

Yeltsin signs military treaty with Georgia

Tbilisi, Georgia, Feb 3: President Boris Yeltsin signed a treaty today, boosting Russia's military influence in Georgia, hours after Georgia's Deputy Defence Minister was assassinated in a bomb attack, reports Reuters.

A Defence Ministry official described the killing of Nika Kekelidze, shortly before Yeltsin arrived on a one-day visit, as the work of people opposed to a military deal with Russia.

Kekelidze, 37, was killed outright along with an unidentified friend when a blast wrecked his Tbilisi apartment.

The treaty, signed by Yeltsin and Georgian leader Eduard Shevardnadze, along with 25 other documents, envisaged strong assistance from Moscow to the embattled Transcaucasian republic both in the economic and military spheres.

Among other things, Russia committed itself to helping Georgia train and supply weapons to its new armed forces. In return Russia would keep three major military bases in Georgia.

A Georgian Defence Ministry spokesman linked political opposition to what he called an "act of terror."

The death of...Kekelidze

IFAD President due tomorrow

Sawzi Hamad Al-Sultan, President of the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD) arrives here tomorrow to attend a meeting of five heads of UN agencies, reports UNB.

The four-day meeting of the executive heads of the UNDP, WFP, UNFPA, IFAD and UNICEF, all part of the UN Joint Consultative Group on Policies (JCGP) will begin in Dhaka tomorrow to deal with sustainable development programmes and allied issues.

This is for the first time that the UN bodies are meeting outside New York or Rome to deliberate on current programmes and future policies of the UN agencies.

PM's son

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parents of Dr. Shamsul Alam Khan Milon, Shaheed Noor Hossain, Shaheed Selim, Shaheed Delwar, Shaheed Raufun Basunia, Shaheed Nazir Hossain, Shaheed Abu Al Fatah and Shaheed Tajul have been invited, it was learnt.

The political leaders invited include Zillur Rahman, Hasanul Huq Inu, Abbas Ali Khan, KM Obaidur Rahman, Ali Ahsan Mohammad Mujahid, Mirza Abdul Halim, Dr. Kamal Hossain, Khalequzzaman Bhuiyan, Kazi Kader, MA Matin, Prof Mozaffar Ahmed, Ahmedul Kabir, AFM Mahabubul Huq, SM Sobhan, Syed Huda, Nirmal Sen, Shaiful Alam Prodhan, Garib Nawaz, Anwar Zahid, Oli Ahad, Mohammad Anuddin, Saifuddin Ahmad Manik, Amal Sen and Moinuddin Khan Badal.

The invitees have been requested not to bring any presents for the new couple. This request has been written in the invitation card.

Govt has lost right

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The AL leader strongly condemned the Lalbagh killings and criticised Prime Minister Khaleda Zia for not visiting the area and regretting the gruesome murders by what he said, the ruling party's men.

"We will raise the issue in the coming session of Parliament", he informed the audience.

Tofael Ahmed, condemning the post-polls carnage, said the government instead of hailing the AL victory in the elections took revenge against the party by killing six of its workers. Moreover, it issued a press note in a bid to hide the killers, he added.

Tofael blamed the police for not arresting the culprits and also for harassing the AL workers. He also deplored the silence of the Prime Minister about the matter and accused Food Minister Mir Shawkat Ali of being behind the killings.

The way the BNP government tried to reverse the local government elections results, Tofael alleged, "it seemed the ruling party had taken the polls as if a change of government was involved."

Reacting to LGRD Minister Abdus Salam Talukder's allegations of rigging, he said the ruling party leader had only justified the opposition demand for holding elections under a care-taker government.

Saifur returns home

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Finance Minister M Saifur Rahman returned home yesterday after ending his two-week visit to England, France and Switzerland, reports BSS.

In an act of terror is profitable to those who oppose the creation of a powerful Georgian army," the spokesman told Itar-Tass news agency.

Small groups of people stood around public buildings in Tbilisi hold placards declaring: "Down with Russian imperialism" and "Shevardnadze — the butcher of Georgian independence."

Both Yeltsin and Shevardnadze face political problems signing the controversial treaty, which effectively sets up a strategic alliance between the two countries.

