

# India ready for talks

From Page 1 Col 5

a guest of honour when she goes to Ajmeer Sharif to offer feteiha, the Special Envoy was quoted as saying.

Begum Zia, on her part, emphasised the need for resolving the 'water' issue saying that the people, particularly those of North Bengal were facing acute water problems with the onset of the lean period.

Prime Minister Khaleda Zia also underscored the need to transfer the Tin Bigha corridor to Bangladesh which she said was a longstanding problem.

Muchkund Dubey in his opening statement mentioned the initiatives taken by the late President Ziaur Rahman to strengthen bilateral cooperation.

He said that the late President's initiative on forming the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC) was now a reality.

Begum Zia said that she was also looking forward to meeting Indian Prime Minister Chandra Shekhar and other leaders at a time to be fixed later.

The talks between Prime Minister Khaleda Zia and Special Envoy Muchkund Dubey began at 11 a.m. and lasted for about 20 minutes.

Foreign Secretary Abul Ahsan, Additional Foreign Secretary Mahmood Ali, Bangladesh High Commissioner to India Faruq Ahmed Chowdhury and Indian High Commissioner to Bangladesh K. Srinivasan were present on the occasion.

Muchkund Dubey congratulated Khaleda Zia on the victory of her party in the parliament elections and presented her a bouquet of flowers.

## Dubey meets FM

Earlier Foreign Minister A. S. M. Mustafaizur Rahman asserted Bangladesh's position on the sharing of the Ganges waters with India. He made the assertion during talks with Indian Special Envoy Muchkund Dubey.

Mustafaizur Rahman also insisted on the inclusion of the guarantee clause in the water sharing agreement that had been dropped by the Ershad regime.

The talks were held prior to Dubey's scheduled meeting with Prime Minister Khaleda Zia.

The Foreign Minister also stressed on resolving other outstanding issues which he said would help develop better relations between the two neighbouring countries.

During the talks special reference was made to the transfer of Tin Bigha corridor, delimitation of maritime boundary, repatriation of tribal refugees and land demarcation.

## Dubey calls on Irrigation Minister

Later the Indian Special Envoy also called on Irrigation Minister Majedul Haque and discussed bilateral issues.

After the discussion the Irrigation Minister told news-

men that a secretary-level meeting between India and Bangladesh will be held in the last week of April to initiate talks on the sharing of water.

He said that the Bangladesh side considered it a positive step to solve bilateral disputes.

Majedul Haque said that he had informed the Indian Foreign Secretary that the flow of water through the Ganges basin this year was less than it was last year.

Muchkund Dubey said that he would enquire into the matter on his return to New Delhi and instruct the authorities to take necessary measures.

## Gulf security system

Indian Foreign Secretary Muchkund Dubey has said that the post war security system in the Gulf region, adopted by the big powers, would have an 'implication' on all developing countries.

He made the remark when talking to newsmen at the airport prior to his departure for New Delhi Sunday evening.

He said that besides bilateral matters, he had discussed other issues including the post-Gulf war situation.

Dubey said that the post-Gulf war situation might affect north-south general relations.

He said that he also shared experiences gathered from his recent visits to Moscow and the United States with his Bangladesh counterpart.

He said that the security system in the Gulf region should be assessed for bringing back a balance of power in this region.

Dubey said that he talked with the Bangladesh side about the resolution on the Gulf to be adopted on Monday next by the UN Security Council.

He said the resolution which will contain 26 items and 60 articles will be the 'mother of all resolutions' to be adopted in future.

On Indo-Bangladesh bilateral relations, Dubey said that he had discussed bilateral disputes including water sharing, transfer of Tin Bigha and the tribal refugee problem.

Earlier Bangladesh Foreign Secretary Abul Ahsan also briefed newsmen on the visit of the Indian Foreign Secretary.

Ahsan said that during discussions stress had been laid to strengthen the bilateral relations through a dialogue.

He said that they also discussed the post war Gulf situation and security arrangements in the Gulf region and the perceptions of Europe and the Soviet Union regarding the Gulf.

During their 45-minute talks the two Foreign Secretaries also discussed international and political issues related to the interests of the two countries. Additional Foreign Secretary Mahmud Ali was also present during the discussion.



