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Immediate freeze on nuclear tests demanded

By Staff Correspondent

Speakers at a roundtable discussion in the city yesterday called for consistent economic and diplomatic pressure on India and Pakistan to renounce further nuclear tests.

The discussion on "USA and South Asia: A Bangladesh Perspective", organised by the Institute of Policy Studies, was held at the CIRDP auditorium yesterday. Former foreign secretary Reaz Rahman presented the key-note paper. Former finance minister Saifur Rahman was in the chair.

The speakers discussed the recent nuclear tests by India and Pakistan and its possible international and regional implications.

"President Clinton's call must be widely supported to maintain pressure on India and Pakistan to renounce any further nuclear and missile tests immediately and to sign the CTBT," Reaz Rahman said in his paper.

"There must be an immediate freeze on all movement towards deployment of nuclear weapons or delivery system," he said.

The key factor is long term economic pressure. It should be made clear to both the countries that they will be increasingly isolated if they continue the present course, he stressed.

The key-note said nuclear tests by the two countries threaten to destabilise South Asia and the region as a whole by initiating an overt arms

race. It runs directly counter to the international consensus to stop proliferation of the weapons of mass destruction and shattered the defacto moratorium on all forms of nuclear test.

Indian and Pakistani nuclear explosions have forever changed geo-political realities in the subcontinent and Asia as a whole and have transformed the nuclear landscape and undermined world security, it noted.

Deputy Leader of the Opposition in Jatiya Sangsad Dr Badruddoza Chowdhury criticised the 'late reaction' of the government of Bangladesh to the nuclear tests by India and Pakistan.

"But I am glad that the government at last reacted to the tests and the Prime Minister has offered her good offices to a negotiation between the two countries. Bangladesh reacted only when Pakistan conducted the tests. The parliament was in session when India conducted the tests, neither the PM nor the Foreign Minister made any comment on it," he said.

He advocated "severe action against India and Pakistan. No difference should be made between the two countries, he said.

He warned that in the face of international action, India may use Bangladesh as a 'pawn'.

State Minister for Foreign Affairs Abul Hasan Chowdhury defended the government's position on the issue.

Referring to the allegation of 'late reaction' from the government to the nuclear tests he said that Bangladesh had made her position clear regarding the issue by signing the CTBT.

The government had given its reaction after observing the situation very carefully. Abul Hasan said. The Prime Minister had already offered her good offices to defuse the tension in the region, he noted.

Dr Kamal Hossain said that the situation in South Asia was being 'dominated by India-Pakistan confrontation.' The situation improved a lot over the last 10 years. But the development suffered a setback with the nuclear tests by India which was followed by Pakistan, he said.

"Now all should think over how the earlier situation could be restored soon," Dr Kamal added.

About the US-South Asia relations, Reaz Rahman in his paper said "South Asia does not figure prominently in the US Foreign Policy agenda. US policy makers viewed South Asia fraught with problems of poverty, overpopulation, ethnic and religious conflict and natural disasters."

"But in the last few years, the US government and concerned private institutions and think tanks have focused increased attention on a major review of United States relationship with South Asia, he added.

\$ 273 m WB loan for communication sector

A memorandum of understanding (MOU) has been signed for a \$273 million loan from the World Bank for the communication sector, reports UNB.

This is the highest amount of World Bank loan for a single project in Bangladesh.

The project styled as RMRP-3 envisages a total expenditure of \$529 million (Tk 2,400 crore) including a domestic component of \$233 million. UK is to give a grant of \$23 million to finance the project.

Construction of Nalka-Hatikamul-Banpara road, rehabilitation of Dhaka-Sylhet highway, development of 500 km feeder road, rehabilitation and reconstruction of 1000 meter narrow bridge, repair and maintenance of 1000 meter national and procurement of equipment for training of police included in the project.

Communication secretary Syed Rezaul Hayat and World Bank energy and infrastructure unit team leader Arun Banerjee have signed the memorandum of understanding in presence of senior officials of the ministries concerned.

Prof Mahmud

Former VC of BUET Prof M Shaikhah, when contacted, said he was appointed for four years each for two terms, but there was no mention of anything like 'four years or till further order'.

The Dhaka University, Rajshahi University, Chittagong University and Jahangirnagar University are governed by the 1973 Universities Act while the rest including BUET are governed by the Presidential Order of 1962.

Appointment to the post of VC is made for four years under both these sets of rules.

The VCs of the universities governed by the 1973 Universities Act are appointed from a three member panel elected by the senates of these universities. In other universities including BUET, VCs are directly appointed by the Chancellor.

