

PM: South Asia

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South Asia.

The idealist philosophy advocates values and spirit of humanity to be the basis of peace and security while the realists define their position in terms of power and interests, she explained.

Turning to the concept of global village, the prime minister said, "We all speak about global village, but there is no proper application of whatever international laws are there for ensuring discipline and peace in today's world."

She further pointed out that organisations and institutions involved in enforcement of international laws became helpless and ineffective mainly due to lack of respect for such laws.

In order to come out of the situation, she said, peace lovers and thinkers of the world need to find out new ways and means.

The prime minister referred to the two new opposite trends in the changing world system. She said the twin processes of disintegration and integration have been underway in different parts of the world.

On the one hand, disintegration of states is leading to the emergence of new independent nation-states, and on the other, the trend towards regional grouping has been accelerated in different regions including Europe, she said.

The trend of regional grouping is a positive development in the 21st century "indeed a ray of hope in the abyss of darkness," she said. "There is no alternative to this

Internal rifts'

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beginning of SAARC was viewed as a ploy of outside powers, and there was lack of commitment from some major countries in the region, he said.

As a result, the South Asian Preferential Trade Arrangement (SAPTA) has hardly taken off the ground even after several rounds of discussion, he said.

Besides, upgrading of SAPTA to the South Asian Free Trade Area (SAFTA) has missed the target, said Abul Ahsan.

Cooperation for social and economic development of the region has been bogged down in internal conflicts and political suspicion among South Asian countries, Lt Gen (ret'd) VK Singh from India told the daylong regional seminar to mark the silver jubilee of Bangladesh Institute of International and Strategic Studies (BISS).

Unlike ASEAN (Association of Southeast Asian Nations), SAARC failed when it came to regional cooperation, regretted other speakers.

The seminar was also addressed by former foreign secretary of Bangladesh Barrister AKH Morshed, former chief justice Mostafa Kamal, Professor Lok Raj Boral from Nepal and Dr TP Frank De Silva from Sri Lanka.

Siamese twins

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Ahmad Mortuza, Dr. Atiar Rahman, Dr. Abdur Rahman, Dr. ABM Maksudul Alam, Dr. Abdul Jalil, Dr. Zakir Hossain, Dr. MA Jaigirdar and Dr. Harun-ur-Rashid.

Jesmin Begum, wife of rickshaw-van puller Abdul Halim, gave birth to the twin boys -- Hasan and Hosain -- at a clinic in Hasanpur in Khulna on April 18. They were later shifted to IBH in Khulna.

Dr. Ruhul Amin along with a team of doctors went to Khulna to conduct the operation, but one of the twins developed severe respiratory problem, forcing the doctors to postpone the operation.

The conjoined twins along with their parents were later flown to Dhaka and the operation was done yesterday.

Tibet

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tension between New Delhi and Beijing.

Both sides have appeared intent on injecting new life into ties during Vajpayee's visit, the first by an Indian leader in a decade.

"I must say, with great satisfaction, that my meetings with the leadership of China have been excellent," Vajpayee said as the two countries prepared to issue a declaration.

"They have confirmed the desire to build stable, enduring and forward-looking ties of friendships shared by the highest political levels in both countries," he said after talks with Jiang Zemin.

"Our present course of developing all-round bilateral cooperation while simultaneously addressing our differences has transformed the quality of our relationship," Vajpayee said.

The two countries signed the declaration on Monday. They refused to make it public immediately, but officials from both sides said they expected it to help their work to resolve disputes over their border, which crosses some of the world's most mountainous and remote terrain.

Nuclear-armed China and India fought a brief border war in 1962 and despite a thaw in relations, and years of talks, have failed to pin down exactly where their 3,500 km border lies.

approach for South Asia and we must adopt this."

"The more we will hesitate and take time to decide in this regard, the more South Asia will be lagging behind," Khaleda Zia observed.

Turning to the post-cold war era, the prime minister said the changing dynamics in international affairs failed to make positive contributions to peace, stability and security in the world.

"Concern for security and yearning for peace are our primary pre-occupation," Khaleda said.

Later, the prime minister unwrapped two books published by BISS on the occasion of its silver jubilee celebrations.

Naming of new JCD body in Ctg kicks up a row

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Ctg

Declaration of a new city committee last week has triggered off discontent at the grassroots level of the Jatiyatabadi Chhatra Dal (JCD).

According to workers, the newly formed 81-member committee comprised mostly of non-students, businessmen and miscreants with checkered past. Dedicated and tested students have been passed over completely, they added.