Thousands of vehicles came to a halt around New Market in Dhaka in the wake of a clash between police and shopowners yesterday. Story on page 2. —Star photo

# Policy reforms vital for donors' trust

From Page 1 Col 5

Bangladesh's "overwhelming dependence" on the donor community not only for aid but also for formulation of economic policy reforms as a national "disgrace".

It was one of 29 task forces set up by the government in January to examine the critical socio-economic issues facing the country and to recommend policy options to overcome the snags.

The Task Force on relations with development partners recommended at least five specific steps by the government to strengthen meaningful cooperation between Bangladesh and the donors.

The steps included: (1) Closer links between the experts at policy-making level and the political leadership. The main initiative for policy reforms should come from within the country through a clear and logical presentation of "our own thoughts and ideas", instead of policy prescriptions coming from the donors. Planning Commission should prepare the Country Economic Memorandum for the annual club meetings not merely as a reply to the points raised by the donors. The

memorandum, analysis and presentation of the issues there, should be upto the standard and quality of the World Bank. Planning Commission may constitute a panel of experts, comprising of best professional hands both within and outside the government, for the purpose.

(2) The representative government should avoid taking mere populist moves and should instead adopt real welfare-oriented measures which may not appear populist.

(3) There should be in-built arrangements within the overall economic management framework to tackle any exceptional pressures on the economy, originating from circumstances such as the oil price shock and the Gulf war so that the country does not become excessively dependent on external aid to cope with such crisis.

(4) Mere availability of aid should not be the reason for its acceptance. The needs of the country in the light of its clear development priorities should be the sole consideration for acceptance of any aid, and

(5) Easy and ready acceptance of the conditions and terms which are attached to

aid programmes by the donors has been the major weakness of country's external aid management in the past. Such a situation can be overcome only through raising the levels of skill and quality among development administration officials, and effective guidelines from the political leadership to the concerned officials.

The Task Force stressed that a viable long-term strategy should be adopted to attain self-reliance. Productive asset-building activities, generation of more domestic resources, development of human resources and improved administrative efficiency for overall economic management should be accorded the highest priorities.

Reviewing country's existing state of dependence on external aid, it said that disbursements of aid averaged seven to eight per cent of Gross Domestic Product (GDP). Annual commitments and disbursements stood at 1700 million US Dollars and 1300 million Dollars in the eighties. External aid funded 72 per cent, 64 per cent and 65 per cent of total investment programmes under the three successive five year development

plans respectively in the post-independence period. About 19 per cent of annual export receipts are now needed to service external debt burden, it said.

The Task Force stated in its report that Bangladesh's credentials with the donors eroded largely because of the failures by the fallen regime to utilize aid effectively, improve economic efficiency and fulfill its commitments and pledges given at the annual consortium meetings.

It noted that not necessarily all the conditions of the donors were bad or harmful for the country. But, the initiatives for such policy reforms should have come from within.

The members of the Task Force were: A.M. Ejajul Haque, Joint Secretary, ERD, Dr. Debopriyo Battacharjee of Bangladesh Institute of Development Studies (BIDS), Syed Jamaluddin, Joint Secretary, ERD, Begum Sadaka Shafiqullah, Deputy Secretary, ERD, Dr. Mustafaizur Rahman, Associate Professor, Accountancy Department, University of Dhaka and Dr. M. Shorabuddin, Executive Director, Bangladesh Bank.

# Azad Kashmir Assembly dissolved

ISLAMABAD, Mar 31: The prime minister of Pakistan's semi-autonomous state of Azad Kashmir dissolved the legislative assembly on Sunday and scheduled fresh elections for July 2, reports AP.

Mumtaz Rathore's government was the last outpost of former Prime Minister Benazir Bhutto's left-leaning Pakistan People's Party.

Rathore, whose weak coalition has been besieged by a strong right-wing opposition, said he hoped elections would give his People's Party a secure majority.

Ms. Bhutto's People's Party, once considered the country's most progressive political party, was relegated to a weak opposition in the federal legislature and the four provincial assemblies in last October's general elections.

The only part of the country where her beleaguered party continued to rule was Azad Kashmir, on India's troubled northwestern border.

