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Joint efforts against terror financing urged

BSS, Dhaka

Security and financial analysts on Tuesday found lapses in and coordination among concerned agencies as major obstacles in preventing terror financing as a two-day international workshop was kicked off here to review the money flow situation in terror links.

"Money in the hand of terrorists is the money that kills innocent people," retired Major General Muniruzzaman of Bangladesh Institute of Peace and Security Studies said opening the workshop being joined by representatives of global security watchdogs, research groups, banks, government departments and security agencies including police and army.

"A clear concept and capacity was needed to fight the menace as "money is the lifeline of the terrorist outfits," Muniruzzaman observed.

Bangladesh Centre For Terrorism Research (BCTR), the International Centre for Political Violence and Terrorism Research (ICPVTR) and the WORLD-CHECK, a global databank on terrorism suspects jointly organise the workshop titled "Countering the Financing of Terrorism (CFT)".

Director of Counter Terrorism Bureau Brigadier General Dr ATM Amin said two counter terrorism organisations and elite anti-crime Rapid Action Battalion (RAB) in security side, and intelligence

units of Bangladesh Bank, National Board of Revenue (NBR) were tasked to keep a vigil against terror financing in the country.

But, he said, a serious "lack of coordination" between the financial intelligence units and the security agencies remained a major problem in monitoring the money flow for the terror acts. Bangladesh crucially needed to introduce digital accounting system to sharpen the vigil, he added.

Amin said when a criminal activity generates substantial profits the individual or group involved must find a way to hide the funds without drawing attention from others.

"Criminals do this by disguising the sources, changing forms or moving the funds to a place where they are less likely to draw attention even on a small scale," he said.

On the other hand, he said, when a minimum 5,000 US dollar is required for a very small act of terrorism, the process of recruiting, training and sustaining sleeper operations over years requires significant amounts.

The scale of the problem, he said as faced by Bangladesh, occurs outside the normal range of economic statistics.

According to the estimate of International Monetary Fund, the aggregate size of money laundering in the world could be between two to five percent of world's gross domestic product.

Singapore-based ICPVTR chief Rohan Gunaratna and Arabinda Acharya of the same research group in another paper said different terrorist networks with varied structures and financial sources, it is important to understand how terrorists commit crime to help counter- terrorism agencies to respond them.

Some of the global terrorist outfits, they said, were state-sponsored while some operate as quasi-states deriving finance from drug trade or by other linkages, while rests were decentralised, widely

dispersed, they said.

"Fifteen such groups raise money from their domestic supporters, as well as from diasporas across the globe," Rohan said.

The paper said many of the donors were unaware about the use of their money as a major source of terrorist funding in recent years. As a result, the money from charitable organizations and even the global corporate entities like shell companies and offshore trusts are being abused.

In many offshore centers such as Antigua, the Bahamas, Cayman Islands, Labuan Malta, Mauritius and Vanuatu, there are minimal regulations on international business companies and trust arrangements.

"This helps the promoters mask their true identities and the value, nature and location of their assets, creating opportunities for criminal money laundering and financing of terrorist activities," he said.

The first day of the workshop also witnessed a presentation on the case study on the 2005 London Bombings by Sujoyini Mandal of ICPVTR.

From the Foreign Press: Western hypocrites wag fingers at Iran

George Monidot

What is the Iranian government up to? For once the imperial coalition, overstretched in Iraq and unpopular at home, is proposing law, not war. The UN Security Council's offer was a good one. If Iran suspended its uranium enrichment programme, it would be entitled to legally guaranteed supplies of fuel for nuclear power, assistance in building a light water reactor, foreign aid, technology transfer and the beginning of the

end of economic sanctions. The US seems prepared, for the first time since the revolution, to open a diplomatic office in Teheran. But in Geneva, two weeks ago, the Iranians filibustered until the negotiations ended. Last Saturday President Ahmadinejad announced that Iran has now doubled the number of centrifuges it uses to enrich uranium. More sanctions look inevitable.

