

Joint strategy

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formed with representatives of the people who were elected through elections under a caretaker government which was achieved through a successful mass upsurge on the basis of the programme of the joint movement of the 15, 7 and 5-party alliances.

It further said that it was inevitable to go for parliamentary form of government to place democracy in the country on firm footing.

Talking to The Daily Star, Gonatantri Party Leader Suranjit Sengupta said that there should be a consensus on the form of government among all the parties. He said that if the Awami League brought the bill unilaterally it would be talked out. Before bringing any bill on the private member's day the opposition should explore the avenues still left open to reach a consensus on this vital national issue, he added.

There is still scope for backstage parleys with the BNP, he said.

The NDP leader Salahuddin Quader Chowdhury said that the BNP had not yet said anything about the form of government and the party was playing coy on the issue.

He said that he himself was in favour of a parliamentary form of government but before bringing any bill in this regard there should be through discussion on the issue among all the political parties.

Awami League leader Tofael Ahmed, talking to The Daily Star said the BNP did not want the parliamentary form of government. So there was no alternative for the Awami League but to bring a bill unilaterally to achieve its political objective.

The Jamaat-e-Islami Bangladesh, which had earlier wanted a good balance between the presidential and parliamentary systems, has again shifted its stand at a recent meeting of its central committee. The party has also expressed its support for the Awami League initiative to secure more powers for Parliament. The Jamaat par-

liamentary party leader Moulana Matior Rahman Nizami said that his party's basic stand was in favour of a parliamentary democracy.

Publicity Secretary of the Jamaat-e-Islami Bangladesh Quamruzzaman told The Daily Star that the Jamaat had taken the changed stand to avoid a presidential election which would incur a huge expenditure. He said that his party was not against the presidential system but favoured election of the President by the members of Parliament, which was envisaged in the proposed bill of the Awami League.

According to BNP sources, no formal meeting of the party has yet been held on this issue. They said that the BNP leadership has not discussed the matter either in the parliamentary party meeting or in any other party meeting.

The sources said that a majority of party members were in favour of the parliamentary form of government. The sources added that the party would decide on the issue within the next 15 or 20 days, but was in no haste to discuss the matter in the current session of the Sangsad.

A highly-placed Awami League source told The Star that the other opposition parties did not want to kill the bill. So, considering the logical grounds in favour of the bill, the Awami League would first strive to mobilise public opinion and continue backstage parleys with the BNP. Hence the bill may not be tabled in the current session of the parliament, which is likely to end by May 4.

According to an administrative source, the BNP is under pressure not only from its rank and file but also from extra-parliamentary quarters who are said to be averse to another expensive national election for a transfer of power from the caretaker administration to an elected government. The source said that the speech of the President to the opening session of the Parliament on April 5 contained subtle hints to that end.



Prime Minister Begum Khaleda Zia visited the Bhola Sadar Hospital to see diarrhoea affected people on Tuesday. — PID photo

600 die of diarrhoea

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Acute scarcity of drinking water is the main cause of the outbreak and escalation of the disease, sources from the affected districts, said.

The situation in Patuakhali turned for the worse Tuesday with 14 more deaths raising the death toll to 70.

The highest number of deaths was recorded in Barisal where the figure including Tuesday's four was 93.

Reports of death recorded on Tuesday were Jhalakathi-6, Protopur-1, Bhola-1, Noakhali-3, Satkhira-4, Bagarhat-2, Rajshahi-4, Naogaon-1, Pabna-1, Lakshimpur-3 and Jessore-1.

The Civil Surgeon of Lakshimpur told the Daily Star over telephone that three people died and 585 were attacked in the district on Tuesday.

Twenty eight medical teams are working round the clock in the affected areas, he said.

Civil Surgeon of Noakhali told the Daily Star by telephone that 93 died of the disease there till Tuesday. But Control Room in Dhaka gave the figure 28.

The Chatkhal upazila happens to be the worst affected where 42 people died. "An army medical team in addition to 91 medical teams, has been working at the upazila to check the disease", the Civil Surgeon said.

He said that the administration and the non-government organisations of the upazila are now engaged in telling people how to guard against the disease and treat the sick.