Azad (Free) Kashmir is part of the former princely state of Kashmir divided between Islamic Pakistan and predominantly Hindu India in the 1947 partition that ended British colonial rule of the subcontinent.

Azad Kashmir's special status protected it last August when the federal legislature and the four provincial assemblies were dissolved.

Using his constitutional powers, Pakistani President Ghulam Ishaq Khan dismissed Ms. Bhutto and her 20-month-old government on charges of rampant corruption and mismanagement that he said had crippled Parliament.

A broad coalition headed by the current Prime Minister, Nawaz Sharif, handed Ms. Bhutto a stunning defeat in the polls that followed.

Since her dismissal, Rathore's government has been besieged by its right-wing opposition, which is aligned with Sharif's coalition. At a news conference in Islamabad on Sunday, Rathore said the experience had been "bitter and painful."

Rathore's People's Party controls only 14 seats in Azad Kashmir's 48-seat assembly. It joined with several smaller parties to form the government after last May's election. The opposition all-Muslim conference secured 19 seats and at least three times threatened Rathore with a no-confidence vote.

He also called for compulsory military training, reportedly to protect his state against neighboring India, which has been trying to crush a violent secessionist movement in Jammu-Kashmir, its only Muslim state.

India routinely accuses Pakistan of arming and training militants. Pakistan has rejected the accusation, although Rathore had become increasingly belligerent toward India with his promise of compulsory military training.

# Lanka claims killing 100 more Tigers

COLOMBO, Mar 31: The Sri Lankan government said Sunday its aircraft and ground forces killed about 100 Tamil Tiger rebels in the northwestern Mannar district shattering a flimsy weekend cease-fire, reports AP.

Military officials accused the rebels of ambushing a routine mine-clearing patrol in Saturday's battle. Sources close to the rebels charged that the Army broke its pledge to suspend offensive operations, and sent its troops on a search-and-destroy mission.

The rebel sources said more than 50 guerrillas and 28 soldiers were killed. Officials of the Joint Operations Command said only that 34 soldiers were wounded. Officials on both sides spoke on condition of anonymity.

According to AFP, an Army spokesman said, an army patrol ran into a Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) ambush at Veepankulam in coastal Mannar district Saturday triggering the battle. "We rushed reinforcements. Helicopters were also used to counter the attack and we killed over 100 terrorists", the spokesman said.

He corrected initial reports which said 20 soldiers and two officers were missing in action, saying 30 soldiers were wounded in the surprise encounter.

## Opening session

From Page 1 Col 2

The Daily Star on Sunday at her office said constitutional provisions will be examined before taking any decision in this regard. Besides, she said, her party will discuss the issue with opposition leaders before taking any decision.

Begum Zia also said the BNP Parliamentary Party select candidates for the offices of speaker, deputy speaker, chief whip and whips on April 3.

Replying to another question, whether BNP will request Acting President Justice Shahabuddin to hand over power to the speaker of parliament, Khaleda Zia said that her party has not taken any such decision.

When her attention was drawn to a report published in a section of the press that the BNP has requested the Acting President to hand over power to the speaker, Khaleda Zia said she does not know "who writes what" and what is the source of this information.

The LTTE too got reinforcements but helicopters were used to neutralise them".

A rival Tamil group, the People's Liberation Organisation of Tamil Eelam (PLOTE), said it intercepted LTTE radio messages Sunday which spoke of 11 LTTE fatalities in the latest incident in Mannar district.

Dharmalingam Siddhartha, leader of the PLOTE's political wing, said LTTE commanders in Mannar made radio contact with Jaffna, further north, to report the capture of weapons after killing or wounding over 20 soldiers.

## IG warns police of punishment in failure to curb crimes

The Inspector General of Police Sunday ordered a strong anti-crime drive across the country and warned police officials of "punitive measures" in failure to curb crimes, reports UNB.

Abdul Mueyed Chowdhury, addressing fortnightly meeting of senior police officials, specially directed for strengthening police patrol in the capital to prevent increasing incidents of snatching, car lifting and other crimes.