The President is the Chancellor of all universities excepting BUET. National University and Bangladesh Open University. The Prime Minister is the Chancellor of these three universities.

FP advocacy programme opens next month

By Staff Correspondent

A four year advocacy programme on reproductive health, family planning and gender issues is beginning next month with a seven million US dollars UNFPA contribution.

UNFPA representative Alain P Mouchiroud disclosed it in a meeting in the city yesterday. Representatives of different UN agencies and NGOs attended the meeting.

The advocacy programme has been developed to address various issues and concerns. These include the high maternal mortality rate estimated at 470 per 100,000 live births, increase of discrimination against women, widespread preference for sons over daughters and discrimination in distribution of food and treatment between boys and girls.

A summary paper of the programme mentioned that nine government ministries will be involved in implementing the advocacy programme until the year 2002.

The programme envisages that reproductive health and gender issues would be integrated into the training curriculum of these ministries.

In the advocacy programme, government, NGO and private sector resources have been mobilised to reach all target groups including the influential and the vulnerable and hard-to-reach groups.



BNP Chairperson Begum Khaleda Zia addressing a rally at Islampur in the city yesterday in observance of the death anniversary of party founder and former president Ziaur Rahman. — Star photo

Long march aimed at protecting country's integrity, says Khaleda

BNP Chairperson and Leader of the Opposition in Parliament Begum Khaleda Zia yesterday accused the government of creating chaos, conflict and unrest in the country by passing the CHT-related bills in Parliament, reports UNB.

Begum Zia was exchanging views on Long March programme with leaders and workers of JASAS, Jatiyatrabadi Sangskritik Jote at 29 Minto Road in the evening.

Terming the Long March as democratic right, she said, "the Long March will be peaceful, democratic and non-violent" to raise voice against the CHT accord which is contrary to the Constitution and has endangered the country's sovereignty and integrity.

Referring to the Long March towards Farakka led by Moulana Abdul Hamid Khan Bhasani, Begum Zia said the world opinion was raised against its adverse impact on Bangladesh's environment and the Indian aggression.

Begum Zia said people from all walks of life are ready to join the Long March to express their solidarity to scrap the CHT accord.

The opposition leader said the objective of the Long March is to protect the country's sovereignty and integrity.

She called upon the cultural leaders and workers to join the June 9 Long March.

PM: Remain alert

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and strategies updated," she said.

About the India-Pakistan arms race, the Prime Minister said, "Our position is clear - we have already signed the CTBT and we do not believe in arms race. This money can be spent for the distressed women and children of the region."

About the fate of SAARC in the wake of India-Pakistan arms race, the Prime Minister said her government wants summit to be held on schedule. The occasion might give a scope for discussion to ease the tension, she added.

Replying a question on the long march of BNP planned for June 9, Sheikh Hasina said her government has no plan to obstruct it. "The long march is going to turn into a truck and bus march."

About the trespassing of some people in CHT from across the border after the peace accord, the Prime Minister said

these people were the citizens of this country and they had left home during last two decades due to unrest.

About power crisis, she admitted that the situation has worsened. It is the legacy of the past government, she added.

The Prime Minister said her government is yet to make any headway in this regard as most of the power generators are old. She, however, said her government is trying hard to mitigate the suffering of the people.

Refuting the charges that the four-point agreement with BNP is being violated, the Prime Minister said that the agreement had never been violated. "Rather the present opposition while in power did violate agreement with us," she said, adding that "They even did not withdraw the case against Shaheed Janoni Jahanara Imam although they agreed to do so as per the agreement."

World Environment Day today

The World Environment Day will be observed in the country as elsewhere in the world today, reports UNB.

On the occasion different government and non-government organisations have drawn up various programmes to create awareness among the people about the issues relating to environment.

25 hurt in electric compressor blast at CEPZ

CHITTAGONG, June 4: At least 25 women were injured when an electric compressor of a garments factory at Chittagong Export Processing Zone here exploded today, reports UNB.

Police and fire brigade officials said the accident occurred at Young International Garments in the afternoon.

Upendra Chakma's allegations baseless: Dipankar

RANGAMATI, June 4: Chairman of the Task Force on Tribal Refugee Rehabilitation Affairs Dipankar Talukdar, MP, today categorically dismissed the allegations made recently by refugee leader Upendra Lal Chakma, reports BSS.

In a press conference at the Chittagong Press Club here, Talukdar said the allegations are completely baseless and misleading.