There has been quite some agitation within the JCD since the declaration of the committee on Tuesday, with Mosharraf Hossain Dipti and Ahmedul Alam Chowdhury Rassel its president and general secretary.

Doublemoooring thana JCD held a protest rally at Dewanhat intersection yesterday and burnt effigies of the new president and general secretary.

Sony murder

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registration of the case in the tribunal. Cross-examination of the witnesses started on January 30 and ended yesterday.

Detective Branch (DB) of police submitted charge sheet accusing 15 persons in the sensational murder case of Sabekun Nahar Sony on January 4 last.

Of them, seven in custody are: Mohammad Mokbul Hossain alias Makul, Sirajul Islam alias Wasim, Zakir Hossain Patwari alias Munna, Suján, Aiyub, Year Mohammad and Mohammad Moshfiquddin alias Tagar.

Tagar is also an accused in the killing of Partha, a student of Mass Communications and Journalism Department of Dhaka University.

But, Nurul Islam Sagor, Mokammel Hayat Khan Kuki, Masum and Mohiuddin have been absconding since the killing of Sony and the rest four accused S M Masum Billah, Mohammed Solaiman Babul, Dulal, Rafiq alias Rafiq 'Chacha' are on bail.

Sony, a second year student of Chemical Engineering Department of BUET, was killed in a cross-fire between the two rival groups allegedly led by Muki group of BUET and Tagar group of Dhaka University of BUET campus on June 8 last year.

The armed clash took place over the submission of a tender for construction of a new residential hall and a PDB office at BUET at a cost of Tk 8.7 million.

Three cubs

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sions.
In the past, Promila gave birth to two cubs, both of which she killed and ate up.

Dhaka Zoo currently has 14 Royal Bengal Tigers -- all of them born there.

The zoo has been quite successful in breeding tigers, veterinarians point out. But this has led to accommodation as well as funds crises. Officials said

the zoo has already nine tigers too many and they do not know what to do with the new-borns.

Curator Mafizur told The Daily Star that as many as seven tigers are now housed in a cage made for two.

Since 1974, about 35 tigers were born in Dhaka Zoo. Most of them were sent to zoos either overseas or within the country.

There was also a plan to release the 'surplus' tigers in the Sundarbans or sell them off. But the plan stalled following debates over the sagacity of such a move.

Teenage bride

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Daulatpur when Ferdous allegedly threw acid on her at 11:00pm on Monday, said police. The 16-year-old is now fighting for life at the Kushtia General Hospital.

Police said Ferdous wanted to marry Jarina, daughter of Abdul Jalil, but his proposal was turned down. But Jarina's family was quite jittery since his proposal bordered on threat. So, she was hurriedly married off.

Six days after marriage Jarina returned to the village she grew up in to become the victim of a man possessed.

Ferdous is at large. A case was filed with the Daulatpur Police Station.

19 shanties gutted down in city

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Nineteen shanties were gutted in separate incidents at Mirpur and South Kamalapur yesterday.

At least 12 shanties were gutted in Pora Basti at Gudaraghat in Mirpur while seven others at South Kamalapur.

No report of casualty was available, Fire Service and Civil Defence officials said.

A shanty in Pora Basti caught fire from an earthen oven at 11:30am and soon spread and gutted nearby eight shanties completely and four partially.

Fire fighting units from Mirpur Station rushed to the spot and doused the fire after half an hour's effort.

In South Kamalapur, fire broke out from an oven at 11:45am and reduced seven houses to ashes.

Five fire fighting units from Khilgaon Station and the Headquarters extinguished the fire.

Sattola slum bulldozed

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Over a thousand shanties adjacent to the Infectious Diseases Hospital at Mohakhali were bulldozed yesterday.

The Directorate of Health in cooperation with police launched the eviction that lasted from 11:00am to 5:00pm.

Some 130 policemen led by a magistrate conducted the drive yesterday and evicted half of the residents in the slum, known as Sattola Basti.

Residents claimed the eviction was carried out despite a court order against it.

E-voting

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India Limited (ECIL), which offered to introduce the electronic voting system in Bangladesh. GR Koteswara Rao, senior deputy general manager of the ECIL, explained functions of the system to the EC officials.

"Using a single machine, at least 2,500 voters will be able to cast their votes within 8 hours. If introduced, it would save huge costs involved in traditional system for papers, printing, transportation, storage and distribution," Rao told the EC officials.

