



PHOTO: STAR

Leaders and activists of the left-leaning four-party alliance shout slogans during a demonstration against the Anglo-American presence in Iraq.

Dhaka, Delhi keen

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improve bilateral trade and movement of people across the border like toning up storage facilities at trading points on both sides of the border, quick introduction of bus service between Agartala and Dhaka and movement of people by train.

India is disappointed with Bangladesh's inability to take a decision on the export of natural gas, but there is no hard feeling. In fact, India is appreciative of the political whirlwind in which a sound economic proposition has got caught in Bangladesh.

That disappointment would not affect India's emphasis on economic diplomacy was mirrored when Yashwant Sinha is understood to have told Rahman during a meeting on Thursday morning that if Bangladesh utilises its gas resources for its industrial projects, Indian companies with technical know-how would be keen to invest in them.

In fact, the Confederation of Indian Industry (CII), the apex body of Indian industries, also showed appreciation of the political sensitivity involved in Bangladesh's possible decision to export gas when Rahman addressed the body.

The CII sent an important signal to the Indian government when its international Vice-President Arun Bharat Ram said that the CII would try to convince Indian entrepreneurs to accept zero duty import of certain items from Bangladesh provided there is a 30 per cent value addition to them on the model of India-Nepal

trade agreement.

The Indian government had faced protests from a section of affected businessmen at home at the time of the finalisation of the India-Nepal accord last year.

Before Rahman went into talks with the Indian leadership, both New Delhi and Dhaka recognised that the exercise had wide ramifications for the future economic ties, especially the Joint Economic Commission's meeting to be presided over by their foreign ministers in July.

Analysts here point out that despite the bad blood created by trading of charges between the two governments following India's security concerns over "elements" in Bangladesh and "illegal immigration", bilateral institutional mechanisms remained activated.

Yashwant Sinha had visited Dhaka in August last year and it was followed by commerce secretary-level talks in the Bangladesh capital and in New Delhi. Indian Foreign Secretary Kanwal Sibal also visited Dhaka last month for regular foreign office-level consultations and the BSF-BDR biennial meetings also took place.

But it remains to be seen if and when the summit-level interaction between the neighbours takes place. Saifur Rahman renewed Bangladesh Prime Minister Khaleda Zia's invitation to her Indian counterpart Atal Behari Vajpayee for a bilateral visit to Bangladesh.

Vajpayee, in his turn, invited Khaleda for a visit to India.

Powerful quake kills three in Kazakhstan

AFP, Almaty

Three people were killed when a powerful earthquake shook a village in southern Kazakhstan overnight, a spokesman for the Central Asian country's emergency situations agency said yesterday.

"Our agency flew to the scene and is providing all necessary assistance," spokesman Kayirzhan Turezhanov, told AFP.

The quake measured between 6.5 and seven on the Richter scale at its epicentre near the village of Lugovoy in the former Soviet republic's Zhambyl region, Turezhanov said.

Many of the village's clay-brick houses were "completely destroyed" and one person was injured, Turezhanov added.

The quake also sent shudders through Kazakhstan's largest city Almaty, which lies 300 kilometres to the east. No victims have been reported in the city, he said.

Earthquakes are common around the seismically unstable mountain ranges of southern Kazakhstan, but they rarely cause large numbers of casualties as most of the region is sparsely populated.

Dialogue

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organisers are trying to reassess the situation.

Editor of the Prothom Alo Motiur Rahman will deliver welcome address and CPD Executive Director Dr Debapriya Bhattacharya will make the introductory remarks in the Barisal event.

Former director general of the Bureau of Anti-Corruption, M Badiuzzaman, will present the keynote paper in the first session on 'Good Governance: Corruption and Judicial System'.

Mayor of Barisal, Mujibur Rahman Sarwar, will attend the session as the chief guest while Barisal Bar Association President advocate Manabendra Batbal will preside.

Principal of Barisal Law College Advocate Enayet Pir Khan will attend the second session as the chief guest. The session on 'Democratic Process: Elections and Parliamentary System' will be chaired by Golam Mowla, former president of Barisal Chamber of Commerce and Industries.

