

# Pakistan to respond 'positively to all Indian moves'

REUTERS, Islamabad

Pakistan promised yesterday to respond positively to every Indian peace gesture and said it hoped talks would start soon to resolve all the outstanding issues, including Kashmir.

Foreign Ministry spokesman Aziz Ahmed Khan told a regular weekly news briefing Islamabad would soon announce measures to improve relations.

"We want to enter into a dialogue process, a negotiating process, with a positive frame of

mind," Khan said.

India has sent a "positive" reply to Jamali's invitation to talks with his Indian counterpart, Khan said, further spurring hopes of a thaw between the two neighbours.

"We have received a response and it is a positive response."

Pakistan Prime Minister Zafarullah Khan Jamali sent a written invitation to Atal Behari Vajpayee on Friday, formalising his telephoned offer on April 28 for talks in Pakistan.

The current easing in tensions

was triggered by Vajpayee's April 18 offer to sit down to talks called for repeatedly by Pakistan.

It comes ahead of visits to both countries this week by US Deputy Secretary of State Richard Armitage and Assistant Secretary of State for South Asia Christina Rocca.

They are due in Islamabad late Wednesday for talks the following day with President Pervez Musharraf and Jamali, US and Pakistani officials said.

Armitage, the US administration's chief troubleshooter, is

credited with pulling the nuclear neighbours back from the brink of conflict almost 12 months ago.

Khan said relations with India would be on the agenda.

"Of course during that visit the situation vis-a-vis India and all other issues will also be discussed," Khan told a press conference.

Jamali was due to meet the opposition and parties in the ruling coalition to discuss "a joint strategy" on approaching the first talks with India.

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## US soldier shot by Iraqi civilian in Baghdad

AFP, Washington

A US soldier patrolling the streets in the Iraqi capital was shot in the head and wounded Sunday by an unidentified Iraqi civilian, the US military announced.

The serviceman from the 3rd Infantry Division was taken to a military field hospital and was reported there in stable condition, officials at the US Central Command said.

No details of the incident, which US military officials said was being investigated, have been provided.

The assault, which follows two similar attacks in other parts of Iraq, underscores continued resistance to US forces in the country, just days after US President George W. Bush declared an end to major combat operations there.

On Saturday, several Iraqis fired rifles at an 82nd Airborne Division convoy near the central city Fallujah, the site of earlier violent

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## Chalabi has 25 tons of Saddam's documents

AFP, Washington

Iraqi National Congress (INC) leader Ahmad Chalabi has taken possession of 25 tons of documents from Saddam Hussein's secret police, some of them onerous for the Jordanian royal family, Newsweek reported in its latest edition.

"It's a huge thing. Some of the files are very damning," Chalabi told Newsweek in an interview, implying that some of the most incriminating material concerned Jordan's King Abdullah.

The monarch, who has ruled Jordan since 1999, "is worried about his relationship with Saddam. He's worried about what might come out," Chalabi told Newsweek.

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## Human chain against pouncing on Chittagong playground

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Ctg

Members of the civil society formed a human chain at Agrabad Jamboori Maidan yesterday to protest the construction of a market on the playground.

Later they submitted a memorandum to the city mayor urging him to stop the on-going construction immediately.

President of Chittagong Chamber of Commerce and Industry (CCCI) Amir Humayun Mahmud Chowdhury joined the human chain organised by the Forum for Planned Chittagong (FPC), a voluntary organisation.

In his speech Chowdhury demanded the relocation of the two amusement parks at Jamboori Maidan and Circuit House area. He

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# JS standing committees in next session likely

## Opposition slots may be left vacant as rift over representation remains

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The Jatiya Sangsad is likely to form the parliamentary standing committees on various ministries in its next session beginning May 8.

"Formalities to form the committees are complete and appointments of lawmakers to the bodies would be made immediately after the session begins," a parliament official dealing with the committees said yesterday.

But the long-standing discord between the treasury bench and the opposition over proportionate sharing of members and chairmen of the committees remains. The government has not informed the opposition about the move to form

the standing committees.

BNP insiders said the government is determined to form these committees even if the opposition does not nominate its candidates for the bodies. In such a case, slots in the committees for the opposition lawmakers would be left vacant.

