

North Korea test-fires missile

AFP, Seoul

North Korea, ramping up the pressure in its stand-off with the United States, test-fired a missile yesterday that fell harmlessly into international waters, according to officials here in Tokyo.

A South Korean Defense Ministry official said the test apparently involved a short-range anti-ship missile similar to the one Pyongyang test-fired on February 24 and was launched from Sinsang-ri on North Korea's east coast in South Hamgyong province.

"The missile is believed to have landed into the sea some 110 kilometers off the east coast and has a range of 160 kilometers," a ministry official said.

The missile launch was widely anticipated after the February missile test was pronounced a failure and North Korea last week issued a warning to mariners off its east coast.

Markets in Japan and South Korea dipped marginally on the news of the missile launch that came just one week after North Korean jet fighters intercepted a US spy plane, further escalating the stand-off over the North's nuclear weapons ambitions.

Analysts said the missile test was part of Pyongyang's game of brinkmanship aimed at breaking US resolve five months into the crisis.

North Korea has called for direct talks with Washington to end the stand-off, demanding a non-aggression pact as a precondition. Washington rules out one-to-one talks until North Korea dismantles its nuclear programs.

Professor Yu Suk-Ryul of the Institute of Foreign Affairs and National Security here said Pyongyang was closely watching Washington's plans for war against Iraq, and believed it had limited



time to get Washington's attention. "I think North Korea understands that Washington does not want war on two fronts," he said.

"However, after the Iraq war, North Koreans certainly believe that they will be the next target. They are doing this missile tests and other provocations because they believe that now is the time to induce the United States to come to the negotiating table, not later."

South Koreans, engrossed in the twists and turns of domestic politics under new President Roh Moo-Hyun, are focusing less on North Korea.

Washington and Pyongyang have been locked in a tense stand-off since the crisis erupted in October when North Korea allegedly admitted to US officials that it had kept up a secret nuclear program in breach of a 1994 bilateral accord.

Move to cancel newspaper holidays protested

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Leaders of Sangbadik-Sramik-Karmachari Oikya Parishad yesterday protested the move to cancel newspaper holidays.

They urged the owners of newspapers and news agencies to ensure that journalists and other employees can enjoy all holidays, including the Ashura that falls on March 14.

In a joint statement, the union leaders said they would not accept any move to deprive the workers of holidays.

The owners would be held responsible for any situation arising from cancellation of holidays, they added.

The signatories to the statement are Gias Kamal Chowdhury, Iqbal Sobhan Chowdhury, Akther Ahmed Khan, Monjurul Alam, Elahi Newaz Khan, Abdul Jalil Bhuiyan, Omar Faruque, Abdus Shahid, Fazle Imam, Golam Sarwar Azad, Mohammad Shahjalal Mian and Mohammad Motiur Rahman Talukdar.

Six dacoits arrested from Sunderbans

UNB, Bagerhat

Six dacoits were arrested with arms from Charaputta area of Chandpie range in East Sunderbans Sunday.

The arrested are Nasir Talukdar, Babul Hawladar, Lalan Sheikh, Lokman Fakir, Shamsu Sheikh and Karim Sheikh who are from different districts of Khulna division.

Three pipe-guns were recovered from their possession.

Locals said forest guards arrested the six dacoits from the scene of an armed clash between notorious 'Kader Bahini' and 'Babul Bahini' over establishing supremacy.

A case was filed.

Chan expelled from BNP

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Barisal district BNP secretary and rebel mayor cardinal expelled in Barisal City Corporation election Ebaudul Huq Chan has been expelled from the party for ignoring party decision and violating discipline, according to party press release.

Chan has been relieved of his party post and its primary membership, the press release signed by BNP Office Secretary Emran Saleh said.

Al-Hiqma

FROM PAGE 1 They were taken on a four-day police raid on Saturday and produced before a joint interrogation cell in Dhaka on Sunday.

The main leader of Al-Hiqma, Sayed Kawser Hussain Siddiqui, has been absconding since he was freed on bail last August.

Wazed Ali, assistant commissioner of DB here, told The Daily Star that police were preparing to bring a sedition charge against the arrested Al-Hiqma members as papers banning the organisation reached local police from the Home Ministry.

