

Bangladesh waters

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Boundary in the Bay of Bengal.

Describing his consultation as constructive and fruitful, Hemayet said all bilateral issues, including repatriation of Rohingya refugees, border security, road connection and bilateral trade and investment, were discussed during the talks.

He said the Myanmar side have agreed to repatriate the remaining 21,172 Rohingyas sheltered in Cox's Bazar. They expressed readiness to take back 8,000 already cleared by Myanmar authorities and then the remaining ones.

The two sides agreed to strengthen border security to stop illegal movements, particularly of drug smugglers and gunrunners. They agreed on holding frequent meetings between the border guards of the two countries to maintain a secure and peaceful border.

Hemayet said the two sides have agreed to increase the trade volume through border and coastal trade by improving the banking system and shipping lines. Myanmar expressed keen interest in importing more pharmaceutical products from Bangladesh, he added.

Two-way trade favours Myanmar as Bangladesh imported \$ 32.43 million against its export of \$ 4.18 million in 2004-05 fiscal year.

The Myanmar side also agreed to ease the visa regime for businessmen

by extending visa for at least 15 days, the foreign secretary said.

On the construction of Bangladesh-Myanmar road, Hemayet said the two sides would soon sign a memorandum of understanding on the construction of 25 kilometres road (2 km on the Bangladesh side and 23 km on the Myanmar side) as the two subcommittees completed study on technical and financial aspects.

The proposed road could be linked with Kunming of China on consultation with the Chinese government to establish a greater connectivity in the region.

The two sides also discussed cooperation in defence in the form of training of military personnel.

On the stalled project for tri-nation gas pipeline, Hemayet said the Myanmar side raised the issue when he told them that settlement of some bilateral issues with India could make the way for the trans-border pipeline.

About the release of Bangladeshis in Myanmar prisons, Hemayet said he urged his counterpart to take humanitarian look at some Bangladeshi nationals imprisoned there.

Some 89 Bangladeshis, mostly fishermen, are now imprisoned in Myanmar while some 500 Myanmar nationals are in Bangladeshi jails.

President asked

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water, electricity and gas crises and price hike of essentials.

Due to the rally on the Dhaka-Chittagong highway gridlocks were seen in the Jatrabari and Sayadabad areas. On the highway near Shanir Akhra many Dhaka bound buses and other vehicles were stranded for more than three hours.

Several thousands of opposition leaders and activists with kerosene lanterns and water pots in hands brought out a procession after the rally chanting slogan demanding immediate resignation of the prime minister.

The opposition leaders said a mass upsurge on June 5 will virtually halt the entire country and Khaleda-Nizami government will resign then for failing to solve the ongoing crises and for their wide scale corruption and misuse.

AL Presidium Member Tofail Ahmed said they placed the reform proposals as the alliance government politicised all the sectors to ensure return to power through vote rigging.

"No election would be allowed in the country before implementation of the reform demands and cancellation of the voter list," he said.

Workers' Party President Rashed Khan Menon urged the countrymen to resist the government's conspiracy to come back.

Demanding immediate resignation of the prime minister, Jatiya Samajtantrik Dal President Hasanul Haque Inu urged the countrymen to force the prime minister to accept the reform proposals.

Meanwhile, an AL secretarial meeting held at party chief Sheikh Hasina's Dhanmondi office yesterday demanded immediate resignation of the CEC, alleging that he is responsible for preparing the 'fake' voter list.

Bashar also said the shipment containing 54kg of heroin was supposed to be received by a Bangladeshi born UK citizen named Mintu in London. He said Zafar had provided him with Tk 1.25 lakh for the job and was supposed to provide him with Tk 7 lakh more, but they were arrested before the payment could be made.

Meanwhile, a CID-led five-member team formed by the home ministry, to investigate smuggling of 75.5kg heroin to the UK, submitted a preliminary report to State Minister for Home Lutfozzaman Babar yesterday.

The AL leaders also criticised the slide in law and order situation and asked the government to stop attacks on AL and its front organisations' leaders and activists immediately. The meeting also condemned and protested "capturing of Sheikh Rehana's house and setting up of police station there and allocating a part of the house to former Chief Justice KM Hasan".

They demanded the house to be returned to Sheikh Rehana immediately.

IU closes

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chosen men of either the JCD or Islami Chhatra Shibir, student wings of ruling BNP and Jamaat-e-Islami.

