



PHOTO: PID

Prime Minister Khaleda Zia and Indonesian President Megawati Soekarnoputri witness signing of a memorandum of understanding to avoid double taxation between Bangladesh and Indonesia yesterday.

Dhaka, Jakarta

FROM PAGE 1 rent visit they were not aware of the wide range of importable commodities from Bangladesh.

The foreign secretary informed the press that a delegation would come to Bangladesh next month to invest upto US\$50 million in the power sector.

Trade and investment apart, Shamsheer said the official talks also touched on some other bilateral and international issues.

He said Megawati and Khaleda exchanged views on the Iraq issue and the Middle East roadmap for peace. They also discussed ways to open up avenues so that both Indonesia and Bangladesh could work together in the forums like the Non-aligned Movement and the Organisation of Islamic Conference (OIC).

"The discussion was substantive and forward-looking and took place in a very warm and cordial atmosphere," Shamsheer said, adding that Megawati had noted it was not desirable that a visit at the highest-

level between the two countries take place with a gap of over two and half decades.

She stressed the need for increasing the frequency of such visits and invited Khaleda to visit Jakarta. Khaleda accepted the invitation, the foreign secretary said, adding that the schedule would be worked out in due time.

Besides the official talks, Megawati spent sometime with the Indonesian community in Dhaka in the morning and had separate audiences with Foreign Minister M Morshed Khan and Commerce Minister Amir Khasru Mahmud Chowdhury.

Morshed introduced Bangladesh's candidate for OIC secretary general, Salauddin Quader Chowdhury, to her.

Megawati also attended a luncheon hosted by the FBCCI at Hotel Sonargaon.

The Indonesian president is leaving Dhaka this morning, winding up her three-day visit to Bangladesh.

BAC sues 3 for drawing money from Hazari's account

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Feni

The Bureau of Anti-Corruption (BAC) yesterday filed three cases against nine men, including six bank staff, for their alleged involvement in the withdrawal of cash from the account of former Awami League lawmaker Zainal Hazari.

The case was filed on charges of withdrawal of three crore taka from the Feni branch of the United Commercial Bank Limited under Section 13 of the Money Laundering Protection Act.

Of the accused, Rafiqul Islam, Anwar Hossain and Farid Uddin Hazari are the close relations of the fugitive leader.

The accused bank staff are Manager Nasimul Islam and officers Kamal Uddin Faruque, Mahfuzur Rahman, Ashraf Ali, Obaidul Haq and Narendra Nath Chowdhury.

The case accuses that the relatives of Zainal drew the money in connivance with the bank officials in three phases.

The BAC also filed a separate case against bank staff Nasimul, Mahfuzur and Ashraf on March 18 this year.

The bank officers are absconding since the issue of warrants against them in the case.

4 outlaws arrested in Khulna

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Police arrested four armed cadres of outlawed New Biplobi Communist Party (NBCP) from different places of Keshabpur upazila on Wednesday.

Led by Police Super Shahidul Islam, a contingent of 100 policemen raided seven villages of Keshabpur upazila and nabbed the outlaws.

The arrestees are Shufalkati UP member Nurul Islam, 40, Shahidul Islam of Bakabarshi, Sabur Ghazi, 34 of Arhua and Abdullah A L Mamun, 38 of Arhuadanga.

The outlaws were taken on a five-day remand yesterday.

Trader shot by extortionists

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Extortionists shot a trader at Lal Mohan Saha Street in Sutrapur yesterday noon.

Four extortionists went to his shop and asked for money. On refusal, they shot him in the face at about 1:00 pm.

Critically injured Islam was taken to Dhaka Medical College Hospital.

The same gang had also threatened him earlier for not paying toll.

Suranjit

FROM PAGE 12 deputy said: "He (the chief whip) has to say sorry for this."

Taking the floor next, Delwar firmly stuck to his claim that Suranjit had been expelled by the speaker thrice in the fifth parliament.

"There are records in parliamentary proceedings to support my statement," he said, asking the chair to examine the proceedings.

Stepping into the debate, Deputy Speaker Akhtar Hamid Siddiqui said he will check the proceedings to settle the dispute.

He did not allow Suranjit Sengupta floor to elongate the debate.

Powell likes Dhaka

FROM PAGE 1 further economic progress," he added.

Powell also pointed to the political atmosphere in Bangladesh and said, "Whatever differences there may be among political parties... the people of Bangladesh need their leaders to pull together to go forward."