Those who maintain that Iran's purposes are peaceful clutch at the National Intelligence Estimate published by the US government in November. While it judged that Iran had belied its nuclear weapons programme in 2003, it saw the country's civilian uranium programme as a means of developing "technical capabilities that could be applied to producing nuclear weapons, if a decision is made to do so." The latest report from the International Atomic Energy Agency notes that no fissile material has been diverted from Iran's stocks, but raises grave questions about the documents it has found, which suggest research into bomb-making (Iran says the papers are forgeries). Those of us who oppose an attack on Iran do not have to accept Ahmadinejad's claims of peaceful intent.

Nor do we have to accept the fictions of our own representatives. The Security Council's offer to Iran claimed that resolving this enrichment issue would help to bring about a "Middle East free of weapons of mass destruction". But like every other such document, it made no mention at all of the principal owner of weapons in the region, Israel. According to a leaked briefing by the US Defence Intelligence Agency, Israel possesses between 60 and 80 or more nuclear bombs.

But none of the countries demanding that Iran scraps the weapons it doesn't yet possess are demanding that Israel destroys the weapons it has.

The subject is the great political taboo. The US intelligence agencies provide a biannual report to Congress on the weapons of mass destruction developed by foreign states, which covers Iran,

North Korea, India, Pakistan and others, but never Israel. If Iran builds a bomb, it will do so only for one reason: that there is already a nuclear armed state in the Middle East, by which it is threatened.

But we make the rules and we break them. The non-proliferation treaty (NPT) obliges the five official nuclear states, of which the UK is one, to work towards "general and complete disarmament". Last Friday The Guardian published the notes for a speech made last year by a senior civil servant, which suggested that the decision to replace the UK's nuclear missiles had already been made, in secret and without parliamentary scrutiny. Since then defence ministers have told the Commons on five occasions that the decision has not yet been made. They appear to have misled the House.

At the Geneva conference on disarmament in February, one delegate pointed out that the "chances of eliminating nuclear weapons will be enhanced immeasurably" if non-nuclear states can see "planning, commitment and action toward multilateral, nuclear disarmament by nuclear weapon states" like the UK. If the nuclear states "are failing to fulfil their disarmament obligations", other nations would use this as an excuse for maintaining their weapons. Who was this firebrand? Des Browne, the secretary of state for defence.

But this same Des Browne now claims that Britain must maintain its arsenal because of proliferation elsewhere, just as those proliferating elsewhere say that they must develop their arsenals because the official nuclear nations aren't disarming. But the UK keeps preparing for the last war. The permanent members of the UN security council draw a distinction between their "responsible" ownership of nuclear weapons and that of the aspirant powers. But over the past six years, the UK, US, France and Russia have all maintained that they are prepared to use their nukes pre-emptively against a presumed threat, even from states that do not possess nuclear weapons. In some ways the current nuclear stand-off is more

dangerous than the tetchy detente of the cold war.

The danger has been heightened by the US government's current offensive. Condoleezza Rice, the secretary of state, is demanding that other countries accept her plans to destroy the last remaining incentive for states to abide by the NPT. The treaty grants countries that conform to it materials for nuclear power on favourable terms. But now Rice insists that India should have special access to US nuclear materials despite the fact that it has not signed the NTP and has illegally developed nuclear weapons.

If she is successful, this effort and the concomitant US demand that India is recognised as an official nuclear power will blow the NPT to kingdom come. The treaty that survived the cold war, and that remains the most important guarantee against global manipulation, is being nuked for the sake of a few billion dollars of exports.

Here's where it gets really depressing. The Bush administration's proposal has been supported by both John McCain and Barack Obama. The contrast between Obama's position on India and his statements on Iran could not be greater, or more destructive of the inflated hopes now vested in him.

Mahmood Ahmadinejad's insistence that Iran enriches its own fissile material, and the guessing game he is playing with Israel, the Atomic Energy Agency and the US Security Council is irresponsible and staggeringly dangerous. But if I were in his position I might be tempted to do the same.

-The Guardian Weekly

Zillur welcomes city, pourashava polls results

Staff Reporter

Awami League (AL) acting president Zillur Rahman yesterday welcomed the result of four city and nine pourashava polls saying, "We on behalf of Bangladesh Awami League, would like to express our deep gratitude to the people of the electoral areas for voting the nominees backed by 14 party alliance."

