

AL updates diplomats on present situation

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Main opposition Awami League (AL) yesterday provided diplomats stationed in Dhaka with a comprehensive report depicting the current socioeconomic and political situation in the country and its reform proposals.

The AL also expressed its desire to see the international community as vanguard against tyranny and injustice.

The report was distributed in print and CD among the heads of foreign missions from various countries at a dinner hosted by AL chief Sheikh Hasina at Hotel Radisson last night.

"We would like to see you as vanguard of the struggle for the promotion of peace and harmony in the society as well as against tyranny and injustice and against every violation of human rights

SEE PAGE 15 COL 2

Jt team to inspect river border soon

Indian water minister arrives shortly

REAZ AHMAD

Indian Water Resources Minister Saifuddin Soz is expected to visit Bangladesh soon for carrying out an overdue joint inspection of the river-eroded border areas of the two countries.

The joint inspection would pave the way for resumption of riverbank protection works on both sides, which have been stalled for over a year now due to border demarcation disputes.

Following a recent communication from Dhaka expressing urgency to start the joint inspection by Saifuddin and his Bangladeshi counterpart Hafiz Uddin Ahmed of bordering areas affected by erosion by transboundary rivers, Delhi responded positively hinting at the Indian minister's prospective visit to Bangladesh.

According to official sources, Dhaka and Delhi are working out dates for the joint inspection to be held sometime in late April or early May.

The riparian neighbours, who share as many as 54 common rivers, have long been stuck with reclamation works to protect the riverbanks from erosion on respective sides due to disputes over fluctuating borderlines on the transboundary rivers. The borderlines fluctuate because of the erosion of riverbanks.

In the 36th meeting of Indo-Bangla Joint Rivers Commission (JRC) in September last year Water Resources Minister Hafiz Uddin Ahmed and his erstwhile Indian counterpart Priya Ranjan Dasmuni agreed to complete the joint inspection before the year end and decided to resume reclamation works by both countries from January 2006 on respective sides.

But after the Dhaka meet of JRC, India saw changes in the water resources ministry portfolio twice diminishing the prospect of carrying out the inspection on time. First, Dasmuni had been replaced by SM Dev and then Dev was replaced by Saifuddin Soz just recently.

Following Bangladesh's reminders in recent weeks for

SEE PAGE 15 COL 4

JU hardly remembers its JMB student

JU CORRESPONDENT

The teachers and students of Department of Chemistry of Jahangirnagar University (JU) can hardly remember anything about Alamgir Hossain Saikat, a student of the department, whom the Rab captured on Monday in Comilla.

Alamgir, son of Md Shahjahan Ali and Zarina Begum, entered the university as a freshman in 2003-2004 session. According to his classmates, Alamgir never attended classes regularly and disappeared following the first year final exam in July last year.

During his days in the university Alamgir stayed in room 462/a of Meer Mosharrif Hossain Hall with Wahidul Islam Wasim. Rab captured JMB activist Wasim last September.

Even though Alamgir stayed at Meer Mosharrif Hossain Hall his

SEE PAGE 15 COL 1



This madrasa at Delduar in Tangail was used by JMB chief explosives expert Shakil as a militant training camp.

JMB's 'Mollah Omar' son of Ahle Hadith man

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Tangail

Shakil Ahmed alias Soheli alias Mollah Omar, bomb expert of the banned Jama'atul Mujahideen Bangladesh (JMB) killed in a Rapid Action Battalion raid in Comilla on March 13, was known to the locals of Delduar upazila in the district as "Bomb Shakil".

Tangail police said they had been desperately hunting for Shakil, 28, son of Ashraf Ali, 55, a retired army personnel, of Delduar upazila, since the August 17 countrywide serial bomb blasts last year. Ashraf is a follower of the Ahle Hadith.

Shakil passed Dakhil from Dulla Alia Madrasa in Delduar in 2000. He joined the JMB in 2002 and became fully active after his younger sister Shahida was married to cloth trader Toibur Rahman in JMB chief Abdur Rahman's village

SEE PAGE 6 COL 5

PM conspiring to use army in polls

Alleges Jalil

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Awami League (AL) General Secretary and 14-party opposition combine Coordinator Abdul Jalil yesterday alleged that the prime minister is conspiring to use the armed forces in the upcoming election.

"The prime minister in her speech at a rally said the army would be under president's control although we proposed to keep it under the chief of caretaker

SEE PAGE 15 COL 4



The cannal carries toxic chemical wastes dumped by dyeing factories to the Shitalakha river. The photo was taken from Mokhtarpur.

Govt should maintain fair deal with Tata

Says Saifur after meeting with Indian giant's team

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Finance and Planning Minister M Saifur Rahman yesterday said the government has to consider overall economic benefit of the total package of Tata's \$ 2.5 billion proposed investment in Bangladesh before signing any agreement.