"The filing of the case is just a matter of time now", Ali said.

Bagerhat murder

FROM PAGE 1 Inspector General and Criminal Investigation Department (CID) chief Ashraf Huda at an impromptu press conference at the Khulna Metropolitan Police (KMP) headquarters at noon yesterday.

Huda did not rule out a possible link between the incident and the parliamentary and Union Parishad elections.

He admitted that a gang rape was committed in the house. "I have reasons to believe so. But I am not yet sure whether one or three women were gang-raped," Huda added.

Deputy Inspector General of Khulna Range AKM Enayetullah Dewan, now in charge of the KMP, said one or two of the arrestees might have a link with an outlawed organisation.

The miscreants hail from the same village who were found working in favour of Abdur Rahman in the last UP election held on February 23, said Officer-in-Charge (OC) of the Bagerhat Sadar Police Station Ishaque Ali Dukhu.

"We have been threatened several times and asked to leave Komorpur since the last parliamentary elections," said Swapan at the KMCH. He, however, refused to reveal any names.

Niranjan's wife Shikha Bhattacharya said they were threatened and victimised as they supported Awami League candidates in the recently held election of Jatrapur Union Parishad and 2001 parliamentary elections.

Meanwhile, the body of Tapan Bhattacharya was handed over to his family after autopsy on Sunday.



Leaders and activists of the left-leaning 11-party alliance parade down streets in Dhaka yesterday to protest the price hike of essentials and passage of indemnity law. The alliance enforced a hartal countrywide yesterday.

Transport project

FROM PAGE 12

both the DCC and the RHD for their failure to act according to the condition of the Project Supervision Committee of the WB. It also dropped from the project the component to build bus terminals.

The letter also said the RHD had failed to appoint the contractors within the cut-off date.

At a meeting with the WB in November last year, the DCC agreed to appoint private sector operators by January 31. The transport section of the DCC floated a tender accordingly on January 17, but no-one dropped any bid. The RHD also failed to appoint contractors to construct terminals in time.

Project Director of the DUTP's DCC part Abdul Quayum said the WB condition to appoint operators before completing construction works was 'impractical' and this has been proved by the non-participation of contractors in the

bid. "We have tried our best, but we failed to make the WB understand the reality," said Quayum, refuting the allegation that they were responsible for the failure to appoint private operators.

But sources said the DCC, which manages and collects revenues from the city terminals, was not ready to lose its control on the terminals. Allegations are there that some DCC officials have been embezzling proceeds from the terminals for years.

Project Director of the DUTP's RHD part Mohammad Shahabuddin alleged that the DCC's dilly-dallying over the appointment of private operators pushed the WB to take such a harsh decision.

He said the government is in negotiation with the WB to get back the withdrawn funds.

Badsha murder case Court order today on petition to drop 3 names

COURT CORRESPONDENT

The Third Additional Metropolitan Sessions Judge's Court, Dhaka, will give order today on the petition for dropping the names of three people, including IOJ Chairman Azizul Haq, from police constable Badsha Miah murder case.

The two other accused are Humayun Kabir and Zahidul Islam.

Judge Mohammad Sirajul Islam will issue the order following a petition submitted by the Dhaka Metropolitan Public Prosecutor.

On February 4, the home ministry sent a letter to the public prosecutor asking him to take necessary steps in this regard.

The investigation officer of the case submitted a chargesheet against Azizul Haq and 36 others on July 24, 2001, showing 43 people as prosecution witnesses.

Police constable Badsha Miah, 50, was beaten to death by Islamic zealots inside the Noor Masjid in the city's Mohammadpur area during the hartal called by Ulema Mashaik (Islamic scholars) on February 3, 2001.

Later, a murder case was filed with Mohammadpur police station accusing 37 people.

Minibus owners threaten strike on Khulna-Bagerhat route from Mar 27

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Khulna

Minibus Owners' Association has threatened indefinite transport strike on Rupsha-Bagerhat route from March 27 if attackers of their leader Mohiuddin Shaikh are not arrested by March 15.