Feroj M Hasan of Fair Election Monitoring Alliance will present the keynote paper.

Biman

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The Kathmandu station spent beyond authorisation Tk 37,519 on treatment of the employees in May 1998. A station manager in New York took Tk 10,453 in additional house rents. Another manager of the same station drew additional outstation bills and withdrew money from provident funds and employees' welfare funds without approval, the audit report says. He took Tk 3.09 lakh in total.

Hills

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employment opportunity is very limited in the region.

"Backward and poor hill people cannot surge ahead with the development maintaining the pace of Bangladeshi settlers. All these new buildings and infrastructures are not helping to boost their confidence," said a tribal journalist in Bandarban.

"They need bread before learning about sanitary latrines," he said.

However, some hill people think that the development plan is on the right track.

Kumar Nandit Roy, a former UNDP official and a member of the Chakma royal family in Rangamati, said, "Development means a change for the better. There was a two-decade long insurgency in the CHT. So it will take time for the development efforts to produce tangible results. I think the local people are being benefited by development projects."

\$ 11.5m jt venture with Canadian trade team signed

STAR REPORT

Entrepreneurs from Canada and Bangladesh have signed memorandums of agreement and joint venture contracts worth US\$11.5 million, taking advantage of the free trade deal between the two countries.

Apart from finding garment, leather, telecommunications, transportation and soft drink sectors attractive and signing contracts, the visiting members of the Canadian trade team also showed interest in construction, energy, light engineering and spice items.

The SouthAsia Enterprise Development Facility (SEDF) of the International Finance Corporation (IFC) organised the visit in cooperation with the Canadian Manufacturers and Exporters Association (CME) from May 19 to 23.

Speaking at a function at Sonargaon Hotel in Dhaka last night, Commerce Minister Amir Khosru Mahmud Chowdhury said such deals could help Bangladesh strengthen its position in the global market.

The minister invited the members of the trade team to extend their business in light engineering and ICT sectors and said Bangladeshi entrepreneurs needed technological support.

Uday

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if they find him, and believes that a US prison could offer him greater security, the journal said.

"He doesn't have good choices," the source said.

Number three on the list of the 55 most wanted former Iraqi officials, after Saddam and his other son, presumed successor Qusay Hussein, Uday was in charge of Iraq's feared security force, the Fedayeen, and also led Iraq's Olympic committee.

A December 14, 1996 assassination attempt left him partially paralysed.

Indo-Pakistan talks

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hoped that a resumed dialogue between the two would not only address the Kashmir issue but also enable the two countries to discuss strategic restraint and security building measures.

On the nuclear issues, Khokar said Pakistan supported confidence building measures outlined in the memorandum of understanding (MoU) signed at Lahore in February 1999.

Stating that Pakistan was ready to discuss several measures to reach an agreement with New Delhi, he said both Pakistan and India were observing a moratorium on nuclear testing and "this could be formalised".

An agreement on non-deployment of nuclear weapons based on agreed definitions would also be a major factor for stability, he said adding a formal agreement to notify each other of ballistic missile tests, would constitute an important confidence building measure.

Stating that preserving the conventional balance in South Asia was a major responsibility of states that were large exporters of conventional weapons, the Pakistan foreign secretary said "already there were forecasts of conventional weapons transfers in our neighbourhood which could seriously erode the conventional balance and generate instability and insecurity".

Referring to the Kashmir issue, Khokar said, "In a nuclear environment the continuation of this dispute rightly worried everyone".

Terming Pakistan's resolve to fight terrorism as "unflinching", the foreign secretary at the same time said Islamabad would oppose with

Greg McDonald, leader of the delegation, said the recent withdrawal of tariffs and import quotas by Canada for Bangladeshi products has created immense opportunities for the country's manufacturers and exporters.

Anton de Wilde, senior programme manager of the SEDF, said success of this mission means serious consideration will be given to arranging more visits by Canadian trade teams to Bangladesh.

