Bangladesh Chamber of Commerce and Industry (BBCCI) organised the event moderated by journalist and TV presenter Zillur Rahman. BBCCI President Enam Ali made the welcome speech.

"This is not a clash between civilisations. It is a clash within a religion," he said referring to Islamic militancy,

adding that a vast majority of Muslims did not believe in that extremist idea.

"If we believe that [it is a clash between civilisations], all of our policies will be wrong.

"Terrorists want us to believe it is a clash between civilisations. Their whole narrative is that ultimately we [different religions] can't live together. Their message to young Muslims is that it is impossible. You cannot survive and thrive in a society that is not one along the line of ISIL."

He further said, "It's not just a fight against violent people ... it's a fight against violent ideology. Let's fight against them. We have to have security."

In reply to a question from the audience, he said, "We cannot give up the rule of law in combating terrorism."

Giving example of Bangladesh's development and utilisation of foreign aid, the British leader said those who claim that aid did not work should come and visit Bangladesh to witness the extraordinary success in terms of aid utilisation.

The next stage of Bangladesh's development would involve massive

investment in infrastructure, huge investment in energy as business continues to grow and also investments in skills and professional education.

And for that, he said Britain, would remain as a partner of Bangladesh as always even after the Brexit.

Cameron also spoke about having quality institutions, including college and universities, to help produce skilled professionals required for taking the country forward and reach the next stage of development.

On high-quality of democracy, he said it was not all about elections; rather it was about governance, rule of law, accountability and ensuring rights of all.

Touching on corruption, he said it needed to be addressed if money was stolen in a poor country but spent in rich a country.

"The idea that little bit of corruption is okay... is wrong. It's a cancer that destroys the faith in politics and faith in our country," he said, adding, "Western world is lecturing everyone else about corruption, but the money is stolen in poor countries and hidden in

rich countries."

Earlier, Cameron attended a roundtable discussion with Bangladeshi civil society members, economists and business leaders at Westin Dhaka.

The roundtable titled "Fragility, growth and development: Bangladesh's progress" was organised by the Bangladesh chapter of International Growth Centre (IGC).

Prof Rehman Sobhan, IGC Bangladesh Country Director Sultan Hafeez Rahman and Country Adviser Prof Wahiduddin Mahmud, businessman Saluddin Kashem Khan, Sujon Secretary Badiul Alam Majumdar, Barrister Sarah Hossain, among others, were present.

The IGC is based at the London School of Economics and in partnership with the University of Oxford it works to promote sustainable growth in developing countries.

Cameron is the chair of the Commission on State Fragility, Growth and Development, which aims to generate innovative ideas to help tackle state fragility and state failure.

Govt to focus on forecast

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The government was planning to bring in lightning strike detectors, a device that can predict lightning strikes and issue warnings 30 minutes ahead. Vietnam was using this technology, said officials.

"We are working on it [introducing lightning strike predictors] and making proposals ... We are working to construct big towers in haor areas," Disaster Management and Relief Secretary Shah Kamal told The Daily Star.

"The situation has reached an alarming level and we are concerned. We are emphasising on tree plantation, especially palm trees. We have decided to plant 10 lakh palm trees across the country.

"We asked the Public Works Department to ensure installation of grounding systems in all buildings. We will keep the provision [of installing grounding system] there in the building code," he said.

Gawher Nayeem Wahra, director of Disaster Management and Climate Change at Brac, said, "The number of large trees in the country has decreased sharply in recent years, which is a major reason behind the rise in lightning strike related deaths."

Gone are the days when various metals were installed on the roofs of buildings, which basically worked as grounding, he said.

"Grounding system is rarely seen in our buildings. The casualty rate is high

in places where there are fewer trees. In Dhaka, we see electrical equipment going out of order due to lightning strikes, because those work as ground during strikes."

The poor are the worst victims of lightning strikes, he said.