The 88 appointments were made against 53 advertised posts.

The JCD men got furious as the syndicate failed to fulfil their demand of at least 200 appointments in the university.

On Friday, they vandalised 23 buses of the university, offices and residences of teachers and officers, and threatened to continue massive agitation till their demands are met.

On Saturday night they torched two private cars -- one used by the treasurer and the other by the registrar of the university.

At a rally on the campus yesterday, Islamic University unit of Bangladesh Chhatra League (BCL) demanded immediate cancellation of all 'partisan' recruitment.

Registration staff

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At the beginning of the press meet, he said he would not reply any question due to time constraints.

"Question-answer will be in future," he said.

During the press meet that lasted hardly 10 minutes, Aziz made his brief statement on the preparation of voter list to dispel controversies over the list.

The CEC admitted that there might be duplications in the voter list. "We don't have enough manpower to prepare the list from such a huge population. We have to recruit government officers, school and college teachers to accomplish the task."

Aziz said the EC has got 26 objections from individuals and 22 from the media about the irregularities in the draft voter list. "We forwarded all allegations to the election officials concerned for investigation," he told reporters.

However, the CEC defended the sharp rise in the number of voters in the draft list. "The rise in the number of voter was 33.69 per cent in the voter list prepared in 2000 while this year the rise is 22.4 per cent," he explained.

About the allegation raised by the law minister of enlisting fake voters in his constituency, the CEC said they have not received such allegations. "However, we have directed the election officials concerned and revising authority to probe the allegation. The revising authority will hold hearing on the allegation on May 24."

Referring to the laws, the CEC said punitive action could be taken against any official involved with the preparation of the voter list, if he is proved guilty. Even any person can

Bus counter

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Hospital has 28, the draft roll shows.

The enumerators probably used some ultra-modern remote-controlled system, because, Delwar Hossain, who runs a shop in the clinic compound, told reporters that no one had come to register them as voters.

The ticket counter staffs were thunderstruck yesterday to know that so many voters have been enlisted at that address. "Nobody came to us to put our names on the list," one of them named Dulal Hossain told reporters.

Like most areas in the country, the draft lists for Savar and Dhamrai upazilas of Dhaka district are also rife with anomalies. The Daily Star detected a few thousand erroneous identities of voters on them. For example, the list did not specify the relation between a female voter and the man named in the column for husband or parent.

However, an Election Commission (EC) source claimed they are amending the mistakes.

While the number of revelations of gross irregularities in the draft voter lists was escalating, the time for submitting claims and objections to the

54kg heroin shipment

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appointed a worker. They manufactured 650 tiles with heroin hidden in each of those.

"We manufactured more tiles and in each of those 100 to 150 grams of heroin was concealed," Bashar told a magistrate. "In floor tiles and in cans containing molasses we shipped 54kg heroin to the UK between 2004 and April 2006," he said.

Rapid Action Battalion (Rab) members arrested Abul Bashar raiding a house at Shankarpur in Jessoro town in the early hours on May 6.

Bashar also said the shipment containing 54kg of heroin was supposed to be received by a Bangladeshi born UK citizen named Mintu in London. He said Zafar had provided him with Tk 1.25 lakh for the job and was supposed to provide him with Tk 7 lakh more, but they were arrested before the payment could be made.

Meanwhile, a CID-led five-member team formed by the home ministry, to investigate smuggling of 75.5kg heroin to the UK, submitted a preliminary report to State Minister for Home Lutfozzaman Babar yesterday.

Babar held a meeting with the probe body members. Emerging from the meeting the state minister told journalists that the report is a preliminary one and a lot of investigation is still needs to be carried out.

Babar said involvement of BD Foods in the heroin smuggling was detected in the investigation. Replied to a question he said the primary investigation did not find involvement of any political party or any government official in drug trafficking.

In the confidential statement Bashar told Metropolitan Magistrate Nani Gopal Biswas that he and Zafar also smuggled 2kg of heroin to the UK hidden in another shipment of vegetables through Zia International Airport in 2000. A UK citizen of Bangladeshi origin named Liluc received the shipment of the illicit drug there.

He also said they collected the 54kg of heroin from three spots -- Hotel Pritom at Paltan, Cafe Jheel at Dainik Bangla Crossing and a place in front of Shapla Chattr, all in the capital.

He said he knows only one supplier named Habib who used to supply heroin at Shapla Chattr. He said Zafar told him that the heroin was smuggled into Bangladesh from Pakistan.

