

## India should lower tax barriers, ensure free movement of goods

FS tells press in Delhi ahead of Khaleda's visit

PALLAB BHATTACHARYA, New Delhi

Setting the tone and tenor of Prime Minister Khaleda Zia's three-day state visit to India, Bangladesh yesterday said it expected India to lower tax barriers to its goods in Indian market contending it would be an important confidence building measure (CBM).

"Our expectation is that the visit will be landmark in terms of bilateral relations," Bangladesh Foreign Secretary Hemayatuddin told reporters after meeting his Indian counterpart Shyam Saran yesterday to fine tune Khaleda Zia's visit. "We need to move forward," he added.

Asked what Bangladesh wanted from India, he said Dhaka was looking for creation of "conditions

for free movement of goods" to this country. "Reduction of tax barrier will be an important CBM," he said.

The foreign secretary said his country wants investments from

India and in this regard he referred to a move by the Tata group to set up an industrial unit in that country for which negotiations are

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Khaleda



Manmohan

## Bombs blasted in Netrakona as 2 JMB men were not freed

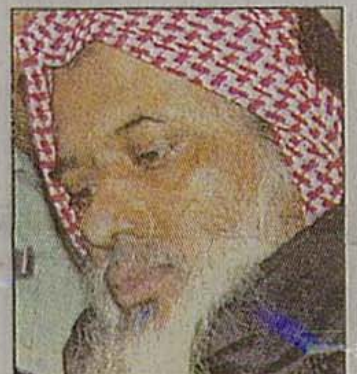
Abdur Rahman confesses

STAR REPORT

Jama'atul Mujahideen Bangladesh (JMB) chief Abdur Rahman has confessed before the law enforcers that the suicide bombing in Netrakona on December 8 killing eight people and injuring 50 others was in retaliation for not releasing two JMB operatives.

After Netrakona police arrested JMB cadre Sanaullah on October 11 and Kawser Alam Sumon on October 13 at Mawa in Gouripur upazila of Mymensingh, the militants phoned the superintendent of police in Netrakona. They asked him to release the two immediately or face reprisal for the arrests.

"As he did not release them, we decided to teach him a lesson," Samiul Alam, officer-in-charge (OC) of Netrakona Police Station, quoted the detained militant leader as saying, reports our



Abdur Rahman

Netrakona correspondent.

Rahman said he chose to go for the attack in the constituency of State Minister for Home Lutfozzaman Babar 'so he took notice of JMB's might and the consequence of not paying heed to its demand'.

Eight people including the suicide bomber and Udichi's district unit joint convenor Khwaja Haider died and 50 others including 10 policemen were injured in the blast in front of Udichi office in Netrakona.

OC Samiul and Sub-Inspector Mohammad Alauddin, who are investigating two cases filed in connection with the blast, interrogated Rahman at Rapid Action Battalion (Rab) headquarters in Dhaka on last Tuesday.

The JMB chief has been made the main accused in both the cases. Rahman said the attack was a special operation and Shura member Salauddin, who still evades capture, was in charge of mounting the assault.

He confessed that he had sent two well-trained suicide squad members to Netrakona for the attack.

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## Investigate if anyone in govt sheltered JMB men: AI

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Arrests of the top two JMB brasses point to a long-awaited shift in government policy to target the actual perpetrators of bombings in contrast to its usual practice of conveniently accusing the political opposition, said Amnesty International (AI) in a public statement on Thursday.

Citing the arrests of Shaekh Abdur Rahman, the chief of banned Jama'atul Mujahideen Bangladesh (JMB), and Siddiqul Islam alias Bangla Bhai, the second-in-command of JMB also the leader of another banned militant group Jagrata Muslim Janata Bangladesh (JMJB), the statement said, "There have been persistent allegations about these groups' involvement in a violent campaign of bomb attacks in recent years."

Citing media reports, AI continued, "... some politicians with close links to the ruling parties had been frustrating efforts to stem the rising tide of violence generated by

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## Outlaw found dead on road in Khulna

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Khulna

An armed cadre of outlawed Purba Banglar Communist Party's (PBCP) Janajuddha faction was found dead on Teligati bypass road yesterday.

