

Australia warns China Halt arms sales to Myanmar

BELJING Apr 11: Canberra has given Beijing a strong warning to halt arms sales to Myanmar's military Junta, Australian Foreign Minister Gareth Evans said today, reports AFP.

"I put the issue in very strong terms," Evans told reporters after talks with Chinese leaders, "the regime in Myanmar has become impossible to defend."

"China is increasingly being put in the position of being the regime's only friend," he said. "It does have some clear influence as a result and it ought to exercise that influence, in particular by ceasing arms sales."

Evans said a response was not forthcoming, but added that "China is becoming increasingly acutely aware of just how little support the Myanmar regime now has and the risks of being isolated in that respect."

Azam issue made to divert people's attention: JS

By Staff Correspondent

A meeting of the Jatiya Party parliamentary party Saturday observed that the Golem Azam issue was created by the government to divert people's attention from the crisis facing the nation.

Chaired by Mizanur Rahman Chowdhury, the meeting viewed that the government must be responsible for the consequences arising out of the situation.

Held at the Jatiya Sangsad, the meeting blamed the Government for failing to resolve the country's burning issues like terrorism, silent famine, lack of development works, price hike of essentials and deterioration of law and order. The meeting was adjourned till today.

1 killed in Khulna fire

From Our Correspondent

KHULNA, Apr 11: A baby was killed, five persons injured and about 30 thatched shanties were gutted in a devastating fire that broke out in the city Saturday evening.

The baby (3) was burnt to death as the shanty to the ground in which he was playing was razed to the ground.

The baby's mother received serious burn injuries when she rushed to rescue her child. She was admitted to the Sadar Hospital.

Other injured persons were admitted to various city clinics. The fire, learnt to have originated in the house of a rickshawpuller at Islampur Road, soon spread to the adjoining houses.

Local people and Fire Service personnel brought the fire under control after an hour's relentless efforts.

Jamaat, trial body supporters clash: 60 injured

From Our Correspondent

FARIDPUR, Apr 11: At least 60 people including 12 police personnel were injured in a clash between the activists of Jamaat and the supporters of Trial Committee here today.

Four seriously wounded committee supporters were admitted to Faridpur Sadar Hospital while 12 Jamaat workers were treated for minor injuries at their office. The policemen include ASP (Circle) and Officer-in-Charge of Faridpur Police Station.

The clash ensued when some Jamaat supporters allegedly hurled a number of cocktails on a rally of the Trial Committee supporters demanding implementation of the verdict of the March 26 'Gono Adalat' at Janata Bank Square in the city.

Jamaat-e-Islami was also holding a rally in front of their office demanding Golem Azam's release nearly 100 yards away from the committee's meeting venue. Several thousand people attacked the 200-men Jamaat rally following the cocktail throwing incident and both the groups continued clash for about an hour.

The clashing groups used rods, hockey sticks, Chinese axes and cocktails while the police remained a mere spectator for half an hour.

Two vehicles and five shops were damaged during the incident. Police lobbed five tear-gas shells and resorted to lathi charge to bring the clashing groups under control.

The Jamaat supporters took shelter at their office when police went on action and they did not leave the office fearing fresh attack of the public.

Both groups blamed each other for the incident, tension was prevailing in the town.

China, the first country to recognize the Junta that took power in a September 1988 coup, is Myanmar's main arms supplier, with sales of one billion dollars in 1990 that included fighter jets and tanks, diplomats say.

The Myanmar leader, General Saw Maung, came here in October last year for an official visit — his only trip abroad since the coup — that included talks on military sales.

Evans said there were reports that Chinese fighter jets had been used by Yangon to bomb ethnic Karen insurgents, while persecution by Myanmar troops has also led tens of thousands of Muslims to flee into Bangladesh.

Experts

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The government arrested him on March 24 on charges of violating the constitution of Bangladesh and illegal stay in the country.

Azam has been kept in the Dhaka Central jail. Legal experts strongly view judicial steps are also due against Jamaat for violating the Constitution.

Article 38 of the Constitution of Bangladesh does not permit any foreign citizen to be a member of any political party or organisation of the country.

Parliament of Bangladesh required to be constituted by the persons representing different interests of the people of Bangladesh only and for that reason a foreigner-led party cannot be accepted in the country's parliament maintained the legal experts.

Barrister Lutfar Rahman while talking to the Daily Star said, Jamaat's election of a foreigner as its chief virtually violated the sovereignty of the constitution.

