The Daily Star

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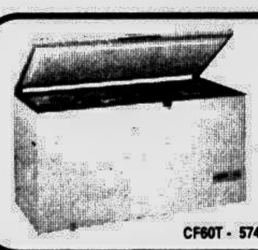

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Democracy means compromise, not confrontation: Richardson

By Staff Correspondent

US Ambassador to the UN Bill Richardson yesterday expressed his happiness over the Opposition parties' decision shifting a hartal date because of his visit to Bangladesh.

He was making an obvious reference to the seven-party — called hartal tomorrow, which was earlier scheduled for yesterday. The date was reportedly shifted because of the US envoy's visit.

"I understand the Opposition delayed a general strike because of my visit. I say thank you. Unfortunately, I cannot visit Bangladesh more frequently to shift them."

Richardson made the impromptu remarks while delivering his written address on 'Making Democracy Work in the 21st Century' at the Bangladesh Institute of Strategic Studies yesterday morning.

In his written address he said, "It is clear that democracy in Bangladesh remains fragile and vulnerable to the machinations of political partisanship and rivalry."

Richardson, who reportedly played a role during the standoff between the then ruling party and the Opposition before the last general elections said, "The 1991 elections began the process of building democracy in Bangladesh. And the June 1996 elections in which I participated as an observer, was a true milestone for this nation."

"It represented the first transition between democratically-elected governments in Bangladesh history. In addition, successful nationwide local elections last December represent a critical step forward."

Continuing he said, "All political parties deserve credit for these advances, but let me assure you, the work here is not complete. Simply put, the future of Bangladesh and the strengthening of democratic institutions must take precedence over narrow political or personal interests."

Referring to a speech by President Shahabuddin Ahmed in October last, Richardson said both the government and the Opposition must begin to display more accommodation and tolerance.

"Compromise, not confrontation, accommodation, not acrimony, must be the words we use to describe democracy. That includes the United States and it includes Bangladesh," observed the US envoy who was a Congressman for many years.

Foreign Minister Abdus Samad Azad was present at the lecture session at BISS. He thanked the visiting dignitary in his concluding remarks. Earlier, Director General of the Institute Brigadier Shahedul Anam spoke briefly welcoming Bill Richardson.

CHT bills

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cussion on 'fundamentals' of the CHT bills.

As Shaikh Razzak Ali sought to discuss the 'principles' of the CHT bills while the law minister proposed to send those to the Special Committee, the Speaker said that there was no such record in the parliament's two decades' history.

Ali challenged the Speaker's statement terming it absolutely wrong and added that he had allowed such discussions on many occasions when he was Speaker. He also quoted from Article 78 of the JS Rules of Procedure to back his contention.

In reply, the law minister said the opposition lawmaker missed such an opportunity while the bills were tabled on Sunday. Contradicting the BNP lawmaker statement, he told the House that there was no such record in parliament's 26 years' history.

Deputy Leader of the Opposition Prof Badruddoza Chowdhury also rose in support of Razzak Ali and requested the Chair to allow the former Speaker to speak further on the issue.

Given the floor, Razzak Ali blamed the law minister for "misinterpreting" law and reiterated his argument for the discussion, citing relevant rules.

However, the Speaker rejected Razzak Ali's demand and allowed the law minister to make his proposals. This led to an uproar in the Opposition Bench.

BNP Secretary General Abdul Mannan Bhuiyan told The Daily Star later that his party would suggest amendments to the bills and soliciting public opinion on those.

Asked if the BNP would reach any understanding with the Jatiya Party, which is also opposing the CHT bills, to have a common strategy in the parliament, Mannan Bhuiyan replied, "Let's see what stance the JP takes."

Richardson calls on

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He reiterated Bangladesh's continuous support to the USA in the international arena on mutually shared common interest.

Calling on Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina at her office in the afternoon, Ambassador Richardson anticipated that US investment will rise to one billion dollar by the turn of the century.

