

Bhutan to remove rebel camps, Wangchuk assures India

PTI, New Delhi

Bhutan Monday assured India of stepping up efforts to resolve the problem of ULFA (United Liberation Front of Assam), Bodo and other insurgents operating from its territory in north-eastern states through dialogue and removal of militant camps inside that country.

Visiting Bhutan King Jigme Singye Wangchuk, who met the top Indian leadership, said he had invited leaders of ULFA, National Democratic Front of Bodoland and Kuki Liberation Organisation for talks to resolve the insurgency

problem.

Wangchuk, who held extensive talks with Indian Prime Minister Atal Behari Vajpayee Sunday night, called on President A P J Abdul Kalam who hosted a banquet in his honour after a 30-minute meeting, and met Vice President Bhairon Singh Shekhawat.

The King said it is important to understand that the government of India and Bhutan have been working closely together and making every effort to resolve the militant problem over the last few years.

A Memorandum of Understanding for the preparation of a detailed project report on

Punatsangchhu Hydroelectric Project was signed by External Affairs Minister Yashwant Sinha and his Bhutanese counterpart Lyonpo Khandu Wangchuk.

The project, with an estimated generation capacity of 870 mw, has been identified for implementation under the 10th Five Year plan of India.

In his banquet speech, President Kalam said a strong global compact was being forged to combat the upsurge in terrorism, insurgency and extremist activities as democratic societies cannot succumb to violence and terror unleashed by a disgruntled elements.



Prime Minister Khaleda Zia presides over a meeting of the Executive Committee for National Economic Council at the NEC conference room in Dhaka yesterday.

Pry edn overhaul

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fiscal under the new project that also aims at poverty alleviation, sources said.

Currently, there are 78,126 government primary schools run by about 3.60 lakh teachers.

Most primary schools are at present running in two shifts and the plan will minimise workload on teachers and reduce schooling to one shift after implementation, said Tahmina.

Besides teacher recruitment, the

government will appoint another 3,500 people as officials under the project that also envisages setting up new school buildings, reconstructing and improving existing schools, supplying free textbooks and training teachers.

The Executive Committee for National Economic Council (Ecne) approved the project, to be implemented by June 2009, at a meeting with Prime Minister Khaleda Zia in the chair.

The project outlines Tk 662 crore in cost for new teachers, Tk 1,947 crore for infrastructure, Tk 18 crore for transportation, Tk 176 crore for furniture, Tk 33 crore for departmental office decoration and computerisation, Tk 118 crore for consultants and Tk 1,976 crore for other expenditures.

The government will build 30,000 new classrooms, eight lakh benches, 1.65 lakh chairs and 1.12 lakh tables, purchase 63,000 tons of paper to print textbooks and teachers' guides and eight jeeps, eight microbuses and 1,984 motorcycles.

Planning ministry sources said the World Bank will provide \$150 million and the Asian Development Bank another \$100 million in loans for the 'approach-based' project. The UK's Department for International Development will give a grant of \$150 million, the European Union another \$100 million, the Netherlands \$50 million, Norway \$40 million, Sweden \$29 million and Canada \$20 million.

Judge court

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With the passage of the first bill, the post of vice-president ceases to exist. Though the post was dropped from constitution through its 12th amendment in 1991, the legal provision relating to the post remained in the president's remuneration and privileges act. Now the vice-president is replaced by the speaker, which means the speaker will be entitled to the president's remuneration and privileges whenever he discharges the latter's responsibilities.

The government passed the Chittagong Hill Tracts Regulation (Amendment) Bill, 2003 to set up the districts and sessions judge's court at Rangamati, Khagrachhari and Bandarban districts.

The Rangamati, Khagrachhari and Bandarban districts will constitute three separate sessions divisions and the district judge concerned will be the sessions judge of the respective sessions division. And the joint district judge will be the assistant sessions judge, says the bill.

Tongi juvenile

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The committee will submit its report to the Social Welfare Directorate within 48 hours, said a press release issued yesterday by the Press Information Department.

Press reports said eight inmates of the centre -- Abul Kalam, 15, Shuvro, 14, Mamun, 13, Aslam, 14, Sumon, 13, Titu, 14, Babu, 14 and Khorsheed Alam, 14, attempted to take their own lives with blades and broken bottles on September 14.

The injured children were rescued and rushed to the Tongi Hospital where they were treated before being sent back to the centre.

The juveniles alleged that the Centre authorities do not give them enough food and bar them from playing or watching TV.