"Besides, the vote counting is done very quickly; literally by pressing a button. And the result can be declared within 2-3 hours whereas 30-40 hours are required under the conventional system."

Rao said the voting machines of his company are sold for Tk 14,000. The EC discussed the possibility of tagging a local company with the ECIL to manufacture voting machines.

The CEC told The Daily Star that they would thoroughly review the proposal after gathering information from different countries with such system.

"If it is feasible for our country, we will prepare a project proposal and then try to introduce this system phase by phase. We may first introduce an electronic voting system in a Union Parishad or Pouroshava or by-election. Then we will introduce it for the national election," said the CEC.

MA Sayed presided over yesterday's meeting at his office where Election Commissioners Safur Rahman, MM Munsef Ali, AK Mohammad Ali and other top officials were present.

Gram Sarkar

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Gram Sarkar Prodhan (chief), three women representatives (one must be a member of the trained Village Defence Party), two farmers, one male VDP member, one worker representative, two farm worker representatives, one freedom fighter, one teacher and one businessman.

Besides, officials from various departments of the government, financial institutions, co-operative societies, ansars and NGOs will be in the body as representative members, but they will have no voting right.

Gram Sarkar will assist the Union Parishad by implementing various development and social projects. These include growing more food, reducing illiteracy and spreading education, arranging sports and cultural functions, facilitating family planning and ensuring supply of safe drinking water and sanitation.

Besides, it will ensure primary health care, gathering birth, death, marriage and divorce related information and assist the Union Parishad in tree plantation, preservation of environment and cleanliness, formation of cooperatives and augmenting pisciculture, poultry farming and so on.

It will also assist the Union Parishad to maintain law and order and supervise VGF and VGD activities. The Union Parishad will provide a part of its income to Gram Sarkar to carry out its activities.



Firemen and locals try to douse a fire that burnt down seven shanties in South Kamalapur in Dhaka yesterday.

Funds remain main question

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UP. This may not ensure the goal of a vibrant local government system."

As per the Gram Sarkar Act passed by the Jatiya Sangsad in February this year, the local body will have no taxation power and will receive some non-statutory allocation from Ups to run their activities.

The PPRC, a non-governmental organisation, which is working as the secretariat of the Local Government Support Group (LGS) headed by Grameen Bank chief Prof Mohammad Yunus, has carried out a review on grassroots institution-building and prepared a policy brief for the government.

He put special emphasis on launching an information campaign across the country about the tasks, formation of the Gram Sarkar and training the people who would head the smallest unit of local government before the Gram Sarkar is formed.

Welcoming the Gram Sarkar move, as a step to bring UP administration and village people closer, Zillur said if the UP was provided

with more financial resources the Gram Sarkar would benefit from trickle down effects.

"Gram Sarkar can be a potential institution to bridge the missing link between the predominantly chair-man-centric union parishads and the grassroots people. By activating the UP ward members, the local government body can be made more accountable to the beneficiaries," Zillur said.

"If the implementation of Gram Sarkar begins without prior training of UP members who will head and advise these bodies and without a vigorous information campaign at the national and local levels, it will result in confusion and inefficiency."

Instead of vesting too many responsibilities and roles in the Gram Sarkar, Zillur preferred to limit its work in four areas. These are: convening villagers' meeting at least twice a year, developing a community action plan, maintaining a 'Gram bol' (village diary) with basic statistical updates and developing community policing for restoration of law and order.

He stressed the need for an

'implementation guideline' to enable the Gram Sarkar to operate effectively with its elected and selected leaders aware of their roles.

In a recent article, local government activist and Country Director of The Hunger Project-Bangladesh, Dr Badiul Alam Majumdar pointed out that Ups were beset with serious resource constraints.

Moreover, the government has recently taken away the power of leasing out jalmohals (water bodies) from the UP, further reducing its sources of income.

Other experts and activists who believe in strengthening local government institutions are now attaching importance to enhancing both financial and power-exercising capacities of the UP.

They observe that if the Ups were made financially solvent and given with enough power, the trickle down effect would automatically put the Gram Sarkars on a solid footing.

AL MPs walk out

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the ising godfathers in Laksmpur, the Chair disallowed him too.

As all the AL lawmakers sprung to their feet demanding of the speaker to let Nasim finish his statement, Law, Justice and Parliamentary Affairs Minister Moudud Ahmed took floor and cautioned the lawmakers not to speak against the president and the chief justice as such utterances are disallowed as per article 270 (3) of the Rules of Procedure (RoP) of the Jatiya Sangsad.

