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Assad ready for peace if Israel returns land

DAMASCUS, Oct 27: Syrian President Hafez Assad after a meeting with President Clinton today reiterated Syria's willingness to negotiate with Israel for peace but held firm to an insistence that Israel give up Arab land it seized, reports AP.

Clinton said "there was some progress made" in his talks with the Syrian leader and American officials appeared to be encouraged by evidence that Assad was showing new flexibility on conditions he had set for peace with Israel.

Landing in Tel Aviv, the fourth stop of his six-nation tour, Clinton said the new peace accord between Jordan and Israel, signed Wednesday, showed "a glimpse... of the future of the new Middle East."

"You stand on the threshold of a new era of peace and security," he told the Israelis who greeted him.

Assad, speaking after the two leaders met in the presidential palace in Damascus, said Syria wanted "full withdrawal for full peace," adding that Israel must return to Syria the Golan Heights it seized in the 1967 war as well as returning land it seized in southern Lebanon.

Clinton conceded that getting a peace agreement with Syria remains "a key to achieving a comprehensive peace" in the region.

"Our job will not be done and we will not rest until peace agreements between Israel and Syria and Israel and Lebanon are reached," Clinton declared.

A day after he witnessed the historic signing of a peace agreement between Jordan and Israel, he pressed Assad to move forward on stalled peace talks with Israel. With Wednesday's accord, Syria and Lebanon remain the last two Arab states on Israel's border still officially at war with the Jewish state.

Clinton, the first US president to visit Syria since Richard Nixon in 1974, said that he believed Assad was "committed to achieving peace."

Clinton had hoped to bring a new Syrian offer to Israel. But Assad's assertion that it would not deal unless Israel returned the land it seized fell short of a major new Syrian overture.

Even so, Clinton said Assad's statement had gone beyond previous Syrian positions.

He said he would discuss the talks in Jerusalem with Israeli Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin, adding that there were some things he and Assad had talked about which he could not disclose publicly.

Another report says, Clinton, facing a storm of public controversy from Israelis and Palestinians alike, cancelled a planned tour of holy sites in east Jerusalem today.

Israeli officials said that Clinton would cite tiredness as the cause for cancellation of the visit and would instead invite Jerusalem mayor Ehud Olmert to pay a call on him at his hotel.

The planned visit had touched off the most sensitive issue before Israeli and Palestinian negotiators.

Jerusalem Mayor Ehud Olmert insisted on accompanying Clinton on any tour of east Jerusalem, while Palestinians said it would imply American recognition of Israeli rule over the Arab sector of the city.



Bill Clinton (L) and his Syrian counterpart Hafez Al-Assad listen to their national anthems at the Damascus Airport yesterday following the US president's arrival. — AFP photo

Resumed talks constructive, says Ninian

The Commonwealth-brokered dialogue to end the present political impasse resumed yesterday with a meeting between the delegations of the ruling Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP) and the Opposition.

The meeting was held at the state guest house Meghna in the presence of the Commonwealth Secretary General's emissary Sir Ninian Stephen.

The talks, which began on October 20, appeared to have broken down Tuesday night after five rounds.

After the more than four and a half-hour meeting, Sir Ninian in a statement at 11:25 last night, said the meeting was 'constructive'.

The statement, read out by Sir Ninian's aide Christopher Childs, also said that the leaders "discussed the proposal for a caretaker government, strengthening of the Election Commission (EC) and code of conduct to guide political activities, as envisaged in the proposal of the Commonwealth Secretary General."

The meeting was adjourned till 4:30pm tomorrow.

The four-man ruling party delegation at the talks, headed by Deputy Leader of Parliament Prof. AQM Badruddoza Chowdhury, comprised Chief Whip Khandaker Delwar Hossain.

