

Muslims protest as Bush tours southern India

AFP, Hyderabad

US President George W. Bush yesterday met farmers and weavers in the southern Indian city of Hyderabad, as Muslim protesters clashed with police and brought the business centre to a standstill. Bush's whistle-stop visit to the high-tech city, capital of Andhra Pradesh state, comes a day after he and Indian Prime Minister Manmohan Singh sealed a deal that aims to give India access to US civilian nuclear technology.

Bush spent much of his four hour visit chatting with farmers, weavers and women volunteers from self-help groups at an agricultural university, and interacting with young entrepreneurs at the Indian School of Business.

Police said five people were injured in clashes between riot police and Muslims opposed to his visit outside Hyderabad's Mecca Mosque.

The clashes occurred after Friday prayers ended and some

among the congregation of about 5,000 began throwing stones at police.

Police wielding batons pushed the crowd back into the mosque, from where many continued throwing stones, shoes and plastic bottles. Some protesters also burnt an effigy of Bush on the street.

Two separate protests earlier drew a combined crowd of about 5,000, organisers and witnesses said.

No shops opened in the business centre after Muslim leaders called for the city to be brought to a standstill in protest at Bush's visit.

Police overnight slapped a ban on the flying of kites and balloons, which Muslim activists had said they would fly bearing anti-Bush slogans as part of their protest against US policies in the Middle East.

Tight security ensured the protesters came nowhere near the president, who in his interaction later with the businesses students hailed the nuclear deal he and Singh sealed during talks in New Delhi on

Thursday.

"Yesterday was a way to put the Cold War behind us (and) move forward as strategic partners. I want to congratulate your prime minister and the Indian government for working with me and our government to show the world what is possible when people come together and think strategically," Bush said.

The deal, the highlight of Bush's three-day trip to India, commits Washington to seek approval from the US Congress and the 45-nation Nuclear Suppliers Group to share their civilian nuclear technology with India.

Bush also ruled out protectionist measures to address domestic concerns on outsourcing to India and said he favoured easy access for Indian students to American universities and schools.

"I have taken a position, the US will reject protectionism. We won't fear competition. We welcome

Bush to talk 'war on terror' with Musharraf

AFP, New Delhi

US President George W. Bush said Friday he would discuss the "war on terror" and ways to lessen the appeal of radical Islam when he meets Pakistani President Pervez Musharraf at the weekend.

Hailing Pakistan as "an important friend" of the United States, Bush made the comments at the end of a three-day visit to India.

"I will meet with President Musharraf to discuss Pakistan's vital cooperation in the war on terror and our effort to foster economic and political development so we could reduce the appeal of radical Islam," Bush said before heading to Islamabad.

"I believe a prosperous democratic Pakistan would be a steadfast partner for America and a peaceful neighbour for India and a force for freedom and moderation in the Arab world," he said, speaking in New Delhi.

Bush noted that there was a time when "America's good relations with Pakistan would have been a source of concern here in India" but added, "that day has past."

India was "better off because America has a close relation with Pakistan and Pakistan is better off because America has a close relation with India."

The nuclear-armed South Asian neighbours have been engaged in a



Bikkhubdha Deshbashi brings out a flag procession from the Central Shaheed Minar in protest against communalism and militancy yesterday.

PHOTO: STAR

RESULT DISPUTE Duta unhappy as Pro-VC made probe convener

DU CORRESPONDENT

Teachers of Dhaka University expressed their dissatisfactions over the appointment of Pro-vice-chancellor Prof AFM Yusuf Haider as the convener of the investigation committee formed by the authorities to probe into the incident of 52 Masters of Social Sciences (MSS) candidates getting first class grades in the final examinations at the political science department.

The disputed result of the MSS 2002 examinations, which were held in 2004, was published with the Pro-VC's signature.

"I think the Pro-VC should not be included in the probe committee as he signed the tabulation sheets meaning that he already took a position," said Prof Sharifullah Bhuyian, president of Dhaka University Teachers' Association (Duta).

Vice-chancellor (VC) Prof SMA Faiz said the syndicate of the university took the decision to appoint the Pro-VC as the convener of the committee and that signing of the tabulation sheets by him should not be considered in his appointment to the post.

Some teachers talking to The Daily Star said as the dean of the social science faculty, Prof Harun-or-Rashid should be included in the committee.

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Witnesses dispute police account of 2 youths' death

SHAHEEN MOLLAH

Residents of Shutirkhalpar of Dhalpur area in Demra contradicted the police version of what happened on Thursday that left Monir, 22 and Mujibur, 24 dead.

According to the police version, which was reported in newspapers yesterday, the deceased were killed in an 'armed encounter' with the police. But local residents claimed that they saw them being shot point blank by the police.

Eyewitnesses said they saw the police chasing four young men through the neighbourhood Thursday evening. Two of them managed to escape while Monir and Mujibur were caught.

The police dragged the two young men on to the street, made them lie on the asphalt and shot them dead point blank while the two were pleading for mercy, alleged local residents.

The police drove the women onlookers away before killing the two young men, the residents told The Daily Star yesterday.

They also said incidents of mugging went up in the neighbourhood in the last few months.