Article 7 of the Constitution of the country reads: 'All powers in the republic belong to the people' and this Constitution is, as the solemn expression of the will of the people, the supreme law of the republic, and if any other law is inconsistent with this constitution that other law shall, to the extent of the inconsistency, be void.'

Barrister Lutfar in this connection said the Constitution of the country therefore plainly shows it does not allow any party to elect anybody its chief, who is not a member of the people of the country.

Barrister Amirul Islam said, election of Golem Azam as Jamaat chief is not only a violation of Article 38 of the Constitution of Bangladesh, it is virtually a violation of the core concept of the Constitution.

The objective of any political party is to attain the state power which means any political party, at least conceptually, is eligible to run the state and Jamaat in that sense is also no exception, Barrister Islam said adding, Jamaat by electing Golem Azam its Ameer has therefore virtually proposed a foreigner even to the highest office of the country which is directly contradictory to the concept of the Constitution.

The government is, however, yet to take any legal step against Jamaat for its alleged violation of the Constitution by electing Golem Azam its chief.

Italian envoy visits refugee camps today

Italian Ambassador in Bangladesh Claudio Pacifico is leaving Dhaka today for the Rohingya refugee camps in Cox's Bazar to evaluate the possibility of involvement of the Italian government in providing assistance to the refugees in a meaningful manner, reports BSS.

Official sources said here today, that the ambassador is taking with him a technical team who could identify areas and extent of assistance after discussion with local officials as well as with UNHCR officials.

During his trip, Pacifico will also visit Chittagong where a technical branch of the Italian Embassy has started functioning. The formal opening of the branch will be held on April 13.

The technical branch is to coordinate and monitor activities of various Italy-aided projects aiming at improve the area which is frequently devastated by calamities.

The governments of Bangladesh and Italy have signed a political agreement two months ago to expand areas of bilateral cooperation and assistance, the sources said, adding that with this agreement a mechanism of cooperation has already been established.



A torch procession of the Committee for Realisation of the Spirit of the Liberation War brought out in the city Saturday to make today's programme a success. — Star photo

Yeltsin govt on verge of collapse

MOSCOW, Apr 11: Economy Minister Andrei Nechayev announced today that the Russian government was ready to resign, after the Russian parliament voted to limit the power of the President and his cabinet in a blow to Boris Yeltsin, reports AFP.

"We just signed a declaration on our resignation and we have submitted it" to Yeltsin, the Russian President, he said.

"We asked the president to take action so that the resolutions of parliament can be cancelled, if not we will resign," Nechayev said.

First Deputy Prime Minister Yegor Gaidar meanwhile warned that the situation was "very serious," and said he would make a statement at 9 pm (1700 GMT) during the evening television news programme, though he did not give details.

He and the rest of the Russian cabinet, along with 300 supporters of Yeltsin, walked to Russian government headquarters at the Kremlin to meet with Yeltsin.

On the way there, Gaidar warned that the situation was "very serious" following the decisions taken at the day's session of the Russian Congress of People's Deputies, the full-scale parliament.

Conservative opponents at

the Congress have launched an offensive on Yeltsin's pro-market shock therapy economic reform programme while moving to trim Yeltsin's power and boosting that of the legislative branch.

"Each amendment made to the resolution on economic policy did not appear very dramatic. But when you examine the test as a whole, you understand that it involves a complete overhaul of the political and economic thrust," he said.

The Congress also voted by a large majority Saturday to abolish the posts of state advisors to Yeltsin and regional governors, both appointed personally by the President.

The move was proposed by a deputy of the conservative opposition because of "the obvious duplication of powers" with those of the 'organs of constitutional government.'

Regional governors appointed by Yeltsin were in effect prefects, or state representatives, with wide-ranging powers.

But the Congress later held another vote tempering their decision, deciding to cancel their decision on abolishing the state advisers' posts, and only "recommended" the abolition of the governors.

Trial body memo

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The parties which issued statements yesterday called for massive participation in the programme.

The parties which issued statements include among others the Patriotic Democratic Front, Bangladesh Samajtantrik Dal (Khaleq), JSD (Rab)-backed Chhatra League and BSD (Khaleq)-supported Samajtantrik Chhatra Front.

The Muktiyuddher Chetona Bastobayon Committee (Committee for Realisation of the Spirit of the Liberation War) brought out a torch procession in the city Saturday evening demanding government action against Golem Azam.

The processionists marched in the city streets from the National Press Club premises to Bangabandhu Avenue.