He also greeted the officials related to the electoral system to perform their duties impartially.

Zillur was jubilant while uttering his reaction on the results of the four city and nine pourashava election at the party's Dhanmondi office surrounded by a number of AL central leaders.

He extolled the victory of the AL-backed candidates in the local polls as the "victory of the people of Bangla."

Urging the Government to announce of the schedule for the parliamentary elections to restore democracy in the country he said, "Enthusiasm of the people to vote their representatives has proved that the people are eager to establish a democratic government in the country through parliamentary elections. So the Government should arrange the national polls ahead of any other elections to preserve the constitutional right of the people."

Criticising the Government for not withdrawing emergency rule he said, "We noticed that the people could not exercise their franchise in a festive mood for emergency rule. The people would participate in voting spontaneously if emergency was withdrawn."

Referring to different newspaper reports published yesterday on controversies surrounding the local polls such as anomaly between voter lists and national ID cards, absence of photographs from the voter list provided to the candidates, inadequate polling booths, shortage of modern technology and lack of administrative coordination, he said, "If these disputes are not

solved immediately, it will cause a great harm to the conduct of the parliamentary polls. So the government should take initiatives for holding a free, fair and credible national election."

Zillur Rahman also expressed gratefulness to the party chief Sheikh Hasina as she was always in touch with the partymen to inquire the electoral atmosphere through phone despite her illness.

In a greeting speech to the newly elected city and pourashava mayors and councillors Sheikh Hasina said that the success was the result of hard work and honesty of the partymen and love of the people.

She expressed her reaction from Washington through telephone to her press secretary Abul Kalam Azad.

She urged the Government to withdraw emergency rule to hold the parliamentary polls in a fair and credible manner.

She also called on the Election Commission and the Government to preserve the constitutional rights of the people.

SAARC summit ushers in new hopes

BSS, Dhaka

The just concluded 15th SAARC Summit in the Sri Lankan capital of Colombo has ushered in new hopes as the heads of state and government of the South Asian forum, including Bangladesh, vowed to work closely for economic benefit of the region through alleviating poverty.

The two-day eight-nation South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC) Summit began on August 2 at the Bandaranaike Memorial International Hall in Colombo for devising way and means to undertake concerted efforts by the

member countries to improve the lot of about 150 crore people of the region..

The formation of SAARC Food Bank and SAARC Development Fund (SDF) at the summit would further accelerate the regional initiatives to build a prosperous future for one-fifth people of the globe living in south Asia, leaders of the regional grouping observed.

Besides, Bangladesh's robust role in adopting a 41-point Colombo Declaration, calling for cooperation to fight terrorism and transnational crimes and facing the challenges of food and energy security and climate change, will open up a new era for SAARC to establish peace and stability along with ensuring economic growth in the region.

The declaration adopted in the concluding session also covered wide areas of cooperation including improving intra-regional connectivity and facilitating social, economic and people to people contact and undertaking sustained efforts to attain SAARC Development Goals (SDGs).

The annual conference of the SAARC grouping Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, Maldives, Nepal, Pakistan and Sri Lanka also underlined the importance of conservation on water resources in the backdrop of a looming global water crisis and implementing the SAFTA in letter and spirit.

Chief Adviser Dr Fakhruddin Ahmed, who led Bangladesh delegation to the summit, strongly pleaded for increasing peoples' connectivity, working closely for alleviating poverty in South Asia and taking concerted efforts to face the challenges of climate change.

"In this independent world, we could only prosper if we act in unison. It is incumbent upon us who have gathered here to clearly prepare the roadmap for SAARC for the greater prosperity and welfare of the peoples of South Asia," he said in his speech to the inaugural session of the 15th

summit.

SAARC leaders highly applauded Dr Fakhruddin when he announced Bangladesh's firm stand against terrorism in all of its form and manifestation. He also highlighted the climate change issue and sought cooperation to face the challenges through regional initiatives.

The Chief Adviser, who also held separate bilateral talks with the heads of state and government on the sidelines of the summit, also stressed meeting the challenges of poverty in the South Asia and climate change as well as fighting regional and trans-regional terrorism ensuring economic progress in the region.