With the microphone switched off, Nasim tried to speak at the top of his voice and make the lawmakers understand that he had no personal grudge against the new chief justice. He tried to argue that he was opposing the process of the chief justice's appointment.

At this stage, Deputy Leader of the Opposition Abdul Hamid tried to make the point clear. He got floor but as he said, "the law minister spoke on an issue, which Nasim even did not get the chance to raise," the Chair put Hamid's mike off, enraging the opposition lawmakers.

Akhtar Hamid Siddiqui said he would not allow Abdul Hamid to speak on the same issue, as he did not consider it to be a point of order.

Hamid and Nasim apart, senior AL deputy Abdus Samad Azad and others repeatedly pleaded with the Chair to allow Hamid to finish making his point. But the Chair did not oblige them, prompting the AL deputies to stage the walkout.

Soon after they walked out of the House, Prime Minister's Parliamentary Affairs Advisor Salaudin Quader Chowdhury took floor to say "it's their (AL) walkout time now as per the order of the day".

In presence of the House Leader Prime Minister Khaleda Zia, Health and Family Welfare Minister Khandakar Mosharraf Hossain rose to add that the Chair was right to disallow the Opposition Deputy Leader and Nasim to speak.

Walking out of the House, Hamid spoke to journalists at an impromptu news conference at his Sangsad Bhavan meeting room. Hamid condemned the speaker's attitude. "He (Akhtar Hamid Siddiqui) gave me floor but didn't allow me to speak as he himself made a statement. What's this?"

"We don't want to walk out of the House but they (the Chair and the treasury bench) compel us to do so," said Hamid.

Opposition Chief Whip Abdus Shahid said Deputy Speaker Akhtar Hamid Siddiqui has violated his oath by compromising on neutrality in running the House.

"The deputy speaker should keep silent while allowing MPs to take floor to speak," said Abdus Samad Azad. Mohammad Nasim was sceptical about the neutrality of the next caretaker government and the next general election as he alleged that the new chief justice has been appointed by superseding two senior judges.



A bulldozer smashes shanties near the Infectious Diseases Hospital in Mohakhali in an eviction drive by the Directorate of Health yesterday.

Food grains import

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ning and monitoring unit of the government.

The dash for import is mostly seen in January and February when the rice prices spiral, and a significant amount of imported grains remain stockpiled in private warehouses, he said.

The government officials denied any shortage of rice yields and said aus, amon and boro produces were satisfactory. The total output of grains, including aus, amon, boro and wheat, has been projected at 252.72 lakh tonnes, up from the required 223.51 lakh tonnes for 2002-03.

The importers doubt the government data on grains yields and requirement. "Certainly, there is a gap between production and requirement, otherwise such a huge amount of grains would not have been imported," said an importer.

But a high official of the food ministry said, "There is no shortfall in rice production, but there

might be some shortage of wheat yields."

The annual wheat production varies from 15 lakh to 18 lakh tonnes against the requirement of around 30 lakh tonnes, he said.

The official said the government will import wheat shortly, but declined to specify the amount.

Of the total grains import in the outgoing fiscal 2002-03, 15.65 lakh tonnes were rice and 14.88 lakh tonnes wheat.

Traders imported 20.72 lakh tonnes of grains from India alone, with the average prices of rice and wheat at Tk 9,000 and Tk 7,000 a tonne, said sources.

In 2002-03 until June 22, 14.79 lakh tonnes of grains were imported through the Benapole land port in Jessore and 5.93 lakh tonnes through Sonamasjid in Rajshahi, the sources added.

Also, 8.99 lakh tonnes were imported through Chittagong seaport and 1.85 lakh tonnes through Mongla seaport.

According to the government's Economic Review 2003, the grains import volume in tonnes is: 1.14 lakh (1981-82), 8.68 lakh (82-83), 6.15 lakh (83-84), 12.87 lakh (84-85), 1.13 lakh (85-86), 3.42 lakh (86-87), 11.3 lakh (87-88), 7.80 lakh (88-89), 5.84 lakh (89-90), 0.37 lakh (90-91), 1.50 lakh (91-92), 4.48 lakh (92-93), 3.12 lakh (93-94), 16.33 lakh (94-95), 16.89 lakh (95-96), 3.49 lakh (96-97), 14.02 lakh (97-98), 42.56 lakh (98-99), 12.38 lakh (99-2000), 10.63 lakh (2000-2001) and 12.89 lakh (2001-02).