The main opposition Awami League has alleged that the government did not take the opposition into cognisance in the process of forming the standing committees.

"We have not been contacted on the issue," Opposition Chief Whip Abdus Shahid told The Daily Star yesterday.

He added that the ruling alliance ignored the opposition's

letter seeking proportionate representation in the committees.

Chief Whip Khandaker Delwar Hossain was not available for comment. Earlier, he told the press that the committees have been finalised and the file was with the prime minister.

The forthcoming session may be prolonged to accommodate passage of the national budget for FY04, said another source. Tentatively, June 12 has been set for budget placement.

The session would see the placement of some important bills relating to the ruling BNP's election pledges. These include setting up

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## JU teachers and students march against Nizami's abortive visit

JU CORRESPONDENT

Teachers and students of the Jahangirnagar University (JU) brought out a silent procession yesterday to protest the arrival of Agriculture Minister Motiur Rahman Nizami on the campus after driving him away on Sunday.

On Sunday morning, the teachers and students lay down on a road as Nizami was heading for the Vice Chancellor's Office after visiting a hybrid mango farm in an adjacent village. The protesters shouted slogans against the minister, calling him a razzakar, and forced him to leave the campus.

Yesterday morning, agitating students brought out processions to join a rally later at the Social Science Faculty. Some teachers, aligned with left-leaning political parties, the BNP and the Awami League, also took part.

Later, they led a joint procession to the Arts Faculty (old) after a march through the campus.

At the rally, the teachers and students aired deep concern at Nizami's arrival on the campus and termed it insulting to the university.

Pointing out the Jamaat-e-Islami leader's past activities, the speakers asked the government to rid the country of such anti-liberation elements. They urged the government to remove him from the agriculture ministry and try him for war crime.

Meanwhile, a statement signed by 102 university teachers has condemned activities of top JU officials and accused them of keeping contact with fundamentalist politicians.

"No Jamaat leader entered the campus before," says the statement.

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## JRC discusses action plan for dredging Surma

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Sylhet

A regional meeting of the Joint River Commission (JRC) held at Jakiganj yesterday discussed an action plan and a model test for dredging the river Surma.

It also suggested further model study for flood protection in the Borak valley across the Indian border with a view to protecting the embankments on the Kushiara river banks from erosion. Reports of the study would be discussed in the next meeting to be held in September.

A 14-member team of Indian officials, headed by the chief engineer, flood control and irrigation in Silchar-Assam region, P Mitra Majumder, joined the meeting, while the 10-member Bangladesh side was headed by the chief engineer of the Water Development Board (WDB), North-Eastern Region, Hassan Jobayer. The meeting was held at the WDB rest house at Jakiganj from 9-30am to 4-30pm.

The meeting reviewed the progress of joint survey done in the Indian river Borak and the Surma and Kushiara rivers in Bangladesh territory over the last three years. The regional survey was initiated in 2000. Later, the JRC held a national level meeting at Dhaka from 14 August to 17 August, 2000. The members of the JRC standing committee also visited Sylhet-Assam border areas at that time.

## Outlawed party cadre shot dead in Khulna

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Khulna

Ranjan Sarker, 25, an armed cadre of outlawed New Biplobi Communist Party (NBCP), was shot dead by unidentified assailants at Bamandia beel in Dumuria upazila at midnight on Sunday.

According to police, the killers entered a fish enclosure where Ranjan was asleep. They slaughtered and shot him dead. Police recovered body yesterday morning.

The slain NBCP cadre was most trusted man of its ringleader Mrinal, local people said. In another incident on the same night, Mihir Joarder, 35, owner of a shrimp enclosure, was severely wounded when he came under armed attack by miscreant at Bamandia in the same upazila.

He was shot in the chest and back. Local people sent him to Khulna Medical College Hospital (KMCH) in a critical condition.



PHOTO: AKM MOHSIN

Rice wholesalers run their business under the second Buriganga Bridge, illegally occupying the open space. Police are blamed for letting the traders keep hundreds of sacks of rice under the bridge in exchange for tolls.

# Yield of discontent makes food security jittery

REAZ AHMAD

Poor wheat yield has dealt another blow to the overall food situation and may lead to a new surge of grains import in the current fiscal 2002-03.