It is not only gas price issue, the government has also to consider the impact of Tata investment on the balance of payment, export earning and employment generation in the country, Saifur told newsmen after a meeting with Tata executives.

Tata Steel Deputy Managing Director Tridibesh Mukherjee along with two other executives met the finance minister at his Planning Commission office.

Mukherjee, a steel expert, is now visiting Bangladesh to explain the Indian giant's proposal for a steel plant with a production capacity of 2.4 million tonnes a year among policymakers and business people.

Meanwhile, a national daily reported that major development is expected during the prime minister's upcoming visit to India as Ratan Tata, chairman of the Indian indus-

trial giant, has taken initiative to settle the thorny issues regarding its investment proposal.

Saifur said the negotiators should consider volatility of the prices of crude oil and petroleum products in the global market before setting gas price with the Tata group.

Replying to a question, the minister said, "How can I give them (Tata) guarantee for gas supply when we don't have adequate gas for our own people."

SEE PAGE 15 COL 4

'Outlaw' killed in crossfire

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Khulna

A regional leader of Purba Banglar Communist Party (PBCP) M-L faction was killed during an encounter between the police and his accomplices yesterday at Bejpara of Gilatala union in Khulna. Two police constables were also injured during the encounter.

The victim Abdul Mannan Shikdar, 45, was arrested on Monday night along with his wife Jharna, 32, at Mandartala in Jessore.

Police claimed, following his information they along with

SEE PAGE 15 COL 5

Charges pressed against Sunny in 2 more cases

COURT CORRESPONDENT

Rapid Action Battalion (Rab) yesterday pressed charges against the military commander of Jama'atul Mujahideen Bangladesh (JMB) Aatur Rahman Sunny and four others in two cases.

The two cases, one in Arms Act and the other in Explosive Substances Act, were filed with Sabujbagh Police Station against Sunny and six others on December 14 last year.

The other accused are Sunny's friend Fariduzzaman Swapan, JMB regional commander of Gazipur Enayet Ullah alias Jewel, Kamrul alias Sumon alias Zahidul and

SEE PAGE 6 COL 5

Clouds over third Buriganga bridge

MORSHED ALI KHAN

The communications ministry faces an indefinite delay in launching construction of the third Buriganga Bridge at Basila as the Cabinet Purchase Committee (CPC) refuses to approve the appointment of a consultant, demanding that one of the components of the project be scrapped.

Minister for Communications Nazmul Huda told The Daily Star that his ministry is now seriously considering discarding the Sitalakha Bridge component of the Tk 265 crore project. Since 2004, the project envisages building three

bridges on the rivers Buriganga, Sitalakha and Teesta. The ministry has already spent over Tk 2 crore on feasibility study and detailed design of the proposed Sitalakha bridge.

Official sources said the decision to scrap the Sitalakha component would delay the project for an indefinite period with the funds for it lying idle.

"The authorities will have to restart the entire process of engaging separate consultants and obtaining approval from Kuwait, a

SEE PAGE 15 COL 7

Icy 'super-Earth' found

REUTERS, Washington

A cold, heavy "super-Earth" has been found orbiting a distant star, using a method that holds promise for detecting faraway planets that closely resemble our own, astronomers said on Monday.

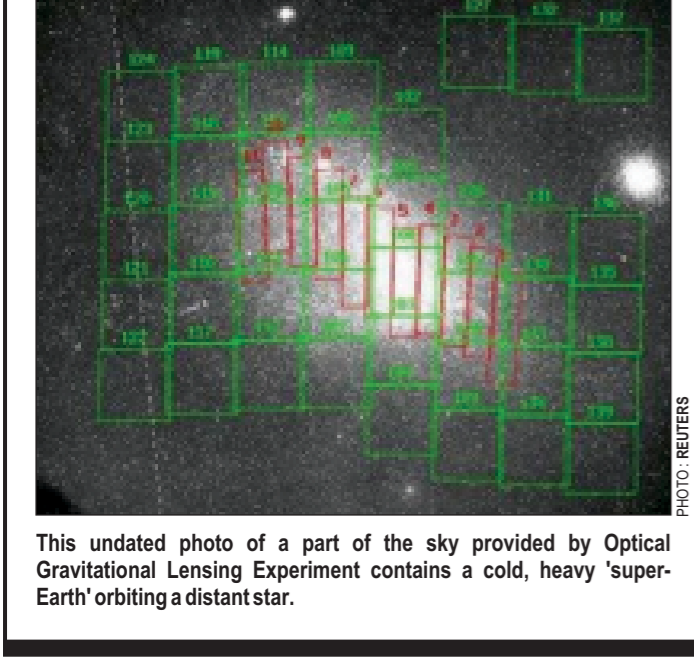
The planet weighs 13 times as much as Earth and is orbiting a star about 9,000 light-years away. But instead of circling close to its star, as Earth does, this "super-Earth" is about as

distant from its star as Jupiter and Saturn are from the Sun.