Ron Berlet of the Trade Facilitation Office of Canada (TFOC), and a member of the mission, urged Bangladeshi companies to register with the TFOC so that their profiles could be placed before the Canadian companies interested in doing business in Bangladesh. The Canadian government has set up the TFOC to increase exports from the LDCs to its market.

The CME is Canada's leading business network. Its members account for 75 per cent of the country's manufacturing exports and 90 per cent of its total exports.

Transport strike

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Shaikh Tayebur Rahman to arrive at an amicable settlement on the demands of transport owners and workers.

Political Secretary to the Prime Minister Haris Chowdhury intervened in the matter requesting leaders of the association to call off the strike.

The 48-hour strike in fact ended 11pm on Thursday. Yet, transports remained off the roads in the entire south-western zone till 7am yesterday.

The strike was called to realise nine-point demand. The demands include reduction of prices of petroleum products, construction of truck and bus terminals in every district across the country, stoppage of toll collection from vehicle by police and political hoodlums and compensation for families and drivers killed in highway robberies.



PHOTO: AFP

Two police officers walk along concrete blocks patrolling the parameter of the House of Parliament yesterday. The concrete blocks were erected overnight in a bid to prevent possible terror attacks on the British parliament.

One killed, 30 hurt as bus, truck collide in Narsingdi

UNB, Narsingdi

A BRTC bus and a truck collided head-on near Baburhat bus stand on the Dhaka-Sylhet Highway yesterday, killing the bus driver and injuring 30.

Police said the Dhaka-bound BRTC bus from Kishoreganj overturned at about 2 pm after collision with the Narsingdi-bound truck coming from Dhaka.

The bus driver aged about 40, died on the spot. The injured were sent to Dhaka in another bus.

Police seized both the vehicles, but the truck driver fled the scene.

US tightens immigration process

BSS, New York

The US authorities have taken some new steps to enforce strict immigration rules and restrictions on the non-immigrants travelling to USA from different countries.

According to newly introduced 'USA Patriot Act' all non-immigrants in the United States must register their names with the authorities concerned.

US Homeland Security Department officials have announced that the National Security Entry-Exit Registration System (NSEERS) would be replaced by a new entry/exit system for foreigners entering the United States.

They said the new programme will be called the US Visitor and Immigration Status Indication System (USVISIT) and will try to track all those coming to the US to work, study and visit.

South Asian Free Media Confce begins in city tomorrow

UNB, Dhaka

A two-day 3rd South Asian Free Media Conference begins in Dhaka tomorrow (Sunday) to renew its pledge to strive for peace and cooperation in the region and struggle for access to and free flow of information, the organisers said.

"More than 165 leading media personalities from India, Pakistan, Nepal, Sri Lanka and Bangladesh will attend the South Asian Media Moot," said Reazuddin Ahmed, President of the South Asian Free Media Association (SAFMA).

Addressing a press conference at the Jatiya Press Club yesterday, the organisers said the conference, with the theme "Media and Democracy", would begin at Sonargaon Hotel.

Mystery remains

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boy Jalil and a hardwire businessman Kabir and produced them before the Chittagong CMM's court here yesterday.

On the other hand, Khosru's family members alleged that Khosru was abducted. "Whatever be the incident," the family members said, "investigation should be made to know who were behind it, what was the motive or who might have been benefited from the incident."

They expressed surprise as well as resentment as police appeared to be interested to prove that Khosru was hiding somewhere, instead of finding out who had abducted him.

Meanwhile, a rumour that Khosru was arrested and undergoing treatment under police custody spread in the city on Thursday night.

Some local dailies in their reports also said that an "arrange drama of abduction" was proved and Khosru was arrested.

However, police said the report of "Khosru's arrest" was misleading. Police officials said police were posted at the clinic to ensure the security of Khosru at the directive of the court that followed an appeal made by his family.

Khosru's elder brother Akram Siddiqui Chowdhury in a press statement last evening said that the reports published in a section of the press shocked the victim's family members who had faced a lot of anxiety, and suffering in the 21 days of his abduction.

