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ASEAN must take common stand : Malaysia

OIC condemns Myanmar, calls for 'generous aid'

NICOSIA, Mar 11: The 46-nation Organisation of Islamic Conference condemned Myanmar today for what it termed a campaign of repression and persecution against its Muslim community, reports Reuter.

OIC Secretary-General Hamid Al-Gabid urged member states and foreign countries to provide 'generous assistance' to Bangladesh where around 180,000 Myanmar Muslims have taken refuge since December.

The OIC strongly condemns the campaign of repression and persecution being waged by the Myanmar authorities and which is characterised by flagrant abuses of the human rights of the Muslim Burmese people, he said in a statement sent to Reuter.

The campaign, which Gabid said was accompanied by threats and intimidations against Dhaka, had led to the exodus of more than 180,000 Muslims known as Rohingyas to Bangladesh.

He said the OIC, based in Jeddah, Saudi Arabia, has sent a mission to Bangladesh to study relief needs.

Iran urged the United Nations Tuesday to stop the 'genocide' of Myanmar's Muslim minority.

In a letter to Secretary-General Boutros Boutros-Ghali, Foreign Minister Ali Akbar Velayati said Iran was ready to help care for the Myanmar Muslims driven into neighbouring Bangladesh, the Iranian news agency IRNA reported.

A Kuala Lumpur report says

the Association of South East Asian Nations (ASEAN) should take a unified stand against Myanmar for mistreating its Muslim minority, Malaysia's Defence Minister Najib Razak said today.

"We have to have a common stand on this", Najib told reporters after a fund-raising ceremony for the Rohingyas, who have fled to Bangladesh to escape alleged killings and atrocities by Myanmar troops.

"We cannot wait, we have already been accused of not responding to the situation," Najib said. "It is not that we did not want to act. It has now come to the point that Malaysia feels that it cannot wait."

There are certain things like atrocities going on, lives being lost, looting, raping and

abuses going on.

"If other countries want to follow suit, they are most welcome", Najib said. "We would like to see not only ASEAN countries but as well as Islamic countries collaborate to show our unified stand over this matter."

Dhaka has approached the six members of ASEAN - Brunei, Indonesia, Malaysia, the Philippines, Singapore and Thailand - to jointly apply pressure on Myanmar, Bangladesh's High Commissioner to Malaysia, Muzammel Hussain said.

The powerful youth wing of Malaysia's ruling party also called Wednesday on the ASEAN to ask Myanmar to end alleged atrocities against its Muslim minority.

See Page 12 Col 1

Aid disbursements gain momentum, says Saifur

By Staff Correspondent

Finance Minister M Saifur Rahman on Wednesday said that 46 per cent of the total ADP outlay of Taka 7,500 crore had been disbursed upto February of the current fiscal year as against 45 per cent during the corresponding period of 1990-91.

This indicates that the economy is picking up after the initial slowdown, he pointed out while briefing newsmen at the National Economic Council auditorium.

He noted that imports, exports and remittances have shown improving trends since January. Dispelling notions from certain quarters he added that the foreign aid disbursement has also gained momentum during the same period.

The minister said that there is no credit squeeze as the banks have adequate liquidity and the inflation rate has

come down to an annual rate of six per cent from ten per cent last fiscal year. He, however, noted that the private sector investment is not picking up as expected, but the macro-economic investment atmosphere in the country is "excellent".

Dwelling the overall state of the economy, the Finance Minister noted that for the first time the revenue realisation during the first half of the current fiscal year had exceeded Taka 100 crore over the budgetary projection. He also added that the Value Added Tax (VAT) has been "satisfactory" so far.

The Minister pointed out that the budgetary allocation for the Annual Development Programme (ADP) was Taka 2600 crore in local currency and Taka 4900 crore in foreign exchange. Of this amount, See Page 12 Col 1

BENSON & HEDGES
 WORLD CUP 1992

Pakistan beat Australia

BRISBANE, Mar 11: Pakistan kept their semifinal hopes alive with a 48-run victory over defending World Cup cricket champion Australia on Wednesday night at the WACA Ground, reports AP.

Pakistan made 220 for nine in their allocated 50 overs and then dismissed Australia for 172 with five overs to spare. Captain Imran Khan defied a painful shoulder injury to take two wickets for 32 from 10 tight overs.

The loss left Australia facing almost certain elimination from the tournament after losing four of their six matches to date.

That was a terrific victory. See Page 12 Col 7



Shelter for Rohingya refugees at Nila, Cox's Bazar.

—Star photo

Golam Azam's 'public trial' BNP silence worries some party leaders

By Mahfuz Ullah

The ruling Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP) is yet to take a public stand on the proposed 'public trial' of Golam Azam.

Comments and observations by BNP leaders, as gathered by this correspondent, indicate the party is not seriously concerned over the issue and is keen on drawing a line between the Government action and party position.