"The driver of Begumganj upazila parishad Stray Mian was attacked with the disease while transporting patients from remote areas to the camps," he added.

The Civil Surgeon of Patuakhali told The Daily Star that task forces had been formed to eight against the disease although 65 medical teams were working in the six affected upazilas. Eightyfour people have so far died in the district and another 2798 have been attacked till Tuesday, he added.

DU teachers observe two hour strike

The teachers of Dhaka University on Tuesday observed a two-hour strike from 11 am to 1 pm in response to the call given by Dhaka University Teachers Association (DUTA) to protest against the assault on a university teacher by the alleged supporters of a student organisation, reports BSS.

Arefin Siddiqui Assistant Professor of the Department of Mass Communication and Journalism and some other teachers of the department were threatened by a group of students which aroused severe commotion among the teachers.

The DUTA brought out a silent procession against terrorism in the campus during the strike period. Starting from Aparajeyo Bangla, the procession ended at Central Shaheed Minar after parading the Doyel Chatter.

A large number of male and female teachers took part in the procession.

Later, the DUTA held a brief rally at the foot of the Shaheed Minar which was addressed, among others, by DUTA President and General Secretary Dr Anwarullah Chowdhury and Dr Shahadat Ali respectively.

The rally demanded stern action within fifteen days against those responsible for misbehaving with Arefin, who is also Joint Secretary of DUTA, and other teachers.

Lauching of Discovery cancelled

CAPE CANAVERAL, Apr 23: NASA scrapped the launch of space shuttle Discovery early Tuesday after engineers discovered an equipment failure in one of the craft's engines, reports AP.

Troops

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or wounded in the Gulf war. He said a Bangladesh soldier died of heart attack while an officer was killed in a road accident there. He said both of them died after the war was over.

Replying to a supplementary, the minister told the House that both Bangladesh and Saudi Arabia are jointly bearing the cost on account of the Bangladesh troops.

Replying to another supplementary from Abdur Razzak (Bakstal-Madaripur), the minister said the previous government had legalised the constitutional requirements.

Answering to another supplementary as to who commanded the Bangladesh soldiers there, the minister said the army kept the matter secret. He said, 'since I myself was not in the government, I can't say anything on this.'

The minister sought notice to reply another supplementary from Enamul Haq (Jamaat-Cox's Bazar) about the size of the costs borne so far by the Government for the Bangladesh troops in Saudi Arabia.

BSF action

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speaks.

The Jatiya Party members led by Barrister Moudud Ahmed wanted to participate in the discussion.

The Jamaat members also rose and demanded more time for the discussions.

BAKSAL General Secretary Abdur Razzak and CPB member Shamsuddeha similarly insisted on granting more time to express their views on the incident.

The Deputy Speaker referred to a particular clause of the Rules of Procedure saying that the discussion on an adjournment motion could not exceed two hours.

Earlier, the House faced uproars from the Opposition members who objected to allowing Treasury Bench member Lt Col (retd) Akbar Hossain speak on an adjournment motion.

The objections which came

from the Leader of the Opposition Sheikh Hasina, Ganatantri Party member Suranjit Sen Gupta and Jatiya Party leader Moudud Ahmed were ruled out by the Deputy Speaker.

He said that the subject of the adjournment motion was of utmost national importance and the admission of the particular motion was also backed by the Treasury Bench.

He pointed out it was not contrary to the Rules of Procedure.

Speaking in favour of his adjournment motion, National Democratic Party leader Salahuddin Quader Chowdhury condemned the killing by the BSF personnel and said it was a reflection of the expansionist designs of India against its small neighbours.

He demanded of the government to take effective measures to stop the recurrence of such incidents.

Awami League members Salahuddin Yusuf, Tofael Ahmed, and Asaduzzaman, Jamaat members Latifur Rahman and Maulana Md Shakwat Hossain, independent member Nurul Islam Moni, Workers Party member Rashed Khan Menon, Ganatantri Party member Suranjit Sen Gupta and Jatiya Party member Fazle Rabbi took part in the discussion.