Before producing the "three witnesses" from Dhaka before the court, the IO of the case took them to National Hospital, a clinic at Mehediabagh, to identify Khosru. But as the IO entered Khosru's room, the others reportedly expressed unwillingness to go inside. Later, they were taken to the court without identifying Khosru. Police did not allow the local pressmen to talk to the witnesses.

Khosru, also a correspondent of the Bengali daily Ittefaq, was kidnapped while going to a relative's house at Nalapara from Dewanhat under Double Mooring thana in the city on April 30.

After his release on May 21, Khosru alleged, while talking to fellow newsmen, that his opposition to the leadership and illegal activities of local thana BNP general secretary Nurul Islam and his men might be the reason behind the abduction.

Eateries galore

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that depending on the season, the favourite fruits are the cucumber, water melon, pineapple, papaya, green coconut, etc.

As in the case of the mainly bread and banana selling mobile stalls, the fruit selling mobile stalls operate from one end of Baitul Mukarram to the old railway station across Gulistan and the stadium areas, besides numerous other locations. The hospitals also provide suitable locations for the fruit stalls.

In the old part of the city, Sadarghat, Moulvibazar and the district court area are important centres of this trade.

It is a stark reality of urban life that, when considered against the background of the vast segment of the city population being hard pressed to fend for two meals a day, there is no place for fruits of any kind in their menu. An important question connected with the sale of snacks and fruits through the numerous food stalls appears to be whether such food items are safe for health. There is a risk for common people who take such foods. The sellers in the fruits and snacks retailing stalls are mostly lacking in knowledge of hygiene and sanitation. The City Corporation should play a more effective role, through its public health department, in ensuring good quality of the food items sold through the mobile snack stalls, with particular emphasis on safe food handling practices. This is needed in the

overall interest of public health.

The preference of the common people, particularly rickshaws, pullers, for consumption of bread and banana with tea to stave off hunger seems to be a reflection of their good food habit inasmuch as it saves them from taking otherwise harmful foods.

Water project

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development specialists would be renewed only when operation of the project in at least four of the nine municipalities begins by June.

Harsom said, "All physical works in the nine municipalities were almost completed in December 2001. The DPHE (Department of Public Health and Engineering) was supposed to provide some 124 key personnel. Most of the key personnel, I mean to say are engineers who should be taking over charge of operating the entire engineering works of the water supply functions but that did not happen."

He however said the PMO is learnt to be seriously considering the matter and may soon ask the establishment and finance ministries to arrange the required personnel -- engineers -- for operation of the project.

The review team said, "Review exposed the absence of the DPHE engineers (key personnel) for the project as well as vacancies among the DPHE territorial staff positions."

The project is an urban component of a five-year project taken up under an agreement between Bangladesh and Denmark signed on December 22, 1996.

Moudud interview

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also take a long course, he said: "It's the matter of the home ministry."

Why did the government ignore the recommendations of the chief justice for appointment and confirmation of the service of judges?

"We are still following the convention of upholding the honourable chief justice's (CJ's) recommendations."

On the SC Bar Association's allegation that the government ignored the recommendations on various occasions, an agitated Moudud said: "What do they know?"

"Over the last 18 months, we consulted with the CJ on confirmation or appointment of additional judges."

On the allegation of political consideration in the appointments, Moudud said no judge was selected on political grounds.

"We were able to appoint some brilliant advocates as judges as we were free from all sorts of bias," he said.

Taking a question on deterioration of law and order, he said no country in the world was free from the concern.

The government is making relentless efforts to tackle the situation by modernising the police force, he said.

"We have to rely on police," Moudud said, adding the deployment of joint forces including the armed forces improved the situation remarkably.

Fending off the criticism of the Joint Forces Indemnity Act, he said the act indemnified the members of the armed forces from prosecution in the civil courts, but they were not given exemption from the military courts.

"No country tries members of its armed forces in civil courts for any offence they commit when performing duties in any operation," he said.

"This is exactly what we have done. When I explained the issue at the development forum meeting, many ambassadors expressed their satisfaction openly," he added.



PHOTO: STAR

Visitors at the show of artworks by artist Shaheen Akhter Lipi at the Zainul Gallery of Fine Arts Institute yesterday.