

Dhaka to seek more access to US market

The Foreign Minister ASM Mostafizur Rahman, is expected to meet US leaders to seek their support toward increasing US investments in Bangladesh and greater access for its products into the US market to sustain the massive economic reforms undertaken by the Bangladesh government to develop a strong private sector in the country.

The Foreign Minister, now in New York to attend the UN General Assembly session, arrived in Washington yesterday at the invitation of the Chairman of the Foreign Affairs Sub-Committee for Asia and Pacific Affairs of the US House of Representatives, Congressman Gary Ackerman.

Ackerman will hold a reception in honour of the Bangladesh Foreign Minister at the capitol building during which Mostafiz will have a round of discussions with the members of the House Committee of Foreign Affairs.

The Foreign Minister's meetings with the US leaders are expected to contribute to strengthening of existing cordial and warm bilateral cooperation between the two countries.

Mostafiz is expected to seek

4 banks asked to give loans to drought-hit farmers

The Bangladesh Bank has directed four banks to provide special credit to the farmers affected by drought in the country's northern region to help them recoup losses, reports UNB.

According to a press release of the central bank, issued in Dhaka yesterday, the Sonali Bank, Janata Bank, Agrani Bank, and especially the Rajshahi Krishi Unnayan Bank were advised to start the credit programme immediately.

A drought-affected loanee can now be given fresh credit after rescheduling his previous loan borrowed under the agricultural credit programme for the fiscal 1994-95 for Aman paddy (local and HYV).

But the branches of the banks concerned will examine the feasibility of Aman cultivation before sanctioning new loan, the press release said.

Besides, fresh credits may be sanctioned for other crops cultivable in the the drought-affected areas.

A bank can also channel crop loan to farmers who borrowed for pumps, bullock and pucciculture but defaulted maximum two instalments. The banks can lend fresh amount rescheduling both the instalments, and the loan borrowed earlier to be repaid within maximum one year.

All transactions relating to disbursement and recovery of agricultural credit should be completed through the Agricultural Credit Pass Book. The banks have also been

asked to take up special programme under the annual agro-rural credit policy of the Bangladesh Bank to integrate the poor and unemployed with income-generating activities.

The banks can also provide credits by themselves or through Non-governmental Organisations for this purpose.

Rockets kill 12 near Kabul

KABUL, Sept 27: Twelve people were killed by rocket attacks Tuesday in a western suburb of Kabul where rival Shi'ite Muslims have been fighting nearly two weeks, reports AP.

The victims included four medical students who died when a military hospital was hit. An additional 106 people were wounded in the attacks near the capital, officials at several hospitals said.

Hundreds of rockets rained down on the western suburb as troops loyal to President Burhanuddin Rabbani pounded Unity Party positions near Kabul University, where three days earlier 10 teachers were killed.

The Unity Party is loyal to Rabbani's archenemy, Prime Minister Gulbuddin Hekmatyar.

Rabbani and Hekmatyar have been fighting a savage battle for power since throwing out the communists from Kabul in April 1992.

About 750,000 people have fled the city.

Plague in Calcutta

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have no access to medicine or doctors.

Many of the people who fled Surat last week went to 160 miles south to Bombay, but the first cases of pneumonic plague outside Surat were reported today in New Delhi, 730 miles to the northeast.

Twenty people, most of them from Surat, have been admitted to the Infectious Diseases Hospital in New Delhi, and two of them tested positive for pneumonic plague, said Dr RC Panda.

At the capital's train and bus stations today loudspeakers were ordering arriving passengers with plague symptoms to report to doctors working there around the clock. Nearby police have been ordered to rush anyone with plague symptoms to the hospital. Although no such cases have been reported yet, hundreds of people were asking the doctors questions about the plague.

In West Bengal state, where Calcutta is the capital, the government issued a red alert tonight after seven of 17 patients admitted to hospitals in the state tested positive for pneumonic plague. United News of India reported.

Five of the plague patients were in a Calcutta hospital, 1,000 miles east of Surat, and one each in Maida and Midnapore districts outside the city, UNI said.

In Bombay, 10 suspected pneumonic plague patients were admitted to hospitals today, raising the total of 42, health officials said. But tests haven't found any cases of plague yet.

About 2,500 paramedical workers are conducting house-to-house surveys around Bombay — a city of 12.5 million people, more than half of whom in slums — looking for

people with plague symptoms. Health officials also have raided pharmacies hoarding or black marketing antibiotics that plague sufferers need.

Hospitals in Ahmedabad, the largest city in Gujarat, and the bordering states of Rajasthan and Madhya Pradesh, also are examining several dozen patients with suspected plague. In states as far away as Tamil Nadu in southern India, authorities reportedly are killing rats and spraying homes with insecticide.

In Surat, a port city in western India, doctors and soldiers are searching filthy shantytowns for more plague victims and Guarding Civil Hospital to stop infections patients from fleeing.

But tension remains high in some areas of the city.