Bashar told the magistrate that he had been working as a labourer at Zia International Airport since

lists expired yesterday.

Hundreds of residents of Jurain in the capital, when came to know that their names are absent on the list, demonstrated in protest and besieged a local school yesterday, a day after demonstration in Banasree on the same ground.

Officials at the EC Secretariat could not specify yesterday the total number of claims and objections received across the country to the draft voter list.

The revising authorities will resolve the objections and claims by June 6 and then the EC will publish the final list, though the EC is yet to announce the date of the publication.

The EC has sent allegations against the draft lists to the election officials concerned to examine them, Chief Election Commissioner MA Aziz told a press conference yesterday. "The voter list will be corrected and revisited until the schedule of the next parliamentary elections is declared," he said.

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1988. He met vegetable exporter

Zafar Reza who exported vegetables to the UK during 1988 to 1996 in five shipments.

Zafar requested Bashar to join his business as a partner and subsequently financed the business. Bashar said in 2000 Zafar proposed to him to smuggle heroin to the UK concealed among vegetables and accordingly they started with smuggling 2kg of heroin to London.

BABAR ON INVESTIGATION Asked about reports on different newspapers about the possible link of a lawmaker of a ruling alliance partner with the drug smuggling, State Minister for Home Affairs Lutfozzaman Babar yesterday told journalists, "Newspapers report many things, but we have to cross check if those are based on fact or fiction."

He said so far investigators have not yet found any link between any political leader or government official and the heroin smuggling. "If any link is found later, law enforcers can take appropriate steps," he added.

He said the investigators will have to go to the UK for further investigation. The UK proposed to the government to join the investigation and Bangladesh accepted its proposal. But the UK has yet to send any investigator.

"None will be spared if found involved in heroin smuggling to the UK," Babar told journalists after a meeting with top officials of different law enforcing agencies following submission of the preliminary report by the investigation team.

He said bank transactions of BD Foods and its sister concerns are being checked to find out whether there was any abnormal transaction and from where the money came and where it went.

He said he gave instructions to the investigators in this regard in the meeting.

"It is a matter of documentation. It will take time to complete the investigation," he added.

Badrudza Chowdhury Momen, Chairman of BD Foods Group, was arrested after primary investigation had revealed that he was involved in heroin smuggling to the UK, Babar said.

The meeting was also attended by Inspector General of Police MA Quayyum, Director General of RAB MA Aziz Sarkar and other top officials from different law enforcing agencies.

be punished if they submit false declaration to be a voter. But Aziz did not specify whether anyone has been punished for this.

The CEC, who last time met the press on January 31, addressed yesterday's press meet at the conference room of the EC Secretariat in presence of two election commissioners, Justice Mahfuzur Rahman and SM Zakaria.

Aziz who on April 25 launched a broadside on certain 'vested quarters' and the media for 'undermining democratic practices and destroying people's aspirations,' yesterday lauded the role of the media in helping the EC to prepare a fair voter list.

"Your (journalists) investigative journalism will help prepare a fair voter list," Aziz said. "Election Commission will be able to present a fair election if your support continues."

About a month ago, Aziz at a luncheon meeting organised by American Chamber of Commerce said, "Some interested quarters and the media as a whole have raised a simulated storm in a tea cup as if heaven will fall if the voter list is prepared."

Aziz then accused the media of distorting facts referring to reports on various irregularities in the process and procedure of making the fresh voter list.

Jubo Sangram

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Commissioners.

The leaders and workers of JSP, a platform of the young fronts of the components of 14-party opposition combine, will gather at Russell Square and Dhanmondi playground at 11:00am and then march towards the EC Secretariat in the capital.

"We will lay siege to the EC Secretariat to ensure CEC and two politically-appointed commissioners' resignation and cancellation of the controversial voter list to ensure a free, fair and neutral election," said Jahangir Kabir Nanak, chairman of Awami League's youth front Jubo League.

Nanak said the JSP will observe sit-in and hold a rally if the law enforcers put barricade to foil the march.

Hartal

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SCC ward commissioner.

The speakers said the law enforcers are not sincere about arresting the killers, who had attacked Juba League leader Ayub Ali, a young trader, and his companions for protesting extortion by the ruling party backed gang.