They also alleged that they were beaten up whenever they complained about the irregularities, adding that the torture and denial of recreation have made it unbearable for them to live there.

The superintendent of NJCC was unavailable for comments despite several attempts yesterday.

Also, journalists who went to interview the inmates were not allowed to enter the facility yesterday.

Although recovery of arms during the drive is not significant, we succeeded in demolishing three temporary criminal camps near the border and law enforcers identified the criminal zone in deep forest," said a top Bandarban police official.

Earlier, security forces recovered two AK-47 rifles, one M-16 rifle, 18 SBBL guns, five pistols, four rifles, three revolvers, 124 bullets and one high powered land mine between July 2002 and June 2003. Another joint drive last month recovered one rocket launcher, two grenade launchers, one M-16 rifle, one pistol, two walkie-talkie and a huge amount of drugs, sources said.

Wrong agenda

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The Dhaka Declaration was adopted on a 'give-and-take' basis but the issue of market access did not figure prominently although it is the prime concern for Bangladesh.

Agricultural subsidy was not the issue of Bangladesh. If subsidy in agriculture is reduced or withdrawn, Bangladesh will suffer at the initial stage since it is a food-deficit country, Bakht said.

"So, Bangladesh should not have taken a strong position on this issue. The US and EU will be forced to reduce farm subsidy at one stage and India, Brazil, China and African countries will be benefited," he said.

Bakht said it has been said that movement of natural persons was included in the revised Cancun declaration, which should not be overplayed. "When rich countries are not giving market access to products of the LDCs, how can we expect they would allow our semi-skilled manpower?" he asked.

"It is unthinkable that the US will allow free movement of labour from any Muslim country after the September 11."

Sazzad Zahir, former secretary of Bangladesh Economic Association, said the failure at the Cancun conference was expected. "The ministerial meet at Montreal gave signal of what was to come in Cancun. But people were given a wrong impression."

The interest of the developing countries like India, Brazil, China was not at par with the interest of the LDCs. Besides, the LDCs bloc was divided. "When we face difficulty in defining our interest at the country-level, it is very difficult to define the interest of the LDCs as a whole," he said.

Referring to Bangladesh's being the LDCs coordinator, Zahir said: "We have to assess now whether we have adequate intellectual and administrative resources to engage ourselves in so many issues."

Former Secretary and Permanent

Representative to the United Nations in Geneva M Anwar Hashim said Cancun is not the end of the road. The setback of Cancun could be reversed once both developed and poor nations work together to build a better future, he noted.

He however said the global trading system should be based on justice, equity and consensus. Cancun should be a lesson for future multilateral trading arrangement.

"All the members of the World Trade Organisation should start cooperate with instead of confronting each other. A better understanding between rich and poor countries could only yield a positive new world order," he told The Daily Star yesterday.

"Let us be cautiously optimistic that an agreement will be signed in the near future," he hoped.

Another nabbed in Ctg student abduction

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Ctg

Another suspect in the recent abduction of four college students, Anwar Hossain alias Anu, was arrested in a city hotel Monday night.

The other suspect, Irfan Quaderi, is now on a five-day remand that ends tomorrow.

Tipped off, a team of Kotwali police raided Hotel Amania in Laldighirpar area and arrested Anwar. Irfan identified him (Anwar) as a member of the gang involved in the kidnap, sources said.

The four students -- Shahanur Hossain alias Apollo, Tanvir Rahman, Shahful Alam Ripon and Md. Sharek Chowdhury -- were abducted by a gang of more than 10 from the city's KC Dey Road area Friday night.

The gang members later released Ripon and Sharek the same night, asking them to bring Tk 1 lakh in ransom for the freedom of the other two. On information from them, police raided an abandoned house at Hazari Lane and rescued Shahanur and Tanvir and nabbed Irfan.

Quoting Irfan and Anwar, sources said they had planned to take the four students to Boalkhali upazila by Saturday morning.

Iraq rift

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differences between the five permanent members of the Security Council the United States, Russia, Britain, France, and China. Blair might have a tough task to persuade Chirac and Schroeder to take a role in Iraq after the war they opposed unless the United Nations gets a bigger role.

The Iraq war opened up deep divisions in Europe, souring relations between backers of the US-led invasion like Britain, Spain and Poland and vocal opponents led by France and Germany, who thwarted Britain's bid for a UN mandate for the conflict.