He warned that in failure to stop snatching, departmental action would be taken against the concerned Officers-in-Charge (OCs) of the metropolitan areas, according to a press release issued by the police headquarters.

The IGP also asked district police officials to launch all-out measures on an emergency basis to contain snatching, dacoity and other crimes in rail, road and riverine routes.

He noted that positive results had been achieved in the emergency DMP drive earlier launched against car lifting in the city and asked it to continue it.

The review meeting on crime situation held at the police headquarters was attended by all Additional Inspectors-General of Police, DMP Commissioner, DIOs and other senior police officials.

The IGP's warning came in the wake of rising crime across the country, specially in the capital, where snatching has become a regular phenomenon both at day and night in the transitional period.

# The Midnight File

## 21 Pak cops killed in combat with criminals

KARACHI, Mar 31: At least 21 police died in 148 encounters with criminals in southern Pakistan's troubled Sindh province over the past three months, a provincial government spokesman here said. The spokesman said 94 criminals including highway robbers were killed in these encounters in different parts of the province, reports AFP.

## US withdrawing 5,000 troops daily

RIYADH, Mar 31: The US is withdrawing about 5,000 troops a day from the Gulf region while awaiting a permanent cease-fire with Iraq, military sources said Sunday. More than a fourth of the US troops in the region have returned home and the number of soldiers remaining has dropped to under 400,000 from a peak of 540,000, the US Central command said, reports AP.

## Syrian President in Egypt

CAIRO, Mar 31: Syrian President Hafez Assad arrived Sunday for talks with President Hosni Mubarak, the official Middle East News Agency reported. The main issue under discussion by the two presidents is likely to be security arrangements in the region after the end of the Gulf war. Mubarak greeted Assad at Cairo International Airport and then gave him an official welcome ceremony at the presidential Kubbah palace, the news agency said, reports AP.

## 3 more insurgents surrender

CHITTAGONG, Mar 31: Three members of tribal insurgents along with their families surrendered to the chairman of Khagrachari Hill District Local Government Parishad at his office yesterday, official sources said today. The insurgents claiming themselves as second lieutenants told district local government parishad chairman Samiran Dewan that they would devote themselves in development of Chittagong Hill Tracts, reports BSS.

## Honour hopes of Palestinians

VATICAN CITY, Mar 31: Pope John Paul II urged the world on Easter Sunday to heed the "long-ignored" aspirations of Palestinians, Lebanese and Kurds to exist in freedom. In Jerusalem, several hundred Christians marked the resurrection of Jesus with mass in the church of the holy sepulcher, built on the sites where tradition holds, Christ was crucified and buried, reports AP.

## 20 killed, 270 hurt

From Page 1 Col 7

The upazilawise break up of those killed are: Shahzadpur-6, Uliapara-3 and Serajganj sadar-3.

Of the victims, 10 were identified as Ramzan Ali (28), Rubbat(28), Mukul (18), Halim (26) and Asmat (27) of Shahzadpur upazila, Moinal(40) and Akbar (28) of Uliapara and Hasina (30), Saiful (37) and Shahana (7) of Sadar.

State Minister for Irrigation, Flood Control and Water Resources Ansar Ali Siddiqi Sunday visited the affected areas and assured the storm-hit people of necessary help.

The three dead two persons are from Dhamrai upazila under Dhaka district and another from Harirampur upazila of Manikganj district. All of them were killed by lightning.

Upazila Chairman of Dhamrai, Alhaj Tamjuddin Ahmed, on Sunday confirmed two deaths in his upazila. Harirampur Upazila Chairman Taleb Hossain also reported another lightning death at Latakholha. He also informed that 25 persons were injured by flying corrugated tins and tree branches.

UNB adds from Serajganj: At least 12 people were killed and 20 others injured in three days (Thursday-Saturday) when Nor'westers lashed three upazilas of the district.

About 1,000 kutcha houses were damaged and many trees uprooted by Nor'westers which swept over Shahzadpur, Uliapara and Sadar Upazila between March 28 and 30, police and villagers said.

The trouble erupted when a Chittagong-bound passenger train from Dohazari was proceeding towards the station and a group of railway employees and genuine travellers protested against some ticketless travellers who stuffed the compartments with timber and logs at different station on way to Chittagong. At one stage they started hand to hand fight and later the unruly travellers attacked the protesters with sticks.

