

US, Vietnam agree to set up missions

HANOI, May 26: Vietnam and the United States have agreed to exchange diplomatic missions, "an important step toward the normalization of relations," the Foreign Ministry announced Thursday, reports AP.

The agreement comes more than 20 years after the two countries fought each other in a bloody war that divided the United States and cost nearly 60,000 American and as many as 2 million Vietnamese lives.

The ministry said in a statement that last Friday and Saturday, US Assistant Secretary of State Winston Lord and Vietnamese Deputy Foreign Minister Le Mai "exchanged letters concurring in the establishment of representative offices in their respective capitals."

Le Mai earlier had described the diplomatic missions as a transitional step toward full diplomatic relations.

The statement did not say when the offices would open. A spokesman said he had no additional details.

In Washington, State Department spokesman Mike McCurry said in a statement the opening date will depend on implementation of an agreement to return each other's diplomatic properties.

"This office should facilitate progress on all issues of concern, particularly POW-MIA accounting," McCurry said. "The liaison office also will enable us to provide services for an increasing number of Americans in Vietnam and advance our human rights dialogue."

The United States lists 2,233 Americans as missing in action — MIA — from the war.

SAARC Finance Ministers to meet in Dhaka July 9

WASHINGTON, May 26: The SAARC finance ministers are likely to meet in Bangladesh on July 9 and 10 to formulate a strategy to accelerate poverty reduction programmes in the SAARC region, Bangladesh Finance Minister M Saifur Rahman said here today, reports BSS.



A Palestinian policeman orders an Israeli soldier to lower the barrel of his gun while passing a road block manned by the new Palestinian authority, in the Gaza Strip Wednesday. — AFP photo

JS body discusses separate PSC to recruit non-govt teachers

A meeting of the parliamentary standing committee on the Ministry of Education was held at the Jatiya Sangsad Bhaban yesterday with Education Minister Jamiruddin Sircar in the chair, reports BSS.

The meeting discussed matters relating to setting up of a separate public service commission for recruiting the teachers of the non-government schools and colleges.

The meeting agreed that the draft of the proposed private public service commission would be discussed in the next meeting for making improvement of the same before placing it for approval of the authority concerned.

The committee discussed benefit being given to the registered private primary schools and ibtedayee madrassah. It also has a discussion on the problems of the non-government teachers and employees and benefits already given by Prime Minister Begum Khaleda Zia to meet the legitimate demands of the non-government teachers.

State Minister for Education Principal Md Eunus Khan, Mrs Khurshid Jahan Haq (BNP), Moshirur Rahman (BNP) and Shah Ruhul Qudus (Jamaat) attended the meeting.

Education Secretary Irshadul Haq elaborately discussed the recent matter relating to the SSC examinations in the meeting.

Secretary of the Primary and Mass Education Division Kazi Rakibuddin Ahmed gave a vivid idea about the primary education, registration of the non-government primary schools and benefits being given to the teachers of the private primary schools.

Warm welcome awaits Solzhenitsyn at home

VLADIVOSTOK, Russia, May 26: Russia today prepared a warm homecoming for writer Alexander Solzhenitsyn that should mark a triumphant ending to a life odyssey of suffering through war, labour camps and exile abroad, reports Reuter.

The 75-year-old Nobel laureate, bundled out of Russia 20 years ago by the communist authorities because of his writings, was flying into this rain-lashed Pacific port on Friday from the United States for an emotional reunion with his homeland.

One of his three sons, 23-year-old Yermolai, said his father, who remains deeply suspicious of Russian officialdom, would not allow his schedule to be dictated by the authorities.

"Fear could never make my father do anything. He always did everything that he wanted to do," he told reporters in Vladivostok. "It is a great honour for me to accompany my father on this trip. As they say, we all walk under God."