Yeltsin flew to the former Soviet Republic apparently shrugging off a written appeal from heads of all parliamentary parties not to commit Moscow to helping Georgia build an army.

The heads of the party factions in the Duma or lower chamber appeared to fear the planned treaty would tie Russia too closely to Georgian interests in the sensitive Caucasus region and draw it against its will into a conflict.

Russia also fears unrest in Georgia's breakaway regions of Abkhazia and South Ossetia could spill onto its territory and bring a flood of refugees to southern Russia.

3 held with statues

By Staff Correspondent

The City Criminal Investigation Department (CID) in two raids in the city on Tuesday and Wednesday evenings recovered three statues made of black stone and marble worth about Taka one crore.

Police arrested three persons — Mainul Hasan, 28, Abul Kalam, 37, and Khalil, 32 in this connection.

A CID spokesman said that a team led by an A S P Khalequzzaman raided a house at Karimullahbaragh, Demra, and recovered a statue of Parboti of black stone and a marble statue of Buddha from the possession of Mainul and Kalam.

Later the team on a tip raided a shop at Sultana Razia Super Market under Lalbagh Police Station and recovered another statue of black stone weighing about 44 kilograms. Police arrested Khalil from the spot.

21 Iranian embassy staff asked to quit Jordan

AMMAN, Feb 3: The Foreign Ministry has asked 21 diplomats and staff at Iran's embassy in Jordan to leave the country, a Foreign Ministry spokesman said Thursday, reports AP.

Ahmed Mbeideen, head of the Foreign Ministry's information section, did not say whether the government had given the Iranians a deadline for departure.

The move comes five days after a Jordan's second-ranking diplomat in Lebanon, Naeb Imran Maaytah, was shot dead by an unidentified assailant near his residence in seaside neighbourhood of Raouche in Beirut.

UK to provide

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implementation of agreed policies to promote private economic activity and effective utilisation of available aid funds," said a British High Commission statement quoting the signed minutes.

A new project worth one million pounds sterling was agreed for establishing a National Herbarium in Bangladesh.

Both sides also agreed to move rapidly to new investments in: A budget reform and expenditure control project worth 6.5 million pound sterling; design and construction of bridges in Sylhet worth 10 million pounds sterling; the second road rehabilitation and maintenance project worth seven million pounds sterling; and the Gas Infrastructure Development Project worth 15 million pounds sterling.

Both sides also agreed at the meeting that the continuing programme of British aid should focus on helping Bangladesh tackle its priority objectives of poverty alleviation; public administration reform; human resource development with particular emphasis on health and family planning; education and a greater role for women in the development process; efficient use of energy; sustainable exploitation of natural resources; and improved collection and use of revenues.

During the talks the British Under Secretary also announced a special grant of one million pounds sterling (about Tk 6 crore) for the UNHCR's special appeal for the voluntary repatriation of the Rohingya refugees to Myanmar.

Britain's bilateral aid programme to Bangladesh is its second largest, the High Commission statement noted, and added: "UK spending on development projects (in Bangladesh) is expected to continue at about 50 million pounds sterling (about Tk 300 crore) in the coming years."

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Convener of the Gano Forum Dr Kamal Hossain speaking at a seminar on "Role of Law: Citizens and the Government" organised by the Ganosahajya Sangstha in the city yesterday. Also seen are Khandaker Mahbubuddin Ahmed, Barrister Ziaur Rahman Khan, MP and Justice Maksumul Hakim. — Star photo

Heads of UN agencies arrive today

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The heads of the organisations of the United Nations Joint Consultative Group on Policies (UN-JCGP) will start arriving in the capital from today to attend its annual meeting beginning here tomorrow, reports BSS.

Executive Director of the UNICEF James P Grant and Chief Executive of the World Food Programme Ms Cathrine Bertini will arrive here today while the Administrator of the UNDP James Gustave Speth, Executive Director of the UNFPA Dr Nafis Sadek and the President of the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD) Fawzi H Al-Sultan are expected to reach tomorrow.

Hanif visits Lalbagh

Mayor-elect Mohammad Hanif yesterday visited the homes of those who were killed in Monday's post-election violence at Lalbagh and met with members of the bereaved families, reports UNB.