Chakma, Chairman of the Tribal Refugee Welfare Association in a press conference in Chittagong last week alleged that the 20-point agreement on the rehabilitation of the tribal refugees were yet to be implemented.

Talukdar referred to the relevant clauses of the agreement and said that the government took all steps to realise those completely.

DU alumni convention tomorrow

The Dhaka University Alumni Convention '98 will be held at the Teacher-Students Centre (TSC) tomorrow, reports UNB.

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina will inaugurate the day-long programme at 10 am, said a press release of Dhaka University Alumni Association yesterday.

Vajpayee

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Reiterating that India's nuclear tests were not targeted against any nation, Vajpayee said it was a message to those who were stockpiling nuclear arms while preaching world peace and nuclear non-proliferation.

Asserting that India would not sign the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty (CTBT) in its present form as it was discriminatory in nature, Vajpayee said New Delhi was, however, prepared to discuss the nuclear test ban treaty.

He said after the underground nuclear tests by India and Pakistan, there has been a lot of unwarranted pressure on both countries to sign the CTBT on the grounds that tension had escalated in the region following the tests.

US Secretary of State Madeleine Albright, who rushed today to join an emergency meeting of the world's five official nuclear powers in Geneva characterised the Indo-Pak nuclear testing as "uniquely dangerous."

She and the foreign ministers of Russia, China, France and Britain were prepared to unite behind the common goal of defusing nuclear tension on the Asian subcontinent, she said.

Carrying instructions from President Bill Clinton, Albright also intended to revive the global arms control agenda stalled by last month's atomic tests.

The five major powers were working on a communique that would offer mediation services and emphasise the urgency of India's and Pakistan's rejoining the global arms-control movement, said a US official who spoke on condition of anonymity.

Biman's purser

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chief purser Khalilur Rahman was held by a customs team when they found traveller's cheques of 1,00,400 US dollar wrapped by scotch tape in four small paper packs hidden in the crew coat cover.

The customs officials then searched Khalil's body and recovered 3,990 US dollar, bank draft of about 17,927 US dollar and 20 Australian dollar. The exchange price of the seized currencies were about Tk 57 lakh.

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Business Council

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When asked at a press conference if the Bangladesh government would allocate exploration blocks on a priority basis, Tofael said that the allocations would be made in a transparent manner as the government is an accountable one.

He hoped that the US companies would win the bids with their cost-effective offers.

"I believe, through their rich technological background and managerial skill, the US business community can utilise the comparative advantage of our available resources and cheap manpower to attain the maximum return on their investment," he said.

The press conference was held at the US Chamber of Commerce building.

Tofael Ahmed hoped that the upcoming visit of US President Bill Clinton to Bangladesh would go a long way towards expanding the bilateral ties between the two countries.

Before the formation of the Council, the executives of the companies held a closed door meeting where they expressed their anxiety over the bureaucracy in Bangladesh, meeting sources said.

It was decided at the meeting that a "energy conference" will be organised in Dhaka sometime in January, 1999.

A number of Bangladeshi-born US company executives showed keen interest to join the Council.

I am investing 25 million dollars to construct an international hotel and a super market in Dhaka," said MA Nasir, Chairman of SN Corporation, a member of the Council.

Former US Ambassador to Bangladesh David N Merrill, who was representing Halliburton at the inaugural session of the Council, said that the Council will promote US investment in Bangladesh.

Chetia

From Page 1

into the country and possession of Bangladeshi passports. But the defence lawyer appointed by the state for Chetia prayed for granting time before the charge framing.

The court then fixed July 9 for this.

Lawyers of human rights organisations present in the court yesterday also prayed for allowing them to assist Chetia and to talk to him.

Chetia, Secretary General of ULFA, along with the two others were arrested from a house in Mohammadpur thana in December last year.

Office timing

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be a small group that wants the change in timing. But it has no support from the overwhelming majority of the officials and employees in this regard.

The present government under the directives of Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina announced a new pay-scale for the government officials and employees even before they made any demand, he said.

The full pay-scale will be implemented from July this year, he said. Other allowances will be given in phases. In the budget for 1998-99, a provision has been kept to meet the allowances.

The government strongly feels that indiscriminate use of service will be taken very seriously, the spokesman said.

He said the government expects the officials and employees will devote themselves to the welfare of the country and uphold discipline in all respects.

