

Khaleda-Chandrika talks

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seized the opportunity to talk bilateral matters, particularly economic cooperation. At the talks, both sides agreed to expand trade and further activate the Bangladesh-Sri Lanka Joint Economic Commission set up in 1985.

The two sides have agreed to hold the next meeting of the Joint Commission in Dhaka within the next six months.

Bangladesh delegation sources said Sri Lanka showed keen interest in having some long-term arrangements with Bangladesh for importing jute bags. Officials of the two sides are to work out details of such arrangements.

It was also decided at the talks that Bangladesh Biman and Air Lanka officials would meet soon to work out the details for implementing an air services accord already signed by the two countries. The two airlines would swap flights to each other's capitals once the details of route planning and traffic rights are worked out.

Sri Lanka has offered technical cooperation in the tea industry as well as training of Bangladeshi teachers. Colombo also offered facilities for vocational training for Bangladeshis and also scholarships for students in agriculture, forestry, archaeology and engineering.

At the talks, the Bangladesh Prime Minister laid stress on "effective cooperation" in the

field of trade and investment, and called for more exchanges of business and economic delegations.

In this context, Begum Zia apprised the Sri Lankan side of the economic liberalisation policies in Bangladesh adopted by her government since 1991.

The Bangladesh side appreciated the new initiative of the government of President Kumaratunga in starting a process of dialogue and the ceasefire reached with the Tamil Tigers (LTTE).

Officials said the Sri Lankan side appreciated Bangladesh's role in broaching the idea of SAARC and in launching the seven-nation forum.

The Sri Lankans have been consistent in their support for regional cooperation and they want that SAARC should be further strengthened," said a member of the Bangladesh delegation.

On SAARC matters, Colombo has proposed that the SAARC council of ministers' meeting should be held more frequently to make the council more active and effective.

Colombo also proposed that the SAARC secretariat should be restructured and strengthened.

Begum Zia said that Bangladesh, as the current chairperson of SAARC, is committed to charting new directions, approaches and strategies for SAARC which, since its inception, has made good progress.

The Bangladesh Prime Minister's current visit, her fourth to this island nation, is seen here as significant as Begum Zia has been the first head of the government visiting here since the People's Alliance government of President Chandrika Kumaratunga took over in Sri Lanka.

Chandrika

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to-day life of the people of the two countries, she said, is striking.

Besides a common culture, the Sri Lankan President said, there exists a common mode of dress and a common cuisine.

The distinguishing mark of the friendship of the two countries, she said, is that "our two countries have always extended a hand to each other in times of need."

The Sri Lankan President said the traditional friendship had recently been further strengthened by developments in economic relations of the two countries. Not only do we seek to expand the volume of bilateral trade between us but, together, we have agreed to promote jointly the regional trading arrangement known as the SAPTA, she said. "Our joint endeavours to make the SAPTA a reality will soon bear fruit," she hoped.

While the industrial sector has offered employment to many Sri Lankans in Bangladesh, Sri Lanka is providing training to Bangladeshis in a wide spectrum of subjects ranging from a sharing of expertise in the fields of administration and local government to technical training in irrigation and connected hydro-projects, she said.

In the field of higher education, she said, Sri Lanka has students from Bangladesh studying in institutions of higher learning in Sri Lanka while there are many Sri Lankan students who benefit from the opportunities of pursuing their tertiary education in Bangladesh.

Russia shoots down missile

MOSCOW, Jan 25: Russian air defences today shot down a missile, apparently fired from a country in northern Europe, Interfax news agency said quoting an informed source in Moscow, reports Reuter.

The agency quoted the source as saying the missile, which was violating Russian airspace, was destroyed at 10.30 am (0730 GMT) today.

"According to his words, the destroyed missile, whose parameters are being determined, was launched from the territory of a country in northern Europe," the agency said in its report.

There was no immediate confirmation of the alleged incident by any other Russian news agency or by authorities in Moscow.

World Bank team

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The World Bank official took positive note of the government's efforts and progress made recently in the energy sector, a government handout said.

The Energy Minister apprised the World Bank Director of the progress and present position of some on-going projects aided by the Bank in gas sector. He also briefed on the progress of the power sector reforms package.