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Commonwealth envoy Sir Ninian Stephen (4th from left) talking to the leaders of the ruling Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP) and the opposition at the state guest house Meghna yesterday. Seen (from R) are Abdus Salam Talukdar, Khandaker Delwar Hossain, Prof AQM Badruddoza, Oli Ahmed of the BNP, Abdus Samad Azad, Mohammad Nasim and SAMS Kibria of the Awami League. — Star photo

Gunmen kill BCL leader at DU

By DU Correspondent

Some unidentified gunmen killed a student leader at the Jagannath Hall of Dhaka University early yesterday.

The victim, Gazi Zakir Hossain, was a leader of the pro-Awami League Chhatra League (S-P) and an MA final year student of the Sociology Department.

The reasons behind the murder could not be known immediately. But some campus sources said that the incident might be the result of infighting within the BCL (S-P).

Zakir became the third victim of campus violence in the last two months.

The assailants fired at least four shots which hit Zakir in the head, chest and leg. The incident happened in Room No 71 on the first floor of the Dr G C Dev Bhaban, better known as the North House of the men's hostel at around 4:15, the sources said.

Son of Gazi Razzat Ali of Chandshi union under Gournadi thana in Barisal district, Zakir was said to be a resident student of the Sir Salimullah Muslim Hall and a former joint convener of the BCL (S-P) hall unit.

He was staying at the Jagannath Hall for about two years after being 'ousted' by rival students from the S M Hall, some resident students said.

The Provost of S M Hall told this correspondent that Zakir was not, officially, a resident of his hall.

A resident of the North House, whose room is close to Zakir's, said he woke up at about 4.15 am after hearing sounds of an explosion. Later he saw some people running out of the building.

Other sources said that four youths knocked at the door of Zakir's room saying that the police were coming. As Zakir woke up and opened the door, they shot him point blank.

Two friends of Zakir were also in the room at that time, the sources said.

Some students of the hall and BCL leaders took him to the Dhaka Medical College Hospital (DMCH) where doctors declared him dead at about 5 am.

After autopsy, Zakir's body was sent to his village home at about 2 pm.

AL chief Sheikh Hasina went to the DMCH to see the body. A large number of leaders and activists of the BCL and some university teachers were also present at that time.

Meanwhile, police picked up one Manik Das, an employee of the Jagannath Hall, for interrogation.

JS session summoned Nov 12

President Abdur Rahman Biswas yesterday summoned the session of the Jatiya Sangsad on November 12 at 6:30 pm in the Sangsad Bhaban, according to an official announcement, reports BSS.

This will be the seventh session of the fifth Parliament, the announcement said.

Youngman found dead at Demra

By Staff Correspondent

Police yesterday recovered the body of a 27-year-old youngman from a road-side ditch in the Demra area in the capital.

Demra police said the recovered body of Nasir Ahmed of Darogabari Road, Demra at about 4:30 pm. The victim was found with his throat slit open.

The reason for the murder was not immediately available. However, police suspected Nasir was killed by his rivals of the area.

The victim was wanted by the police, they said.

The police arrested one Abul from the neighbourhood for interrogation. The body of the victim was sent to hospital for autopsy.

Isha murder: Zakir sent to jail

By Staff Correspondent

Zakir Hossain Biplob yesterday confessed to his involvement in the Isha murder case.

In his confessional statement to a city magistrate, Biplob said accused Habib was the first to slit the throat of the 15-year-old schoolboy Isha and he only made a deeper cut afterwards.

Biplob was sent of the Dhaka Central Jail after the recording of his statement.

Earlier, four others accused of the murder made separate statements to the court.

Khulna Polytech. Mohsin College closed to avert violence

From Our Correspondent

KHULNA, Oct 27: The Khulna polytechnic Institute and the Khalishpur Mohsin College have been closed for three days from October 29 in apprehension of violence.

The decision has been taken following clashes at two local colleges between the Islamic Chhatra Shibir, student wing of the Jamaat-e-Islami and the Jatiyatibadi Chhatra Dal, student wing of the ruling BNP, which claimed two lives recently.