The National Coordination Committee for Implementation of the Spirit of Independence War and Annihilation of Killers and Collaborators of 1971 has planned 'trial' of Golam Azam on March 26, Independence Day, in public at the Suhrawardy Udyan.

Meanwhile, Jamaat leader Maulana Nizami has expressed the hope that the Government will resist the attempt in the interest of the rule of law and democracy.

A section of BNP leaders, speaking on condition of anonymity, expressed worries at the way the party leadership is handling the issue. One of the MPs, sounding a note of

warning, referred to the formation of a citizens committee back in 1981, a little before the assassination of Ziaur Rahman, almost with similar objectives.

During the recent extended meeting of the Executive Committee of the party held on February 25 and 26 nobody excepting one raised the issue for discussion. The issue was lost as it failed to gather support from others.

An MP, elected from one of the Dhaka constituencies, said that by maintaining silence on the issue the party was being trapped. He observed 'Awami League is no threat for BNP but if Golam Azam is allowed to go unchallenged that would create trouble in future.'

Shahjahan Omar MP, Bir Btkram, thinks Golam Azam is no issue and says 'Why attach importance to him?'

Avoiding a direct answer, Lt Gen (Retd) Mir Shawkat Ali MP, Bir Uttam, said: 'As a freedom fighter my thinking remains the same.'

A cabinet minister, prefer- See Page 12 Col 3

Band on interest rates goes

Toufique Imrose Khalidi

In a further move to liberalise money market operations, the Bangladesh Bank has decided to withdraw the bands on interest rates except on lending in a few areas.

According to a Bangladesh Bank circular issued Monday, the scheduled banks are now at liberty to decide their own rates of interest, apart from lending to agriculture, exports and small and cottage industries.

In case of deposits a minimum rate has been given while the maximum rate will be decided by the banks themselves.

The circular says that the lowest rate for savings bank deposit shall be 7.5 per cent instead of the previous 8 per cent. The existing provision for a maximum rate of 11.5 per cent has been withdrawn.

The new minimum rate for fixed deposits, according to the circular, shall be 8.5 per cent replacing the existing 9 per cent.

The band on the maximum rate of 13 per cent goes. The new rates take effect April 1, 1992.

Previously, the scheduled banks were entitled to charge 10 to 14 per cent interest rates on working capital loan, 12 to 17 per cent on other See Page 12 Col 3

Commentary

Call an emergency Sangsad session on Rohingya issue

By S M Ali

With the stage set for taking the Rohingya issue to the United Nations Security Council, the Government of Bangladesh should take several new steps to secure a just and fair solution of the problems faced by the refugees from Myanmar, now sheltered by this country.

The first task facing the Government of Begum Khaleda Zia is to demonstrate its resolve that it will reject a compromise solution that leaves the refugees exposed to harassment and persecution on their return to their homeland in Myanmar.

Bangladesh must convince the international community

where it stands on this issue. At the same time, it must show the world that the nation is fully united behind the government on this matter.

We are sure that this has been said by both the Prime Minister and the Foreign Minister A S M Mustafizur Rahman to all foreign diplomats based in Dhaka. But this may not be enough.

Although time is short, before the departure of the Prime Minister for the United States on Monday, an emergency session of the Jatiya Sangsad can be convened even for one day to underscore the country's position on this national issue. The session would

offer the right opportunity, in our democratic set-up, to all opposition parties and groupings to condemn the policy of Myanmar on the refugee issue and to lend their support to the pro-democracy movement led by Aung San Suu Kyi.

Assuming the Sangsad session is called after due consultation between the ruling party and the opposition, a parliamentary motion may be unanimously adopted to underscore an all-party support for the government's current diplomatic efforts, especially at the UN level, on this issue.

Such a motion would demonstrate how democracy See Page 12 Col 8

Diplomats for pressure on Myanmar

By Staff Correspondent

Heads of Diplomatic Missions of 34 countries Wednesday suggested international pressure on the Myanmar authorities to stop persecution on the Muslim minorities at Rakhine province.

In an interview telecast by Bangladesh Television Wednesday night they also called for international aid to tackle the refugee problems in Bangladesh.

Ambassadors, High Commissioners and Charge d' Affaires of 34 countries in Dhaka Wednesday visited four refugee camps in Cox's Bazar district. The envoys numbering 45 visited the Dhoapalang, Dechuapalang-1 and Dechuapalang-2 camps at Ramu Upazila and Marichya camp at Ukha Upazila of the district.

Some one lakh 50 thousand See Page 12 Col 4

AL district body split over Montu

By Staff Correspondent

The sharp division within the Dhaka district unit of the party, however, resolved yesterday to talk to the party chief Sheikh Hasina immediately and urge her to withdraw the suspension order issued against him, sources said.