During the meeting, Dr Fakhruddin Ahmed called for expanding bilateral trade and business in light with the SAARC spirit for the benefit of their people.

Apart from these issues, Bangladesh along with other SAARC countries signed four agreements. These are- Agreement on the Establishment of South Asian Regional Standard Organisation (SARSO), SAARC Convention on Mutual Assistance in Criminal Matters and Protocol on Accession of Islamic Republic of Afghanistan to Agreement on South Asian Free Trade Area (SAFTA).

Indian Prime Minister Dr Manmohan Singh, Pakistan Prime Minister Syed Yosuf Raja Gilani, Afghanistan President Hamid Karzai, Nepalese Prime Minister Girija Prasad Koirala, Bhutanese Prime Minister Lyonpo Jigme Y Thinley and the Maldives President Maumoon Abdul Gayoon led their respective countries to the summit.

8 killed in road mishaps

Staff Reporter

At least 8 people were killed and about 30 others

injured in separate road accidents at different places in the country on Monday and Tuesday.

Five people, including four fish traders, were killed and 30 others injured in a collision between a bus and a pick up van in Fakirhat on Khulna- Mongla highway at about 11 am on Tuesday.

Police and eyewitness said the Khulna- bound bus collided head-on with the fish- laden pick up coming from opposite direction as a tyre of the bus deflated.

Three pick up van passengers died on the spot while two on way to hospital. The deceased were identified as Iqbal, 25 son of Alim Sheikh, Nazrul Sahrif, 30, son of Mujibur Sharif and pick up van driver Shamim, 30.

The injured were admitted to Khulan Medical College Hospital and different clinics. Condition of the five injured is critical. On information, police rushed to the scene and recovered the bodies.

The agitated people put up barricade on the spot and had disrupted smooth traffic movement for an hour on Khulna- Mongla highway. The situation became normal after police intervention.

In another incident two people were killed and a minor boy was injured in a road accident on Chandraganj- Khilpara Road at Baropur in Chatakhil upazila in Noakhali district on Monday.

Police said the accident took place at about 7 am when a Khilpara- bound pick- up van rammed a rickshaw from behind and killing rickshaw peddler Nur Islam, 30 and an unidentified woman on the spot and injuring a minor boy.

A minor boy was crushed under the wheels of a bus on Jhalakati- Rajapur road in front of BRAC office in Baghari area of the district on Monday.

The dead was identified as Mahmud, 8, son of Anwar Hossain of Baghari area of the district.

Separate cases were filed in respective police

stations.

US soldiers shoot woman Al-Qaeda suspect

Agency

A Pakistani woman suspected of links with al-Qaeda has been extradited to the US from Afghanistan to face charges of trying to kill American agents.

Aafia Siddiqui, 36, a former US resident, was arrested on 17 July in Afghanistan's Ghazni province.

When US military officials went to pick Mrs Siddiqui up from the detention centre, she fired two rounds at them.

While she did not hit anyone, she was shot in the chest by a US officer who returned fire.

A US attorney said Mrs Siddiqui, who is married with three children and is a former student of the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, is scheduled to appear at New York's Southern District court.

Mrs Siddiqui is charged with assaulting US officers and employees and attempting to kill US officers and employees.

If convicted, she faces a maximum sentence of 20 years in prison on each charge, Garcia said.

Mrs Siddiqui's lawyer, Elaine Whitfield Sharp, called the charges "a tall story" and disputed claims by the US that her client had gone underground for several years before her capture.

Her family believes that Mrs Siddiqui was secretly held by US agents since her disappearance in Pakistan in 2003, before authorities finally brought charges to justify her detention.

"I believe she's become a terrible embarrassment to them, but she's not a terrorist," Ms Sharp was quoted as saying by the Associated Press news agency.

"When the truth comes out, people will see she did nothing wrong."

Orphanage graft case: Probe against Khaleda, Tarique at final stage

UNB, Dhaka

Investigation into Zia Orphanage Trust graft case filed by Anti-Corruption Commission against detained former Prime Minister Khaleda Zia, her elder son Tarique Rahman and five others is at the final stage.