Charges framed against 12 in ex-MP Sujan murder case

COURT CORRESPONDENT

The Speedy Trial Tribunal-4, Dhaka Division, yesterday framed charges against BNP leader Dr Raushan Alam and 11 others in former MP Shahjahan Howlader Sujan murder case.

The other accused are Kajol Ahmed Jalali, Khorsheed Alam, Humayun Kabir alias Phool Miah, Abdul Mannan alias VP Rahman, Ziauddin alias Bayes, Akhter Hossain alias Akbar Ali, Kamal Ahmed, Farkanuddin, Giasuddin Jalali and Ibrahim Nur alias Apu.

Of them, Raushan Alam and Khosheed Alam are now on bail, Kajol Jalali and Humayun Kabir in the custody and the rest eight are still at large.

The Criminal Investigation Department (CID), submitted a charge sheet against 12 people on July 9, this year, showing 43 people as prosecution witnesses. The trial of the case will begin tomorrow.

Sujan, 35, a former BNP MP from Brahmanbaria-6 constituency and former vice-president (VP) of Haji Mohammad Mohsin Hall students union of Dhaka University, was abducted by his rivals. He was found dead near Dayel Chattar on the Dhaka University campus on July 3, 2001.

Victim's mother Hena Akhter filed an abduction case with Motijheel Police Station the same day, accusing Dr Raushan Alam, Khorsheed Alam, Giasuddin Jalali, and Phool Miah.

But in the Chargesheet, the investigation officer included the names of eight others

Toxic gas

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a madrassah -- Kadam Rasul Primary School and Gauchhia Tayebia Sunniya Madrassah-- had to be demolished. Two dogs and some poultry birds died and people were suffering from serious respiratory problems at the time, locals said.

While visiting the area yesterday, a group of pressmen could feel the impact of the gas pollution, even 26 hours after the incident took place.

The affected people have developed many symptoms of physical discomfort.

Upazila Nirbahi Officer Mohibul Haq and officials of the explosives department and the environment directorate visited the spot yesterday.

But no case was filed till 8:00 last night.

BNP bosses

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gave all joint secretaries general of the party division-wise responsibility to complete formation of district committees.

But, sources said only Tareque Rahman, senior joint secretary general of BNP, completed much of the task and formed fresh committees in 12 districts out of 16, where 'intra-party conflict' persisted for long.

Tareque is now working to resolve conflicts in Gazipur, Mymensingh (north) and Manikganj district units and complete formation of fresh committees there soon.

Mannan Bhuiyan is supervising the entire process of formation of committees and giving necessary instructions to expedite the process.

"We have now decided that the process should be over by the coming Ramadan," said a top leader of the party, seeking anonymity.

Leaders of district units with serious intra-party conflicts are now being called to Hawa Bhaban, presently political office of Tareque Rahman and commonly known as another power centre, and committees are formed either on consensus or through secret ballot.

Narayanganj district committee was formed through secret ballot at Hawa Bhaban recently. Besides, leaders of about a dozen other district units were called to Hawa Bhaban to resolve conflicts with the mediation of Tareque Rahman.

District unit committees have so far been formed in Chittagong North and South, Laxmipur, Munshiganj, Narayanganj, Pabna, Lalmonirhat, Natore, Naogaon, Gaibandha, Kurigram, Panchagarh, Thakurgaon, Pirojpur, Bagerhat and Cox's Bazar.

Hartal observed

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General Post Office while it was proceeding towards the Bangabandhu National Stadium at about 11:15am. However, police allowed the procession to advance after a hot exchange of words with the workers' leaders.

Although the AL supported the general strike, none of its leaders and activists picketed the city streets. However, a procession led by AL presidium member Abdur Razzak and leader Obaidul Quader joined a rally of the Jute, Cotton and Textile Mills Employees Action Committee in the afternoon, expressing solidarity with the action committee's demand.

The left-leaning 11-party alliance, Workers Party of Bangladesh, Communist Party of Bangladesh and Skop brought out separate processions in support of the hartal in the city.

The processions mainly took place in Paltan, Muktangan and Motijheel commercial areas.

The hartal supporters chanted slogans criticising government policy of closing down mills and factories and rendering thousands of workers jobless.

Government offices in the city remained open with a thin presence of officials and employees. Private offices functioned partially.

Most shopping centres kept their shutters down, but many wayside shops remained open. A good number of buses and auto-rickshaws plied the city streets during the hartal hours and movement of rickshaws was as usual.

