

Edward College closed sine die AL-BNP gunbattle in Pabna: 10 hurt

PABNA, Apr 5: A gunfight between activists of ruling BNP and opposition Awami League in the town today (Monday) left at least 10 people injured with bullet, police and witnesses said, reports UNB.

The clash was a sequel to Saturday's exchange of gunshots between the activists of the two parties that left 15 people injured after a JCD leader and VP of Edward College Students Union was shot at.

District Awami League enforced a dawn-to-dusk hartal in the town today protesting ransacking of a sweetmeat shop on Saturday by an armed group following the gunbattle.

Pabna Edward University College which reopened Saturday after Eid holidays was closed sine die today following the clash to avoid untoward incident on the campus.

Students of the college vacated their hostels by 5 pm after the Academic Council decided to close the college at an emergency meeting.

Witnesses said about 25 rounds of bullet were fired and 10 hand bombs hurled during

today's clash at Kalachandpur area in the town that erupted at about 7.30 pm and continued for half an hour.

The injured were not admitted to the hospital to avoid arrest, local people said.

Police have been deployed in the troubled area to prevent further clashes.

One killed, 10 hurt as CSD workers clash in Khulna

KHULNA, Apr 5: A worker was killed and 10 others injured in a fierce battle between two rival groups of workers of Boira CSD Godown last night, reports UNB.

Police today (Monday) said Dewar Hossain Ditu (35) was shot during the fight between the groups led by Shah Alam and Nazim -- both trying to establish control over the godown workers.

Ditu died on way to hospital. More than 100 hand bombs were exploded and about 20 shots fired during the clash which continued for more than three hours.



IDLE TIMES: Drivers playing cards on the cars parked outside the Secretariat yesterday.

— Star photo

Pak troops halt Kashmir marchers: 102 arrested

SEHRI (Pakistan), Apr 5: Pakistani paramilitary forces arrested the leader of a march on the Indian-defended ceasefire line dividing Kashmir today, reports Reuter.

Officials ordered the arrested of the leader, Mumtaz Hussain Rathore, and 102 followers after they threatened to storm a police barricade.

About 2,000 marchers at this hamlet 23 km (14 miles) from the line of control had staged a sit-in on the second day of the march, saying they would break through police barriers unless Pakistan opened routes into the disputed region.

The march was organised to show support for a three-year-old separatist rebellion in Indian-ruled Kashmir.

Rathore, leader of the Kashmir branch of Opposition

leader Benazir Bhutto's Pakistan People's Party, was arrested after army officers failed to persuade him to call off the march.

Speaking before he was taken away, Rathore told the crowd to disperse and said the march would resume at a later date.

"No god but Allah," shouted the demonstrators, who began their march on Sunday, the 14th anniversary of the hanging of former Prime Minister and PPP leader Zulfikar Ali Bhutto.

Officials had warned that paramilitary troops blocking the road and posted on surrounding hilltops would open fire if the marchers tried to force their way passed a red tape stretched across the narrow road.

"If we allow them through,

the Indians will kill them," Deputy Commissioner Akbar Shah said.

Rathore had given the government until midnight to meet his demands to open routes through Kashmir across the UN-monitored ceasefire line, to try to obtain observer status for Kashmir at the United Nations and exert pressure for a UN-mandated plebiscite in the state.

Police opened fire on a jeep, saying that its five passengers were saboteurs, but no one was hurt.

"We are ready to shoot at (Indian) Hindus and to be shot at by them" Rathore said. "We are not ready to go back."

Officials said Indian troops had broadcast warnings that anyone trying to cross the line of control would be shot.

FBCCI

From Page 1 Col 5
The FBCCI President, who is also the leader of the Bangladesh delegation at the two-day meeting, also sought the support of the Japanese financial sector in developing the capital market and the financial services sector in the country.

The FBCCI President highlighted some of the areas of potential cooperation agreed upon in past joint meetings, which included: setting up linkage industries in the ready-made garments sector, electronics, finished leather and other export potential areas; cooperation in seed production, crop diversification and equipment manufacture in the agriculture sector; setting up a technical training centre in Bangladesh to meet Japan's need for foreign workers and relocating Japan's "sun-set" industries in Bangladesh.