Awami League leader Abdur Razzak MP addressed the gathering before the procession was brought out.

In his speech, Razzak warned the governments that there would be a mass uprising in the event of its failure to execute the verdict of the 'gana adalat' by April 26.

Armed clash leaves one dead in city

By Staff Correspondent

One Fajzur Rahman Ripon (22) was killed in an armed clash between two groups of mastans at Bijli Mahalla of Mohammadpur Thana in the city last night, police said.

Robbers decamp with cash, ornaments

By Staff Correspondent

A gang of armed youngmen robbed cash and gold-ornaments from a house at Dinonath Sen Road in the city late Friday night.

The house-owner, Mashukur Rahman, a businessman, complained to Sutrapur police that a group of armed youngmen numbering seven stormed into his residence at 81-b Dinonath Sen Road at about 3 am and escaped after looting gold-ornaments worth about Tk 61,200 and Tk 15,000 in cash, said police.

The house-owner also told the police that the robbers were masked and therefore he could not identify any of them, police said.

The house-owner lodged a case with the Sutrapur police. But none was arrested till filing of this report last night.

BNP respects

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about 18 MPs including the Minister for Food and the Minister for Energy and Mineral Resources took part in the discussion.

Speaking to newsmen following the meeting, Abdus Salam Talukdar, Secretary General of the BNP said that the BNP would oppose any demand to implement the verdict of the 'people's court'.

Rather "we will go by the decision of the court," he added.

Referring to moves by the opposition on the issue of Golem Azam, the Secretary General observed, "We will listen to its proposals and then decide our strategy."

Salam Talukdar told the newsmen that the meeting discussed the political situation prevailing in the country, issues of Rohingya influx, Golem Azam and his public trial.

Parliamentary sources said that the Food Minister and the Energy Minister made statements clarifying the government position on the reported news of food and diesel shortage. They informed the MPs that open sale of rice had been ordered to ease the situation.

According to sources, the MPs in their deliberations made it clear to the party leadership that 'under no situation would they be in a position to support the anti-people and anti-constitutional move by the Jamaat.'

Welcoming the government decision to detain Golem Azam, the MPs observed that the party should formulate a strategy to counter the 'destabilisation' move made by a section of people, sources added.

Saifur

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The Finance Minister, in this context, referred to a recent study which found some 200 leading businessmen under survey paying insignificant amounts of tax.

He, however, pointed out that despite the existence of lacuna, revenue collection performance in the current year improved substantially.

Macro-economic performance, he also said, is now quite satisfactory and inflation position is by far the best in the region.

Referring to recent announcement by the government on retrenchment of a large number of government and sector corporation employees, Saifur Rahman said the firing would come in phases, and affected persons would be compensated adequately.

NBR Chairman Nurul Hossain Khan, in his introductory speech, said Bangladesh's current tax-GDP ratio of 1:8 is lower than that of neighbouring India and Pakistan. It has to be raised for a self-reliant economy.

Khan appealed to the business community to help bring about a tax payment culture in the country.

Scores of suggestions were put forward at the meeting by the private sector representatives for further rationalisation of the duty and tax structure.

Federation of Bangladesh Chambers of Commerce and Industry (FBCCI) President Mahbubur Rahman suggested that VAT rate be lowered to 10 from 15 per cent.

He also recommended that the corporate tax rate be fixed at 35 per cent at the maximum.

To invigorate the capital market, Rahman suggested that profit by selling shares, debentures, unit certificates etc should be exempted from the existing capital gaining tax.

Metropolitan Chamber President Morshed Khan strongly demanded adequate measures, including improved currency reforms, to keep country's exports competitive in the changed situation in the international market.

The Midnight File

14 drown as boat capsizes in Jehlum

ISLAMABAD, Apr 11: At least 14 people drowned when a boat carrying pilgrims capsized in the Jehlum river, official sources said today. Twenty-one people were on board when the boat was caught in a storm near the Punjab city of Bhalwal late Friday, local administration chief Mehmud Akhtar told AFP by telephone.

23 Armenians killed in Azeri attack

MOSCOW, Apr 11: Three Armenian militiamen and at least 20 civilians were killed overnight in an armoured Azeri offensive against a village in the North of the disputed territory of Nagorno-Karabakh, the news agency Itar-Tass reported Saturday. About 1,000 Azeris equipped with artillery and about 20 armoured vehicles launched an attack late Friday on Maraga, in the region on Mardakert, reports AFP.

Govt to appeal UK cabinet

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and waging war against the state', the High Court judgement mentioned.