On Wednesday night, Ayub and some other traders were injured in an attack by JCD cadres led by Abdul Mannan, General Secretary of ward no 26 JCD, who had demanded toll from the traders the day before.

Ayub Ali succumbed to his injuries at a clinic on Thursday night.

Rejoinder

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The ministry said the graveyard is a part of its project to "meet the growing public demand to create" facilities like "park, playground and graveyard etc" in "Khilgaon Rehabilitation Zone".

Hotel staff

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Extra police force from Ramna Police Station rushed there after about 15 minutes of the horrific vandalism and took the situation under control.

The police chased the unruly people away and detained four restaurant workers from the spot.

The traffic movement on the Topkhana Road was halted for about half an hour.

BDNEWS adds: Earlier, the mobile team conducted a raid on Tourist Hotel at Gafur Tower and detained 11 women and some men allegedly for their anti-social activities. The team also fined the hotel.

Following the attack by restaurant employees, the mobile court team abandoned the drive and left the spot under police escort.

"We are preparing to file cases against the hotel and restaurant employees on charge of contempt of court and creating obstruction to the government work," officer-in-charge of the Ramna Police Station said.

Earlier on April 16, the employees and officials of Nabisco Biscuit and Bread Factory, a concern of Bhailya group, attacked a mobile court team, also led by Magistrate Tapan Kumar Biswas.

PM

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has taken decisions to promote people-to-people contact by facilitating travel between the Saarc countries.

Other relevant Saarc decisions in this regard, she told the conference, have been on youth exchanges in the fields of culture and sports, intra-Saarc tourism and linkages between concerned professional bodies.

The Saarc chairperson said South Asia is now poised to achieve significant development in social and economic areas, including the tourism sector. "We are aware of the vast economic and social potentials of our region that can be tapped through regional collaboration and cooperation."

She said, "I am confident that continued efforts would be made by the Saarc countries to promote the culture of our people through tourism. This is vital for projecting the distinct identity of South Asia."

On Bangladesh's development in the tourism sector, Khaleda said her government has recognised tourism as an industry and declared a National Tourism Policy for its development at domestic and international levels.

The policy emphasises both tourism marketing and human resource development, she said adding, the country's industrial policy has included tourism as a thrust sector.

She said steps have been taken to develop Cox's Bazar, the Sundarbans, the hilly districts and Kuakata as special tourist zones.

She said the government encourages foreign investment in this sector in the form of joint venture or 100 per cent foreign ownership.

Earlier, Pakistan Tourism Minister Nilufar Bakhtiar requested Khaleda to urge the Saarc countries to cut their respective defence budgets and invest the money for the development in tourism industry.

Bangladesh logs

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will greatly improve telecommunications systems, she added.

Bangladesh earlier signed an agreement with 12 other countries under a consortium in 2004 for installing the submarine cable underneath the seabed at a cost of Tk 628 crore.

The South East Asia-Middle East-West Europe-4 project connects the country with undersea fibre-optic cable passing from Singapore through Malaysia, Thailand, Bangladesh, India, Sri Lanka, Pakistan and a number of Middle-Eastern countries to finally land in France.

Now the country will have a 10-gigabyte data-transfer capacity per second, 68 times higher than the current speed.

Prime Minister Khaleda Zia said that this submarine cable would facilitate high-speed data and voice transfer and also increase the number of international communications circuits that will ultimately lead to an enhancement of revenue for the government.

"The country will also have a scope for earning huge foreign exchange through leasing out the unutilised capacity of the submarine cable," she told the function.

The prime minister said the submarine cable project would create the opportunity for introducing broadband data-transfer and call-centre services at a very cheap rate, while the cost of software production for export, e-governance, e-commerce and tele-medicine services will also decrease.

Through video conferencing,

Militants attack

FROM PAGE 16

General of the Central Reserve Police Force who led the operation against the militants, told Reuters.

"We suspect some others are hiding around," he said. "Though the firing has stopped, we are searching the area."

Four workers belonging to the Congress party and two policemen also died after militants fired automatic weapons and hurled grenades. Twenty others were wounded, including two senior police officers.

Prime Minister Manmohan Singh condemned the attack, saying such attempts would not prevent efforts to bring peace to the disputed Himalayan region.

"The prime minister said that it is only through dialogue that a lasting solution can be found," a statement from his office said.

Singh said he would go ahead with a visit to Srinagar on Wednesday, when he is due to take part in talks with Pakistan aimed at ending the two countries' bitter conflict over the Siachen glacier in the mountains of Kashmir.