The investigation report on the high profile case will be submitted to ACC with recommendation for submitting charge sheet against the accused.

Investigation into the case is at the final stage. Deputy assistant director Harunur Rashid, the investigating officer (IO), will submit the memo of evidence (investigation report) with the Commission next week recommending charge-sheeting against the accused, a competent source told UNB.

The source added, "Subject to approval of the Commission, the charge sheet will be submitted."

Asked if there would be recommendation for charge-sheeting against more people than the accused individuals, the source said, "I can't tell you this."

Meanwhile, as part of the investigation, the IO yesterday visited Bogra where he questioned several persons in connection with the case and

seized relevant documents.

On July 3, the anti-graft watchdog filed the case against Khaleda,

Tarique Rahman and five others for embezzling over Tk 2.10 crore in the name of an establishment called Zia Orphanage Trust. The embezzled money was meant for the welfare of the country's orphans.

The five other accused in the case are former BNP lawmaker Kazi Salimul Haque, Syed Ahmed alias Sayeed Ahmed, Gias Uddin Ahmed, Sharfuddin Ahmed and Mominur Rahman, a nephew of late President Ziaur Rahman.

During the investigation, Khaleda and Tarique were questioned on July 23 in connection with the case. Khaleda was questioned at the makeshift prison while her son was quizzed at the prison cell of the Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujib Medical University.

Sharfuddin Ahmed, one of the main accused in the case, was arrested the following day (July 24) when he was summoned to the Commission for questioning.

Delwar rejects city, poura poll results

Staff Reporter

BNP Secretary General Khandaker Delwar Hossian yesterday rejected the Monday's four-city corporation and Pourashava election results and said that the polls could not get people's acceptability, as it was a 'planned' election of the Caretaker Government. "It is a kind of rehearsal to hold an arranged JS elections under the state of emergency," he said while addressing a meeting of City BNP at the Institute of Engineers auditorium yesterday.

"We knew that the Government arranged a 'mock election' held on Monday. So, we did not field any candidate for the elections," he said.

Delwar alleged that the Government would also try to hold the national elections under the state of emergency. "If the government tries to hold the national elections under the state of emergency, the Four Party Alliance will resist it," he warned.

"Any election without the consent of the four party alliance will be resisted," Delwar said.

He demanded of the Caretaker Government to hold national elections immediately before the upazila polls.

Delwar also called for the release of Khaleda Zia immediately and steps for the treatment of Tareque Zia.

BNP Central Committee member Chowdhury Tanvir Ahmed Siddique, vice president Begum Sarwari Rahman and MK Anwar, Joint Secretary General Selina Rahman, among others, addressed the meeting.

VoIP machines worth Tk 2 cr seized

Staff Reporter

Bangladesh Telecommunication Regulatory Commission (BTRC) in collaboration with Rapid Action Battalion (RAB) confiscated illegal VOIP machines worth Tk 2 crore from three places in the capital on Sunday and Monday.

They confiscated the illegal VOIP machines from Indira Road, West Shewrapara and WASA road of Mirpur.

The coordination committee of the two organisations led drive and confiscated 342

Telulars, 22 Quintum Gateways and one Panel Bank. BTRC filed cases against accused persons. An official of BTRC said they would continue drive as a part of their regular drive.

Iftekhar writes to Kuwait DPM requesting resolution of outstanding issues

UNB, Dhaka

Foreign Advisor Dr. Iftekhar Ahmed Chowdhury wrote a letter to Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister of Kuwait Dr. Sheikh Mohammed Sabah Al-Salem Al-Sabah Tuesday requesting his "personal initiative" to resolve all outstanding issues with regard to Bangladeshi workers in Kuwait.

Iftekhar who is also in charge of the Ministry of Expatriates' Welfare and Overseas Employment thanked the Kuwaiti Deputy Prime Minister for the measures taken so far to address the issue by the Kuwaiti government.

Rahul Gandhi leaves Dhaka

UNB, Dhaka

Indian Congress leader and Member of Indian Parliament Rahul Gandhi left here for Delhi by a Jet Airways flight Tuesday morning after a five-day visit to the country.