"American investment has reached US dollar 200 million in last two years from 25 million in June 1996 ... the trade relation will be expanded further in future," he said.

Richardson praised the democratic status of Bangladesh and said democracy is being operated smoothly in the country.

He also praised the dynamism and progress in the economy and confirmed the visit of US President Bill Clinton to Bangladesh later this year.

He mentioned that Hillary Clinton inspired the US President to visit Bangladesh, about which the US First Lady is very optimistic.

About increased US quota for Bangladesh's garments, Ambassador Richardson said Bangladesh deserves increase of garments quota and they are trying to develop an administrative mechanism to consider the issue.

The US official also lauded the Chittagong Hill Tracts peace accord and congratulated the Bangladesh Prime Minister for signing the Ganges water sharing treaty with India.

Sheikh Hasina said her government has taken all out initiative to ensure free and fair elections, and establish democracy and peace.

The Bangladesh officials attending the Hasina-Richardson meeting appealed to the US government for its support to bring back the killers of Bangabandhu to Bangladesh.

They also mentioned the US human rights report on Bangladesh, where, they said, misleading and inaccurate information were included damaging the image of the country.

The US officials said they would project the "inaccuracies" in the report if specifically pointed out by Bangladesh. They will be more cautious while making such report next time.

DSE index

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budget.

"People are now observing the market. The budget should provide incentives to the market by withdrawing tax on dividend income. Corporate tax should be reduced to between 25 and 15 per cent depending on declaration of dividends from existing 35 per cent", DSE Chairman Rakibur Rahman said. "The Finance Minister should not miss this opportunity to restore the lost confidence of investors by giving some incentives to this ailing market."

A BNP procession in the city yesterday in support of the seven-party-called hartal tomorrow. —Star photo

IO on Bangabandhu murder

Others on the spot didn't get scope to resist killing

The witnesses from army in the Bangabandhu Murder Case, who were on the spot during the assassination of the country's founding President Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, didn't get any scope to resist the carnage.

Investigation Officer ASP Abdul Kahhar Akhand, also the 61st prosecution witness, said this during his cross-examination at the special *ejlash* of the Dhaka District and Sessions Judge's Court yesterday, reports UNB.

"Some of the army witnesses were on security duty at President's residence while some others, being bluffed by the officers who are accused in the case, had come to the house," he said replying to a query from advocate Khan Saifur Rahman.

The IO also told the court that there was no pressure on him to complete the chargesheet of the case hurriedly.

Khan Saifur Rahman, the defence counsel for principal accused Lt Col (dismissed) Syed Farooq Rahman, resumed his examination when the court of Judge Kazi Golam Rasul began in the morning after the Eid vacation.

ASP Akhand admitted that the DGFI didn't give him the main copies of bio-data of 11 accused, including Major Khairuzzaman, and post-mortem report of killed Shamsu for the sake of the secrecy, rather gave him a copy of the file.

He admitted that Naik Sheikh M Yunus Ali, who was arrested on suspicion for his alleged involvement in the killing but later was acquitted of the charge, was dismissed from his service on August 17, 1975, two days after incident.

Akhand also admitted that Yunus in a statement to magistrate under Section 164 said that some black and *khaki* uniformed people wearing masks had come to Bangabandhu's house at about 4:30 am on August 15.

US finding ways to extradite 3, says Washington Times

A leading US daily said the US officials are exploring the possibility of deporting three men wanted in the 1975 assassination of father of the nation Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, reports BSS.

The United States has no extradition treaty with Bangladesh and so officials are exploring the possibility of deporting them from the United States, according to a report published in the Washington Times yesterday.

The report said the three entered the United States under false names and one of them — former Major Mohiuddin Ahmed — was arrested in Los Angeles in November following an Interpol request from Bangladesh.

Half-day hartal

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torch procession from Shatayu Angan at Ramna Park this evening.