Khan Majlish group, on the other hand, is learnt to have adopted a resolution urging the party high command to expel Montu without any delay.

Khan Majlish and his supporters in the district committee observed that Montu had proved himself a terrorist by his activities following the ALWC decision on his suspension and AL should not allow him to further tarnish the party image.

The five office-bearers of the Dhaka district unit of AL who were present at the See Page 12 Col 5

AL to talk with Chamber leaders before finalising economic policy

By Nurul Kabir

The Awami League Working Committee (ALWC) is to hear opinions of leaders of different chambers by the middle of this month before it finalises the new economic policy of the party.

This was decided at a meeting of the ALWC at the official residence of the Leader of the Opposition in Parliament, AL chief Sheikh Hasina in the chair.

According to sources, the AL Organising Secretary Tofael Ahmed has been given the responsibility of contacting the chamber leaders and fixing a schedule for a meeting with them on or before the 14th of this month.

The ALWC will meet again to discuss the policy on March 15.

Meanwhile, Secretary for See Page 12 Col 7

Major dissolves Parliament, calls poll Apr 9

LONDON, Mar 11: Prime Minister John Major chose April 9 as the date for national elections Wednesday, setting the stage for the closest race since his party took power 13 years ago, reports AP.

Major went to Buckingham Palace to ask Queen Elizabeth II to dissolve Parliament a day after the government announced modest tax cuts for individuals and small businesses.

"I'm utterly confident that we will win the election, that we will win the election with a clear and working majority. I have no doubt about that."

Major announced outside his office at 10 Downing Street. Britain's stubborn recession, symbolized by unemployment of 9.2 per cent and record rates of home repossession, loomed as a major election issue.

The opposition Labour Party, which has moved sharply toward the center since suffering massive defeats in 1979, 1983 and 1987, also has criticised the government's record on health care. Unlike the previous three campaigns, when Margaret Thatcher led the

Conservatives, this time there are no sharp divisions between the parties on defence policy or the primacy of a market economy.

The two parties are so close in the polls that no party may achieve a majority of 326 seats, leaving Britain with its first coalition government since 1976, when the Liberals propped up Labour.

The Financial Times average of polls in the past two weeks published Tuesday showed the parties locked at around 38.5 per cent each,

with centrists Liberal Democrats just under 18 per cent.

The International Communications and Marketing Research poll published Wednesday in The Guardian newspaper put Labour support at 42 per cent against 39 per cent for the Conservatives and 15 per cent for the Liberal Democrats.

The polls have a margin of error of 3 per cent.

The Conservatives are seeking to be the first party this century to win four successive terms.

Labour is trying to break precedent by achieving an 8.5 per cent swing in its favour compared to the 1987 election.

Mrs Thatcher never won a majority of the popular vote, but her party's 42.3 per cent in 1987 yielded 376 seats — a majority of 102 seats against the combined opposition.

Labour polled 30.8 per cent of the vote in 1987 and the centrist alliance of Liberal Democrats and Social Democrats got 22.5 per cent.

The Conservatives sharp drop in opinion polls led to a party revolt against Mrs See Page 12 Col 4

Thatcher in November 1990, and the 48-year-old Major was elected as party leader and Prime Minister.

Kinnoch, 49, took over as Labour leader after the 1983 election. He has ditched unpopular leftist policies such as widespread nationalisation of industry and unilateral nuclear disarmament.

Labour currently has 231 seats in Parliament, including two seats held by men who were recently expelled from the party, and would have to win 95 more to win an outright majority. (Article on Page 4)

DCC employees ignore order for joining duties

By Staff Correspondent

The striking employees of Dhaka City Corporation (DCC) did not join their duties yesterday despite authority's repeated warnings.

Of the total 10,899 employees, some 4,750 muster roll conservancy staff were asked to join their duties by Wednesday but no one turned up, informed sources said.

A corporation official said that nearly 1,500 cleaners and See Page 12 Col 7

NEWS BRIEFS

83 held in city

Dhaka Metropolitan Police arrested 83 people on various charges from the city area Wednesday. According to a press release, the police also rounded-up five snatchers along with knives and daggers, reports BSS.

Shamsul Alam takes over EC Secretary

A Z M Shamsul Alam, former Textile Secretary, has joined the Election Commission Secretariat as its Secretary. Alam is the 21st Secretary of the Election Commission, reports BSS.

PM takes iftar with SC judges

Prime Minister Begum Khaleda Zia hosted an iftar party for the judges of the Supreme Court at her office Wednesday evening, reports BSS.

Explosion

Two powerful hand bombs were exploded in quick succession near the first gate of New Market in the city immediately after iftar Tuesday making panic-stricken people run for safety and shopkeepers pull down shutters, reports UNB.

Schri and Iftar timings

Ramzan	March	Schri	Iftar
6	12		6.13 pm
7	13	4.50 am	6.13 pm