PM's banquet speech

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Begum Zia in her speech drew the attention of the Lankan President to the adverse effect on Bangladesh's socio-economic condition, caused by the unilateral withdrawal of the water of the Ganges at Farakka and its upper reaches.

"We are trying to reach a negotiated settlement with India by ensuring a fair and equitable sharing of the Ganges and of other common rivers. We attach importance to the support of a friendly country like Sri Lanka in this vital matter," she said.

Earlier, Begum Zia flew in here this afternoon to a red carpet reception beginning a two-day official visit to Sri Lanka at the invitation of President Chandrika Bandaranaike Kumaratunga.

On arrival at the Katunayake International Airport, the SAARC chairperson was received at the gateway by Sri Lankan Foreign Minister Lakshman Kadirgamar and Minister for Transport, Environment and Women's Affairs Srimani Atfaldumali.

After signing the Golden Book — the visitors' book for the dignitaries — at the Katunayake airport, the Prime Minister and her entourage left by helicopter for Colombo.

Sri Lankan President Chandrika Kumaratunga formally received the Bangladesh Prime Minister at the Presidential Secretariat in Colombo.

Begum Zia was then escorted by the Sri Lankan Air Force Chief to the saluting dais from where she took salute from a smartly turned out contingent as the national anthem of the two countries were played. She was given a ceremonial guard of honour and a 19-gun salute.

Hillary Clinton keen to learn more about Grameen Bank

United States First Lady Hillary Clinton expressed her desire to learn more about the Grameen Bank activities and wished to visit Bangladesh for this purpose, reports BSS.

She said this while meeting with Professor Yunus at the White House last Monday, according to a message received in Dhaka yesterday.

Professor Yunus called on First Lady Hillary Clinton and briefed her on the activities of the Grameen Bank in empowering the women of Bangladesh. He also updated her on the replication of Grameen Bank in other countries including the USA.

Professor Yunus had met Hillary in 1986. Out of that discussion, a project called "Good Faith Fund" was launched in Arkansas. Mrs Clinton maintains her interest in the project.

Professor Yunus extended an invitation to Mrs Clinton to visit Bangladesh to see the Grameen Bank in operation. The First Lady thanked him for the invitation and stated that she would welcome the opportunity to visit the Grameen Bank in Bangladesh in the near future.

Professor Yunus presented her samples of the Grameen check, a handloom fabric produced by Bangladeshi weavers. Mrs Clinton was impressed by the quality of the handwoven fabric.

12 shops gutted in Barisal

From Our Correspondent

BARISAL, Jan 25: Twelve shops and four houses were gutted in a devastating fire that broke out in the small hours today in Barisal town.

Property worth about Taka 50 lakh was destroyed in the fire, originated from electric short circuit in a shop. Two hotels, two video shops, two grocery shops, one barber shop and a library were burnt to ashes.

HC hearing

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The applications were scheduled to be taken up yesterday. But due to the Opposition's dawn-to-dusk hartal yesterday, these have been listed for today's hearing, said Barrister K S Nabi, counsel for Sheikh Hasina.

The other writ, against the Speaker and the secretary of the Parliament secretariat has been filed by one Md. Alauddin Khaled, challenging the respondents' delay in disposing of the MPs' resignations.

Hearing of the two writs will depend on the decision of the High Court bench about the applications filed.

On January 18, the bench issued rules on the respective respondents asking them to show cause within a week. The bench also ruled that the writs would be heard analogously.

In their applications, the Opposition leaders have stated that since the questions raised in the writs involve important constitutional and legal issues, the petitions deserve hearing by a larger bench.

Morshed's remark

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attention has been drawn to a newspaper report which quoted Morshed Khan as saying that Sheikh Hasina would be invited to chair the closing session of the investment conference.

"We protest such irresponsible statement by the Prime Minister's Special Envoy. He just tried to confuse the people," Prof Sayeed said.

Investment confce ends

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is total, reforms will continue, it won't be stopped," he said. "The government is fully committed to creating the most hospitable and enabling investment climate," Saifur said.

