

Hu promises 'new level' of ties with Pakistan

2 countries sign 18 agreements, including an FTA

REUTERS, Islamabad

Chinese President Hu Jintao promised yesterday to bolster his country's strategic ties with Pakistan to a new level, saying strong relations between the old allies was conducive to peace in Asia.

Hu arrived in Pakistan on Thursday on the first visit by a Chinese president in a decade. His visit also marks the 55th anniversary of diplomatic relations, which analysts describe as Pakistan's most stable.

The two countries signed 18 agreements, including a free trade pact, which they hope will boost trade from \$4.26 billion last year to

\$15 billion within five years.

There had been speculation they would also sign a new agreement on nuclear power but no new deal was announced.

China has already helped Pakistan build a 300-megawatt nuclear plant and is building a second of the same capacity.

Referring to that help, Hu told a news conference with Pakistani President Pervez Musharraf: "We will continue to carry out such cooperation."

Hu arrived in Pakistan on Thursday from a visit to India where he agreed with leaders to expand economic relations, sweep away mistrust and speed up efforts to

resolve border disputes.

Analysts said he would be keen to demonstrate that China's growing ties with India would not come at the expense of its old friend, Pakistan.

"China will continue to view its relations with Pakistan from a strategic and long-term perspective," Hu said.

"We are ready to work together with Pakistan to raise our strategic partnership onto a new level."

In addition to the free trade agreement, the two sides signed a pact on a five-year plan to set up a comprehensive framework for boosting economic ties.

Other agreements covered a range of areas such as telecommu-

nications, infrastructure, science and technology, culture, health and defence, including collaboration on the development of an airborne early warning surveillance system.

Asked about Pakistan's long-running dispute with India over the divided Himalayan region of Kashmir, Hu said China wanted to see the South Asian nations resolve their disputes peacefully.

"South Asian countries are close neighbours to China. So as a neighbour and a friend to South Asia, China sincerely hopes to see peace and stability maintained on the sub-continent," he said.

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PHOTO: STAR

The fountain at Bijoy Sarani intersection in the capital is now an ideal breeding ground for mosquitoes due to negligence of the authorities.

4-party calls activists to prepare for polls

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Leaders of BNP-led four-party alliance yesterday called upon their activists to make preparation for the upcoming general elections.

"On the day after tomorrow we will announce our next course of programme which will be focused on preparation for the election," Bhuiyan told a rally at Muktangon in the capital that was organised as part of the alliance's countrywide processions and rallies in cities, districts and upazilas.

Criticising the Awami League (AL)-led 14-party combine's Bangabhaban and Election Commission (EC) siege programme, the BNP secretary

general said as part of a deep-rooted conspiracy they are keeping issues alive to go on movement.

They raise allegations of election rigging when they lose, he added.

Initially the 14-party said that they will take part in the election and refrain from rail-road-waterways blockade if Justice KM Hasan does not take over as the chief adviser, he said.

"When Justice Hasan stepped aside, the 14-party combine demanded removal of Chief Election Commissioner Justice MA Aziz. Now Justice Aziz has taken a three-month leave, but they have

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14-party to reject poll schedule before voter list correction

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The 14-party coalition said yesterday it would reject the schedule for next general election if it is announced without correcting the voter list by excluding 1.40 crore fake voters.

"If the Election Commission announces election schedule before the voter list is corrected, then we along with the people will reject and resist it," 14-party Coordinator Abdul Jalil said at a press briefing at his Gulshan residence.

Prior to the briefing, the Awami

League (AL)-led coalition held a meeting with AL Presidium member Abdur Razzak in the chair.

At the meeting that lasted more than two and a half hours, the 14-party leaders discussed the latest political situation as Justice Mahfuzur Rahman took charge as acting chief election commissioner (CEC) and stated that election schedule would be announced within this month without correcting the voter list.

Referring to the voter list prepared under CEC MA Aziz, Jalil said the voter list contains some 1.4

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President's speech failed to fulfil people's hope

Says 23 prominent citizens

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

President and Chief Adviser (CA) to the caretaker government (CG) Iajuddin Ahmed's address to the nation on Wednesday has failed to fulfil the expectations of the nation.

Expressing this view in a joint statement yesterday, 23 leading members of the civil society said it seems that Justice Mahfuzur Rahman's taking charge as acting chief election commissioner (CEC) all of a sudden is a violation of the constitution.

The president's address did not

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Brac brings internet to rural homes

SHEIKH SABIHA ALAM

bracNET, an affiliation of Brac, the world's largest non-government organisation, has recently launched e-Hut to give internet access to people in rural areas of Bangladesh.