The lone participant from the Treasury Bench was Lt Col (retd) Akbar Hossain.

BDR-BSF agree to keep borders crime-free

CHITTAGONG, Apr 23: India-Bangladesh border coordination conference which began here this morning ended with the understanding that Bangladesh Rifles and Indian Border Security Forces would strengthen and consolidate their efforts in keeping their respective borders free from crimes and disorder to ensure peace and tranquility, an official handout said, reports BSS.

There were also broad understanding between the two sides on some specific matters.

Bangladesh delegation was led by Brigadier Abdullah Al-Hussain, Deputy Director General of Bangladesh Rifles being assisted by Director Operations and Training, sector commanders of Chittagong, Khagrachari, Rangamati, Comilla, Sylhet and Staff Officers of BDR headquarters.

The Indian side was headed by the Border Security Forces (BSF) Inspector General for Tripura, Cachar and Mizoram frontier Ayodheyath Pathak, IPS, other members of the delegation were Deputy Inspector Generals of Silchar, Tripura (south) and Tripura (north) in addition to Staff Officers of their headquarters.

The conference began in the spirit of traditional cordiality existing between the two friendly forces.

The keynote issue figuring in the conference was trans-border crimes, their specific identification and effective counter measures to put a check on these. Matters related to smuggling, law and order situation in border areas, trespass, violation of border guide lines, cattle lifting, land disputes, kidnapping, killing, dacoity, maintenance of border pillar and allied matters also figured prominently among other subjects.

After thorough deliberation on the issues, both the sides agreed to take stringent measures in order to further secure their respective frontiers with a view to apprehending criminals.

Both the countries also decided to exchange information regarding smugglers and their affiliated organisations in respective areas. Minor irritants were also ironed out and it was decided that regular border meeting would be held at sector and battalion levels between the respective security forces in order to solve matters requiring immediate attention.

The conference ended with a vote of thanks with the understanding that in future Bangladesh Rifles and the Indian Border Security Forces would further consolidate and strengthen their efforts in keeping their respective border free from crime and disorder, thereby ensuring peace and tranquility.

Water

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in 1977. But after 1982, India changed her stand on water resources and no agreement was signed during last nine years of autocratic rules. He expressed his optimism that a happy beginning might be started from the Indian side on distribution of water of all the rivers common to both the countries as a democratic government had been voted to power in Bangladesh which was absent during last nine years.

The minister said that after extreme shortage of water of a number of consecutive years the people of Bangladesh were eagerly looking towards the secretary level meeting for the solution of this problem.

The Agriculture Minister said that the development of Bangladesh and India are closely related as the economy of both the countries are mostly agriculture based. He laid stress on regional cooperation for development of both the countries and said that the fate of about one hundred crore people would depend on successful implementation of the projects for regional cooperation.

The Indian Secretary for Water Resources in reply expressed his sincere interest for a fruitful and durable solution on sharing of water of the common rivers. He hoped that the leaders of both countries would be able to find out a pragmatic solution of the problem.

Commenting on news-item that the water level under the Hardinge Bridge at Pakshi had come to the minimum of all times the Indian Water Resources Secretary said that the Indian government would always invite observers to see the real situation at Farakka.

India does not want to create an information gap on this issue. He said that the visit of the observers and the experts of both the countries would help ending misunderstanding among the people on the issue and ultimately strengthen the mutual understanding and friendship between the two countries, the handout said.

The Midnight File

Atiqul Alam awarded Astor prize

LONDON, Apr 23: The Commonwealth Press Union (CPU) Tuesday awarded its Astor prize for press freedom to Atiqul Alam, Reuter Bureau Chief in Dhaka. At a ceremony in London, CPU Chairman Lyle Turnbull said, Alam, 51, reported on political events in Bangladesh with courage and dedication to truth and objectivity. The award by the Press Union, which as one of its aims seeks to foster press freedom in the Commonwealth, is named for the late Lord Astor, a British newspaper publisher, reports Reuter.

