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Eliasson, Mostafiz talk refugee issue

UN assures of finding a peaceful solution

The United Nations has assured Bangladesh of its best efforts towards finding a peaceful solution of the Myanmar refugee problem, reports UNB.

The assurance came at official talks between Foreign Minister ASM Mostafizur Rahman and the visiting UN special envoy Jan K. Eliasson at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs Tuesday.

The UN Under Secretary General for Human Affairs was briefed about severity of the problem and plight of the refugees, said a Foreign Office spokesman after the one-and-a-half-hour meeting.

Eliasson, who flew in here on Monday as a special envoy of the UN Secretary General, told the meeting that "I will do my best to find a peaceful solution of the problem acceptable to both the countries."

He referred to the meeting between Prime Minister Begum Khaleda Zia and Secretary General Boutros Ghali at the UN headquarters last month, which highlighted three aspects of the problem — human sufferings, settlement of the refugees and durable solution of the issue.

At the Khaleda-Ghali meeting, the influx of Rohingya refugees into Bangladesh was described as "a serious global situation" and the UN move to settle the issue "a test case of preventive diplomacy."

The preventive diplomacy as conceived in the January summit of the Security Council members "means to avert crises, contain situation and continue peace-making and peace-keeping."

"I am moving forward in search of a solution in line with the spirit of this concept", the UN-envoy told the Foreign Minister.

Eliasson arrived here Monday on the first leg of his two-nation tour aimed at resolving the refugee problem arising from large-scale influx of Myanmar Rohingya Muslims into Bangladesh.

Officials said more than 200,000 Rohingya Muslims have so far crossed into Bangladesh to escape persecution by the Myanmar military junta.

Winding up his mission in Bangladesh, he will fly to Yonkon on Thursday to discuss with the Myanmar authorities early repatriation of the refugees.

The UN Secretary General is expected to take measure in dealing with the problem on the basis of the recommendations to be submitted by



Visiting special envoy of the UN Secretary General Jan Eliasson met Prime Minister Begum Khaleda Zia at her office yesterday. — PID

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Door open for talks, PM tells Eliasson

Prime Minister Begum Khaleda Zia, talking to a UN envoy Tuesday accused Myanmar of not responding to Bangladesh's call for solving the Rohingya refugee problem bilaterally, reports UNB.

"We have tried to solve the problem bilaterally, but they didn't respond and, instead, attacked our border checkpoint," she told United Nations Under Secretary General Jan K. Eliasson when he called on Begum Zia at her office Tuesday morning.

"Now that international pressure has started, Myanmar is trying to dress up as nothing has happened," the Prime Minister pointed out to the UN envoy.

She, however, said, "We have kept the doors open for

Rohingya issue : Hasina against military action

COX'S BAZAR, Mar 31: Leader of the opposition in the Jatiya Sangsad and Awami League chief Sheikh Hasina said here today that the unusual situation now prevailing in Myanmar could be overcome by switching over to democratic political system in that country, reports BSS.

In this connection, she called upon the Myanmar government to release NLD leader Aung Sun Suu Kyi and hand-over power to her party in order to put an end to all chaos and confusion.

Briefing newsmen at the local press club this morning after her visit to several Rohingya refugee camps she said persecution of Rohingya Muslims and other citizens of Myanmar could end only when democracy was established in that country.

Giving her impression on the condition of the refugees in different camps she said the unfortunate people of Myanmar had been living in sub-human conditions in refugee camps.

Sheikh Hasina said she received some complaints from the refugees regarding unequal distribution of relief materials.

She pointed out that heavy influx of Rohingya refugees to Cox's Bazar had created a socio-economic and environmental imbalances in the area causing sufferings to the local and non-local people.

She said the Rohingya refugee problems could have been solved earlier, if the government took the problem seriously from the very beginning. "We raised the issue in the parliament in due time but because of government apathy towards the issue, the problem had now taken a serious turn."

She said adding the Foreign Minister told us that the government had adopted a quiet diplomacy to solve the issue.

Sheikh Hasina appealed to the international community to help solve the Rohingya refugee issue enabling them to return to their homeland before the monsoon sets in.

In reply to a question the AL chief said "I do not think there is any politics from any quarter in Bangladesh behind Rohingya refugees coming to Bangladesh."

In reply to another question whether Bangladesh should think of military action if diplomatic efforts failed to solve the issue because of inflexible attitude of Myanmar government, she said "we want peace and we desire a peaceful solution to the problem."

Jamaat to maintain low profile

By Staff Correspondent

Despite pressure from the restive members, the Majlis-e-Shura (Central policy planning body) of Jamaat-e-Islami, Bangladesh yesterday decided to keep a low profile against any provocation from any quarters.

The 139-member body of the party met with its Acting Amir Abbas Ali Khan in the chair. The meeting was convened to ratify the appointment of the Acting Ameer for the party and to discuss the situation that followed the arrest of the party Ameer Prof Golam Azam.

Jamaat sources said, a group of the Shura members was highly critical of the party leadership for not reacting 'properly' to attract and accusations from what they termed 'unpatriotic' forces.