The meeting, the second such gathering since February, has been called by New Delhi to widen the dialogue process in the state, where a separatist revolt against Indian rule by Muslim militants since 1989 has killed more than 45,000 people.

Violence involving separatist guerrillas and soldiers continues in the region despite a peace process

reputed international doctors will have the scope for helping Bangladeshi doctors diagnose ailments and conduct treatment or operations, she added.

Khaleda Zia also expressed hope that this new technology would give the nation an immense opportunity in facing the challenges of the new century as well as play an important role in exchanging information across the world in an easy and faster way.

She said the telecommunications and information-technology-based services are earning huge revenues for the national exchequer and are also playing a positive role in socio-economic development of the country.

The prime minister informed the function that the present government has already taken a massive initiative to promote software industry and make telecommunications and information technology easily available for all.

Soon after assuming power, she pointed out, the government formed the Telecommunications Regulatory Commission to modernise and develop country's telecom sector.

Post and Telecommunications Minister Barister Aminul Huq, State Minister for Communications Salahuddin Ahmed and local MP Shahiduzzaman also spoke on the occasion.

between India and Pakistan, which have fought two of their three wars over Kashmir since they won freedom from Britain in 1947.

India accuses Pakistan of training, arming and sending militants into its part of Kashmir while Islamabad says it is trying to stop the incursions.

Kashmiri militant groups Al-Mansoori and Lashkar-e-Taiba (Army of the Pure) claimed responsibility for Sunday's attack in a call to a local news agency.

It was the second major incident in Kashmir in May, after suspected Islamic militants shot dead 35 Hindus in the remote Doda region on May 1.

Kashmir's Chief Minister Ghulam Nabi Azad was to have addressed Sunday's rally but had not yet arrived when the gunfire erupted, prompting the huge crowd to scatter in panic.

"A man in police uniform suddenly stood up and started firing indiscriminately at us. Thank God I have escaped but I don't know how many are lying injured there," Mohammad Ismail Bhat, a Congress worker, told Reuters.

Militants had threatened on Saturday to disrupt next week's peace talks. A Pakistan-based alliance of Muslim militant groups called on Sunday for a two-day strike in Jammu and Kashmir to protest against the conference.

Bombs rock Iraq

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Baghdad," Malki said. "We will form special new force to secure Baghdad."

But the prime minister stressed that the 37-member cabinet finally approved by MPs on Saturday after more than five months of coalition talks would not do more than resort to strong-arm tactics if it were to rein in the insurgency raging in Sunni areas.

"We have to make extraordinary efforts because we suffer from terrorism and security problems and we have administrative and financial corruption," Malki said.

"We cannot confront terrorism only by using force, we need other measures besides security, we need national reconciliation.

"We have a new plan of reconciliation for Iraq to restore trust."

The government is still without ministers of defence, interior or national security because of continuing disputes over who should be appointed but Malki said he expected the positions to be filled soon.

"I don't think we need more than two or three days to nominate ministers of interior and defence," he said.

US President George W. Bush on Saturday welcomed the formation of the new government as an "opportunity for progress" and pledged US support for the challenges it will face.

"This broadly representative unity government offers a new opportunity for progress in Iraq," said Bush, who is under increasing pressure from the American public to withdraw the some 130,000 US troops deployed in Iraq.

The formation of the new government, after protracted wrangling between Iraq's ethnic and religious communities that saw a sharp spike in sectarian violence, was greeted with cautious optimism in Iraq.

"What is important for Iraqis is not to have a new government, but to judge its actions on the ground," said an editorial in the Adala newspaper of the powerful Shiite religious party, the Supreme Council for the Islamic Revolution in Iraq (SCIRI). "The Iraqi people await with impatience to reap the fruits of their sacrifice."

Ordinary Iraqis had watched on with mounting exasperation as insurgents filled the power vacuum left by the bickering politicians with a daily diet of violence.

Many accused the politicians of working for party or sectarian interests rather than the good of the country.

"We don't know about everyone in the new cabinet, but we know the prime minister has a good background and he appears strong and could well change the situation," said Qais Ahmed, a middle aged Sunni working as a housing ministry engineer.

"We hope this government will work on getting us services, like electricity, cleaning up the city and of course

improving security," he said.

Standing outside his technology company in central Baghdad, Yasser Ghazi, a 27-year-old