Although the meetings of the committee is held every year, Rahman noted, it has failed to enhance exports to Japan and attract investment into Bangladesh.

To silence critics who say the meetings are only an annual ceremony, Rahman added "we would like to overcome this through meaningful cooperation in trade and investment."

Rahman hoped that the current meeting would go a long way to bring about awareness of opportunities, complementarities, needs and expectations between the two sides. "I hope, the meeting will bring about real prospects with effective measures for implementation."

The FBCCI President went on to add: "While the Government of Japan is our single largest partner, we would hope, Japanese industry would also come forward so that trade may finally overtake aid."

WHO: Violence

From Page 1 Col 6
of Health Education Nazrul Islam and Deputy Inspector General of Police M K I Choudhury, who also heads a WHO project "Accident Prevention Project."

To combat the increasing number of deaths from violence and accidents, Dr Abe-yundere stressed the need for increasing medical facilities to treat emergency cases.

Prof Sirajul Islam, Director of Orthopaedic Hospital, said that road accident was the number one cause of unnatural deaths in Bangladesh. He informed that of the total injured patients coming to the hospitals, 80 per cent are victims of road accidents. The orthopaedic hospital received some 78,000 patients in 1991.

Citing a Home Ministry report, Tahmina Hossain said that during 1992, 3092 accidents were recorded throughout the country. In these accidents, 1655 people were killed while 2850 people were injured.

Citing the causes of the rising number of road accidents, Sirajul Islam who had been working on accident prevention for the last 12 years, said that the fault of vehicle was the main reason, while over-loading of passengers, faulty driving, faulty road constructions, lack of traffic sense of the pedestrians and weakness in enforcement of traffic rules are the others.

Referring to environment of the road, he cited a Dhaka City Corporation (DCC) statistics where it was found that Dhaka had 450 miles of road, of which only 30 per cent was free and the rest was occupied by hawkers, shops, house-building materials or by political parties for holding public meetings, he added.

The government had chalked out elaborate programme to observe the day. It includes seminar, health education exhibition and special programmes through radio and TV.

PM seeks investment

From Page 1 Col 4

Rahman, Commerce Minister M K Anwar, Industries Minister Shamsul Islam Khan, outgoing Japanese Ambassador in Dhaka Toshio Saiki and FBCCI President Mahbubur Rahman.

Welcoming the Japanese delegates, Prime Minister Begum Zia said: "We seek your cooperation in our national development efforts, you possess developed technology and capital for investment as well as long years of entrepreneurial experience."

Although poverty alleviation and employment generation were on top of the government agenda, she said, they could not be achieved without rapid labour-intensive industrialisation.

Noting that an integrated development process required close cooperation among nations, Begum Zia emphasised that mutual cooperation and close trade-links among Asian nations were of "paramount importance for development of the region."

"This is felt more so in Bangladesh as resource constraint stands as the single most important impediment to accumulated problems of widespread poverty and unemployment."

The Prime Minister, however, pointed out that the government was also striving to attain a self-reliant economy. As a result of which, internal resource mobilisation, almost nil in the 80s, she said, currently stood at about 25 per cent.

Reiterating the government's commitment to building a prosperous Bangladesh, Begum Zia said, "We are now boldly grappling with the challenges of development and democracy has provided us with the much needed stability."

She pointed out the success of the government's economic policy initiatives in achieving economic stability, maintaining a comfortable level of foreign exchange reserve, enhancing revenue collection and containing inflation.

"Our economic performance has indeed generated considerable hope when viewed in the backdrop of global recession," Begum Zia said, while noting that investment has accelerated and that the growth rate is likely to be around five per cent this year.

The Prime Minister assured that the present government has been persistently striving to create a favourable climate for investment, both local and foreign, in the country.

She referred to the progress in setting up two additional export processing zones and the liberal policy adopted by the government to attract foreign investment and boost the capital market.

Mentioning the country's long-standing relationship with Japan, the Prime Minister recalled with gratitude the generous Japanese assistance after the cyclone in 1991.