Nobel peace laureate and Grameen Bank founder Prof. Muhammad Yunus saw off the young Congress leader at Zia International Airport (ZIA).

Officials of Indian High Commission and BRAC were also present.

Rahul Gandhi, son of slain Indian Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi and Congress president Sonia Gandhi, had arrived in Dhaka on Friday (August 1), to see the activities of Grameen Bank and BRAC.

Local polls important step towards JS election: US

UNB, Dhaka

The United States said the holding of Monday's local-body elections are important first step for preparing for parliamentary elections and restoration of democratically elected government in Bangladesh.

A spokesperson for the US Embassy here last night congratulated those who took part in the elections as voters and as contestants.

"We commend the Election Commission for its professional administration of these elections which were an important step for preparing for parliamentary elections and restoration of democratically elected government in Bangladesh," the spokesperson told UNB.

Aug 15 Mourning Day: Govt to appeal against HC ruling

UNB, Dhaka

The interim caretaker government eventually decided to file appeal against the High Court

ruling restoring 15th August as the National Mourning Day and public holiday.

In its July 27 verdict the High Court declared illegal the cancellation of the National Mourning Day and public holiday on August 15 by the previous BNP-led 4-party alliance government.

A highly placed source in the ministry of Law, Justice and Parliamentary Affairs told UNB yesterday that the government had already communicated officially its stance to the Attorney General (AG), the chief government law officer.

The assigned Advocate on Record (AoR) in the office of AG said that he is now "examining the relevant documents and papers" for filing application before the Supreme Court for staying operation of the HC ruling as the government prefers leave to appeal against it. On July 27, a two-member HC Division Bench of Justice MA Rashid and Justice M Ashfaque Islam delivered the judgment following a public-interest litigation writ petition, scrapping the impugned decision of the immediate-past coalition government taken on July 28, 2002.

The HC rulings also set aside the changes made by the alliance government to the Flag Rules 1972 prohibiting the hoisting of national flag half-mast to pay respects to the memory of Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman.

On August 8, 1996, the Awami League government headed by Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina declared August 15 as National Mourning Day and public holiday in commemoration of Father of the Nation.

The country's founding father was assassinated on August 15, 1975 along with most members of his family by a group of in-service and sacked army personnel in a putsch.

3-day bank, non-bank fair begins tomorrow

Staff Reporter

Dhaka Sheraton Hotel is going to organise a three-day long fair for bank and non-bank financial institutions at Winter Garden of the hotel from tomorrow.

Commerce and Education Adviser Dr Hossain Zillur Rahman is expected to inaugurate the fair as chief guest.

Bangladesh Bank (BB) Governor Dr Salehuddin Ahmed and representatives from banks and financial institutions will also be present on the first ever event in the country.

Trevor MacDonald, General Manager, disclosed it at a press conference at the hotel premises yesterday.

Highlighting the importance he said the fair would create opportunities for the stakeholders to have a direct interactions with the products and services of the banks and financial institutions.

Besides, the clients would also get scope for knowing the latest services offered by the banks and financial institutions on their products and services, he added.

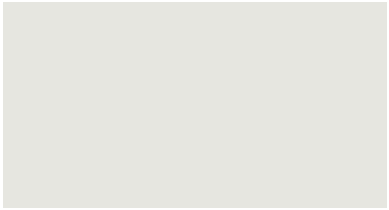
The City Bank, Arab Bangladesh Bank Ltd, Mercantile Bank Ltd, Continental Insurance, Dhaka Bank Ltd, Standard Chartered, Trust Bank, United Commercial Bank (UCB), Uttara Finance, Prime Bank Ltd, Shahjalal Islami Bank, Pubali Bank, IDLC, Islamic Finance and Investment Ltd, Green Delta Life, DBH, ICB Capital Management, MIDAS Financing, First Lease, ICB Islamic Bank, National Bank Ltd, National Housing Finance, NCC Bank, One Bank Ltd, Phoenix Finance and Investments Ltd, Premier Bank, Exim Bank, Prime Finance and Social Investment Bank are among the confirmed participants of the fair.

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