Write-off of LDCs' debts

TOKYO, Apr 23: The Paris Club of Western creditor governments is considering measures to write off two-thirds of debt owed to them by the world's poorest nations. Japanese government officials said. The measures under consideration by government creditors belonging to the so-called Paris Club were proposed last year by British Prime Minister John Major. But this does not mean that all creditor nations have already agreed to forgiving two-third of these countries debt, reports Reuter.

Storm kills one at Bogra

BOGRA, Apr 23: One unidentified youth was killed on the Nawab-bari road near Circuit House here during a thunderstorm which lashed over the town tonight. Witnesses said, he died on the spot when a tree fell on him during the storm. Met-office sources said, the storm swept over the town at the speed of 64-70 miles began at about 8-45 pm and lasted for an hour, reports UNB.

Editor killed in Kashmir

SRINAGAR, Apr 23: Suspected Muslim militants shot and killed a newspaper Editor in Kashmir on Tuesday, police said. Mohammad Shaban Wakil, 48, owner-editor of Al Safa, an Urdu language newspaper, was murdered in his office, a police official said in Srinagar, capital of the northern state. The federal Indian government in New Delhi announced an award of 50,000 rupees (2,700 dollars) to anyone providing clues to the murder. Press Trust of India news agency reported, States AP.

UCSU resents CU closure

CHITTAGONG, Apr 23: Chittagong University Central Students Union Vice-President Muhammad Bazmuddin and General Secretary Azimuddin in a statement tonight resented the decision of closure of the university again today saying it an undemocratic and an interference in the autonomy of the university. They said that the closure of the university again after long four months had thrown hundreds of students to uncertainty. They called for reopening of the university immediately, reports BSS.

Pakistan slams Scud attack

ISLAMABAD, Apr 23: Pakistan today slammed Kabul's "brutal" Scud missile attack on the Afghan town of Asadabad reports AFP.

Akali Dal splits

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The Punjab elections were first set for May, when India goes to the polls to elect a new parliament, but have been postponed because of security considerations. New dates are still to be announced.

Badal announced his decision a day after the Indian government revealed that it was holding secret talks with Sikh separatists, two groups of whom met with caretaker Prime Minister Chandra Shekhar here on April 17 and 19.

7 killed

Meanwhile, suspected Sikh militants killed seven people, including a father and two sons, and a paramilitary officer in overnight violence.

A Central Reserve Police Force (CRPF) was killed when a gunman fired on a paramilitary patrol in Fardkot district.

A Sikh militant was killed by police, another shot dead by the grandfather of a teenaged girl he tried to kidnap and a third gunned down by members of a rival gang.

The latest deaths took to 1,423 the death toll so far this year in Punjab violence.

India

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During the talks yesterday, Bangladesh stressed on a permanent solution to the Ganges water sharing problem and for an agreement between two countries incorporating the 'guarantee clause'.

India has unilaterally been withdrawing water at the Farakka Barrage from the Ganges since December, 1988 when the Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) on water sharing expired.

It was learnt that the Indian side did not commit anything on Bangladesh's demand but, had shown interest for a durable solution on the sharing of the waters of the common rivers.

Both the sides will further discuss the issue today.

After the first day's deliberations, Dr Chitale told newsmen Tuesday evening that both sides exchanged views and ideas on the water sharing issues and he described the discussions as 'lively'.

The leader of the Bangladesh side said that the talks were held in a 'friendly atmosphere' and that the two sides would make their positions known after the end of the meeting Wednesday noon.

The Bangladesh side included Faruk Ahmed Chowdhury, High Commissioner to India and Mahmud Ali, Additional Foreign Secretary.

K Srinivasan, the Indian High Commissioner to Bangladesh and Ramesh Chandra, Commissioner in the Water Resources Minister were the members of Indian team at the meeting.

CU shut

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fresh unrest, asked the authorities to keep the varsity closed till May 4 and review the situation.

Earlier, residential halls were reopened under tight security measures for students this morning and classes were to resume tomorrow (Wednesday).

Students who returned to the halls have been asked to pack up again and vacate the halls by 10 am tomorrow (Wednesday).

The University was closed on December 22 last year after a bloody clash between the All-Party Students Unity (APSU) and the Islami Chhatra Shibir supporters.