"Japan is one of the first developed countries to recognise Bangladesh and Shaheed President Ziaur Rahman's visit to Japan further cemented closer links between the two countries," she said.

Ministers, members of parliament, diplomats and leading businessmen of the country also attended the inaugural session of the joint meeting

being participated by a 66-member Bangladesh delegation led by the FBCCI President.

The Japanese Minister for International Trade and Industry, in his message, assured continued support for the economic development of Bangladesh.

"Japan plans to increase its level of cooperation, in a number of areas and this will include stronger economic and technological cooperation and a more active promotion of the investment and trade opportunities Bangladesh offers," Yoshio Mori said.

However, he pointed out that mutual trust and understanding among members of the business communities of the two countries was "absolutely crucial" to the cementing of positive economic ties.

"In this sense, this gathering of leaders of the economic communities of our countries to exchange frank opinions on various issues related to our economic ties is very significant," he added.

The leader of the Japanese delegation, also the Chairman of the Joint Committee, noted that at present there were 12 Japanese companies operating in the Chittagong Export Processing Zone (CEPZ) while another six in other parts of Bangladesh.

"But this is not enough," Ikeda acknowledged, "in light of the potential of joint efforts between Japan and Bangladesh and I believe there lies an opportunity for expansion."

However, he identified a number of areas including development of infrastructure, introduction of a more incentive plan for foreign investors and a publicity drive directed towards Japan and other newly industrialised countries in Asia, where much improvement was urgently needed.

He noted that a guidebook titled "Investment Guide to Bangladesh: Manual about export processing areas" was published in Japan by JETRO in January.

Finance Minister Saifur Rahman noted the long catalogue of economic reform measures initiated by the present government but apologised for the fact that "not much reform in the labour sector" was undertaken.

Noting that there was no "anti-Japan" feeling in Bangladesh as in some other Asian countries, Rahman assured the Japanese delegation of facing no discrimination as a foreign investor.

He also urged Japan to help Bangladesh attain "not a trade-driven growth but a trade-driven growth."

The Commerce Minister pointed out that while nearly nine per cent of Bangladesh's imports came from Japan, only 3.5 per cent of its exports went to Japan.

Anwar also noted that there was no general trade agreement between the two countries at the moment.

During the period between 1979-92, Anwar said, Bangladesh exported 814 million US dollars worth of goods to Japan while imports from Japan stood at nearly five billion dollars in the same period.

Noting that the government had initiated a plan for export-led growth in the country, the Commerce Minister said, as a result, exports have shown a 30 per cent increase in the first eight months of 1992-93.

Pak cabinet

From page 1 col 7

Sharif enraged the 78-year-old Ishaq Khan this year when he set up a committee to modify the eighth amendment, martial-law era legislation that empowers the President to dissolve parliament and appoint armed forces chiefs of staff.

In a heated meeting that lasted until early on Sunday, 40 ministers and members of parliament had asked the Prime Minister to mend differences with Ishaq Khan that could prompt him to use his power to dissolve parliament.

"We asked him to go and meet the President and to surrender," said one minister who declined to be named. "There was a virtual cabinet rebellion."

Saiki

From Page 1 Col 5

Noting that the existing bilateral relations between Bangladesh and Japan is "heavily weighed" towards government to government contact, the Japanese envoy pointed out that total Japanese private investment in Bangladesh stands at only 0.018 per cent of the total foreign direct investment by Japanese businessmen.

Private investment, he said, takes place when there is mutual interest and it also needs a congenial atmosphere.

However, he added "more has to be done" in improving the investment climate in Bangladesh. "Additional efforts has to be taken to make the government initiatives more effective," which includes those of bureaucrats, workers and others in society.

The Japanese envoy identified three areas where immediate improvement is needed: labour relations, effectiveness of the bureaucracy and simplification of customs regulations.

The Overseas Development Assistance of Japan, which is the largest bilateral donor to Bangladesh, Saiki pointed out is geared towards developing the infrastructure, which in turn would facilitate private investment in the country.

Saying that the country is "eagerly waiting" for domestic investment, he noted that the level of both public and private domestic investment is relatively low in Bangladesh compared to even other South Asian countries.

"In a country where local investors do not invest themselves, foreign investors are not attracted."