UNB adds: Over 4,000 police and BDR personnel will be deployed in the city during the hartal.

Official sources said eight deputy commissioners and seven additional commissioners of DMP will lead the police and BDR personnel. DMP Commissioner Mahmud-al-Farid will supervise the whole operation.

Besides police, nine platoons of BDR will patrol different trouble spots and guard important installations in the city.

Khaleda urged

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to Begum Zia for shifting the date of hartal to facilitate his visit.

Later, briefing newsmen M M Rezaul Karim, a foreign policy adviser to Begum Zia, said that a number of issues were discussed during the meeting — on politics and socio-economic and other matters.

The BNP Chairperson gave a resume of the issues and also discussed relations with India and other neighbours.

Both felt that the government and the Opposition have special role to play in strengthening democracy.

Begum Zia also urged Richardson to help promote US investment in Bangladesh, expand trade and raise garments quota by 30 per cent.

Pahela Baishakh today

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the first day of Bangla month Baishakh.

In keeping with the age old tradition, traders and shop keepers will open *halkhatas* (fresh account books) and offer sweets to their customers/clients.

President Shahabuddin Ahmed, Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina and Leader of the Opposition in the Jatiya Sangsad Begum Khaleda Zia yesterday gave separate messages on the occasion.

President Shahabuddin Ahmed in his message stressed the need for upholding Bangladesh's own culture and heritage and urged the people to help flourish it for socio-economic development of the country.

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina in her message called upon the people to take a fresh vow to build a modern Bangladesh imbued with the spirit of the Bengali new year.

In her message, Leader of the Opposition Begum Khaleda Zia urged all to vow afresh for upholding the country's independence and sovereignty, press the government to repeal the CHT peace treaty.

Organised by Chhayanot, a leading cultural organisation of the country, the day's first programme will begin at the crack of dawn at Ramna Batamul. A large number of people, dressed in traditional dresses, are expected to attend the programme at the Ramna Green.

Students and teachers of the Fine Arts Institute of the Dhaka University will bring out a colourful procession in the morning carrying festoons, placards, posters, banners and wearing masks to welcome the Bangla new year.

National dailies will bring out special supplements and Bangladesh Betar and Bangladesh Television will air special programmes on the occasion.

Bangla Academy will hold a cultural programme on its premises at 7:30 am. Leading artistes of the country will participate in the function.

Bangladesh Shilpakala Academy will organise a cultural function on the Academy premises at 6:30 pm.

Clinton

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Bangladesh, said, "I will make an important announcement after the end of my speech."

Later, before the presence of a large number of academics and diplomats at BIISS, he said, "I am especially proud to announce that President Clinton will visit Bangladesh later this year when he travels to South Asia."

The US President's proposed visit to South Asia is due to take place in September or November and includes visits to India and Pakistan.

An influential politician and close aide to the US President, Richardson said, he talked to Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina and informed her that President Clinton and First Lady Hillary Clinton had accepted her invitation to visit Bangladesh.

Richardson said the US President would like to visit Bangladesh because "this is a country that is making progress. It is a country where tremendous strides have been made on elimination of child labour and the excellent work on micro-credit work by the NGOs like Grameen Bank."

He further said, "he will particularly like to come because of the warm reception given to First Lady Hillary Clinton."

Road accidents

From Page 1

College died on the spot when she was run over by a truck at Khilgaon rail crossing in the city at about 4 pm yesterday.

Daughter of Mir Hossain Chowdhury of Sipahibagh, Jainun was going to her private tutor at Taltala from her house in a rickshaw.

Police arrested the truck driver, Chunnu Miah, and seized the vehicle.

Rawshanuzzaman Jamaly, 59, former managing director of Petrobangla's subsidiary, RPGCL, was fatally injured when the autorickshaw he was travelling was hit by a car at a crossing at Tejgaon at about 4:30 pm yesterday. He died an hour after admission in the DMCH, sources there said. He was a founder member of Bangladesh Tennis Federation.