Mohan Kumar Das, senior research fellow of the Institute of Water and Flood Management (IWFM) at Bangladesh University of Engineering and Technology (Buet), said the rise in temperature due to climate change, formation of cumulonimbus clouds and absence of tall trees were the reasons for lightning strikes.

Cumulonimbus cloud is a dense towering vertical cloud associated with thunderstorms and atmospheric instability.

"The Met office has good radar coverage. There are five radars and three of them are modern Doppler Weather radars. It is possible but challenging to issue a location specific short-term forecast, known as nowcasting system," he said.

Nowcasting deals with up to two-hour weather forecast, according to the World Meteorological Organisation, and up to six hours, according to other organisations, he said.

Mohan, who is a former researcher of Saarc Meteorological Research Centre (SMRC), said, "For better nowcasting, Moulvibazar Doppler Weather Radar needs to be run round the clock by a dedicated research team, especially during nor'wester seasons."

Kidnapped

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yard in front of their rented house on the afternoon of April 2 before going missing.

Police came to know about the abductor scrutinising CCTV footage of the road. Sumaiya in the footage was seen going with a woman wearing burqa, police said.

The kidnapper was identified by police as Sabina Akhter Brishti, 28, who used to live in the house where Zakir's family lives now. Police arrested Brishti and her father Sirajul Islam and detained three others for interrogation.

On April 2, Brishti came to meet the owner of the house where she used to live six months ago. Sumaiya went missing as she left the place that day.

Zakir then filed an abduction case with the police station.

Briefing reporters at the Dhaka Metropolitan Police media centre, Ibrahim Khan, deputy commissioner of Lalbagh Division, said they would find out the motive behind the abduction.

Police suspected that the child was picked up either for trafficking her to India, as Brishti was a frequent traveler to

the neighbouring country, or to rear her up as her child since she does not have any.

The abductor did not demand any ransom for her release, police said.

About the rescue operation, Ibrahim said that on information from sources and through mobile tracking police got to know where Sumaiya had been held.

Accordingly, police conducted a raid around 4:30am and rescued Sumaiya.

The girl had marks of torture on her body, the parents said.

A cheerful Sumaiya with her parents arrived at the DMP media centre yesterday morning. She was seen hugging and kissing her parents, laughing, and talking with journalists.

Sumaiya will be officially handed over to her parents after a court order.

Meanwhile, the two arrestees were taken on three-day remand.

Talking to reporters, Zakir, an employee of a local steel workshop, expressed his gratitude to police for rescuing his child.

Zakir said he didn't have any idea as to why Brishti had abducted his daughter and that he didn't have any enmity with her.

Textbooks for class 9, 10

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"We want to make the textbooks simpler so that students find those easier to learn."

Besides, an effort is on to bring down the number of textbooks so that students of different classes can be relieved of unnecessary study burden.

The education minister made the decisions public at a press briefing after a meeting with educationists on improving the quality of secondary education at this ministry in the secretariat.

Amid a debate over the standards of education at the secondary level, the ministry last year began a process to improve the quality.

As part of the effort, the ministry in May last year organised a workshop in Dhaka where leading educationists pointed out that the curriculum and textbooks of secondary education were too difficult and complex, forcing students to turn to guidebooks and private tuitions.

In another workshop in Cox's Bazar in

November last year, experts suggested making textbooks simpler, dropping a few subjects at Secondary School Certificate level and holding public exams with unified question papers.

In the light of the expert opinions, the ministry in January this year formed two committees comprising academicians to review curriculum and modify some textbooks.

The changes are being made under an educationist, Nahid said.

Shyamoli Nasrin Chowdhury, former principal of Udayan Higher Secondary School, will be leading a team to modify the textbook of Bangla Literature while Prof Syed Manzoorul Islam English for Today.

Dhaka University teachers Prof MM Akash and Prof Md Akhtaruzzaman are working to modify economics and Bangladesh and Global Studies textbooks, and Prof Taslima Begum, former chairman of Dhaka Board, is changing the textbook of Bangladesh and World

Civilisation.