It was a heart-rending scene when Hanif reached Lalbagh and met with the members of the bereaved families who burst into tears. Hanif consoled them, "Allah will punish the killers," he said in an emotion-choked voice.

On January 31, six people were killed when supporters of defeated Commissioner candidate Abdul Aziz sprayed bullets from automatic weapons on jubilant supporters of Commissioner-elect Humayun Kabir of the Awami League.

The Mayor-elect was accompanied by Awami League leader Dr Mostafa Jalal Mohiuddin, newly elected Ward Commissioners Humayun Kabir and Kazi Masum, party's city leaders Hemayet Uddin Ahmed, Delwar Hossain and Mohammad Sentu.

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Jatiya Sangsad session

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the opposition parties would try to reach a consensus on moving a bill unitedly seeking the polls under a caretaker government.

Meanwhile, the opposition parties are scheduled to meet this evening to decide common strategy to face the treasury bench during the session.

A policy-maker of the ruling BNP, who is also a minister, felt that the demand for holding the next general elections under an interim government would now fail to earn the sympathy and support of the people, especially after opposition candidates won the city corporation polls held under the government of Prime Minister Khaleda Zia.

"The present government has earned absolute credibility by holding the elections in a free and fair manner," the minister asserted.

However, the Opposition, especially the Jatiya Party (JP), would repeat its accusation of rigging by the government in the city polls.

Barrister Maudud Ahmed, while talking to this correspondent last night, said his party would also accuse the Election Commission of its 'failure' to ensure free and fair polls.

The demand for repealing the Anti-Terrorism Act will also come up in the House. But such claims from the Opposition bench are likely to be met with the customary rebuff from the treasury bench.

A general discussion on the Lalbagh incident that left six persons killed in post-polls violence Monday would be held in the Sangsad in the first working day after the President's address to the House and discussion on it.

President Abdur Rahman Biswas is scheduled to address Parliament on its opening day. It is the constitutional obligation of the President to address the House when it meets for the first time in a new calendar year.

Meanwhile, the business advisory committee of the JS met yesterday evening to discuss the general agenda and the duration of the coming session.

During the meeting, the treasury bench members proposed the session be prorogued on March 7, a week before Eid-ul-Fitr. But the Opposition members on the committee felt the session should continue, with an Eid vacation, until the last week of March.

The advisory committee will meet again tomorrow to finalise both the duration and the agenda of the session.

After the presidential address, the House is likely to be adjourned for a couple of days.

Three ordinances, which were promulgated after the last session, will be laid before the House on the opening day.

The ordinances are: The Bangladesh Industrial Enterprises Nationalisation (Amendment) Ordinance-1994, the 'Artha Rin Adalat' (Finance Loan Court) (Amendment) Ordinance-1994 and the Institute of Post-Graduate Studies in Agriculture Ordinance-1994.

Parliament members, belonging to both treasury and Opposition benches have so far submitted more than two thousand questions to the Parliament Secretariat for answers from different ministers.

Rallies, processions and carrying of arms and ammunition in Sangsad Bhaban areas have been prohibited from early hours of February 5 for a smooth conduct of the winter session of parliament, reports UNB.

The Dhaka Metropolitan Police Commissioner AN Hussain ordered the ban which will remain in force till the end of the 13th session of the 5th parliament, beginning Saturday, said a DMP press release yesterday.

City polls boost country's image

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60,000, the Foreign Secretary insisted the figure would be between 10,000 to 15,000, and again repeated: "It is a matter of commitment to take back the genuine refugees and not a question of numbers."

The Foreign Secretary dismissed as 'baseless' an Indian allegation that insurgents were being allowed to operate from Bangladesh territory. He also expressed his unhappiness at a news item, published in a local vernacular daily, "Such news do not help in building cordial relations between neighbours," he said.

Asked about the progress of the water-sharing and other outstanding issues with India, Osmani replied: "Dialogue is continuing and we are optimistic. Negotiations have not stopped."

He did not agree with a reporter who suggested that discussions between the two countries were not progressing.

"I would not say it is not moving, properly. We have a considerable degree of optimism," he replied.