BSS adds from Narsingdi: At least two persons were killed and several others injured when a Dhaka-bound bus fell into a roadside ditch at Gashirdia under Shibpur thana police said.

Abul Kalam, 27, and Suman, 20, expired while ten others were admitted to Shibpur hospital with severe injuries, doctors said.

BSS adds from Comilla: One person was killed and five others were injured when a Dhaka-bound microbus hit a roadside tree at Shafipur village under Burichang thana on the Comilla-Sylhet highway at about 7 am.

Billal Hossain, 40, a passenger of the microbus died on the spot.

The injured persons were sent to the Comilla Combined Military Hospital (CMH).

US praises success

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were held about extending all possible facilities to American investors so that leading US companies and entrepreneurs were encouraged to invest in Bangladesh. Growing interest of US investors in the energy sector was also mentioned .

The sources also indicated that the US side had evinced keen interest in participating in infrastructure development work and said it was willing to pay the costs for commissiioning a study on the options for use of Bangladesh's huge potential of natural gas reserve.

The US side is learnt to have expressed its willingness to commit funds of nearly one million dollars for taking up projects in the fields of human rights and responsive government and for increasing transperency.

The Bangladesh side at the talks raised the issue of waiving loans under PL-480 programme of the US.

Richardson, who led the visiting delegation at the official talks, said his country lauded the role of Bangladesh in UN peace keeping operations. US also looks forward to Bangladesh's cooperation in undertaking reforms in the UN body.henoted

The visiting dignitary described US-Bangladesh ties as "very strong" and expressed the hope that it will be further strengthened in the years ahead.

Discussions were also held on some of the accomplishments by Bangladesh like the water treaty with with India and the CHT peace accord.

Ambassador Bill Richardson was assisted by US Secretary of State on South Asian Affairs Karl Inderfurth and President's Adviser on South Asian Affairs Bruce Riedel . He led the 15-member US delegation at the hour -long talks.

Foreign Minister Abdus Samad Azad led the Bangladesh side at the talks. State Minister for Foreign Affairs Abul Hasan Chowdhury, Foreign Secretary Mustafizur Rahman and senior officials were also present

Richardson said that President BillClinton and First Lady Hillary Clinton will be paying a visit to Bangladesh towards the end of the current year.

Abdus Samad Azad, responding to a question, said he was happy at the outcome of the talks but did not elaborate. He, however, expressed happiness about the proposed visit of President Clinton.

Block bidding results

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Sources said, multinational oil company Shell and British company Cairn, which had submitted bids for six blocks, will be invited to finalise negotiations on blocks 5 and 10.