The criticisms came mostly from those Shura members who represent areas where Jamaat has a stronghold. Besides, sources said, the critics included also a section of the younger leadership of the party.

On the whole, most of the leaders are in between 40s and 50s while a small number belongs to the older generation.

More gas fields need to be explored, says Petrobangla

By Staff Correspondent

Bangladesh should intensify its efforts to explore more gas fields, says a Petrobangla report released last week.

The report says: "As gas is the only indigenous source of commercial energy in the country its optimum development and utilisation are of vital importance to our national economy."

"A national natural gas reserve is yet to be formulated and agreed upon to cater to the needs of the future generation."

The most recent estimates put the figure of total reserves — proven and probable — at about 21 TCF (trillion cubic feet) of which 12.4 TCF is considered as recoverable, according to the report released March 25.

Since the beginning of gas production in 1960 from the Chhatak field, the report says, the total cumulative production as of January 1992 stands at 1.7 TCF.

Thus, the total 17 gas fields that have till date been discovered in Bangladesh have a recoverable reserve of 10.7 TCF.

Explaining the need for a

Gana Adalat case

CMM directed to grant 24 bail after surrender

By Staff Correspondent

The 24 person against whom warrants of arrest were issued for involvement in the Gana Adalat (People's Court) that held a "public trial" of Jamaat Amir Golam Azam on March 26, were granted bail yesterday.

The bail was ordered following a two-day hearing of the petition by High Court Division Bench.

The warrants had been issued by the Chief Metropolitan Magistrate (CMM) Court charging the 24 persons accused with sedition and attempt to murder.

"We therefore find it just and proper that the petitioners namely (names of the 24)



Pakistan goes, pillars remain

From Atiur Rahman

JESSORE, Mar 31: Even two decades after Liberation, boundary pillars demarcating border line with India still bear the mark 'Pakistan' on Bangladesh side.

It can be witnessed in the border areas under Jessore district that the boundary pillars are still bearing 'Pakistan' instead of Bangladesh.

Since independence, successive governments came and initiated many reformative and development programmes. But the necessity of changing the identity marks on the boundary pillars escaped their attention.

Move for Collaborators Act revival bill

By Nurul Kabir

The Opposition in Parliament excluding Jatiya Party and Jamaat is planning to move a bill in the coming session of Parliament to pave the way for Golam Azam's trial as a war criminal.

The planned bill will virtually seek revival of the Collaborator Act 1972 which was repealed in December 1975 by an ordinance promulgated by the then Chief Martial Law Administrator Abu Sadat Mohammad Sayem.

A senior lawyer who is also an Awami League leader told this correspondent yesterday that the draft of the bill seeking repeal of the Act had already been prepared.

Before placing the bill in Parliament, AL would discuss the matter at the parliamen-

Lailatul Qadr tonight

The Muslims will seek the mercy of the Almighty Allah through night-long prayers on 'Lailatul Qadr' to night, reports BSS.

Various socio-religious organisations have organised special programmes marking the 'Lailatul Qadr'.

Bangladesh Seerat Mission has organised Quran Khawari, Waz-Nasid, Nafal prayers, and special munajat after Magrib prayers at Patuatuli Jame Mosque.

The Haqqani Anjuman, Dhaka branch has drawn up a similar programme at Oliganj Haqqani Mosque opposite Sadar Ghat terminal.

Bangladesh Mehanati Party has organised a discussion, milad mahfil and iftar party.

Swappadesh, a socio-cultural organisation will hold a discussion and milad mahfil at 5 P.M. at 32, Purana Paltan, Social Welfare and Women Affairs Minister Tariqul Islam will preside over the discussion.

'Dhaka-KL jt venture prospect bright'

By Chapal Bashir

The new investment policy of Kuala Lumpur has created vast scope for Bangladesh to attract Malaysian entrepreneurs in joint ventures.

"Time has come for Bangladeshi entrepreneurs to avail this opportunity," said Tunku Dato Nazihah Binte Tunku Mohamed Rus, the outgoing Malaysian High Commissioner in Bangladesh.

She said that Malaysia's Reverse Investment Policy offers opportunity for Malaysian entrepreneurs to invest abroad, particularly in developing countries.

Tunku Nazihah, who has completed a three-year tenure as her country's envoy in Bangladesh, told The Daily Star Monday that some entrepreneurs in Bangladesh and Malaysia have shown much interest to set up industries in Bangladesh under joint venture and are studying prospects and possibilities of such projects.

Some Malaysian investors have already visited Bangladesh to explore the possibilities of setting up joint venture industries and have discussed with the government authorities and local entrepreneurs.

Tunku Nazihah said that Bangladesh has great potential of labour-intensive investment while the Malaysian government is encouraging entrepreneurs to invest abroad under its new investment policy.

As regards possible joint ventures in Bangladesh, Tunku Nazihah said that palm oil refinery, garments industry, fishing, small and cottage industry are the sectors where Malaysia could collaborate.

"Lot of interest from Bangladesh entrepreneurs exists to set up palm oil refineries under joint venture", she said adding that such refineries, if set up in Bangladesh, would not only meet the country's domestic requirement, but palm oil could also be exported to neighbouring Nepal, Bhutan and India, where it has good demand.