However, the Japanese envoy expressed "great hope" at tapping the "enormous potential" in the field of investment in Bangladesh, with the Export Processing Zones (EPZ) playing a key role. "There is a realistic hope of increasing (foreign) investment at the EPZs," he added.

AL, allies to resist

From Page 1 Col 5

Ganatantrik Jote, have held several rounds of talks during the past few days.

The leaders concentrated during the talks that continued until last night mainly on how to make their April 8 planned public meeting in the capital a total success.

They also discussed strategies on fresh courses of action to combat "government's contemplation" to undo the Samannaya Body movement for trial of "war criminals" including Golan Azam and demand the outlawing of communal politics, according to meeting sources.

The aforesaid parties, claiming themselves to be pro-Liberation, called the April 8 joint meeting as part of their protest against "continued oppression on the pro-Liberation forces" and to condemn the March 26 and 28 occurrences.

Leaders of the parties meantime agreed in principle to extend their all-out support to all the planned programmes of the Samannaya Committee and thus help the committee movement reach its cherished goal, sources said. However, they added, such support would be endorsed in further meetings with AL chief and leader of the Opposition in parliament Sheikh Hasina on her return home from India.

She was scheduled to be back in the late hours last night, party sources informed.

The joint meeting, likely to be held today or tomorrow with Sheikh Hasina, is expected to decide the April 8 rally resolution regarding support to the Samannaya Body's April 10 grand rally at Rajshahi, April 20 sit-in near the secretariat in Dhaka and the showing of black-flags to the Prime Minister from May 4, organisers said.

Willoughby: Aid Club

From page 1 col 7

problem is not the adverse aid climate but the underuse of the money. There has to be better execution of public investment and more private sector activity.

According to Willoughby Bangladesh is boosting its capacity of aid utilisation. He estimated that the current year's (1992-93) aid disbursement will be between 1.7 billion and 1.8 billion dollars.

"It's not too bad. You can consider it satisfactory," he said about the pace of utilisation out of a commitment of 2.2 billion dollars for the current year.

He said, in reply to another question, that it is no more the shortage of counterfunds that hampers utilization of foreign aid. It is the limited execution capacity by the people concerned that delays the aid, he said.

Asked if World Bank will support Bangladesh if it decides to build a barrage on its side of the Ganges Willoughby

The Midnight File

Armenian tanks kill 60 Azeri civilians

MOSCOW, Apr 5: Some 60 Azeri civilians fleeing the just-conquered region of Kelbadzhar were killed by Armenian tanks today, the Azerbaijan presidency announced in Baku, reports AFP.

US to lift arms ban unless Serbs accept peace plan

WASHINGTON, Apr 5: The United States will consider lifting an arms embargo 'quite soon' for Bosnian Muslims unless rebel Serbs accept a current peace plan, Secretary of State Warren Christopher said today, reports Reuter.

Disciplinary action

From Page 1 Col 4

The second report, however, did not change its original position. The Commission felt that although irregularities were there, there was no corruption at any phase in the implementation of the project.

The Commission held, along with 'some high officials' of the Works Ministry, four particular officers responsible for the irregularities in implementing the project.

The accused officers included, the then chief engineer M A Rauf, chief architect Shah Alam Zahiruddin, the then chief engineer of the Public Works Directorate Sheikh Hashmat Ali and A K M Shafuluddin of the Supervisory Committee charged with the implementation of the Hare Road project.

The Commission also accused the Minister for Public Works Barrister Rafiqul Islam Miah for his failure to monitor the completion of the project at the originally estimated expenditure.

The Cabinet meeting held March 29 this year that approved the Commission's findings about the irregularities of the concerned officials, rejected the allegation against the minister.

The Cabinet members observed that the Rules of Business of the government does not oblige any minister concerned either to monitor progress in implementation of any project of the ministry approved by the Cabinet earlier or to supervise disbursement of funds required to implement the concerned project.

According to the Rules of Business, to ensure implementation of the cabinet decisions, the secretary of each ministry shall keep a record of all the decisions conveyed to him and shall watch progress of action.