However, he said, "Bangladesh stands out for its strides made in strengthening democracy over the years."

About his talks with Morshed Khan and other ministers, Powell said they discussed the economic relations between Dhaka and Washington and decided to make more fruitful steps ahead for mutual benefits.

He assured Bangladesh of unwavering US help in eliminating poverty, terrorism and achieving economic progress. Bangladesh and the US are going to sign a bilateral tax treaty shortly, said Powell.

The US buys one-third of total exports from Bangladesh and half of its garment exports, he pointed out. The US being the largest investor in Bangladesh has pushed the investment figure to US\$2 billion from almost zero, he said.

"We like to see more investment, we like to see a surge of investment," Powell said. He called on Bangladesh to ensure an investment-friendly atmosphere to shore up confidence in foreign investors.

Alluding to the export of Bangladesh's natural gas, Powell has suggested that the country diversify its exports without depending solely on textiles. "The US wants to help Bangladesh on how to use its other natural resources for its economic benefits."

Powell, who arrived in Dhaka at 12:50 from a meeting of Southeast Asian nations in Cambodia, also held talks with Prime Minister Khaleda Zia before heading for the Middle East.

His visit coincided with that of Indonesian President Megawati Soekarnoputri, who arrived here on Wednesday on a three-day trip and also with a countrywide half-day hartal called by the Bangladesh Chhatra League, the student chapter of the main opposition Awami League.

Morshed Khan
In his opening remarks at the press conference, Foreign Minister M Morshed Khan said the visit was "very symbolic and timely and we are both committed to making a better society for us tomorrow".

Powell's visit recognises and reinforces the tradition of friendship and cooperation between the two countries, he said.

The war on terrorism, the situation in Iraq and the roadmap for peace in the Middle East are some of the points that figured in the exchange of views, alongside bilateral economic and political issues, he said.

"Yet the real focus was on long-term perspectives that can cement America's relationship

Magnetic trains

FROM PAGE 1

tors from home and abroad.

"We are finalising the matter," Nazmul Huda said in reply to a question.

Officials said the Communications Ministry had sought request for proposal for the project late last year. Fourteen companies had bought tender documents and five participated in the bid. But the ministry found 'responsive' three companies including the InterGlobe EURO-ARAB Group, American McAllen and Associated Research Management, a consortium of local and Japanese companies.

Of the three, InterGlobe EURO-ARAB Group and American McAllen qualified while the local consortium did not respond to additional queries made by the Bangladesh Railway.

with South Asia in general and Bangladesh in particular," he added.

The long-term interests converge on promotion of economic growth and reforms, expansion of democracy and advancement of women and Bangladesh's integration into the global mainstream, said the minister.

"We also focused on the regional challenges in alleviating poverty, expanding trade, avoiding regional conflict, preventing nuclear proliferation, fighting drugs, defeating terrorism, averting climate change etc," he said.

Bangladesh's efforts to bring about regional harmony through SAARC (South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation) and its overall endeavour to become a responsible, contributing member of the world community were also highlighted.

Khan said sustained and intense interaction between the US and South Asian countries are crucial to peace, prosperity and freedom in the 21st century.

Earlier at a working luncheon at Sheraton Hotel, the US secretary of state and Bangladesh ministers agreed to work together to promote bilateral relations and international peace.

Powell, outgoing US Ambassador to Bangladesh Mary Ann Peters, Assistant Secretary of State for Public Affairs Richard P Boucher, Assistant Secretary of State for South Asia Christina Rocca, the secretary of state's Executive Assistant Craig Kelly and the Joint Chiefs of Staff's Special Assistant Vice-Admiral James Metzger represented the US side.

The Bangladesh side was represented by Morshed Khan, Finance Minister M Saifur Rahman, LGRD Minister Abdul Mannan Bhuiyan, Commerce Minister Amir Khasru Mahmud Chowdhury, Science and Information Communication Technology Minister Dr Abdul Moyeen Khan, State Minister for Foreign Affairs Reza Rahman, Bangladesh Ambassador to the US Syed Hassan Ahmed, the Prime Minister's Principal Secretary Dr Kamal Uddin Siddiqui and Foreign Secretary Shamsheer Mobin Chowdhury.

Shamsheer Mobin Chowdhury

At another briefing, Foreign Secretary Shamsheer Mobin Chowdhury said the US likes to see Bangladeshi troops in peace-keeping in Iraq but "nothing has been decided as yet".