The Foreign Secretary told the members of the press, "We do not want to engage in dialogue through the media. We want to do it through proper diplomatic channels."

Asked about the proposed visit of Indian premier Narasimha Rao to Bangladesh, Osmani hoped the visit would take place 'soon' and quickly added that he had no other information on the matter.

Rabindra Sangeet confce begins today

KUSHTIA, Feb 3: The two-day 13th Rabindra Sangeet conference begins here tomorrow amid much enthusiasm, reports UNB.

Senior Tagore singer Rabindranath Roy will inaugurate the conference at the premises of the local Shilpakala Academy at 9 am. Noted educationist Zillur Rahman Siddiki will inaugurate the photography exhibition 'Rabindra Jeebandhara' after the opening of the main function.

Noted artist Qaiyum Chowdhury will attend as the chief guest.

The programmes of the conference include seminar, discussions and musical soirees. Prominent artists from across the country are expected to take part in the function.

Poet Begum Sufia Kamal will inaugurate the second day function at Shilaidaha Kutubari at 9 am on Saturday.

The second days programmes will also be followed by cultural function.

Ekushey programme

Discussion on 2 books held

By Staff Correspondent

On the third day yesterday of the month-long Amar Ekushey programme organised by the Bangla Academy, discussion on two books was held at the academy premises.

The books are Madyajuger Bangali 'Projukti O Samaj Bibartan' (Technology and social evolution in Bengal of Mid-era) by Mantazur Rahman Tarafdar and 'Hasan Hafizur Rahman O Sahitya' (Hasan Hafizur Rahman and Literature) by Rafiqullah Khan.

A K M Zakaria and Prof Mohammad Maniruzzaman presided both the sessions. Prof Musa Ansari and Prof Mofakkarul Islam took part in the discussion on the first book while Prof Abdul Mannan Syed, Dr Ali Reaz, Prof Tasique Islam and Dr Masuduzzaman on the second book.

India rejects UN probe on Kashmir

GENEVA, Feb 3: India said Thursday it opposes a United Nations probe into alleged human rights violations in Kashmir, a territory disputed with Pakistan where Indian government troops are battling Muslim separatists, reports AP.

Prime Minister Benazir Bhutto of Pakistan, accusing India of abuses, demanded the investigation in a speech Tuesday to the UN Human Rights Commission in Geneva. This usually means dispatching a rapporteur.

"I don't see a role for a special rapporteur to deal with the Jammu and Kashmir problem," Indian finance minister Manmohan Singh told a news conference Thursday.

UN Secretary-General Boutros-Ghali also has said he opposes intervening in the India-Pakistan dispute as long as both countries are engaged in talks.

A team from the International Commission of Jurists, a Geneva-based human rights group, visited Kashmir last August. And Singh said India is negotiating with the Red Cross to send its envoys to Kashmir.

Abdul Aziz, a BNP-backed commissioner candidate, was defeated in Sunday's polls and the next day he and his brother Shaheen allegedly led the armed attack on the supporters of Humayun Kabir.

Local people said, they supported the Awami League-backed Humayun Kabir because they considered him a good and honest candidate.

A Jatiyatabadi Jubo Dal worker in the area said, on condition of anonymity, that many of his party-men had supported Humayun in the polls as, according to him "Aziz was a terrorist and a Jatiya Party man and he had joined the BNP just before the polls to get the nomination."

"Hafizuddin, who was murdered on the day, was also a Jubo Dal worker of the Ward No. 59 and had supported Humayun in the polls," said the Jubo Dal worker.

Local people said, Aziz had worked against the anti-autocracy movement in 1987 and 1990. Later, he was arrested and sent to jail following the fall of the autocratic regime, they added.

"In 1989, local WASA staff went on a 48-hour strike as Aziz and his men ransacked the local WASA office and beat up some of the staff," said the local people adding that a Jatiya Party leader had to intervene to bring the situation under control.

Meanwhile, police and BDR were patrolling the area. Quikhwant of the six victims was held at the Nawabganj Bara Mosque after Arj prayers yesterday. Hundreds of people attended.