A student leader, Faruquzzaman of Chhatra Moitry, and a guardian were killed and over 50 teachers and students injured in the campus battle during a non-cooperation movement for resignation of Vice-Chancellor Alamgir Mohammad Strajuddin.

Today return of residents was very thin, about 20 per cent. Only one female student turned up into Shamsunahar Hall.

A huge contingent of riot police has been posted in and around the terror-torn campus.

Salt price

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tended by Prime Minister Begum Khaleda Zia and other cabinet ministers.

It reviewed and found the state of current production of salt satisfactory and expressed optimism that the price benefit will encourage the salt growers to keep the present pace of production unhindered and to go for further increases.

Among other things, the Council of Ministers reviewed measures taken for the return and rehabilitation of the Bangladeshis who had come back from Kuwait and Iraq due to the Gulf War since August 2, 1990.

The meeting was also apprised of the various steps being taken for promotion of employment of Bangladeshis in the Middle East.

Seen from the gallery

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told the Speaker that the presence of the concerned Minister was not needed.

The speaker set aside Sheikh Hasina's plea and allowed discussion on the motion.

The Deputy Speaker Sheikh Razzak Ali was very meticulous in upholding the Rules of Procedure in conducting the business.

Veteran parliamentarian Suranjit Sen Gupta was caught off guard when he stood on a point of order. The Deputy Speaker ruled out the point of order.

Salahuddin Quader Chowdhury demonstrated a parliamentary feat while speaking on the motion. He quoted the Indian constitution, saying that the provision regarding Indian territory also includes "Such other territory as may be acquired", which exposed the Indian expansionist design.

He said India had annexed Chandannagar, Pondicherry, Goa and Sikkim being inspired by its policy of subjugating neighbours.

The BSF attack on Bangladesh was in continuation of the Indian design, he added.

Salahuddin Quader thanked Sheikh Hasina for condemning the BSF attack adding that "Sheikh Hasina's condemnation had proved that there were no permanent friends or foes in politics."

Former Speaker Mirza Golam Hafiz was paid back in words by Deputy Speaker Sheikh Razzak Ali.

Mirza Golam Hafiz rising on a point of order said "To catch the eye of the Speaker is very difficult".

"It is as difficult as it was during your time," quipped the Deputy Speaker.

Mirza Golam Hafiz backed the Opposition demand for TV coverage of the proceedings of the House saying "The members come to the House well dressed in case the camera zooms on them".

Col (Rtd) Akbar Hussain waged a war of words in the House over the 25-year treaty with India.

He, however, made a 'no war' offer to India, probably because of his having retired long ago, he would not like to be called up as a reservist.

He shouted at the top of his voice in the House as if he were commanding his troops in battle.

Khaleda

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Bhola Sadar Hospital and setting up of a diarrhoeal disease research centre at Bhola and an oral saline project at Barisal.

The Speaker of the Jatiya Sangsad, Abdur Rahman Biswas, Health Minister Chowdhury Kamal Ibne Yusuf, State Minister for Textiles Maj (retd) M A Mannan, Mrs Selina Rahman, MP and Saleuddin Kamran, MP accompanied the Prime Minister during the visit.

Thousands of people from all walks of life received the Prime Minister warmly at the places she flew in by a helicopter.

During the day-long tour, Begum Zia also visited the diarrhoea patients.

One bill passed

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who piloted the bill in the House said the bill was intended to ensure welfare of the Railway employees.

The bill was passed by a voice vote.

Law and Justice Minister Mirza Golam Hafiz introduced the Code of Criminal Procedure (Amendment) Bill, and the Penal Code (Amendment) Bill.

Independent member Nurul Islam Moni and Ganatantri Party leader Suranjit Sengupta raised objections to the introduction of the bills.

Matin

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MH Khan Manju and about 30 former MPs belonging to JP.

When contacted Tuesday night, Dr Matin said the present leadership of JP had deviated from the ideals of the party for which it was established and that brought debacle for the whole party. "They did not pay heed to our suggestions and opinions," he added.

A meeting source told this correspondent that the deposed president Ershad and other leaders including Moudud Ahmed and Mizan Chowdhury were severely criticised at the meeting.

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