The police said the slain two were apprehended in suspicion of preparing for a hijacking operation. The law enforcers could not say

if there is any criminal record in file against the two. They however said Monir was known as 'Bomb Monir' in the neighbourhood and was involved in criminal activities.

Dead bodies of Monir and Mujibur are lying in Dhaka Medical College (DMC) Morgue.

Autopsies are scheduled to be done today.

Kawsar, uncle of Mujibur, told journalists yesterday at the morgue that he came to know about Mujibur's death from newspaper reports. Mujibur was an employee in an artificial leather shop at Bangsal and was not engaged in criminal activities, he claimed.

Sub-inspector Khaleq of Demra Police Station filed a case Thursday night regarding the incident.

When The Daily Star asked Khaleq over phone about the claim of local residents he said, "Please write what the local people told you. I can't comment on this."

The residents said just after the shooting a large number of Rab and Detective Branch personnel, and high-ranking police officials rushed to the scene.

Power crisis in north worsens

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Rajshahi

Crisis of electricity in North Bengal worsened yesterday as the authorities had to shed 430 MW of load against the daily demand of 630 MW after the 45 MW West Mount power unit at Baghabari tripped and since the diesel-run 18 MW Sayedpur, and 20 MW Rangpur units did not resume operations.

"The situation worsened as the lone functioning 125 MW coal-fired Bara Pukuria unit started providing 113 MW," said a source at Power Development Board.

Power outage eased on Thursday but worsened again as the West Mount unit, which started operation on March 1, tripped.

Sources at Load Dispatch Centre said Rajshahi zone received 160 MW against a demand of 416 MW while Rangpur zone got 60 MW out of 214 MW demand.

Among other power units in the north, 100 MW, and 71 MW PDB units have been remaining non-operational since February 26.

The 2 MW unit in Thakurgaon was functioning during peak hours at night.

One killed as forest guards, timber thieves trade fire

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Sylhet

One person was killed and 12 others were injured in a gunfight between forest guards and timber thieves in the remote Kalenga Reserve Forest in Chunarughat upazila of Habiganj district yesterday.

Rajab Ali, 30, who hails from Barjui in Chunarughat died on the spot while critically injured Kajol, 20, was admitted to Sylhet MAG Osmani Medical College and Hospital. Eight forest guards were also wounded in the incident.

Sources said around 200 armed forest robbers entered old teak forest of Kalenga Reserve Forest in the morning and started felling the teak trees.

On information, a team of forest guards led by Kalenga Forest Beat Officer Dipankar Roy went to the spot to stop them which triggered the hour-long firefight.

The forest guards fired 12 bullets while the robbers fired around 20. Chunarughat police later recovered Rajab Ali's body from the spot.

Prayer Timing		
March 4		
	Azan	Jamaat
Fajr	5-10	5-45
Zohr	12-45	1-15
Asr	4-30	4-45
Maghrib	6-07	6-11
Esha	7-30	8-00

Source: Islamic Foundation

28 public polytechnics out of 38 have no principal

20 run without vice principal, over half of 256 posts vacant

ASHIQUK RAHMAN

A large number of faculty posts remain vacant in the state-run polytechnic institutes across the country for long due mainly to irregular recruitment and promotion, causing widespread resentment among the teachers and students of the institutes.

According to Directorate of Technical Education, out of 38 public polytechnics, 28 currently have no principal while 20 have no vice-principal. Similarly, some 140 out of 256 posts of instructor too lie vacant.

Bangladesh Polytechnic Teachers Association (BPTA) says the number of vacant posts in the government-run polytechnics is higher than the one claimed by the directorate.

According to recent BPTA findings, 31 out of 38 institutes have no principal and 25 have neither a principal nor a vice-principal.

Of the government-run polytechnics, 20 are revenue-based while the rest are operated under different projects.

BPTA says about 50 percent of instructor posts in 20 old polytechnics financed by government revenues also remain vacant for long.

"If you visit Mymensingh, Sylhet, Barisal or Comilla polytechnics, you will see many departments are being run by not more than one or two teachers," said BPTA President Shamsur Rahman.

Echoing the view, Principal of Mymensingh Polytechnic Institute Muzahed Ali told The Daily Star, "Only one teacher runs the entire electronic technology department at my institute whereas at least a chief instructor, two instructors and five junior instructors are needed to teach students properly."

He said 25 percent of total faculty posts in Mymensingh Polytechnic Institute are now vacant.

The Polytechnic Teachers Association alleged that irregular promotion and recruitment, failure to formulate an acceptable graduation list for the teachers, complicated recruitment procedure and above all, the concerned authorities' indifference to the needs of the polytechnics have accounted for the prevailing teacher crisis.

According to the recruitment rule, a teacher shall not be promoted to principal if he lacks three years' experience as a vice-instructor posts in 20 old polytechnics, the BPTA president said, adding that similarly, a teacher must have at least five years of experience as a chief instructor to be

promoted to vice principal.

"Despite having the qualifications, many teachers do not qualify for the position of principal as they didn't have the opportunity to gain required experience thanks to irregular promotions," Shamsur Rahman blasted the education ministry and the Directorate of Technical Education for their failure to reach consensus on framing a teacher gradation list, absence of which, he said, has slowed down the promotion process for the polytechnic teachers over the years.