Mohiuddin, general secretary of the association and leader of BNP Rupsha thana unit, was wounded in an armed attack while he was coming out of Bagmara Jame Mosque after Jumma prayers on Friday last.

He was shifted to DMCH on Sunday for better treatment.

The association will hold a rally at 11 am at east Rupsha on March 17, enforce a transport strike on March 20 and road barricade programme on March 23.

Meanwhile, transport strike on 13 routes from Rupsha and Bagerhat was called off yesterday.

The strike was called by Bus Owners' and Transport Workers' associations from March 8 in protest against BRTC bus service on these routes.

Elected presidents for sports bodies

FROM PAGE 12

versy, especially over the appointment of the Bangladesh Football Federation (BFF) president after the Bangladesh Nationalist Party came to power.

The appointment of SA Sultan as BFF President suspending the elected body of General Secretary Harun-ur Rashid saw Bangladesh expelled by the game's ruling body FIFA. Later FIFA reinstated the BFF committee on condition that it would make provisions for an elected president instead of a nominated person.

Taking part in a discussion on the general principle of the bill, opposition lawmakers criticised the option for nomination. They saw it as a ploy for continuing "politicisation" of the sports federations.

But the state minister argued that the option was mostly for the benefit of the smaller federations who depend on the government's assistance to function.

The Awami League MPs said that the nomination system was introduced by the martial law government of Justice Sayem.

Fazlur Rahman however refuted that allegation saying that the original law was enacted in 1974 when the Awami League was in power.

"That means the nomination process was brought about by them (Awami League) and now we are going to amend it."

The Opposition lawmakers also took the opportunity to blame the government for the national cricket team's disastrous showing in the 2003 World Cup and the FIFA ban on Bangladesh.

Awami League's Abdus Shahid, Rahmat Ali, Shamsur Rahman Sharif, Faruk Khan, AKM Jahangir, Panchanan Biswas, Shahjahan Khan, Atiur Rahman Atiq and Jatya Party's GM Kader, Hafizuddin Ahmed and Golam Habib Dulal took part in the debate.

On expulsion by FIFA, Fazlur Rahman claimed that even world champions Brazil had faced the prospect of a three-year suspen-

tion and was fined FIFA. "We have brought the bill to follow the rules set by FIFA."

He also assured the Opposition that the government was trying its best to develop sports.

"Test status was one of the greatest achievements in Bangladesh's cricket story. The then BCB president had said that Bangladesh got the status due to the efficiency of management. It's a matter of pride, but it would be nicer if we could enhance the efficiency of our cricketers."

In response to GM Kader, who spoke on corruption, Fazlur Rahman showed a file saying that it contained documents on sports activities and corruption over the last five years. He also claimed that the previous government awarded TV coverage rights of the national cricket team to WorldTel while ignoring more competitive bidding by other international firms.

"Against the highest offer of Tk 151 crore, the Tk 20 crore offer was accepted," he told the House.

British minister threatens

FROM PAGE 12

low versus the Euro and slipped on the dollar as well.

Saying the Iraq crisis had reached "ten minutes to midnight," the outspoken Short went further than just confirming weeks of rumours over her possible resignation.

"I will not uphold a breach of international law or this undermining of the UN and I will resign from the government," she said. "The current situation is deeply reckless; reckless for the world, reckless for the undermining of the UN in this disorderly world...reckless with our government, reckless with his own future, position and place in history."

Her harsh words came after an opinion poll showed that just 15 per cent of Britons would back war without a UN mandate.

Some 122 Labour parliamentarians also recently voted against the government over war against Iraq, leaving Blair to look to the opposition Conservatives to support him.

Blair's pro-US stance throughout the Iraq crisis has also split Europe and jeopardised Blair's ambition to be a bridge between Washington and the 15-member EU bloc.

Britain, Spain and the United

States are expected to press for a vote on a second resolution this week after Britain put forward a draft resolution giving Iraqi President Saddam Hussein until March 17 to disarm or face military action.

France has warned it may exercise its power of veto on the resolution, saying UN weapons inspectors are making headway. Russia and China, which could also veto a resolution, are against military action.

Iraq denies possessing banned weapons of mass destruction. A second UN resolution and quick military action in Iraq could turn the tables for Blair, whose popularity has sunk, although some MPs have suggested that the damage has been done.