She believed that other similar products produced under joint venture in Bangladesh might find market in the neighbouring countries.

"Some Malaysian investors have also shown interest in collaborating to set up refineries here, however, more efforts from the Bangladesh side are essential to get the job done", said the High

Remove Biswas as Chancellor, demands DUTA

By DU Correspondent

The Dhaka University Teachers' Association (DUTA) demanded Tuesday the removal of President Abdul Rahman Biswas from the post of Chancellor of the University for his alleged involvement in anti-liberation activities during the Liberation War.

At an emergency meeting chaired by its Vice President Professor Md Shahadat Ali yesterday, DUTA members warned all quarters not to rehabilitate those who were involved in the genocide during the Liberation War and collaborated with the anti-liberation forces.

The meeting, held at the Dhaka University Club, demanded execution of the verdict of the people's court on Golam Azam.

The meeting expressed deep concern at the 'false propaganda' of the 'committee to resist Indian

A disenchanting people marking time in uncertainties

Star Guest Columnist Kuldeep Nayar Writes From New Delhi

I have returned from Srinagar disturbed. There is a sea change in the conditions prevailing now and what I saw during my last visit in the first week of January 1990. The city is cold and distant, not so much geographically as emotionally. Estrangement, nay, alienation is almost total.

The people look towards you with indifference as if nothing matters to them anymore. They have seen the worse. In the last two years, they have undergone untold miseries. Practically, every Kashmiri family feels aggrieved in one way or the other.

The business goes on as usual, in the sense that shops are open, children go to school, the chadder-clad women move freely and buses ply up and down the streets. But there are many police-

men and too many bunkers which distort the impression of normalcy. The curfew in the city's interior is in force and so is Section 144, which bans an assembly of more than five. A notification has also been issued to the Srinagar press not to publish news stories about Kashmiri militants.

True, the militancy has decreased. New recruits are reluctant to join; 700 have surrendered with their arms, and one-third of some 8,000 militants have become inactive. One killing here or a couple of kidnappings there continue to take place but the large-scale defiance is absent. There is disenchantment. A call for haral or bandh has a limited response. The people do not come to the streets readily and even when they do, the number is far smaller than before.

However, there is no lessening of alienation or distance as if something has broken within them. They open up in no time, even the government servants. Some of what they say is exaggerated but a substantial portion of it is true.

For example, the story of mass rape in Kupaware is incorrect only to the extent that the women involved were not 40 to 50 as alleged. But Governor Girish Saxena did not rule out "two to three rapes," although New Delhi has gone to town on false exonerations by the Indian Press Council team.

Most blame is laid at the door of Indian security forces and their operations — a blot on India's conscience, as one former Judge in Srinagar put it. There is also irritation against the militants, who have disturbed their lives, economically and socially, without giving them anything in return. Pakistan comes in for criticism for having stoked the fires and staying in the background.

More disconcerting to the motest village and the havenots generally own them. Their anger is not only against New Delhi but also against the haves who, they believe, have been the beneficiary.

The motivated have been pushed to the background and the disciplined cadre of the Jamiat-e-Islami is not large. Most militants are on their own, divided and subdivided into many groups, often working at cross purposes. There are skirmishes among them. Recently, the pro-Pakistan Al Omar and the Jammu and Kashmir Liberation Front (JKLF) fought an open gunbattle, in which three persons lost their lives. The other day eight persons were killed when a family tried to stop one militant from throwing a hand grenade one another.

Anti-social elements have jumped into the fray. That probably explains the extortions, looting, instances of personal vendetta and even molestation of women. This also explains why the commonman is confused and the intelligentsia embarrassed. Understandably, there is an unimpeded flow of information about the militants to the authorities.

But whatever the disillusionment, it is not turning into a pro-Indian sentiment. The argument that Kashmir has been a disputed territory is almost a conviction, and many recall Jawaharlal Nehru's promise that the Kashmiris would be given an opportunity to decide about their fate. Whether Pakistan joined CENTO or did something else was no reason for India to re-

Inside Kashmir

Kashmiris is the fallout: the gun culture. Devout and peace-loving Muslims as they are, the indiscriminate use of the bullet and all that goes with it worries them. They wonder how it will affect their way of living — and the future.

Nearly 4,000 have been killed since January 1990, 2,500 by security forces and 1,500 by the militants. Arms have reached even the re-

Solanki quits over Bofors, issue

NEW DELHI, Mar 31: Foreign Minister Madhavsinh Solanki offered his resignation Tuesday, under fire for allegedly trying to bury a 5-year-old investigation of corruption into the governing Congress Party, reports AP.

Solanki's resignation was announced by Parliamentary Affairs Minister Ghulam Nabi Azad in Parliament, Indian news agencies reported.

Azad said Solanki met Prime Minister P V Narasimha Rao earlier Tuesday and "tendered his resignation."

The move came a day after Solanki admitted in Parliament that he delivered a letter last month to Swiss Foreign Minister Rene Felber concerning bank investigations into alleged kickbacks in the purchase of artillery guns from Sweden in a 1986 deal.