Hundreds of private doctors fled Surat, where 2 million people live, when the plague broke out. Five doctors and two nurses are recovering from the disease at Civil Hospital. On Monday, angry people ransacked the clinics of two doctors and burned furniture in the streets, police said. No injuries were reported.

At Civil Hospital, where most of the city's 400 plague patients are being treated, three people died today, more than died on Sunday or Monday. But doctors said they still believed that the number of people suffering from the plague in Surat was falling.

An official statement carried by the Associated Press of Pakistan (APP) said "the government of Sindh has banned with immediate effect the entry of six persons in the premises of Sindh province till October 7."

"This is an old proposal made by president Yeltsin six months ago and that President Clinton has agreed to this time," Ilyushin said.

Ilyushin said that no date was set for the summit and that the proposal must first be approved by the countries involved.

Yeltsin earlier this year proposed a summit meeting of Britain, France, Germany, Russia and the United States to reach a final settlement of the war in the former Yugoslavia.

Earlier, Yeltsin warned that Moscow would take it badly if the United States followed through on its threat to lift the embargo on arms supplies for Bosnia's Muslims by the set deadline of October 15.

Yeltsin Monday proposed that the five major nuclear powers



Awami League chief Sheikh Hasina went to the Dhaka MC Hospital to see Abdul Aziz, vice-president of the city AL who was injured splinter injuries during yesterday's Opposition barricade programme. — Star photo



Home-made bombs were reportedly hurled at the ruling BNP's Lalbagh thana office in the city yesterday. The shutters of the office remained down during yesterday's opposition barricade programme. — Star photo

Opposition barricade disrupts life

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pur, Syedabad, Pagla, Gabtali, and Tongi. Police fired tear gas at Tongi where pickets tried to remove railway tracks.

Police also used batons and lobbed tear gas shells to disperse mobs engaged in putting up barricades on railway tracks at Ashuganj, Sylhet and Mymensingh.

Inter-district buses were off the roads and did not leave the terminals at Gabtali, Syedabad and Mohakhal in the city.

Normal life in the capital was affected during the barricade programme. The city wore a hartial-like look although no such strike was announced by the Opposition parties.

All motorised vehicles stayed off the streets while only a few autorickshaw drivers dared to ply their vehicles. However, rickshaws moved freely without any hindrance.

Business centres and most of the shops and private offices as well as educational institu-

tions remained closed while attendance at the government offices was reported below normal.

Abdul Aziz, vice president of the Dhaka AL, sustained splinter wounds when some home-made bombs exploded as a procession was passing near Chankharpur in the city around 11:30 am.

Aziz and five others were admitted to the Dhaka Medical College Hospital while some others were given first aid.

Correspondent in Narayanganj reports: At least 15 persons were injured, including the driver of a train and his assistant when picket damaged a Narayanganj-bound train near Chashara station.

Driver of the train Abdul Quddus, 50, and his assistant Idris Ali, 40, seriously wounded in the attack, were rushed to the Dhaka Railway hospital.

No vehicles piled on the Narayanganj-Dhaka and Narayanganj-Demra roads.

In the afternoon, the AL and

Jatiya Party organised separate rallies in the town.

Our Staff Correspondent writes from Chittagong: The dawn-to-dusk road and rail barricade programme passed off peacefully.

Barricades were put up at the Alankar cinema crossing, the BOL crossing, Kabuliyadhan, Bahaddarhat crossing and Bengura of Boalkhali thana.

The Dhaka-bound Karnaphuli Express and Sylhet-bound Jalalabad Express trains were intercepted by pickets at Pahartali around 11am. Vehicular movement between Chittagong and Dhaka and Cox's Bazar came to a complete halt.

Our Staff Correspondent in Sylhet reports: Four trains did not operate during the barricade. The Awami League, Jatiya Party and Jamaat workers put up barricades at different points.

Another UNB report from Changpur says: At least 22 people, including seven policemen, were injured in a clash when police baton-charged opposition activists, halting a train in Swarasthi thana during the barricade programme.

The official in-charge of Swarasthi thana, Abdus Sattar, and the ASP of Hajiganj circle A B M Syeduddin were injured seriously. They were admitted to the Hajiganj health complex.

Police and witnesses said Awami League, Jatiya Party and Chhatria League men, holding separate rallies on the rail track in front of Waruk station at noon, halted the Changpur-bound Sagarika Express from Chittagong by waving a red flag.

They pulled out the hose-pipe from the engine, making it inoperative. Police managed to restart the train by dispersing the angry activists.

Later, some 200 activists chased the police and pelted stones at them. Police countered with a lathicharge.

A BSS report quoting police sources said one police constable, Nurul Amin, was injured when a section of pickets pelted stones at him at Kakall, Banani in the city yesterday. He was admitted to the Police Hospital.

Campus sources said Nishat Ali, joint convenor of the RU unit of the JCD, was knifed in his hand following conflicts between its two factions known as Shahid and Bulbul groups at about 12:30 pm.

Police arrested Shahidul Islam, Dollar, Benazir, Moazzem, Farhad and Razu from the campus following the incident.