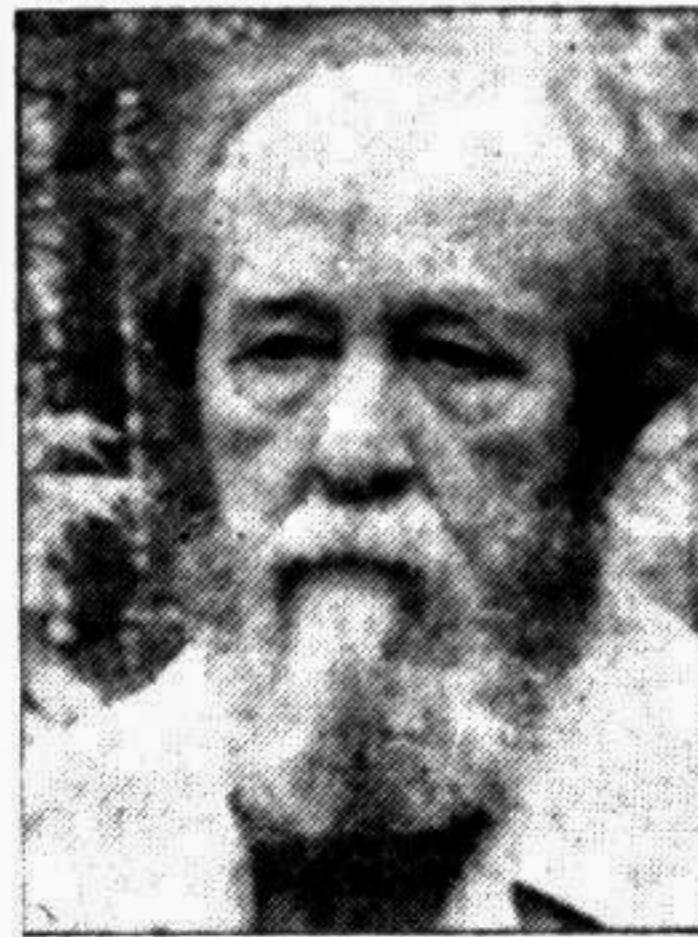
Yuri Prokofyev, an aide to Solzhenitsyn, also made clear the writer would not allow any official meddling in his programme.

"This is not an official visit by a delegation. This is a writer returning to his homeland and so there will be no official protocol," he said.

Vladivostok officials said

Solzhenitsyn, who has lived as a semi-recluse in Cavendish, Vermont, USA for the past 18 years, had expressed he wish to go into the city immediately and talk to his compatriots.

"Talk to people. Talk to people. That's all he wants," said one harassed official in Vladivostok involved in preparing the way for his arrival.



The one-time dissident, a moral giant and an icon of defiance to communist tyranny, is coming back to die in his homeland apparently satisfied with the democratic progress of the new post-communist Russia under Boris Yeltsin. He was due to fly into Vladivostok with his wife Natalya and two of his grown-up sons from Anchorage, Alaska on Friday.

UN lifts mandatory arms embargo against SA

UNITED NATIONS, May 26: The Security Council Wednesday scrapped a 17-year-old mandatory arms embargo against South Africa following the burying of apartheid and the installation earlier this month of a non-racial government, reports Reuter.

The council's unanimous action was taken at a meeting held, symbolically, on Africa Day and addressed by South African Deputy President Thabo Mbeki. He was the first member of the country's new government headed by President Nelson Mandela to speak in the world body.

The Council also rescinded a 1984 resolution urging all states to refrain from importing the products of South Africa's own arms industry, developed partly in response to the UN ban.

The arms embargo, dating from November 1977, was one of the last remaining UN punitive measure designed to force an end to apartheid.

A series of non-binding sanctions imposed by the UN General Assembly in the economic, sports and cultural fields was lifted in recent years as South Africa moved toward

becoming a non-racial democracy.

South Africa has yet to rejoin its seat in the 184-member General Assembly and related bodies from which it was suspended in 1974 because of its racial policies. This could happen as early as next month.

22 hurt as rival groups clash in Jhenidah

JHENIDAH, May 26: At least 22 people, including six women were wounded in a series of clashes between two rival groups at a village in Jhenidah pourashava on Wednesday, hospital sources said, reports UNB.

Local people said the clash ensued at the village Kalkapur as a backlash of past enmity between a sitting pourashava commissioner and the previous one.

Supporters of both the groups attacked each other with lethal weapons after hot chase and counter chase in the afternoon. Later it spread to a residential area.