Responding to a question, Saifur Rahman, however, acknowledged that the pace of reform has slowed down recently and attributed it to the prevailing political unrest and some resistance to the reform measures.

The pace of reform is determined by the political scenario prevailing in the country," he said while referring to the current political impasse.

"Reform also has some in-built resistance; there are many vested interests."

However, he assured that the slowdown was only temporary. "It doesn't mean that the reform train has stopped. My commitment is total and reform will continue."

The finance minister acknowledged the need for reforming the public enterprises, the labour market, the administrative and the legal sectors.

The finance minister also

Investors' confidence

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feel confident as international investors from Europe about the prospects here," he said.

Bill Derringer of the International Development Enterprises said he was highly pleased by the presentation of Latifur Rahman, a leading entrepreneur, about food processing and agricultural opportunities in Bangladesh. There is a tremendous scope in agricultural products like oil seeds, vegetable and food processing possibilities, which Bangladesh could sell outside," he said.

Rafiq Ahmed, an expatriate Bangladeshi from Coopers and Lybrand LLP based in the US, felt that the Dhaka Stock Exchange should be capitalised for foreigners' investment opportunity. He said that there were three types of risk in the local market. These were related to liquidity, political and social aspects.

Philip Wu Chong Guan of the Singapore Trade Development Board suggested Bangladesh keep up its reforms programme. He said the private sector should receive more encouragement. He informed this correspondent that a trade delegation from Singapore would visit Bangladesh shortly to particularly see the food sector.

Clarence Chan of DUTA International Finance Company of Hong Kong said that his company was impressed by the conference and would project the market vibrancy to its clients back home. He, however, observed, "It is a pity for your country to have strikes. Political activities have to be improved and rationalised for encouraging overseas investors more."

Khalid Raja of Coca Cola Corporation covering Southeast Asia said that he had heard about people being impressed about the liberalisation programme. "We have to draw a line between investment coming from abroad and the development of the stock market here," he said.

Bangladesh High Commissioner to India Farooq Sobhan said, "We have seen a lot of interest from local and foreign investors. Besides, the conference had been very educative for our own private and government sectors."

The senior diplomat, who is expected to join as the new Foreign Secretary shortly, informed that there were eight Bangladeshi envoys attending the conference which he hoped would "help us directly in our task in promoting foreign investment for the country."

He said, "Our prospects are as good, if not better, in certain sectors than other South Asian countries."

The participants who have come here to see for themselves the investment prospects and potentialities, he said, and added: "If our share market can go up to one billion dollars in one year, if we can have more scrips in the market, including offerings from public sectors, in two years the market should reach a few billion more."

Rashed Ahmed, ambassador to Japan, said that some of the critical questions have been answered for the benefit of foreign investors and this had helped to remove some of the distorted perceptions about Bangladesh.

The envoy said that after his return to Japan, arrangements would be made to hold a series of seminars in different cities to create awareness. Japan, he said, was in the stage of relocation of many industries and "some could come to Bangladesh when they know about the prospects and security we are offering."

M Aminuzzaman, Deputy Managing Director of Eastern

Bank, said that after the conference, prospective investors have started to think positively. He, however, observed that the presentations were oriented towards the capital market and it would be better if more conferences were organised on direct investment prospects.

Anwarul Amin, a veteran banker and chairman of Equity Resources, observed that the conference provided the overseas investors to Bangladesh firsthand, which was important since they had been mostly introduced to the country through brokers and agents.

"Despite the global slump in the equity market the interest in Bangladesh will remain because of its thriving, vibrant and emerging nature."

M Morshed Khan, Special Envoy to the Prime Minister, described the conference by saying, "There is a convolution going on. It is for the first time in our nationhood that foreign investors had the direct opportunity to interact with our local investors. We have been able to send a message that Bangladesh is today poised to make a leap forward."

A S Mahmud, a former DCCI chief and Chairman, Bangladesh Lamps Limited, said that the conference was successful in giving a new impetus towards infusing investors' confidence.

Sohel Rahman, Chairman of the Bestimco Group, said: "We heard very good deliberations. The image of the country will go up and investors' confidence will increase. That will add to the investment flow in the country."