Later, JCD leaders of the RU unit at an emergency meeting expelled Shahidul Islam, Mohammad Arif and Jewel from the organisation for their alleged anti-organisational activities.

The meeting, chaired by JCD's RU unit convenor Mokammel Kabir, also formed a three-member committee to probe the incident.

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The other members of the committee are: Information Minister Nazmul Huda, Home Minister Abdul Matin Chowdhury, State Minister for Civil Aviation M A Mannan, Deputy Minister for Health Md. Serajul Huq, Health Secretary, DG Health Services, DG BDR, DG Army Medical Services, DG Police and Director Infection Disease Hospital.

Another report adds: Travellers may visit India or pass through Indian airports without restriction despite the outbreak of plague in the country. The World Health Organisation said today.

A WHO circular advised travel agencies that the western Indian city of Surat is the only place officially declared an epidemic zone. It said Indian authorities assured the agency there is no risk for travellers to the country.

The circular said travellers should tell a physician about any illness appearing within six days of leaving the plague area, as well as the visit to the epidemic area.

The Midnight File

Kuwait to buy war planes from Indonesia

JAKARTA, Sept 27: Kuwait plans to purchase several military planes and ships from Indonesia's strategic industries, a press report said here today. The Bisnis Indonesia Daily quoted chairman of the Strategic Industry Management Board (BISI) Bacharudin Jusuf Habibie, after a meeting with visiting Kuwaiti military chief Major General Ali Mu-Min, saying that Kuwait had expressed their interest in buying a military hardware, reports AFP.

Germany to participate in UN peacekeeping missions

UNITED NATIONS, Sept 27: Germany said today it was ready to fully participate in UN peacekeeping missions, a conditions set by some countries for permanent membership in the UN Security Council. In his annual speech to the UN General Assembly, German Foreign Minister Klaus Kinkel also expressed hopes that the process of expanding the Security Council would lead to "productive results," reports AFP.

Govt-Opposition talks

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Chowdhury regarding a possible dialogue. Prof Chowdhury's letter contained the ruling party's views on the Opposition's pre-conditions for talks, conveyed by Samad Azad earlier this month, before Chief Emeka came on the scene.

A senior minister told The Daily Star last night that the BNP had no objection to wait until the arrival of Emeka's emissary for the talks to start. "However, we can take a step forward by agreeing on the date and venue and communicating the same to the Commonwealth Secretariat so that the special envoy can arrive accordingly," he said.

Meanwhile, senior AL leaders met at Sheikh Hasina's official residence last night to finalise their next course of action in view of the latest developments.

One AL leader told this correspondent that whatever programmes the three mainstream opposition parties announced at their respective public meetings in the city today would be consistent with the latest political realities.

Party allows Koirala to contest polls

KATHMANDU, Sept 27: Nepal's first democratically elected prime minister in three decades overcame a revolt in the party and was allowed to contest November's general election, party officials said Tuesday, reports AP.

Girija Prasad Koirala was forced to quit in July after his government lost a crucial vote in parliament because many of his own party lawmakers defected to the opposition.

Rebels within the Nepali Congress Party had demanded a change in the party's leadership.

BNP : Agitation

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them," he said. Nazmul Huda said that the BNP assumed power after a free and fair election under a caretaker government. "So, where is the guarantee that there will be no such street agitations after an election under a caretaker government in future," the information minister said referring to the opposition demand for a caretaker administration.

BNP leader and Works Minister Rafiqul Islam Miah said that the ruling party was ready for a dialogue with an open agenda to resolve the political impasse.

When contacted, he said that he would not comment on the Opposition agitation since both the sides were now ready for a dialogue.

"I hope the matter would be resolved through the planned dialogue," he said.

National body

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Fruits, vegetable and other perishable items imported from India will be thoroughly checked, sources informed.

The other members of the committee are: Information Minister Nazmul Huda, Home Minister Abdul Matin Chowdhury, State Minister for Civil Aviation M A Mannan, Deputy Minister for Health Md. Serajul Huq, Health Secretary, DG Health Services, DG BDR, DG Army Medical Services, DG Police and Director Infection Disease Hospital.

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Editor : Mahfuz Anam

Printed & Published by A. S. Mahmud, Managing Director, on behalf of Mediaworld Ltd, 52, Motijheel C/A, Dhaka-1000, from City Publishing House Ltd, 90 Kakrail, Dhaka-1000. Editorial, News & Commercial Offices: House No: 11, Road No: 3, Dhanmondi R/A, Dhaka-1205. PABX: 500092-4, Commercial: 500091 (Direct), Fax No: 88-02-563035, GPO Box No: 3257, Cable: DAILYSTAR, DHAKA.

Clinton, Yeltsin agree to convene confce on Bosnia

WASHINGTON, Sept 27: Russian President Boris Yeltsin said today he had reached a compromise with President Bill Clinton following three hours of talks at the White House, reports AFP.

"We found a compromise," Yeltsin said at a luncheon given by Vice President Al Gore.