MP Peter Kilfoyle, an outspoken opponent of war, said a second resolution would not win over all MPs.

There are many "who feel this is a wholly wrong response to the dangers of Iraqi President Saddam Hussein and all he stands for, and the war that we think should be fought against international terrorism," he said.

British newspapers took up the theme in editorials. The Times newspaper warned that even a

quick military victory in Iraq would not paper over the cracks exposed within Labor while the Independent newspaper cautioned: "Make no mistake...this is now extremely dangerous for the Prime Minister."

2 held with arms

FROM PAGE 1

challenged by patrol police of Bakurha outpost, four members of the gang managed to escape, while Shumon and Shahidullah were caught with their motor cycle (Dhaka-Ha-14-4353).

The arrestees told police that they were bound for Khulna after taking delivery of the arms and bombs from Benapole border. There were more arms and explosives with those who had escaped, they said during interrogation.

Shumon and Shahidullah are being interrogated by a special team of senior police officers headed by the SP of Jessore. A case has been filed against them, and police have launched a combing operation in Jessore, Khulna, Bagerhat and Sathkira districts to arrest the four youths who had managed to escape.

India beat Lanka

FROM PAGE 1

Jayasuriya (12) hit Srinath straight to Mohammad Kaif at cover.

Srinath's performance followed yet another Tendulkar master class. The Indian maestro agonisingly missed a record fifth World Cup century but helped India amass a daunting total after Jayasuriya put the opposition in to exploit any early life in the pitch after overnight rain.

Tendulkar was out for 97, edging a sweep against De Silva to jubilant wicketkeeper Kumar Sangakkara after moving past his previous World Cup record aggregate of 523 scored at the 1996 World Cup. He has scored 571 runs so far at the 2003 tournament at an average of 71.38 with a strike rate of 90.3.

The India opener, who was dismissed for 98 in a first round match against Pakistan, said he was disappointed to miss a century again.

"But I'm very excited to be in the semi-finals," he said. "It was a good track to bat on and Javagal and Ashish bowled really well. To be able to extract so much pace and movement was something extraordinary."

Tendulkar shared an opening partnership of 153 with Virender Sehwag, who recorded his highest score of the tournament with 66.

Yet another left-arm pace bowler Chaminda Vaas, the tournament's leading wicket taker, led a bowling fightback with consecutive maidens to Tendulkar before returning to bowl captain Saurav Ganguly (48) and Yuvraj Singh (5) in his final spell.

India's seventh consecutive victory ensured them of a semi-final place along with defending champions Australia. Both teams have 16 points.

"I thought it was the perfect game of cricket for us," said Ganguly. "We batted brilliantly and then bowled superbly, we have stuck together as a team and worked hard as a team. Everybody has fired."

Sri Lanka's semi-final hopes now depend on a Zimbabwe victory over Kenya on Wednesday followed by a win themselves over the Zimbabweans on Saturday.

"We didn't bowl in the right areas," said Jayasuriya. "We bowled all over the place and there were some easy runs."

SCOREBOARD

Scoreboard of the World Cup Super Six match between India and Sri Lanka at the Wanderers in Johannesburg on Monday:

INDIA				
Tendulkar c Sangakkara b De Silva	97			
Sehwag c De Silva b Muralitharan	68			
Ganguly b Vaas	46			
Kaif b Muralitharan	19			
Yuvraj b Vaas	5			
Dravid not out	18			
Mongia c De Silva b Muralitharan	9			
Harbhajan not out	7			
Extras: (b-4, lb-9, w-14, nb-3)	23			
Total: (For 6 wickets in 50 overs)	292			
Fall of wickets: 1-153, 2-214, 3-243, 4-251, 5-265, 6-277				
SRI LANKA				
Atapattu c Kaif b Srinath	0			
Jayasuriya c Kaif b Srinath	12			
Mubarak c Dravid b Srinath	0			
Jayawardene lbw b Zaheer	0			
De Silva lbw b Srinath	0			
Sangakkara c Yuvraj b Nehra	30			
Arnold lbw b Zaheer	8			
Vaas c Tendulkar b Nehra	9			
Nissanka c Kaif b Nehra	0			
Fernando not out	13			
Muralitharan c Kaif b Nehra	16			
Extras: (b-1, lb-5, w-14, nb-1)	21			
Total: (All out in 23 overs)	109			
Fall of wickets: 1-2, 2-2, 3-3, 4-15, 5-40, 6-59, 7-75, 8-78, 9-78				
Bowler				
Vaas	10	2	34	2
Nissanka	6	0	49	0
Fernando	10	1	61	0
M'tharan	10	0	46	3
Jayasuriya	3	0	27	0
De Silva	6	0	32	1
Arnold	5	0	30	0