Through e-Hut the people living in the remote corners of the country will have access to the internet at an affordable price. While explaining the programme, bracNET officials said e-Hut is a one-stop shop of different types of digital services including internet browsing, basic computer training, photocopying, scanning, digital photo taking and lamination of documents and photos.

Moreover, e-Huts are franchi-

sees of bracNET and owned by local entrepreneurs, thus, it would facilitate young people to be self-reliant.

Khalid Quadir, chief executive officer (CEO) of bracNET said, "Our mission is to disseminate internet data connectivity to people in rural areas by 2008. bracNet's e-Hut franchisees will also be encouraged to become "bracNet Partner" in their respective communities to provide online connectivity.

The e-Hut programme is not a charity, rather a business. It would follow a shared model as did the village phone, he said adding, "We don't need a master's degree or a

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Nizami slates professionals, EU for endorsing 14-party demands

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Jamaat-e-Islami Ameer Matiur Rahman Nizami yesterday blasted the lawyers, businessmen, journalists, intellectuals, and the European Union (EU) for endorsing the 14-party combine's demand for Election Commission (EC) reconstitution including removal of Chief Election Commissioner (CEC) MA Aziz.

"Some lawyers and intellectuals led by Dr Kamal Hossain are continuing to misinterpret the constitution to mislead the people. Both the print and electronic media are focussing on these statements and

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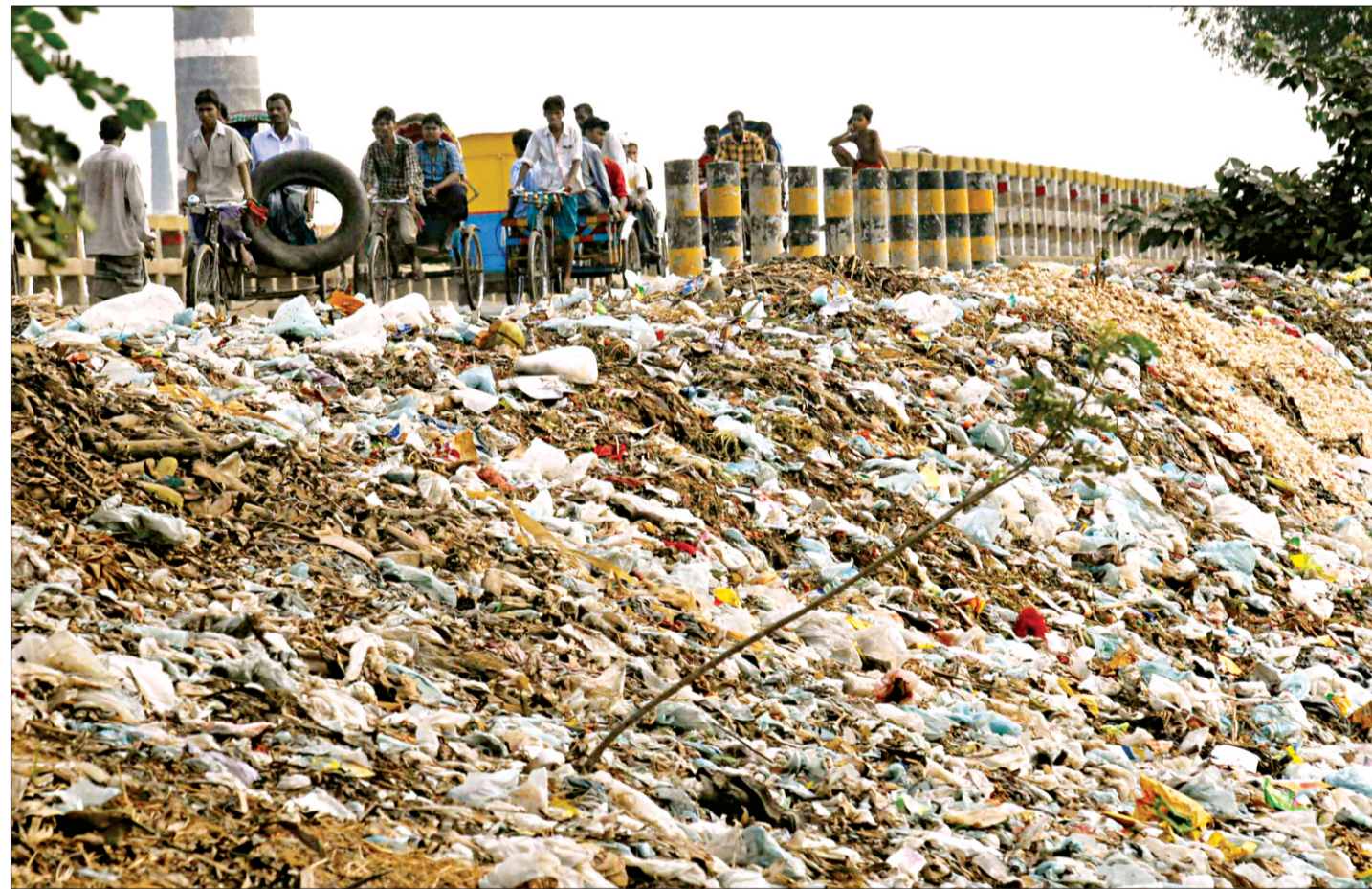