Besides, the government has also failed to fill the vacant posts of principal and vice-principal at the 18 polytechnic institutes under projects. Many teachers with required qualifications and experiences do not apply for the posts, fearing that they may lose their jobs with expiry of the projects on June 30, 2007.

A special rule for the project-based institutes stipulates that recruitment papers will become invalid with the expiry of the projects.

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Criminal killed in 'shootout' with Rab

UNB, Munshiganj

A top criminal of Munshiganj was killed during a 'shootout' between his cohorts and members of the Rapid Action Battalion (RAB) at Sreedharpur in Sreenagar upazila early yesterday, Rab sources said.

He was identified as 'Kala' Faruk, 45, son of Chunnun Miah of Baroikhal village in Sreenagar upazila. Faruk was wanted in a double-murder and other criminal cases, police said.

Rab members arrested Faruk at his village home Thursday morning and recovered a gun from his possession.

On his confessional statement, the members of the elite force along with Faruk set out for Shekhmagar, 50-km from the

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2 JMB suspects arrested

UNB, Shariatpur

Police arrested two suspected members of Jama'atul Mujahideen Bangladesh (JMB) in chaurangi area of Sadar upazila on Thursday night.

Acting on a tip-off, police raided a house near Shariatpur Club and arrested Sirajul Islam, 24, and Akash, 20.

The arrestees were taken on a 10-day remand for interrogation.

Train blaze that sparked Gujarat riot was accident

AFP, New Delhi

A judicial panel probing a 2002 train fire blamed for sparking an anti-Muslim massacre in western India said the blaze was an accident, rejecting claims by right wing Hindus that it was deliberately set.

Authorities initially blamed a Muslim mob for the torching of the train in the town of Godhra in Gujarat state that claimed the lives of 59 Hindus.

The blaze sparked an orgy of revenge violence in Gujarat in which at least 2,000 people, mainly Muslims, died, according to human rights groups.

Retired Supreme Court judge U.C. Banerjee said in his final report to state-owned Indian Railways that his four-member panel had concluded that it was an accident after probing all possible causes of the fire.

"The cause of the fire in the S-6 carriage on February 22, 2002, carrying kar sevaks (Hindu pilgrims), was accidental and not deliberate," Banerjee said.

The victims were returning from

the Hindu temple town of Ayodhya in northern Uttar Pradesh state when two carriages of their train caught fire just after leaving Godhra station.

"My definite conclusion is that the fire is not by reason of any deliberately inflicted fire but accidental," he told reporters, adding that circumstantial evidence pointed to the same conclusions.

"There was no conspiracy whatsoever because the Gujarat police didn't know when they (pilgrims) were coming back," he said.

He was referring to charges by the Hindu nationalist Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) which was in power in Gujarat at the time of the massacre and which still governs the state that the Muslim crowd ambushed the train and set it on fire.

"If the police intelligence had failed then I don't expect that other private agencies would have a better intelligence system," the judge said.

"The additional police director-general of Gujarat had said there wasn't a scrap of paper in his department to prove there was any conspiracy," he said.

The national ruling Congress party, which ousted the BJP in 2004 general elections said the report vindicated its stand that the riots had been engineered by Hindu extremists to polarise Hindus and Muslims.

"Here's a report says there was an accident and so why doesn't the BJP analyse the report and come to certain conclusions in terms of public opinion?" senior Congress leader Salman Khursheed said.

"They (the BJP) simply rejects the report because it does not fit their scheme of things," Khursheed, a Muslim, said.

The Gujarat police said the train fire was sabotage aimed at fanning religious violence and have arrested 104 under an anti-terrorism law in connection with the blaze.

Baghdad slaps daytime ban on private vehicles

19 killed in Iraq violence

AP, Baghdad

Gunmen stormed an electricity substation and slaughtered Shia factory workers in separate attacks during a night of carnage that killed at least 19 people in Baghdad's southeastern suburbs, police said yesterday. The attacks raised the toll from Thursday's violence to 58.

Iraqi police and soldiers took to the streets Friday to enforce a daytime ban on private vehicles in an effort to blunt a surge of sectarian violence that has pushed Iraq to the edge of civil war.

The assault began as a series of mortar shells slammed into the Nahrawan power station, police Lt. Bilal Ali Majed said. Half an hour later, dozens of gunmen arrived and set fire to the generating facility. Security guards returned fire, and

the Iraqi police and army sent in reinforcements, he said.

At least nine people were killed and three injured in the gunbattle, police Lt. Mohammed Kheyoun said. He identified the victims as guards and technicians at the facility but did not know if any attackers were killed or wounded.

In the adjacent Maamil suburb, gunmen killed 10 Shia southerners employed at a brick factory as they slept in their shacks, said Maj. Falah al-Mohammedawi, an Interior Ministry official. Police believed the gunmen may have been part of the same group that attacked the power station, he said.

The government imposed the vehicle ban Friday in a bid to avert more attacks on the day Muslims congregate in large numbers for

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