Earlier, the CMM court, following cases filed by the Officer-in-Charge of Ramna thana issued warrants of arrest against the 24 persons two days after they organised a public trial of the controversial Jamaat leader Golem Azam for war offences on March 26.

The CMM Court did not receive the High Court order till Saturday night, court sources said.

The 24 sponsors of the people's court were reportedly prepared to surrender in the CMM Court and a decision to this effect would be taken within a day or two, trial committee sources said.

'Khagrachari killing an 'Indian design'

CHITTAGONG, Apr 11: Chittagong Hill Tracts National Coordination and Peace Council Saturday described Friday's killing of 11 people in Khagrachari by the outlawed Shantibahini as an "Indian design" to destroy the country's stability, reports UNB.

Leaders of the council in a statement condemned the incident and expressed deep concern over the atrocities perpetrated by the tribal insurgents having sanctuary in India.

BCL (N-S) leader killed in Manikganj

By Staff Correspondent

A JSD (Inu)-backed Chhatra League leader Abujar Hossain Swapan was killed Saturday morning at the Devendra College compound at Manikganj allegedly by the supporters of BNP backed Jatiyatabadi Chhatra Dal (JCD).

Swapan was the General Secretary of Chhatra League (N-S) Manikganj town unit. The motive of the killing could not, however, be ascertained.

It is alleged that Swapan was dragged to the college compound by the activists of JCD while he was returning home from the college and was hit brutally by a 'ramda'.

Peasants

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right were displayed in the rally.

The sit-in demonstration was addressed by leaders of different organisations. Awami League leader Rashed Mosharraf, Student leaders Mosharafa Mishu, Jayed Hasan Khan, Krishak Federation leader Abdur Rashid Minu, Abdus Sattar Khan and female peasant leaders from different part of the country among others addressed the audience.

Free Azam or face movement

From Page 1 Col 7

people to be united against it. Naye-e-Ameer Moulana Abul Kalam Mohammad Yousof said that the action of the BNP government had frustrated those who voted it to power. He stated that if the BNP loses its 'tested friends' in the process, and joins hands with forces responsible for the fall of the previous BNP governments, its fate would be the same.

Jamaat Assistant Secretary General Mohammad Qamaruzzaman addressing the rally said democracy was now a hostage in the hand of fascism.

He said that people would not allow the government to cling to power while anti-Islamic campaigns and 'conspiracies of expansionism' continue unabated.

He termed the Awami League's stance regarding the public trial as politically motivated and mentioned that the AL itself released the prisoners of war and announced an amnesty for the war criminals during its reign.

Abdul Kader Moila, Publicity Secretary of Jamaat said that the recent incidents have raised the question about the existence of the government. He told the government that if it was unable to arrest the trial members, then it should admit it. "The people know how to treat them," he added.

The Jamaat leaders were also critical of some new newspapers and alleged that these were fanning anti-Islamic campaigns and acting against the Jamaat-Shibir.

The meeting presided over by city Ameer A R M Asharul Islam, was also addressed by the deputy leader of the Jamaat Parliamentary Party, Maulana Abdus Sobhan and Prof Yousof Ali.

The rally also announced holding of rallies from April 13 to 18 at the divisional level.

Move against Azam, not govt: Imam

By Staff Correspondent

Public trial committee chairman Jahanara Imam on Saturday said that the current anti-Golem Azam campaign was in no way a movement against the government.

"Our identified enemies and their agents are trying to colour the campaign as a movement against the BNP government but it is in no way so, Imam said at a reception at the Taher Auditorium in the JSD (Inu) office.

The reception was accorded to 24 trial committee members against whom warrants of arrest were issued for holding the public trial on March 26 at Suhrawardy Uddyan. The public trial passed a verdict that Golem Azam deserved the death sentence for crimes he committed during the War of Independence in 1971.

Imam said that the people could not agitate against a government they voted to power just a year ago.

She said that the people had expressed their pent-up hatred against Golem Azam and his accomplices on the trial day after a long 20-year period. "We have just crossed a hurdle on our long way," she said adding "There is no alternative but to execute the verdict of the public trial."

She urged the people to make the march towards the Jatiya Sangsad today (Sunday) a success.



The acting Ameer of Jamaat-e-Islami, Abbas Ali Khan, addressing a rally at the Northern Gate of Baitul Mokarram Mosque on Saturday, demanding the release of Golem Azam. — Star photo

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Editor: S. M. Ali
Executive Editor: Mahfuz Anam

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