Seek divine blessings for dead hajis: PM

Prime Minister Begum Khaleda Zia yesterday prayed to Almighty Allah for eternal peace of the departed souls of those Hajis who died while performing the holy Hajj in Makkah, reports BSS.

In a message, the Prime Minister conveyed her sympathy to the members of the bereaved families of the late Hajis.

The Prime Minister appealed to all for seeking divine blessings for the peace of the departed souls of the Hajis in each and every mosque during the Juma prayers today.

US daily praises economic growth in Bangladesh

The Washington Times has highly praised the economic growth process in Bangladesh under the leadership of Prime Minister Begum Khaleda Zia, reports BSS.

The US daily in a report Wednesday said "Bangladesh, under the reform minded government of Prime Minister Begum Khaleda Zia, has enjoyed a period of fast economic growth and has moved from statist to market oriented development, emphasising foreign trade and investment."

These moves have drawn praise from the World Bank which said "the dirt-poor south Asian nation has achieved more progress than is generally recognised — especially in food production, family planning and child survival," the report added.

Giving an account of the economic growth during the last three years the report said "After initiating the economic reforms in 1991, Bangladesh's export increased an average of 20 per cent a year. The budget deficit declined from 7.7 per cent to 5.4 per cent of gross foreign exchange reserves increased from 585 million US dollars to 2,197 billion dollars. Inflation dropped to 1.3 per cent from 9.3 per cent.

The report however, observed that the export oriented private investment is needed to increase further growth of economy and create more employment opportunity and reduce poverty.

In this connection, the daily said quoting Ms Linda Lowenstein, a senior World Bank official, "Bangladesh needs to accelerate its economic reform as soon as possible or the investors whose attention the reformist government has captured will disappear."

Top Kashmir militant killed

SRINAGAR, May 26: A top militant of Hizbul Mujahideen was killed in a shoot-out incident and nine others captured besides a large quantity of arms and ammunition were seized across the Kashmir valley by army troops since last evening, reports PTI.

A Defence Ministry spokesman said a Pakistan-trained militant of outlawed Hizbul Mujahideen was gunned down in a shoot out during searches at Rawalpura in Srinagar last evening.

BA captain dies

From Page 1 Col 4 and the two co-pilots navigated the plane accordingly," Suzuki said. "The manual does not say the passengers should be informed of such a death."

The plane touched down at Narita at 8:32 am (2332 GMT) with the two British co-pilots at the controls, the landing was smooth and we didn't know at all about the death, a Tokyo company official told the Japanese press.

But, to many of 270 Japanese among the passengers, the incident was in instant reminder of the China Airlines Airbus crash at Nagoya airport, central Japan, exactly one month earlier.

Only seven of the 271 people on board survived the crash on April 26, which a preliminary investigation has pinned on equipment failure and pilot problems.

NAM FMs' confce

From Page 1 Col 4 Bosnia-Herzegovina, the role of the NAM, disarmament and international security, international economic situation, problems of LDCs, environment and development.

The meeting will also consider and select the venue of the 11th NAM summit.

Officials said Bangladesh, as an active member of the NAM, will highlight its firm and principled position on Palestine and the Middle East, Bosnia-Herzegovina and other important political issues.

Dhaka will also play a positive role for revitalization of the North-South Dialogue, South-South Cooperation and Development.

The Bangladesh Foreign Minister, during his stay in Cairo, will meet his counterparts from other countries.

The Midnight File

Angolan peace talks stalled

LUANDA, Zambia, May 26: Peace talks between the Angolan government and UNITA rebels have stalled over how the combatants would share power, a spokesman for the rebels said Thursday, reports AP.

Jorge Valentim said efforts to resolve the impasse were continuing, but that the government had declined to respond to UNITA proposals on power-sharing made more than two months ago.

LTTE kills 5 Lankan troops

COLOMBO, May 26: Separatist Tamil rebels shot and killed five Sri Lankan soldiers and wounded four in northeastern Sri Lanka on Thursday, military officials said, reports AP.

The off-duty soldiers were in civilian clothes and traveling in a wagon pulled by a tractor when the insurgents attacked them at Pulmoddai village in Trincomalee district, 255 kilometers northeast of Colombo, the officials said.