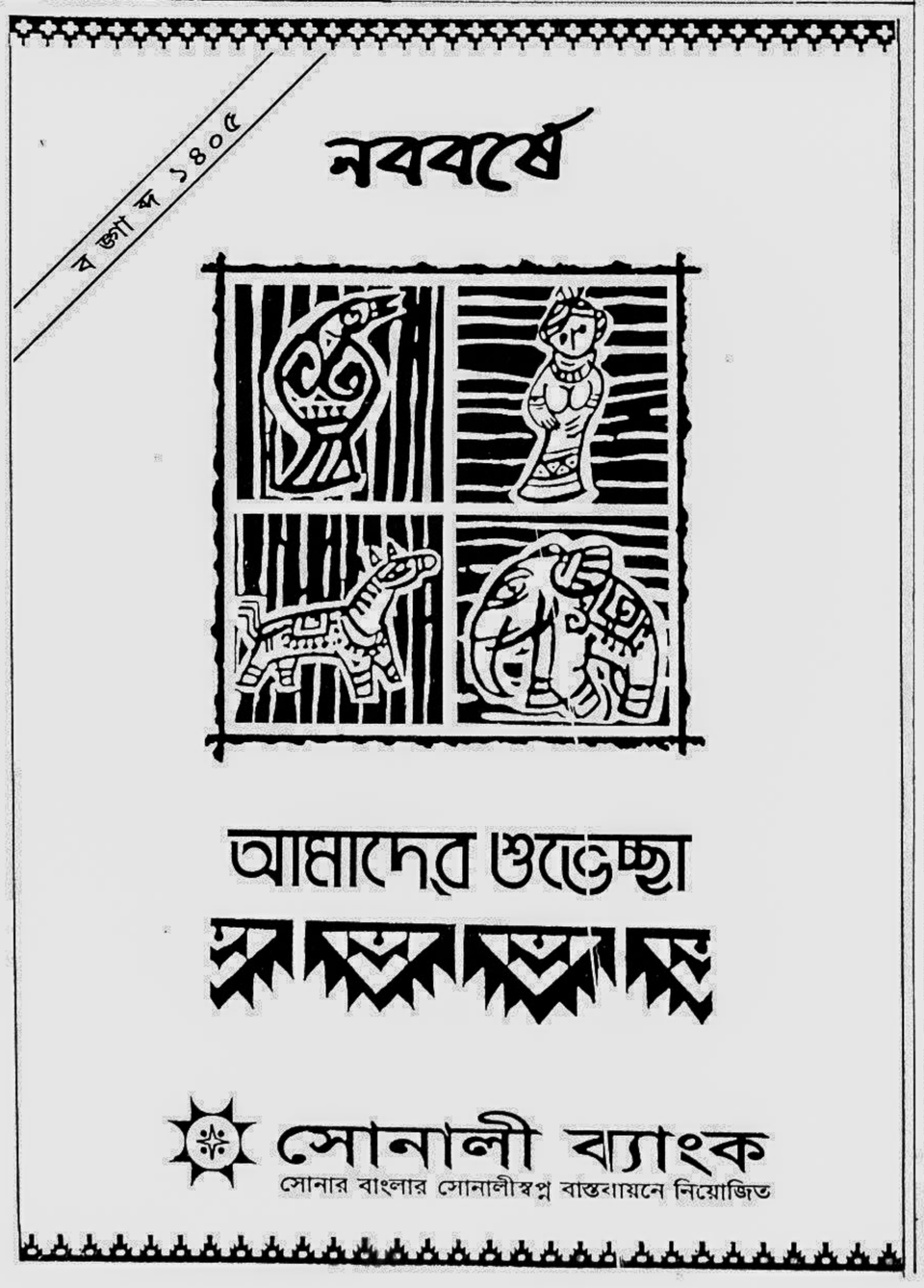
US companies Triton-Unocal will be invited to finalise negotiation for block 7, US company Pangaea and its Austrian partner OMB for block 6, and US company Enron for block 6.

Regarding the much debated negotiations on blocks 9 and 11, focusing on getting Irish company Tullow a financially larger partner, the government will give one month time to US joint venture Chevron-Texaco to decide on a partnership formula with Tullow in block 9. This formula, earlier rejected by the US joint venture but endorsed by Tullow, suggests that Chevron-Texaco gets 45 per cent of the block and Tullow 45 per cent. BAPEX, the country's lone exploration unit, would get the remaining 10 per cent share on 'carried interest' basis.

Similarly US company Mobil and its Malaysian partner Petronas will be asked to agree on a same partnership formula with Tullow in block 11. However, Mobil-Petronas which had offered 20 per cent partnership for BAPEX in their offers for both blocks 9 and 11, had taken a stand that it would only think of partnership with Tullow if government offered it both the blocks.

The recommendations excluded US company Hondo, Union Texas, Total and some other companies.

BAPEX, which was officially promised of a good deal in the second round bidding by the former Energy Minister and the current Energy Secretary, has so far been totally left out, except for a promise that it would be given 10 per cent carried over partnership with Tullow in blocks 9 and 11.



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for names of LUCKY WINNERS See The Daily Star on April 17, '98

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