Prof Muhammad Zafar Iqbal and Prof Mohammad Kaikobad are modifying mathematics, higher mathematics, general science, physics, chemistry and biology, and Prof Mizanur Rahman of DU the accounting book.

Asked about changes already done in Bangla textbooks, Prof Zafar Iqbal said, "We hope that Shyamoli Nasrin Chowdhury will save us from this issue [changing of textbook contents as per demands of Hefajat-e Islam]. She will modify the book keeping in mind the spirit and values of the Liberation War."

Prof MM Akash said he would correct mistakes, if any, and make complex issues simpler.

"We will consider any content that goes against our constitution," he added.

STANDARDISATION OF ANSWER SCRIPTS
The education minister announced that the government had introduced standardisation of answer-scripts in public

examinations with a view to bringing discipline in the evaluation system.

The process was introduced in the SSC exams in February this year.

During the exams, students were provided with model answers and a mark scheme to check the papers, Nahid said, adding that the initiative was taken following a research conducted by Bangladesh Examination Development Unit (BEDU).

Explaining further, Chowdhury Mufad Ahmed, additional secretary of the ministry, said it was found in the research that different examiners gave different marks to same answer scripts.

The head examiners developed a standard model of answers and a mark scheme on the basis of discussions.

The ministry also provided training to the head examiners in evaluating answer scripts as per model answers, Mufad Ahmed said, adding that steps had also been taken to hold examiners accountable.

Ex-GM Mridha, 2 others get 4-year jail

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Mehbah Uddin Chowdhury.

The court, however, acquitted five staff -- fuel checkers Abul Kashem and Anisur Rahman and assistant chemists Sultana Begum, Jahirul Islam and Gonesh Chandra Shil -- as the charges brought against them were not proved beyond reasonable doubt.

Of the eight accused, Mridha, Kibria and Hafizur were behind bars and the fuel checkers on bail. The five were present at the court during the delivery of the verdict.

However, the three assistant chemists have been on the run since the filing of the cases.

ACC Assistant Director Rashedur Reza had filed the cases with Kotwali Police Station on September 13, 2012, accusing the three Bangladesh Railway officials.

Following investigation, the graft watchdog also named five staff, recruited for the posts of assistant chemist and fuel checker, in the charge sheets submitted to the court in August 2013.

According to the charge sheets, the

accused railway officials in connivance with each other appointed the unsuccessful candidates to the five posts between August 2010 and July 2012 without recruiting the successful jobseekers. The accused with a dishonest motive changed the results of recruitment tests by modifying the candidates' answer scripts and the tabulation sheets of the exams, it added.

On April 9, 2012, Mridha along with three others was arrested in the capital's Palkhana by Border Guard Bangladesh while the four were reportedly on their way to then railway minister Suranjit Sengupta's Dhanmondi residence with Tk 70 lakh. The railway GM was suspended following the recovery.

PROSECUTION, DEFENSE UNHAPPY
Prosecution and defense lawyers yesterday expressed disappointment at the verdict.

ACC PP Mahmudul Haque Mahmud said they expected that the maximum punishment of seven-year jail would be handed to the convicts

under Section 5(2) of the Prevention of Corruption Act, 1947.

"We are aggrieved that the court acquitted the charge-sheeted accused [five staff] and awarded only two year's imprisonment to the convicts in each of the two cases," he added.

The lawyer said the ACC would file an appeal with the High Court against the verdict.

Defense lawyer advocate Swabhu Prasad Biswas said although the newly recruited staff were acquitted, the three officials were convicted.

He said his clients would challenge the verdict in the HC and hoped that they would get justice in the higher court.

Railway GM Mridha faces eleven more cases with different Chittagong courts. Four of them are under trial and charge sheets have been submitted in the rest of the cases.

A Dhaka court in August last year sentenced the official to five year's imprisonment and fined him Tk 15 lakh for earning wealth illegally and concealing information in his wealth statements submitted to the ACC.