Cambodian leaders in DPRK for peace talks

TOKYO, May 26: Cambodian leaders including King Norodom Sihanouk arrived in North Korea Thursday for peace talks with the Khmer Rouge guerrilla group, the official Korean Central News Agency reported, reports AP.

The agency, monitored in Tokyo, said Cambodia's co-premiers, Prince Norodom Ranariddh and Hun Sen, arrived along with Khmer Rouge leader Khieu Samphan.

North Yemen dismisses South's truce offer

SANAA, May 26: The Yemeni government in Sanaa dismissed today a ceasefire proposal from the breakaway state in the south, saying it did not recognise the southern leaders who made it, reports Reuter.

Planning Minister Abdul-Karim Al-Iryani, who is close to Yemeni President Ali Abdullah Saleh, spoke to the agency of the proposal made late on Wednesday, saying, "It is a ceasefire in another form."

AFP from Aden adds, northern forces fired two missiles at this port city today and despatched a column of tanks rumbling towards the Mukalla headquarters of southern leader Ali Salem Al-Baid.

A spokesman here said the attack on Aden was a "serious escalation of the war" after two Soviet-made Lunas were fired at the airport.

One missile plunged into the sea while the other was hit in flight by anti-missile fire and disintegrated, with debris damaging cars.

Witnesses said a large column of northern tanks had left Al-Ataq in the oil-rich eastern Shawba province heading for the port of Mukalla, 300 kilometres away.

Baid quit Aden and set up base 600 kilometres away in his birthplace Mukalla, from where he declared the independence of the state.

The meeting, held at the office of the Bangladesh Teachers Association (Quamruzzaman) also condoled the deaths of journalist, litterateur Mohammad Nasiruddin and the Assistant Director of the Directorate of Education, Dr Mohsin Ali.

Liaison committee coordinator Quazi Faruque Ahmed and other leaders, including Choudhury Korshed Alam, Azizul Haq Shah, Prof Asadul Haq, Azizul Islam and Abdul Awal Siddiqi, addressed the meeting.

Meanwhile, the liaison committee has called upon the striking teachers to make the June 11 sit-in a success.

Teachers' body

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Rafiq

From Page 1 Col 7

sions between the ruling party and the Opposition before the upcoming budget session. The essence of democracy is resolution of crises and conflicts through discussions between the sides, he said.

Asked to comment on the opposition demand for elections under a caretaker government, the minister said if they were so serious about it, they could table a bill in Parliament and initiate a full-dress debate on the subject.

"Let the learned members of the Opposition discuss the concept of elections under a caretaker government in all its ramifications and try to convince the government party of its effectiveness in strengthening the foundation of democracy, as they often argue," Rafiq said. "If the Opposition members can convince us of its effectiveness, we may as well change our mind and support it," assured the minister.

He, however, went on to add that a caretaker government could be by no means guarantee free and fair elections or provide an effective check against the adoption of unfair means in elections.

In support of his contention, he cited specific examples of how voting was rigged during the 1991 elections under Justice Shahabuddin's caretaker government. He said he had fallen a victim to rigging and unfair means in that election. With great difficulty he managed to withstand the "conspiracy of the undemocratic forces" in that election.

"If the opposition parties really seek free and fair elections, they should call for effective deterrents against the use of black money and mashtans who let loose hell in polls in our country."

The Opposition should also call for arming the Election Commission with much wider powers which supersede those of the executive for the purpose of conducting elections. Certain other mechanisms can also be devised to prevent executive interference in the affairs of the Election Commission.

He said only such effective safeguards against undemocratic practices could ensure free and fair elections in this country.

AL leader rebuts Huda

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imitation of autocratic Ershad. He alleged President Zia had captured power at gun point by removing President Justice A S M Sayem. He reminded that the proclamation of multi-party democracy was made by President Sayem, not by Zia who introduced 'martial democracy' through tough martial law proclamations.

Prof Sayeed said people still remembered what type of multi-party democracy Zia had introduced by bringing all political parties under PPR, sending 62,000 political activists to jail and killing thousands of military personnel. Ziaur Rahman's entire rule was marked by curfew and military orders, he added.