Wheat output went down to 14.95 lakh tonnes from production forecast of 17.50 lakh tonnes this year and the output of 16.05 lakh tonnes last year.

Food officials blamed the wheat output decline on unfavourable rain this March -- the month of grains maturity and harvesting. Late planting of seeds and shrinking of wheat fields also factored in the low yield.

Wheat acreage declined to 6.64 lakh hectares this year from 7.41 lakh hectares last year, as farmers preferred rice, pulses and vegetables to wheat thanks to their good

selling prices, says the agriculture ministry.

Finance Minister M Saifur Rahman told reporters last week that 22 lakh tonnes of grains were imported by the private sector till April and the food aid flow hit a low.

The government floated an international tender for import of two lakh tonnes of rice and wheat late March in the wake of poor aman yield and failure in rice procurement in the public sector. But the tender was cancelled last month because of poor response from bidders and high price quoting. Now, a file on fresh tender awaits the prime minister's approval.

The current fiscal's import of rice and wheat was 10 lakh tonnes more than the last fiscal 2001-02's - the year that imported 12 lakh tonnes. The last fiscal did not see

any public sector import.

Food officials have been asked to make the current internal wheat procurement drive a success, as the government food stock slipped to less than three lakh tonnes and the public sector import of grains became uncertain after cancellation of the tender.

The wheat procurement drive that began on March 15 and scheduled to run through June 30 has so far purchased 60,000 tonnes. Food officials fear it may be impossible to reach the internal procurement target of two lakh tonnes because of low yield.

Wheat procurement is deemed crucial in filling the dried-up food reserve since the last aman procurement drive failed.

The government procured only 10 per cent of targeted two lakh

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# Naushin murder trial begins

## 5 PWs give deposition

COURT CORRESPONDENT

The trial of the Naushin murder case began yesterday in the Second Additional Metropolitan Sessions Judge's Court, Dhaka.

Five prosecution witnesses, including complainant of the case, gave their deposition before the court. Later, they were cross-examined by the defence lawyers.

After the cross-examination for about three and a half hours, Judge Hossain Shahid Ahmad adjourned the hearing till May 7.

Mohammad Masudur Rahman, the first prosecution witness as well as complainant of the case, told the court that his manager Tareq Rahman alias Palash came under attack by a gang of muggers at "MA Hotel" in the city's Badda area at noon on May 9 last year.

He said the muggers shot Palash in the legs and snatched away Tk 30,000 and a mobile phone from him. The witness further said baby Naushin was shot dead on her father's lap when the muggers opened fire on local people and hotel staff.

Tareq Rahman Palash, the second prosecution witness in the case, identified two accused in the dock.

Marian Islam Naushin, 2, was shot in the head during indiscriminate firing by a gang of muggers at Uttar Badda in the city on May 9 last year. She was on the lap of her father Nazrul Islam.

Naushin was rushed to a local clinic and then shifted to the DMCH where doctors declared her dead.

Later, a murder case was filed with Badda thana.

The Detective Branch (DB) of police submitted a chargesheet against four people on August 21 last year.

Of them, Moslem alias Muslim Mia and Saiful Islam Ratan are in the custody while Mamun alias 'Ragkara' Mamun and Suman still at large.

Assistant public prosecutor Ali Haider Kiran appeared for the state while advocates Mohammad Hanif, A S M Zahid Hossain and Anwarul Kabir Babul defended the accused.

## PSC yet to decide on fresh date for 24th BCS exams

UNB, Dhaka

The Public Service Commission (PSC) is still to decide on a fresh date for preliminary tests of the controversial 24th BCS examinations, which was cancelled following allegations of question paper leakage.

The probe committee, formed to investigate the question paper leakage, has not submitted its report to the PSC yet, and hence the delay, a senior member of PSC told UNB yesterday.

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	Sun Rises	Sun Sets
May 6		6-29 pm
May 7	5-21 am	
Prayer Timings		
May 6		
	Azan	Jamaat
Fajr	4-30	5-00
Zohr	12-45	1-15
Asr	5-00	5-15
Maghrib	6-34	6-38
Esha	8-00	8-30
Source: Islamic Foundation		