An international team of scientists figured the new planet probably has a temperature of minus 330 degrees F (minus 201 C), making it one of the coldest planets detected outside our solar system.

The discovery is billed as a super-Earth because it is thought to be a rocky, terrestrial planet like Earth, even though it is much more massive.

SEE PAGE 15 COL 8



This undated photo of a part of the sky provided by Optical Gravitational Lensing Experiment contains a cold, heavy 'super-Earth' orbiting a distant star.

Israel raids West Bank jail to seize militants

Militants threaten Britain, US over raid

AFP, Jericho

Israeli troops yesterday stormed a prison compound in the West Bank town of Jericho in a vast operation to arrest jailed militants held over the assassination of an Israeli minister.

One Palestinian security guard was killed and 18 others wounded as gunfire rang out and explosions rocked the area after Israeli forces pushed into the compound that houses the prison in the usually peaceful desert oasis town.

Bulldozers started to destroy the compound as Israeli troops called through loudspeakers on Ahmed Saadat, the leader of the leftist Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine and his comrades to surrender.

Saadat and three other PFLP members have been jailed in Jericho, a prison under US and British supervision, since August 2002 after his militant faction claimed the 2001 killing of far-right Israeli tourism minister Rehavam Ze'evi.

Israeli Public Security Minister Gideon Ezra confirmed that troops were on a mission to arrest the four PFLP militants, just over a week after Palestinian Authority president Mahmud Abbas reiterated that he was ready to free Saadat.

The dead man was named by a Palestinian security source as Ibrahim Abu al-Amin, a guard who was shot dead inside the

SEE PAGE 15 COL 6

Fresh bird flu outbreak in India

AFP, New Delhi

India reported yesterday a fresh outbreak of the H5N1 strain of bird flu among poultry in western Maharashtra state, close to where the country's first cases were detected last month.

"It (the outbreak) remains within the same state. It is only a district away from the place where it was first reported," Upma Chowdhry, an agriculture ministry official, told a news conference in New Delhi.

SEE PAGE 15 COL 3

IRAN NUKE Security Council yet to reach consensus

AFP, United Nations

Key members of the UN Security Council frantically sought common ground on the Iranian nuclear issue Monday ahead of a meeting of the full 15-member body later this week to address Tehran's refusal to halt uranium enrichment.

Envoys of Britain, China, France, Russia and the United States -- the five veto-wielding, permanent members of the council -- met early Monday at the UN mission to the UN

in New York.

"We will meet again tomorrow," US ambassador John Bolton told reporters after the meeting.

Diplomats said Tuesday's meeting would be held at the British UN mission, the fourth such meeting between the so-called Perm-5 since International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) head Mohamed ElBaradei sent an assessment report on the Iranian nuclear

SEE PAGE 15 COL 4

Hasina goes to US tomorrow for treatment

EAR INJURY

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Leader of the Opposition Sheikh Hasina leaves Dhaka for the US tomorrow for further treatment of the ear injuries she sustained in the August 21 grenade attacks in 2004.

"She is going to the US for treatment as she's still having some problems with her hearing," said a personal aide to Hasina, also president of the main opposition Awami League. She will take a flight of British Airways tomorrow at 8:30am.

The former prime minister is likely to return on March 27 and on return, she will go on a visit to London, said the aide.

Blood cot in her right ear developed from an enormous bang during the August 21 grenade blasts that she escaped narrowly. She received treatment in Singapore and then in the US for several times.

Dhaka loses top UN mission post in Sudan

SHAKHAWAT LITON

Bangladesh has lost the position of force commander of the United Nations (UN) peacekeeping mission in Sudan due to government decision to replace the force commander, who was a senior officer of Bangladesh army by another officer.

Such replacement during the tenure of a commander is however against the UN policy, sources said.

The UN has rejected the government's appeal to replace the Bangladeshi force commander with another Bangladesh army officer and UN Secretary General Kofi Annan recently appointed Lt Gen Jasbir Singh Liddar of India to the post.

Many in the armed forces fear the government's unbending stance that cost Bangladesh the top post in the mission may create negative feeling despite worldwide admiration for Bangladesh's contribution to peacekeeping missions.

"Many countries lobby for having the post of the force commander in the peacekeeping missions. But we lost it due to stubbornness to have one particular officer replaced by another," a senior army officer told The Daily Star asking not to be named.

The force commander in

SEE PAGE 15 COL 1

Prayer Timing		
March 15		
	Azan	Jamaat
Fajr	5-00	5-35
Zohr	12-45	1-15
Asr	4-30	4-45
Maghrib	6-14	6-18
Esha	7-45	8-15

Source: Islamic Foundation