Smith New Court's Sabiha Sultan, based in London, said the conference was an excellent publicity campaign for Bangladesh. She, however, felt that there was liquidation problem, which should be overcome.

Latifur Rahman a former president of the MCCI, said: "The participation despite of the dislocation, is a clear demonstration of the enthusiasm which the business community was feeling. One will not expect from this meeting — for money to flow from tomorrow — but it will act as an investment for further investment."

Salman F Rahman, president of the FBCCI, said: "As an image building exercise the conference was very successful. The success of the conference, is not necessarily measured by the amount of investment that comes out of it. It is part of an overall process for putting Bangladesh on the financial map."

Salman said that all emerging markets are nervous because of the Mexican crash. "One good result is that if there was any danger of the Bangladesh market going down, I think this conference is going to give the local market a lot of confidence."

He felt that there should be a follow-up of similar meetings and get-togethers and added: "I think, in the long term, the outcome would be good."

Abul Hasan Chowdhury, Chairman of the International Affairs Committee of the Awami League, said a great deal of enthusiasm has been shown about the investment potential in Bangladesh.

Jamaluddin Ahmed, a former Deputy Prime Minister, said that the conference had been able to open up the tremendous investment opportunities, particularly the stock market. He said that a great number of young entrepreneurs are now keen to invest.

"This did not happen even two years ago. That means that the government's economic policies are now working."

LDF demands 30 pc DA for industrial workers

By Staff Correspondent

The Left Democratic Front (LDF), a combine of 10 left-leaning parties, yesterday demanded 30 per cent dearness allowance for workers in view of the price hike of essentials and immediate implementation of wages commission report in private sector owned jute, yarn and textile mills.

Talking to newsmen at the Workers Party office, the LDF leaders also demanded compensation to workers killed or injured during a 72-hour programme that ended Tuesday and punishment to police officials responsible for attack on workers.

The LDF will hold a rally at Noor Hossain Square at 4:00 pm today and bring out a procession protesting harassment to workers. It will also organise meetings at different industrial belts of the country from February 1 to 9, the combine leaders said.

LDF coordinator Dilip Barua read out a statement, which contained the demands, at the press conference. It was attended by LDF central leaders Haider Akbar Khan Rono, Bimal Biswas, Hossain Haq Inu, Monjurul Ahsan Khan, Nirmal Sen, Khalequzzaman Bhuiyan and A F M Mahbubul Haq.

JS by-polls

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also wounded while our Heil, 25, sustained bullet injuries at the Nagarir Char centre. At least nine others were injured at the Aaralab centre of the Brahmanbaria-6 (Banchhanpur) constituency.

Out of 69 polling centres in this constituency, the results of 30 were available till midnight.

BNP candidate Shahjahan Mia was leading, having secured 1954 votes, while two independent candidates — Dr Raushan Alam (symbol-bullock cart) and Shahidul Haq (bicycle) had polled 15981 and 2130 votes respectively.

Counting of votes in all 90 polling centres of the Natore-3 constituency showed BNP candidate Kazi Golam Morshed got 28,187 votes.

His nearest rival, Abdul Jahl Bablu (symbol-jar), an independent, got 7020 votes while another independent candidate Nazrul Islam (bullock cart) secured 4,197 votes.

Out of a total 1,53,802 eligible voters, only 39,749 voters or a mere 25.84 per cent exercised their right of franchise in Natore.

Results from 17 out of 53 polling centres in the Bakerganj-6 constituency showed BNP candidate Principal Abdur Rashid Khan in the lead with 36,180 votes while two of his independent rivals — AKM Enayet Hussain (bicycle) and Adv Abdur Rob Majumder (aeroplane) had secured 1143 and 1095 votes respectively.

Results from the Sherpur-3 constituency were not available till filing this report late last night.

The opposition political parties have boycotted the by-elections demanding elections under a neutral caretaker government.

The deceased MPs were: Md Abu Bakr from Natore 3, Walie Ashraf from Brahmanbaria, Sirajul Haq from Sherpur 3 and Principal Md Eunus Khan from Bakerganj 6. They all died late last year.

Stray incident

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hati and Jatiba Chhatra Samaj held separate rallies in front of the Jatiba Press Club during the hartal hours while Jamaat held a rally near the north gate of the Baitul Mukarram Mosque.