Result: India won by 183 runs. Man-of-the-match: Javagal Srinath. Toss: Sri Lanka. Umpires: Simon Taufel (Aus) and David Shepherd (Eng). TV umpire: Daryl Harper (Aus). Match referee: Clive Lloyd (WI).

Energy body bill

FROM PAGE 1

State Minister for Energy AKM Mosharrar Hossain denied the opposition allegations and said the government is yet to decide on gas export.

"We have obtained reports from expert committees and the decision will be taken in the light of their opinion," he told the House.

He had introduced the bill titled "Bangladesh Energy Regulatory Commission Bill, 2003" on March 5 and sought its passage yesterday.

A statement on the bill said there was a potential regional market for Bangladesh's gas and power.

Earlier, opposition proposals for sending the bill to the select committee to elicit public opinion were rejected by voice. However, the House accepted two minor amendment proposals by AL lawmaker AKM Jahangir Hossain.

AL members said the proposed commission will be a burden on consumers since it will issue license for power generation, and energy supply and marketing. "It could turn into a top-heavy administration and breed more corruption," said Dr Abdur Razzak.

Suranjit Sengupta of AL expressed his doubt over the government's claim that the commission would be an independent body to look after consumer interests. "It will be a means for ruling party men to garb the energy sector," he said.

The opposition lawmakers walked out after the amendment proposals were discussed. None but Nur Mohammad Mandol of the Ershad-led faction of Jatya Party was present during passage of the bill.

The AL lawmakers returned to the House immediately after the bill was passed by voice vote.

The commission will comprise a chairman to be appointed by the President on the ministry's suggestion and four members.

It will issue license to any person for power generation; energy transmission, supply, marketing and stocking on certain conditions.

It will renew, seize or amend any

Evacuation

FROM PAGE 1

dor to Iraq.

At present some 12 officers and staffers are working in the mission, while about 70 Bangladeshis nationals are living in Iraq.

Meantime, the government formed a task force headed by State Minister for Expatriates' Welfare and Overseas Employment Mohammad Qamrul Islam on February 25 to oversee evacuation of Bangladeshis from the Middle East, if necessary.

The International Organisation of Migrants (IOM), a UN body, has already given its assurance to help the government in evacuating Bangladeshis from the Middle East.

As per the government plan, the Bangladeshis will first be sent to Saudi Arabia from other Gulf states before repatriation.

Around 18 lakh Bangladeshis are now staying in the Middle East, including 11 lakh in Saudi Arabia, 3.25 lakh in the United Arab Emirates (UAE), 1.62 lakh in Kuwait, 75 thousand in Jordan and 55 thousand in Qatar, according to the expatriates' welfare ministry figures.

The officials said the Bangladeshis would be evacuated only if they desired to leave those countries on security grounds in the event of a war.

Hartal passes off

FROM PAGE 1

capital city to avert any untoward incident, official sources said. Paramilitary BDR and reserve police were also seen guarding the city streets.

Most of the buses, trucks and private cars remained off the city streets, while rickshaws and motorised three-wheelers were found plying as usual.

Most of the shops and business establishments remained closed.

The 11-party alliance leaders alleged that the police barred their activists from picketing and in many places did not allow them to bring out processions in favour of the hartal.

They were addressing a brief rally at 'Muktangan' to protest the 'police excesses' on the 11-party activists.

Rashed Khan Menon, president of the Workers Party of Bangladesh, said that the BNP-Jamaat alliance government had intercepted peaceful processions of the 11-party activists to please their masters abroad.