No inter-city buses operated. Train service to and from Kamalapur Railway Station was normal. The Zia International Airport also operated normally.

Around 4,000 law enforcers were deployed at different strategic points in the city to avert any untoward incident.

At the end of the hartal, left-aligned political parties held a rally at Muktangan in the city. Workers Party President Rashed Khan Menon, CPB President Monzurul Ahsan Khan and General Secretary Mujahidul Islam Selim and Gono Forum General

Secretary Saifuddin Ahmed Manik addressed the rally.

Our Khulna correspondent says hartal was observed peacefully in Khulna city and elsewhere in the district.

Apart from rickshaws, other modes of transport stayed off the roads. Shops and academic and financial institutions remained closed. Production in the jute mills at Khalishpur and Ara industrial belts remained suspended during the hartal hours.

Our Chittagong correspondent says hartal was observed partially in the port city and adjoining areas yesterday.

Barring educational institutions and commercial banks, other establishments went about their business as usual and all modes of vehicles plied the roads.

Biman and railway sources said all flights and trains to and from Chittagong operated on schedule.

No untoward incident was reported till 4.00pm, said Chittagong Metropolitan Police sources.

Our correspondent from Bogra reports the dawn-to-dusk hartal was peacefully observed in the district. Shops and private offices remained closed.

All types of motor vehicles, including BRTC bus, and trucks were off the road. Hartal supporters took out a procession and held a meeting in the town.

Youth killed

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took away Jilu at gunpoint.

Police said it was the result of a strained love affair between Jilu and one Kamal Hossain Monsoor.

The victim's elder brother Md Shah Alam filed a case with Fatikchhari Police Station, accusing Kamal, his father Islam Munshi, sister Noor Jahan, and brothers Anwar Hossain Manik and Shahabuddin.

2 'extortionists'

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indiscriminate beating," she said.

Luna said Rana ran a shop named Best Crockeries at Chandrima Market.

Sutrapur police refuted the allegation of being present during the mob beating. They said Rana was a listed criminal and a member of the Niloy group. He is accused in two cases and was also named in a general diary filed with police. He was arrested during the Operation Clean Heart, police said.

In the second incident, another alleged extortionist Mohammad Motin, 26, was beaten to death by construction workers at East Hajipara in Khilgaon at about 1:30pm.

Quoting the inquest report, police said Motin along with his accomplices went to an under-construction building at 39/6/1 East Hajipara Monday night and demanded money from the build-

ing manager. They also threatened to stop the construction work unless the money was paid the following morning.

Yesterday morning, Motin and three others again went to the building. Failing to realise the money from the manager, the gang beat up some of the construction workers saying they would be back soon to get the money.

At noon, they went back to the place but Motin was caught by workers while the three others managed to flee. The angry workers tied him up and beat him mercilessly. Motin died on the spot.

Khilgaon police recovered the victim's body from the building and sent it to the DMCH morgue for autopsy.

Separate cases were filed with the police stations concerned in connection with the two incidents.

Speaker urges AL MPs

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At yesterday's press briefing, the speaker read out a written statement highlighting the arrangements for the CPA conference to be held between October 4 and October 12 in Dhaka. Sircar is the chairman-designate of the 49th edition of the CPA conference, which is to be held for the first time in Bangladesh.

Sircar urged the AL to take part in the CPA conference as it concerns the prestige of the country. The AL had earlier announced that it would skip the CPA conference for what it said keeping the opposition away from the conference preparatory process.

The AL also had reservations about the CPA conference steering committee of 25 members with only two representatives from the main opposition. It also objected to the induction of two non-MPs in the steering committee, who are the two political secretaries to the prime minister.

The speaker however said the government would try to ensure opposition representation in line

with its demand in the sub-committees for the CPA conference. He said the two political secretaries were made members of the steering committee since they would be able to keep the prime minister updated on the preparation for the conference on a day-to-day basis. But, he said, the two did not attend any of the steering committee meetings till date.

"It'll not be wise for the Awami League to boycott the CPA conference," the speaker said, adding that it would be attended by as many as 506 delegates representing 150 national and regional parliaments from 46 countries.

Deputy Speaker Akhtar Hamid Siddiqui, who was present at the briefing, told newsmen that he urged the opposition chief whip Monday to participate in the CPA conference.

Chief Whip Khandakar Delwar Hossain and whips Ashraf Hossain, Rezaul Bari Dina, Shahidul Haq Jamal and Wahidul Alam were also present.