Another clause of the Rules reads: the secretary shall also be the principal accounting officer of his ministry, its attached departments and subordinate offices, and ensure that funds controlled by him are spent in accordance with the rules laid down by the Finance Division or any other law for the time being in force.

Besides, according to a Works Ministry document, the matter of the extra schedule expenditure came to the notice of the ministry only when the Public Works Directorate sought approval of the ministry for an additional expenditure of Taka 7,0038 crore on October 15, 1992.

The minister concerned went for an immediate meeting of the relevant officials of Works Ministry and Public Works Directorate November 4 and expressed his dissatisfaction over the extra expenditure in implementing the project.

The minister also asked the officials concerned to prepare a summary describing details of the extra schedule works and sector-wise expenditure for the projects.

The summary reached the cabinet November 26 of the same year. The cabinet members then decided to constitute the three-member commission to look into the whole process of the implementation of the Hare Road project.

According to the commission report, the Hare Road project was originally planned by the government of former President Ershad in 1989 and the expenditure to implement the project was estimated at Taka 6.67 crore.

But in the course of time, many sub-projects were added to the original plan causing increased expenditure in implementing it gradually amended project.

The building was erected virtually on a 32,000 square feet plot while it was supposed to be erected, according to the original plan, on a piece of land covering 26,000 square feet.

The completion of the project in the amended form involved an extra expenditure of Taka 7,0038 crore and a total of Taka more than 12 crore has already been spent on it.

The commission observed that although 'the additional expenditure was necessary to erect such an important state-owned building', the additional money was spent 'without any

prior permission of the appropriate authorities.'

Incidentally, the interim government of Acting President Justice Shahabuddin took a decision on this issue August 12, 1991 that resolved the Hare Road project should be completed at the originally estimated cost of Taka 6.67 crore.

It was discovered later that before the decision of the Shahabuddin Cabinet an additional amount of money had been spent without duly informing the cabinet.

The commission held the officials of the Public Works Directorate responsible for not providing the cabinet with the adequate information.

The Hannan Commission, however, identified six particular causes that had contributed in exceeding the originally estimated budget for the implementation of the project.

The reasons included, unprecedented hurry in estimating the cost of implementing such a big project, absence of detailed structural and architectural designs during the estimation, preparation of the tender schedule and invitation of the tender in a hurry (both took place in only five days), providing the construction firm with designs of the project part by part (some architectural designs were supplied to the firm much after the project was started), spot decisions about a number of extra scheduled items to be included in the original project and lack of coordination among the officials in-charge of preparing structural, electrical and architectural designs.

The commission also observed that although the proposed structure had officially been meant to be the residence of the country's vice president, inclusion of rooms for the president's security force (PSF) and his ADC clearly hinted that the house was being actually designed for the president.

The commission remarked that this sort of a move was unbefitting on the part of the highest ranking personalities including the president.

The commission finally recommended that the Works Ministry approve the additional expenditure already spent in implementing the project.

The amendments later made to the original plan were virtually essential to erect such an important house, the commission observed.

The government, however, is yet to take decision on this recommendation.

Clinton, Yeltsin

From Page 1 Col 4

center hall for the wrap-up to a summit dominated by Russia's need for aid to nurture its reform movement.

Clinton and Yeltsin left Vancouver on Sunday following this two-day summit a spokesman at Vancouver international airport said.

Clinton accepted Yeltsin's invitation to a further summit meeting, this time in Russia.

A final communique issued at the end of the summit Sunday said, "President Yeltsin invited President Clinton to visit Russia. President Clinton accepted the invitation with appreciation."

There was no indication when the next summit would be, but in Moscow the ITAR-Tass news agency quoted a Foreign Ministry spokesman as saying it might take place this year.

The communique said the two leaders agreed to meet regularly 'with a view to accelerating the development of US-Russian partnership.'

[Details on Page 5, 8]

SMC students, local people clash: 20 hurt

From Our Correspondent

SYLHET, Apr 5: At least 20 persons were injured in two clashes between the students of Sylhet Medical College and a group of people from the adjacent area of the college tonight.

Eight of the injured persons sustained bullet injuries.

About 40 rounds of gunshots were exchanged during the clashes.

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