Continuing his vitriolic assault on the ruling party, the Awami League leader said after Zia, Prime Minister Begum Zia created a 'world record' by railroading three bills in six minutes in Parliament following a record polling of 15 votes in one minute in Magura by-elections. The BNP candidate in Mirpur by-election was declared elected through an announcement, he alleged.

"It was also unprecedented when Ziaur Rahman showed three crore 43 lakh votes out of 3 crore 48 lakh in his favour. These pieces of information are enough evidences of what type of democracy the BNP is used to practise," Prof Sayeed said in reaction to the interview of Huda who dug the past of the Awami League, particularly the introduction of the one-party rule.

During the 5-point anti-Ershad agitation, Prof Sayeed said, the present Information Minister along with Begum Zia had met Ershad and placed 33-point demand only to misguide the agitation. "Begum Zia had 45-minute exclusive talks with Ershad at Bangabhaban at

that time, but the contents of the talks were yet to be made known to the people."

On March 22, 1986, the BNP agreed to join elections on condition that its leaders who were in jail on charges of corruption be released. Prof Sayeed claimed, Begum Zia also had hand in removing Justice Sattar from power, he alleged.

He further alleged it was Begum Zia who adopted all means to 'harass' the Sattar government and belittle its image to the people following the dispute over chairmanship of the BNP. "As a result, President Sattar was compelled to declare Begum Zia 'First Lady' which was totally undemocratic and unconstitutional," the AL Information Secretary said.

Even at the time of the passage of 12th amendment that restored parliamentary democracy, he said, Begum Zia sent emissary to Ershad in Dhaka Central Jail.

Prof Sayeed alleged that Begum Zia made a public call for people-sepy agitation in May 1986 'when she failed to get required money from Ershad' for elections expenditure. "After making the call, she had been missing for three days."

In 1986, the BNP-led 7-party alliance took the decision of joining elections on an understanding on 180-120 seat-sharing with the 15-party alliance, but finally, the BNP stayed back from the polls for 'unknown reasons.'

Prof Sayeed said elections under the BNP can never be free, fair and peaceful. "If a caretaker government is called undemocratic and unconstitutional," as claimed by Nazmul Huda, "has the BNP got any right to stay in power?" He questioned, referring to the 1991 elections held under a caretaker government.

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Prokrichi

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try stepped up on the eve of the budget session of Parliament.

Meanwhile, the Prokrichi leaders are busy in organising their district units as part of a programme to chart the next course of action. They visited different districts and met a cross section of people to have their views on the professional movement.

Road accidents

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when a speeding truck severely hit with a Chittagong-bound passengers tempo from behind.

Mohammad Rafique, 28, a passenger of the tempo died on the spot and six others who were inside the tempo were injured seriously.

The injured Mohamad Alamgir 30, Mizanur Rahman, 20, Abdur Rashid 12, Rashid Ahmed 60, Amena Khatoun, 40, and Shahjahan, 20, were admitted to the Chittagong Medical College Hospital.

Meanwhile, two more victims of Wednesday's accident in Fulpur thana on Dhaka-Sherpur highway died at hospitals yesterday. Medical sources said Sharif, MA student of the Ananda Mohan College, died at the Mymensingh Medical College Hospital (MMCH) and Asif, MA student of the Dhaka University died at the PG Hospital.

On Wednesday, two young men identified as Swapan and Manirul Islam were killed in the accident that occurred when a Sherpur-bound minibus from Dhaka collided head on with their microbus at Bagunda.

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King Wangchuck recalls Mujib's contribution to Liberation War

Deputy Leader of the Opposition Abdus Samad Azad called on Bhutanese King Zigme Singhe Wangchuck during his recent visit to Timpu and conveyed Sheikh Hasina's greetings to the King, reports UNB.

Azad went to Bhutan on May 18 at the invitation of its Foreign Minister Dawa Tsering.

The Bhutanese King recalled the contribution of Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman to the War of Liberation. The King lauded the heroic role of the people of Bangladesh in the Liberation War.

Azad also had an exclusive meeting with Bhutanese Foreign Minister Dawa Tsering. They exchanged views on political, social and economic issues of the two countries.



Chinese Premier Li Peng accompanies his Russian counterpart Viktor Chernomyrdin (R) during the welcoming ceremony at the Great Hall of the People in Beijing yesterday. — AFP photo