Police recovered the bullet-hit body of Kazi Kamal 40, son of Abu Kazi of Teligati village, on the road near Khanjahan Ali Police Station at 6:30pm.

He was an accused in five murder cases and another case filed under the Arms Act for looting rifles from an ansar camp of Daulatpur Jute Mill in 2001.

The law enforcers on March 15 recovered the body of another PBCP outlaw, Daud Khan, 26, from Gilatala under the same police station.

The police said Daud was accused in a number of bomb blast cases filed in the last four months. Two BNP and two Jatiya Party leaders were killed in the blasts, they added.

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Mohammad Rafique, left, and Mashrafe bin Mortaza congratulate each other during the first One Day International (ODI) between Bangladesh and Kenya at Shaheed Chandu Stadium in Bogra yesterday. With their highest ever 301 runs in ODI, Bangladesh defeated Kenya by 131 runs.

## Bangladesh cross 300-run barrier in one-dayer

Beat Kenya by record 131 runs

SPORTS REPORTER

Bangladesh put their poor past records aside when they buried Kenya under tons of runs to clinch a thumping 131-run victory in the first one-day of the four-match series at the Shaheed Chandu Stadium in Bogra yesterday.

The Tigers rode on Shariar Nafees's career best 91 and Aftab Ahmed's 62 to amass 301-7 in the stipulated 50 overs -- their highest ever one-day total -- on way to their biggest triumph in 119 ODI appearances in front of a sparse but enthusiastic crowd in the northern town.

The total surpassed Bangladesh's 272-8 against Zimbabwe at the Queens Sports Club ground in 2001 while their previous biggest victory was against Hong Kong by 116 runs during the 2004 Asia Cup in Sri Lanka.

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## Niko flouting rules with govt turning a blind eye

SHARIER KHAN

Canadian company Niko continues to flout unhindered all rules and regulations in each of its steps in keeping with its backdoor entry into the country's energy sector in 2003 using influence of an 'alternative centre of power' of the government.

Energy ministry sources said other than the recent blackmailing tactics to force the government to fix gas price by stopping gas supply from the Feni field, Niko has been involved in illegal land grabbing, purchase and even 'donation', illegal installation of gas pipeline and spending of millions of dollars without due approval.

Niko's undue influence made a number of government organisations commit gross irregularities. "Niko is corrupting the government mechanism," said a highly placed source.

Though the government is aware of Niko's continued foul play, it has never taken any step to punish it, thanks to the influence of the 'alternative centre of power'.

The energy ministry adviser made the only exception last week when he threatened Niko with legal action if it does not resume gas extraction and supply from the Feni field, stopped in late February. The threat led Niko to reluctantly resume Feni field's operation, supplying 29 mmcf (million cubic feet per day) of gas.

Meanwhile, there had been genuine disputes with other foreign oil companies working under different production sharing contracts (PSCs) but none of them has ever been accused of blatantly violating rules or corrupting government offices, an official pointed out.

According to sources in Jalalabad Gas Transmission

Company Ltd (JGTCL), Niko last year grabbed four acres out of 6.5 acres of its land earmarked for JGTCL's future gas pipeline. Niko did so while illegally constructing early last year a 19-km gas pipeline using Titas Gas Company's pipes to take Tengratila gas to Doarabazar in Sunamganj in future. The company went for this mischief with the backing of the then state minister for energy AKM Mosharraf Hossain, who was sacked later for taking a Tk 1-crore car from Niko.

The sources alleged that after grabbing the valuable land, Niko bribed some officials of the JGTCL to ensure silence on the issue. The company then 'donated' a part of this four-acre land to a local mosque. The JGTCL was paid a lump-sum for the land which the company acquired from the public through a lot of hassles. The JGTCL later complained to the energy

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## Subway train unlikely to become a reality soon

RAFIQ HASAN

The city is unlikely to see an underground railway in near future, as all the initiatives by the coalition government seem to have failed to attract foreign investors for the project.

Against this background, the communications ministry at a recent meeting decided to conduct a feasibility study at public expense and then go for an international tender again seeking foreign participation, said a source.

The planning commission has agreed to allocate Tk 7 crore for conducting the study, added the source.

"After the feasibility study, we may go for an international tender again for building the underground rail system on build operate and transfer (BOT) basis," Communications Minister Nazmul

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