Shab-e-Barat

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declared that the moon was sighted in the sky of Bangladesh yesterday, 29th Rajab in the Arabic calendar.

Therefore, the holy month of Shaban starts today. The holy Shab-e-Barat will be observed in the country on the night of 14th of Saban (May 11).

Friday's weekly holiday will coincide with the public holiday for the Shab-e-Barat this year.

Muslim devotees will offer special prayers, recite from the holy Quran, hold milads, zikr and perform other religious rituals throughout the night, seeking divine blessings for the wellbeing of mankind.

Devotees traditionally also visit graves of their beloved ones and pray for the peace of their souls on the occasion.

Many people fast on the day following Shab-e-Barat night. Some people distribute food and sweets among neighbours and the poor.

Bangladesh Television, Bangladesh Betar and private television and radio stations will air special programmes.

The daily newspapers will publish special articles highlighting the significance of the night.

Four killed

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Wednesday and the other yesterday."

The bodies were found lying in one of the three rooms of the house, added the official.

Proloy Kumar Joarder, deputy commissioner of the CTC unit, said they recovered Improvised Explosive Devices (IEDs), bombs and pistols from the den.

Police had so far defused four to five bombs, he told The Daily Star around 8:00pm.

On April 21, CTC unit members busted a den in Jhenidah and recovered a huge cache of explosives and bomb-making materials. But they couldn't arrest anyone.

With the death of the four suspected militants, 23 people have been killed since March 8 mostly in suicide blasts during operations on five "Neo JMB" hideouts in Chittagong, Sylhet and Moulvibazar. Of the dead, 10 are women and children, and the rest are suspected militants.

Briefing reporters yesterday evening, M Khurshid Hossain, deputy inspector general of Rajshahi Range police, said the SWAT team completed the operation around 6:30pm.

"It [the raid] took some time as our main objective was to bring the child and the woman alive out of the den, and we have done that.

"Our big success is that we have completed the operation without any casualty on our forces," he said.

Around 4:30am on Wednesday, CTC unit members along with local police cordoned off the house. As the suspected militants holed up there didn't respond to the law enforcers' call for surrender, a SWAT team was

called in around 4:00pm.

The raid on the hideout began around three hours later but it was suspended around 8:30pm due to darkness, police said.

SWAT members resumed the operation around 9:00am yesterday. Gunshots were heard from the den throughout the day. There were two big explosions -- one at 11:06am and the other at 5:27pm.

According to investigators, Abu was an operative of mainstream JMB. He later joined "Neo JMB" and was tasked with providing shelter to members of the outfit.

He rented the house two months ago, and mostly mid-level leaders of "Neo JMB" used to stay there, they said.

Talking to this correspondent, Mohibul Islam Khan, deputy commissioner of the CTC unit, said they suspect that the three dead militants, who were yet to be identified, came to Abu's house for shelter.

Locals said Abu's family threw him out of home as he started practising religion in a different way. For example, he used to celebrate Eids on the day Saudi Arabia observes them.

Abu's mother Fulsana Begum said they would not receive his body as he had severed all ties with the family.

She mentioned that her son studied at Trimohoni Alia Madrasa in Shibganj and had a circle of about 10 friends. He didn't have good relations with other people.

Abu married Sumaiya about nine years ago, and they have two daughters, aged eight and six. He used to sell spices in local markets, added Fulsana.

[Our Chapainawabganj correspondent contributed to this report]

Teacher beaten

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Rashidul Hasan, has retired from Daya Government Primary School this year.

The accused allegedly sought Tk 5,000 on Wednesday in exchange for preparing documents Rashidul required to receive retirement benefits, the OC quoted the victim as saying.

An altercation ensued and the accused allegedly hit Rashidul in the head and other body parts with a stick,

he added.

Other staff took Rashidul to Shahzadpur Upazila Health Complex where he received first aid before filing the case, said the OC.

Terming it an "unfortunate incident", Shahzadpur Upazila Primary Education Officer Saida Khanam said she had asked the district primary education office to take "departmental action" against the accused.