"The US looks to Bangladesh as a country that can be defined as a role model for democracy, communal harmony and having a government that enjoys people's confidence," said the foreign secretary.

He quoted Powell as expressing a firm commitment to pursue the Middle East roadmap for peace and underlining the need for an administrative body in Iraq representing the wishes and aspirations of the Iraqis.

Consumers' interest

FROM PAGE 12 approval next month.

The act is being prepared in the light of Sri Lanka's experience in this regard. Colombo achieved positive results through such a law, they mentioned.

Powell snubs

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been communicating with Awami League over a meeting schedule. We don't know any further."

The foreign secretary also said the Indonesian embassy sent a letter to the foreign ministry regretting cancellation of the meeting between Megawati and Hasina.

The schedule of the meeting with a 5:00pm start was printed in a booklet describing Megawati's official visit programme. The protocol wing of the foreign ministry published the booklet.



PHOTO: PID

US Secretary of State Colin Powell and Foreign Minister M Morshed Khan at a joint press conference yesterday at Dhaka Sheraton Hotel.

Ctg BNP

FROM PAGE 1

and termed the election a "farce". This time, he traded hot exchange of words with Golam Akber Khondoker, outgoing president and also a presidential runner. Later, GQ Chowdhury withdrew from the election and left the venue immediately.

The council finally re-elected Golam Akber Khondoker and Shahjahan Siraj president and general secretary.

Khondoker bagged 718 votes while his rival Gasuddin Quader Chowdhury got 40. Shahjahan Siraj got 670 votes while his opponent Jasim Sikder bagged 68 votes.

As many as 759 out of 852 voters turned up for voting.

Names of others in the 141-member committee will be announced later.

BNP Senior Joint-Secretary General Tareq Rahman was supposed to attend the council as chief guest, but he did not show up. BNP lawmakers from BNP Chittagong (north) district - Salauddin Quader Chowdhury (Ctg-7) and LK Siddiqui (Ctg 2) - also skipped the council.

Food Minister Abdullah Al Noman attended the council as chief guest with Golam Akber Khondoker in the chair.

State Minister for Labour and Employment Aman Ullah Aman, the Prime Minister's Commerce Affairs Adviser Barkat Ullah Bulu, Joint-Secretary General Goyeshwar Roy and BNP Youth Affairs Secretary Syed Moazzem Hossain Alal were special guests.

Iajuddin

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Ibrahim Ambong, Member of Parliament, Kemal Munawar, Presidential Secretary, Siedar Saistro Atmadio, Director General of Foreign Economic Trade, Department of Industry and Trade.

The chief justice, ministers, the chief election commissioner, political secretaries to the prime minister, members of parliament, political leaders, important personalities, diplomats, editors, and high civil and military officials also attended the banquet from Bangladesh side.

Focussing on Dhaka's 'look east policy', he said Bangladesh greatly values its links with countries of Southeast Asia. "We are keen to deepen these ties for our mutual benefits."

He said Bangladesh has expressed its desire to be part of the ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF) and the country is confident that Indonesia would support its quest for full membership of the ARF.

Referring to excellent ties between Bangladesh and Indonesia, President Iajuddin hoped the two countries would make all efforts to strengthen the existing bilateral relations.

AL MP stabbed

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near the Science Laboratory crossing at 9:00am when activists of Mahila Awami League took position on the Mirpur Road. They diverted traffics the other way.

Police however arrested Raju and Ujjal when another group of pickets pelted brickbats on three minibuses and one microbus in front of Dhaka College at the same time.

BCL leaders claimed nearly 2,000 pro-hartal activists were injured and over 200 arrested, of them 50 in the capital.

Presence of officials and employees were thin in government offices during the hartal hours while private offices functioned partially. Shopping centres kept their shutters down but many wayside shops remained open.

A good number of buses, auto-rickshaws and rickshaws plied the city streets.

Though operation of inter-city buses was completely suspended, train service to and from Kamalapur station was normal. The Sadarghat terminal was also out of hartal purview as passenger launches left and arrived as usual. Same was the case at the Zia International Airport during hartal hours.

Meanwhile, BCL leaders staged a rally in front of the AL's central office after the hartal and alleged again that 'BNP-patronised armed goons' murdered Palash and 'are now trying to divert the investigation other way'.

Observing that the people were not safe with the BNP-led coalition, they called for a resolute movement to unseat the government.

They claimed that the alliance rulers are out to clear their way for the next election by killing and persecuting opposition activists.