PHOTO: STAR

Banned polyethylene bags along with other garbage are dumped in a ditch at Baipail on Dhaka-Tangail highway polluting the environment in the area.

CHT BOARD CHIEF Wadud's removal welcomed by CHT people

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Khagrachhari

Former BNP lawmaker Wadud Bhuiyan's removal from the post of the chairman of Chittagong Hill Tracts (CHT) Development Board has been welcomed by both indigenous and Bangla speaking people in the region.

A November 22 circular of the establishment ministry that gave his removal order also appointed Vice-chairman of the board Mohammad Firoz Kibria as new chairman (extra duty) until appointment of a regular chairman, sources said.

At different places in

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Another bloody day for Iraq

Car bomb kills 22; Sadr City bombing toll rises to 202

REUTERS, AFP, Baghdad

The death toll in Thursday's Baghdad bombings rose to 202, police said as another 22 people were killed in a double suicide attack in the northern city of Tal Afar, heightening fears Iraq is sliding towards civil war.

In Baghdad, at least 250 other people were wounded in the multiple car bomb and mortar onslaught in the Shia Sadr City slum, the deadliest attack of the entire conflict to date.

It has left political leaders from the Shia majority and the once dominant Sunni community scram-

bling to appeal for calm. With Baghdad locked down in indefinite curfew, politicians hope clerical leaders echo those calls in Friday sermons as Muslims go their separate ways to mosques across the city.

One renowned Sunni mosque was hit by a mortar round in an apparent retaliatory strike from Sadr City the night before.

In Tal Afar, one bomber drove a car laden with explosives and another blew himself up with a suicide vest, killing 22 people at a market, a police officer in the regional capital Mosul said.

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Oikya Front sit-in near Bangabhaban Nov 28

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Jatiya Oikya Front (JOF) yesterday said it would stage a sit-in around Bangabhaban on November 27 and the Election Commission (EC) on November 28, simultaneous with the 14-party alliance's programme, demanding the resignation of the chief adviser and the acting chief election commissioner (CEC).

The JOF, a political alliance of Liberal Democratic Party (LDP), Bangladesh Tarikat Federation and Jatiya Oikya Mancha, said it would stage the sit-in around the EC demanding the resignation of Acting Chief Election Commissioner Justice Mahfuzur Rahman and other controversial election commissioners.

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Prayer Timing		
November 25		
	Azan	
Fajr	5-10	5-45
Zohr	12-45	1-15
Asr	3-45	4-00
Maghrib	5-19	5-22
Esha	7-00	7-30

Source: Islamic Foundation

Iran makes concession to IAEA investigation

Tehran to handover records of uranium enrichment work

AFP, Vienna

Iran has agreed to hand over records of its uranium enrichment work in a boost to UN efforts to determine whether Tehran seeks nuclear weapons, but diplomats and analysts said more cooperation is needed.

International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) chief Mohamed ElBaradei told the IAEA's 35-nation board of governors on Thursday that Iran would finally provide the sought-after records.

Tehran had rebuffed previous IAEA demands for months, while

pushing ahead with enrichment operations in defiance of a UN Security Council call for it to suspend the sensitive nuclear work.

Iran has also agreed to the IAEA's long-standing request to let its inspectors take more environmental sample swipes on equipment from a former military site at Lavizan, where enrichment work is suspected, ElBaradei said.

The Vienna-based IAEA is mired in an over three-year-old investigation into US charges that Tehran is secretly developing nuclear weapons.

Diplomats said Iran, under the

threat of UN sanctions over its nuclear program, was trying to parry charges that it has failed to cooperate fully with the IAEA inquest.

Iran says its program is a peaceful effort to generate electricity. "Getting the operating records is a pretty big deal," said a diplomat with technical training and who is close to the IAEA.

The diplomat said the documents would help the IAEA confirm Iran's insistence that it is only carrying out research-level uranium enrichment at a facility in

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