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Sylhet Polytech closed sine die

From Staff Correspondent

SYLHET, Oct 27: The Sylhet Polytechnic Institute was closed sine die following a clash between the activists of the Jatiyatibadi Chhatra Dal (JCD) and the Bangladesh Chhatra League (S-P) today.

The students were asked to vacate the hostels by 6 this evening.

At least twenty persons were injured in the clash, which started when a procession of the JCD parading the campus at about noon. Twenty rounds of gun fire and a number of crackers explosions were heard during the one-hour violence.

Police later brought the situation under control.

European Commission assures easy access to its market

By Staff Correspondent

Ambassador and head of delegation of the European Commission in Dhaka Michael Drury said yesterday the EC's policy is to ensure duty free and easy access of Bangladeshi products to the European markets.

Import from Bangladesh to the European Union is twice the export from the union to this country, he said, adding that the EC would keep its market open for Bangladesh as much as possible.

Michael Drury was addressing, as a special penalist, a seminar on "Economic Implications of European Integration on the South" organised by the Bangladesh Centre for Policy Research and Response (BCPRR) yesterday at the Academy for Planning and Development.

Describing the EC as a major development and trade partner of the country, Drury said, Bangladesh is enjoying an excellent balance in trade with the countries of the European Union.

He said the EC has funded a number of projects in Bangladesh related to poverty alleviation and women's development. It plans to finance more projects in those areas in future, he added.

Regarding tied aid, the head of the EC delegation said the areas in which aid is tied, are not all that bad for Bangladesh. The drawbacks of tied aid are few, he said.

The EC has been laying stress on improving the human rights situation and ending child labour, he said, adding: "We are not, however, linking trade with any of our concepts."

Regarding the EC's investment in Bangladesh, he said, the governments of EC countries cannot force their private sector to invest in Bangladesh. European entrepreneurs are interested more in investing in the south-east Asian countries like Malaysia and Thailand because of the enabling atmosphere in those countries, he said and added that if the situation in Bangladesh improves increased investment would flow in automatically.

Michael Drury also said, increased economic relations between the SAARC and the EC can be useful for both sides. No initiative in this regard has, however, been taken so far, he said.

He, however, observed that some of the member countries of the SAARC are reluctant to build such economic relations.

Presided over by Merlese Rashid, Vice Chairman of the BCPRR, the seminar was addressed by Prof Syed Anwar Hossain of the History Department of Dhaka University, Dr Iftekharuzzaman, Research Director of the Bangladesh Institute of International and Strategic Studies (BIISS) and Prof M Shahiduzzaman of the International Relations Department of Dhaka University. Dr CR Abrar presented the keynote paper, while Rashid Mahmud Titmur, Executive Director of the centre, delivered the address of welcome.

Khaleda making 'farce' with polls, says Hasina

Sheikh Hasina yesterday accused the government of foiling the political dialogue through obstinacy as it sidetracked the caretaker issue although it had agreed to the agenda, reports UNB.

"We want discussion, but that discussion should be based on the agenda," said the Awami League president and Leader of the Opposition while addressing a series of meeting with her party's different organs at the party central office and her Minto Road residence.

Dhaka City Corporation Mayor Mohammad Hanif and the commissioners belonging to the party, central and city committees of the Jubo League, presidents and general secretaries of Dhaka and adjacent district units, central committee of the Jatiya Sramik League and leaders of the Chhatra League attended the meetings held throughout the day.

Blaming the present government for "snatching the

BNP very sincere about dialogue, says PM

Prime Minister Begum Khaleda Zia yesterday said her party is always ready to resolve problems within the constitutional framework, reports UNB.

"I think any problems could be solved in the light of the Constitution and through talks. There is no scope for creating unnecessary issue because we have a Constitution," she said.

Begum Zia said her party is very sincere about dialogue and ready to continue discussions because "it believes in democracy, peace and development."