Railway police later arrested four ticketless travellers with timber.

But the trouble mongers fled away leaving behind their timber and tree-logs which were seized by police.

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Chinese Communist Party General Secretary Jiang Zemin to go to Moscow in May. This would be the first trip there by a Chinese party head since the late Mao Tse Tung went in 1957.

"Well, I understand the visit is going to be very good," Bessmertnykh told reporters at the airport. "We have a very important programme to discuss, a very important agenda, things are going to be perfectly all right," he added.

The two countries, bitter foes for three decades, are working towards better relations in the diplomatic, economic and military trade fields, diplomats said.

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## Dubey-Hasina

From Page 1 Col 5

Bangladesh border Dubey parried the question saying, "the matter is not on his agenda this time."

The Foreign Ministry of Bangladesh prior to the discussion wanted to provide official protocol to Sheikh Hasina and asked her whether they would send any official from the Foreign Ministry. But the Awami League president did not ask for any official from the Foreign Ministry.

The discussion which was originally scheduled for half an hour continued for about 45 minutes.

## Corruption

From Page 1 Col 8

President Ershad and some of his ministers.

The partial report submitted to Acting President said 53 allegations have so far been examined out of several hundred received by it.

The allegations included about 200 against the deposed President and another 30 against his wife Begum Rawshan Ershad.

## Reserved seats

From Page 1 Col 8

The petitioners prayed for issuance of a Rule Nisi on the Election Commission for holding elections to the reserved seats before all members-elect had taken oath.

## Public sector banks

From Page 1 Col 6

Otherwise, the release of second tranche of the credit is highly uncertain, the meeting noted.

The meeting, chaired by Kafiluddin Mahmud, former finance adviser, asked the NCBs to realise that issuance of bonds to support them is just a one-time step. The banks must ensure that such step should not be allowed to be taken in future.

Credit recovery courts have gone into operation to improve the realisation of overdue credit. Steps have also been taken to exchange credit information among the banks to restrict the defaulters from taking fresh loans. An amendment to the laws is under process.

The meeting asked Bangladesh Bank to gear up supervision and monitor the loan-giving procedures pursued by NCBs. The Finance Ministry will bring in structural and institutional changes in laws and regulations to help eradicate mismanagement in loan recovery situation, the meeting decided.

The meeting was attended by Shegupta Bakht Choudhury, Governor, Bangladesh Bank, Khorshed Alam, Principal Secretary, Ministry of Finance, Dr. Harunur Rashid, Additional Secretary, (Banking and Investment), Finance Division, Abdul Karim, Managing Director, Bangladesh Shilpa Bank.

Ahsanul Haq, Managing Director, Sonali Bank and M. A. Reza, Joint Secretary (Bangladesh Bank), Finance Division.

## Wage board

From Page 1 Col 8

lawyer, in his arguments said Moinul Hossain, Chairman of the Editorial Board, Ittefaq Group of Publications Ltd, can implement four, five or more Wage Board awards because Ittefaq is the biggest group of publications in the newspaper industry of Bangladesh, but many other newspaper publishers in Bangladesh have no capacity to implement these Wage Board awards.

Syed Modasser Hossain who appeared for Secretary, Ministry of Information and Chairman, Wage Board, prayed for adjourning the hearing but the Judges rejected his prayer and said the hearing would continue.

The hearing resumes today. Senior Advocate Khondker Mahbubuddin Ahmed with Advocate Joyal Abedin appeared for the petitioner, Bangladesh Sangbadpatra Parishad (BSP).

Barrister Akhter Imam with Advocate Sk. Habib-ul-Alam, Advocate Md. Khalequzzaman and Advocate Mozammel Hoque Mehdi appeared for the respondents. Bangladesh Federal Union of Journalists (BFUJ), Bangladesh Newspapers Press Workers Federation (BNPWF), and Bangladesh Newspapers Employees Federation (BNEF).

India routinely accuses Pakistan of arming and training militants. Pakistan has rejected the accusation, although Rathore had become increasingly belligerent toward India with his promise of compulsory military training.

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