Our staff correspondent in Chittagong reported that the delivery of goods from the port to outside destinations was suspended but cargo handling inside the port continued normally during the hartal hours.

The export procession zone at Patenga suffered production loss due to poor attendance of workers.

Most of the mills and factories in Kalurhat, Sitakunda and Nasirabad areas could not operate.

Bangladesh Railway officials said trains operated normally in Dhaka-Chittagong and Dhaka-Sylhet routes. But more than half a dozen trains in other routes were detained by pickets, they said.

In the western zone, trains operated only up to Jessore and no train left or entered Khulna city during the hartal period.

Our correspondent in Narayanganj said the hartal passed off peacefully in the town. Jute and cotton mills including Adamjee Jute Mills operated normally and train service from and to Dhaka was undisturbed.

Our Staff Correspondent from Sylhet adds: A day-long hartal was observed throughout the four districts of greater Sylhet region today paralysing the civic life totally. Almost all commercial establishments, educational institutions and commercial banks were totally closed.

The Midnight File

Gunmen kill 6 in Karachi

KARACHI, Jan 25: Armed men went on a shooting spree killing six men in this troubled southern port city today; police said. The motive for the killings in the city's congested central district was not immediately known. The gunmen, using a stolen car, indulged in random shooting at different points, in the first major incident since the start of the year, reports AFP.

HC ruling

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to raise the issue for discussion.

Deputy Speaker Humayun Khan Panni, who was in the chair when the House met 6-40 pm after a day's break, said since the matter is important and involves constitutional provisions, the notices would be kept pending. The decision on the matter would be given later, Panni added.

Nurul Islam Moni, in his notice, maintained that issuing a rule nisi on the Speaker amounted to a ruling on all the 330 MPs. Such a ruling is an infringement on the sovereignty of Parliament and since he is a member of this Parliament, his privilege has been breached, he added.

Khalilur Rahman also asserted that the ruling affected the Speaker's right to discharge his constitutional responsibilities. Such ruling is also contradictory to Article 78(1) and (2) of the Constitution, he added.

A High Court bench issued the rule nisi on January 18 asking the Speaker to show cause within seven days why action should not be taken, as required under the Constitution, regarding the resignations of 147 opposition MPs. The MPs submitted their resignation letters on December 28.

A Bill on environment, conservation of environment and control of environment pollution was introduced in the House yesterday.

Neither the minister nor the state minister concerned were present at the time.

Khan Panni then asked treasury bench member L K Siddiki to propose for adoption a resolution thanking the President for his speech in the House on January 23 when the 16th session of the fifth Parliament began.

Siddiki placed his proposal and six treasury bench members took part in discussion.

Around 8-45 pm, Humayun Khan Panni adjourned the session till 6-30 pm today.

AL asks BNP

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BNP had resorted to repression to foil the on-going Opposition agitation. No government could stay in power this way, he added.

The AL leader urged the ruling BNP to test its 'popularity' in an election under a caretaker government. Since the present rulers were claiming that they had done a lot for the people, they should not be afraid of doing so, he added.

The Opposition agitation would continue till the demand for holding general elections under a neutral caretaker administration was accepted, Amu said.

He condemned 'police action' on jute and textile mills workers.

48-hr hartal

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member Amir Hossain Amu announced the programme at a rally at Bangabandhu Avenue, while Jatiba Party secretary general Khaledur Rahman Titu and Jamaat secretary general Moulana Matiur Rahman Nizami gave the identical programme at their respective rallies, held at north and south gates of the Baitul Mukarram Mosque.

Besides, the Awami League will bring out a mass procession from Mirpur today at 3 pm and another procession from Mohammadpur on Saturday to drum up public support in favour of their demands.

GRAND RECEPTION

In honour of the renowned actor of this sub-continent

DILIP KUMAR AND SAIRA BANU

Date : 27 January 1995
Friday at 11-00 a.m.

Venue : National Stadium No. 2
Mirpur, Dhaka

• Stadium gate will be opened at 8.00 a.m. and closed at 10.30 a.m.

You are cordially invited to attend the function

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