The Prime Minister was addressing a mammoth gathering at the Diploma Engineers' Institute in the city organised on the occasion of 3rd national conference of the Jatiyatibadi Jubad.

"The BNP does not believe in the politics of lip service and politics of hoax," she said. "Those who believe in the politics of hoax become frustrated and create crisis in the national politics."

But she said it is not possible to remove problems if they raise unnecessary issues, disturb law and order and resort to destructive activities in the name of politics.

In an oblique reference to some political parties, Begum Zia said they were being alienated from the people day by day. "They have been very lonely and embarrassed today and not in senses."

The Prime Minister said one of those parties which had joined in the 1986 election later termed the autocratic ruling party under which the votes were held as 'vote dacoits'. But now that party had joined hands with those vote dacoits.

"In fact, they have entered into a league to commit a massive vote dacoity in future," she said adding: "A dacoit may be friend of another dacoit, but not of any good man."

"An autocrat has become the worshipper of democracy. The killer of democracy is now crying for democracy," Begum Zia said and called upon the people to remain alert against the unholy league.

The Prime Minister said

Govt forces rout Serb troops, capture land in Bihac

SARAJEVO, Oct 27: Bosnian Serb forces fled in disarray from the most successful government attack in two and a half years of war. UN officials said today, reports AP.

The retreat prompted thousands of Serb civilians to flee their villages in northwest Bosnia.

The predominantly Muslim government force has captured up to 150 square kilometers of territory east and southeast of the town of Bihac, said Lt. Col. Tim Spicer a peacekeeper spokesman.

Serb troops "withdrew in disarray" enabling government forces to capture at least two tanks and numerous mortars, Spicer said.

Bosnian radio said government forces captured four tanks and dozens of mortars. Serb soldiers set fire to ammunition depots before fleeing, the radio said.

"It is clear the Bosnian Serbs were caught totally off guard," Spicer said.

Close to 5,000 Serbs — mostly women, children and elderly — fled either west to a Serb-held part of Croatia or southeast to the Bosnian Serb town of Bosanski Petrovac. UN and International Red Cross officials said.

Relief workers were arranging to bring in food and other aid for the refugees, who were staying in schools, public buildings and private homes.

The triumph was sure to be a huge morale booster to the long-outgunned government army, which controls only about 30 per cent of the country.

Despite some successes in a recent offensives across Bosnia, the government army's territorial gains had been relatively limited against the better-armed Serbs.

"A huge turnaround seems to be happening," the Sarajevo daily Oslobođenje said Thursday in an editorial accompanying front-page coverage of the victory.

Spicer said the government success around Bihac, combined with more than a dozen

Ershad, 2 former air chiefs chargesheeted

The Anti-Corruption Bureau yesterday chargesheeted deposed President Ershad and four others including two former Air Chiefs in a more than Tk. 64.04 crore misappropriation case, reports UNB.

The four co-accused are former Air Force chiefs Sultan Mahmood and Mumtazuddin Ahmed and Shahzad Ali and Hossain Mohammad Musa alias Tipu, both directors of United Traders Limited, a business firm.

A handout said last night, the five were charged with causing a financial loss to the public exchequer and misappropriating the amount, equivalent to 20.42 million US dollar, in the purchase of three radars for the Bangladesh Air Force.

DCC task force to look into city problems

By Staff Correspondent

Mayor of Dhaka City Corporation (DCC) Mohammad Hanif said yesterday that he had formed a six-member task force to identify the problems facing the city dwellers and suggest how to solve those.

Headed by Prof Nazful Islam, Director of the Centre for Urban Studies of the Dhaka University, the task force will start its work next month and submit its report in three months, the mayor told a press conference at the Jatiya Press Club.

The other members of the task force are Prof Jamilur Reza Chowdhury of the Engineering University, retired government servants AHNA



Mayor Md Hanif briefing pressmen