Father, daughter

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filed the cases with Ramna police station yesterday afternoon.

In the first case, BAC official said, Rawshanara Akther Tuli, 20, identifying herself as student, opened a savings account with Sonali Bank, Moghbazar Branch by depositing Tk 87,000 on July 10, 1993.

While examining her account, the BAC official found a total balance of Tk 68.84 lakh on February 10 this year.

After the money Laundering Resisting Act, 2002, came into force, she withdrew Tk 65 lakh using three cheques in March and April this year and deposited the amount with Sonali Bank, Prime Minister's Office branch and Janata Bank Moghbazar branch as savings bond and fixed deposit.

The BAC official alleged that Tuli bought savings bond worth Tk 15 lakh and opened an FDR worth Tk 35 lakh by changing her name as Ms Marzana Akther Tuli in connivance with her father GM Kamal.

She used her name in the passport as Marzana Akther Tuli, the BAC official added.

GM Kamal in cooperation with one Mohammad Delwar Hossain withdrew Tk 17.50 lakh in phases from his bank account at Sonali Bank Moghbazar branch till May 10 this year.

During investigation, the BAC official said, both the account holders failed to provide acceptable explanation regarding their source of income and how the money were deposited in their accounts.

Following a prayer of the Investigation Officer (IO) in the cases, Metropolitan Sessions Judge, Dhaka, who acts as money laundering court judge, in an order asked bank managers concerned to freeze all the accounts of the accused persons.

Traders

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Later, they brought out a procession and held a rally in front of BAMMA office at Madan Pal Lane.

Faisal and Saiful Islam were arrested from Wari and a white pick-up van, allegedly used during the robbery, was recovered from their possession. Yusuf and Shamim were also arrested from Kalyanpur and Adabar.

The four were produced before the court yesterday on completion of their two-day remand. The court later sent them to jail.

Seven armed robbers went to agricultural machinery markets at Nawabpur at 3:15am on June 16. Tying two on-duty guards, Nahid and Ruhul Amin, they took away cash and machinery worth Tk 5.25 lakh from eight shops in three markets of the area. Meanwhile, the Sutrapur Police Station said four youths arrested on Sunday confessed of their involvement in the robbery.

Then the Officer-in-Charge of the Paba Police Station Abul Kalam Biswas filed a case accusing 17 persons. Later, the Detective Branch and the Criminal Investigation Department (CID) of Rajshahi Police submitted charge sheet for the case on December 21, 2002.

In the charge sheet, the CID accused nine persons -- Jamaat leader Dr Moazzemul Haque, Shibir activists Mozammel Alam Dinar, Bulbul, Rubel, Moklesur Rahman, Mehedi, Sangram, Rohidul and Kalam -- under the Explosive Act 1908. It also said the bomb exploded while Shibir workers were making bombs with assistance from Dr Moazzemul.

Fake drugs

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Some are involved in this practice, it is true. We have heard of people doing it in Zinzira (a suburb of Dhaka). They are harming the people and not paying taxes to the government," S M Shafuzzaman, President of Bangladesh Pharmaceuticals Association, told The Daily Star.

In 2001 the government cancelled licences of 44 small companies for producing counterfeit drugs. It is not however known how many were prosecuted. Twelve others were restricted to producing particular items. But the clampdown has not stopped the practice.

The drug administration occasionally raids Babubazaar, the country's biggest drug market, and seizes illegal products. Sources in Babubazaar said that at least 15 kinds of counterfeit drug brands are available, including counterfeit versions of Pericidin, Cavinton, Pathaydin, Kenakta Vayal and Eidaktin. Unscrupulous traders also put patients at risk by selling drugs that have crossed their expiry dates. They change or cover up the original expiry date on the packet.

Industry sources say that drugs worth Tk 700 crore a year are smuggled into the country or produced illegally, out of a total national drug market of Tk 3,000 crore.

The government has only two testing laboratories and 37 drug supervisors for the entire country, which accounts for the poor supervision in the sector.

Officials say they are doing their best. "We are active within our limited manpower to free the market from counterfeit medicines. Whenever we get information we immediately take action," said Dr. Abdul Gani, Director of Drug Administration.

The leaders of the Druggists and Chemists Association disagree. They say the government is not doing enough to control illegal manufacture and trade, and that many officials have been bribed to allow fake drugs onto the market.

"Our people are poor, and most cannot afford the medicine they need. Dishonest producers and traders are cheating them. The government is not taking adequate action," said Md. Sadekur Rahman, President of the Association.