The Midnight File

Cyclone claims 10 in Madagascar

ANTANANARIVO, Feb 3: A huge tropical cyclone has killed 10 people and destroyed many homes and farms in Madagascar, officials said today. Cyclone Geraldia 800 kilometres (480 miles) in diameter, hit the Indian Ocean island on Wednesday, reports AFP.

Avalanche kills 12 Turkish troops

ANKARA, Feb 3: An avalanche buried a military unit hunting for separatist Kurdish rebels in southeastern Turkey, killing 12 soldiers, the military said Thursday. Four soldiers were rescued. A helicopter assisting in the rescue crashed during a blizzard and its pilot was injured, said Col. Dogu Silahcioglu, a spokesman for the Turkish General Staff, reports AP.

DEDO pays Tk 48.5 cr

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ments till now has gone to exporters of processed leather. Drawback payments have also been made to exporters of ceramics, mild steel and stainless products, paper and plastic products, fabrics, fertiliser, jute goods, etc. The garments sector is not covered by the duty drawback incentive because it already enjoys bonded warehouse facility. DEDO officials say that more and more local suppliers to garments industry are coming to claim duty drawback.

DEDO officials insist that drawback claims are settled by them in quick time. The official time limit set for so-called 'flat rate items' is seven days for settlement of claim and payment to applicants' bank account.

Exporters come to face real problems when they are claiming duty drawback on items which do not have an established flat rate of drawback payment. Such items can be a new items for DEDO or an 'old' item with new customs

duty slapped on by the NBR. Settlement of drawback claims take longer in such cases — 'a month', according to DEDO authorities, 'much longer', according to some exporters.

The DEDO has set up computers and information systems with money provided by donors like the USA to reduce claim processing time. They did not have qualified operator for the computers until quite recently.

Although the DEDO settled about 8,600 drawback claims last financial year valued at Taka 112 crore, exporters are still unconvinced about its overall efficiency. One irate exporter says that this number does not say anything about the claims that have not been settled or the length of time taken to settle them.

In any case, the duty drawback system is a much publicised export incentive and the DEDO does have to do a lot more to live upto the exporters' expectations, observers feel.

9 ICS activists beaten up at DMCH

By Staff Correspondent

Nine activists of the Islami Chhatra Shibir were wounded after they were beaten up by the activists of the rival student organisation at the Dhaka Medical College late Wednesday.

The meeting, attended by D P Barua (BSS), Golam Tahaboor (AFP), Amanullah Khan and A Z M Haider (UNB), Dr Touhidul Anwar (PIB), Fazal M Kamal, A B M Musa, Enamul Haq and other senior journalists, discussed the conceptual and operational potentials of the idea.

It was decided that a concept paper would be prepared and distributed to different South Asian media leaders seeking their opinion on the idea.

The informal meeting was held at the office of Enayetullah Khan, Chief Editor of UNB.

Prokrichi

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The programme will conclude with a rally of the doctors, engineers, agriculturists and 21 BCS cadre officials on April 5 at the Institution of Engineers.

Announcing the programme at the BMA building, Chairman of the Prokrichi-BCS Central Action Council Dr M A Majed urged the government to stop, what he called, harassment of the leaders of the professionals by the bureaucrats.

He also demanded immediate reinstatement of M A Hena, secretary general of the Action Council.

Giving an account of the discrepancies existing in different cadres of the administration, Dr Majed called upon the government to remove all anomalies.

He also called for handing over the executive powers to the elected public representatives.

"We want that the government never become a hostage to a handful of terrorist officials inside the Secretariat," he commented.

Central leaders of the Prokrichi-BCS Central Action Council were present at the press conference.

JS Petition Body

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ing applications filed by the students of the college and guardians regarding different problems and irregularities of the college. The guardians had complained of sub-standard education and other problems and irregularities of the college.

The petitions relating to the Rural Electrification Board and the Bangladesh Agriculture Development Corporation (BADC) were also given importance in the meeting.

The committee members including Deputy Leader of the House Prof A Q M Badruddoza Chowdhury, members of the treasury bench L K Siddiqui, Mian Mohammad Mansur Ali, Begum Farida Hasan and Md Shahidul Islam and Awami League Members of Parliament Tofael Ahmed and Col (ret'd) Shakwat Ali participated in the meeting.