"Peace can only be ensured by ousting the repressive government and electing a democratic one through mid-term polls," BCL President Liakat Sikder said.

BCL General Secretary Nazrul Islam Babu, Mamunur Rashid Shubhra, Abdul Matin, Kaiser Hossain Shipu, Jubo League General Secretary Mirza Azam, former AL lawmakers Haji Selim and Shagufa Yasmin, Abdul Hannan, Amir Hossain Raji and Mohiuddin Mohi also addressed the rally.

Police took a liberal stance

Pickets also damaged three three-wheelers at the Central Shaheed Minar in the morning and set ablaze another at Kalabagan at 10:20am.

A strong band of law-enforcers including female cops cordoned off the AL central office at Bangabandhu Avenue since morning and erected barbed wire fences to shut off the road.

Police picked up BCL leaders Suchana, Jhara, Shefali, Lucky, Nasrin and Zakia when they tried to join the demonstration defying the police obstructions at around 8:00am. Seven other BCL leaders were also picked up later from the same place.

Police took a liberal stance

Suicide bomber

FROM PAGE 12 fire with Israel despite what security sources said was Israeli agreement to curb attacks on militants.

Militant Palestinian leaders dismissed the Israeli gesture to limit "track-and-kill" operations as meaningless, underlining the difficulties Powell will face on a trouble-shooting mission to the region on Friday.

In talks with Israeli Prime Minister Ariel Sharon and Abbas, he will try to rescue a "road map" to peace battered by a wave of violence that has killed more than 50 people on both sides since the plan was affirmed at a June 4 summit in Aqaba, Jordan.

Hamas, which has carried out dozens of suicide bombings since an uprising for statehood began in September 2000, had severed contacts with Abbas after his Aqaba talks with President Bush and Sharon.

A suicide bomber last struck in Israel on June 11, killing 17 people in an attack on a bus in Jerusalem. Israeli attacks on militants this month have killed some wanted Hamas members but also bystanders.

After three hours of talks in Gaza, senior Hamas official Ismail abu Shanab sounded a note of defiance, saying: "If there is (Israeli) occupation, there will be resistance."

Despite that, Hamas officials

said they had agreed to further dialogue, though no date was set.

The road map, drawn up by the United States, the European Union, Russia and the United Nations, envisages a Palestinian state by 2005 after a freeze on Jewish settlement building and a Palestinian crackdown on militants.

AP adds: The Israeli Army began removing buildings Thursday at the West Bank settlement outpost of Mitzpeh Yitzhar, the first inhabited outpost it has started dismantling under a new U.S.-backed peace plan, military sources said.

About 200 settlers from nearby settlements blocked the road with cars and burning tires as para-troopers and police arrived to begin taking down buildings, according to Israeli Radio.

As part of the "road map" peace plan, which envisages creation of a Palestinian state by 2005, Israel must take down unauthorized settlement outposts in the West Bank set up over the last two years.

Officials from the Peace Now group, which opposes settlements, says there are 62 such outposts and a total of more than 100 set up since 1996.

Last week Israel removed 10 uninhabited outposts. Settler leaders sued to prevent inhabited outposts from being targeted and threatened to build more.

2 killed, 30 hurt in Rangamati road mishap

BSS, Rangamati

Two people were killed and 30 others injured in a road accident at Naniarchar upazila of the district yesterday morning.

The dead were identified as Amrita Lal Chakma, 38, and Madhu Ranjan Chakma, 55.

Police said the accident occurred when a Rangamati-bound bus plunged into a roadside ditch after its driver lost control over the steering at Kuttamara.

Of the injured, 16 were admitted to Rangamati General Hospital, while the rest to Naniarchar Upazila Health Complex.

Seriously injured Imdadul, 20, was sent to the Chittagong Medical College Hospital, hospital sources said.

Alleged criminal slaughtered

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Unidentified attackers slaughtered an alleged criminal and dumped his body by a lake near the Koril Beltala slum at Gulshan yesterday.

Gulshan police collected the body of Moslem Uddin Tipu, 25, and sent it to Dhaka Medical College Hospital for post mortem.

There were marks of injuries on his body. His hands were tied up with a lungi.

Police suspect that he might have been killed by his fellow criminals following conflicts over sharing of money.



PHOTO: STAR

Women activists of the Bangladesh Chhatra League are being pushed into a police van following their arrest on the Bangabandhu Avenue during the hartal hours yesterday.