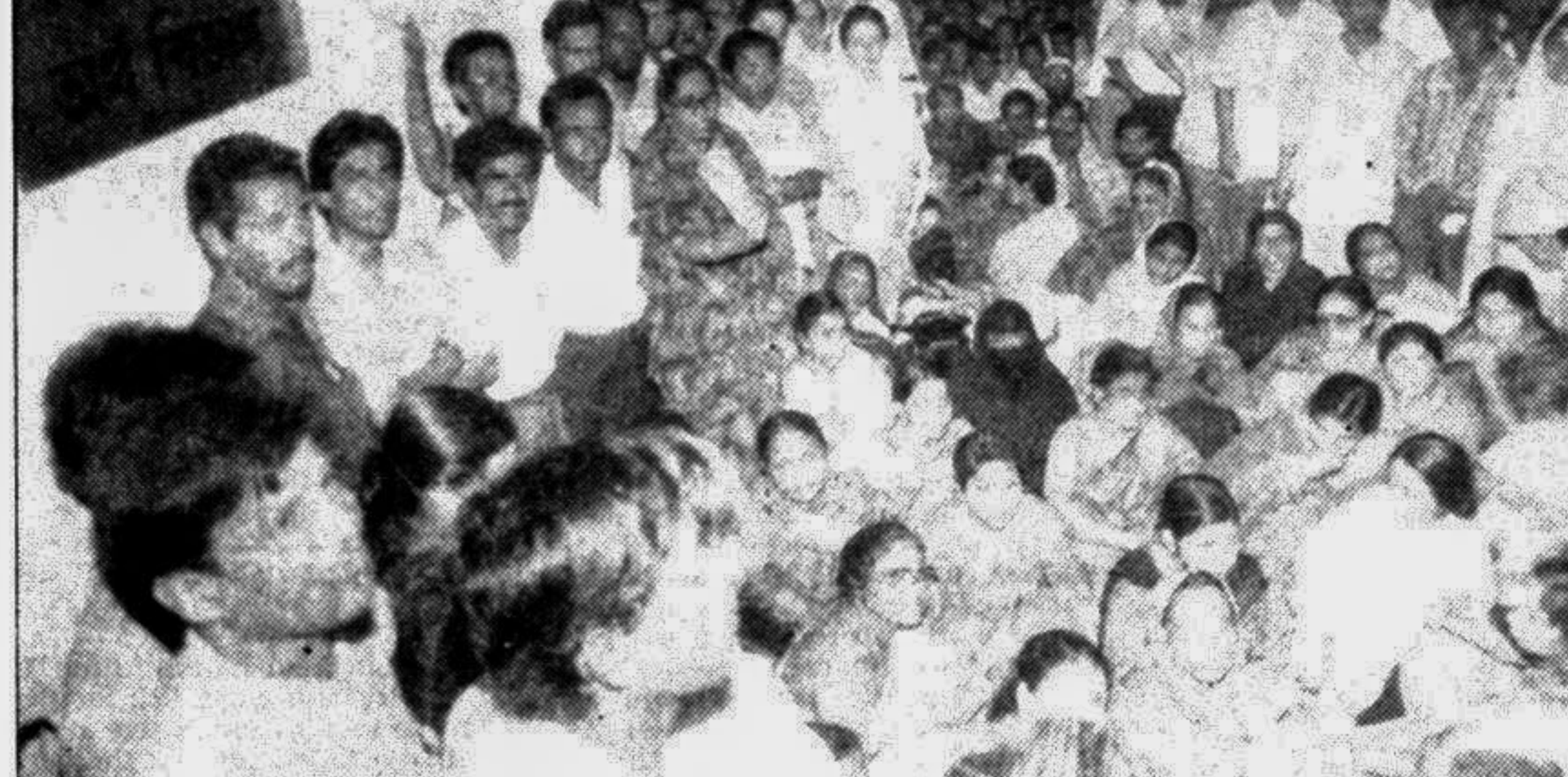
Shazneen murder

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The investigating team continued to verify the statements of security guard Humayun Kabir and confessed killer Shahid.

A senior CID official said they were still examining all possible reasons behind the murder of the youngest daughter of the Chairman of Transcom Ltd, Latifur Rahman.

The CID would take some more time to come to a satisfactory conclusion of the investigation into the murder, the official added.



Class three and four government employees staging demonstration in front of the Finance Ministry yesterday, demanding full implementation of pay commission report and change in office timing. — Star photo

Power plants in pvt sector

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"You don't need any building, no foundation... within a couple of hours [of installing it] we can supply power," Hague says.

The local entrepreneurs have grouped under the umbrella of the so-called Small and Medium Industries Organisation (SMIDO), a voluntary, non-profit agency registered with the Commerce Ministry.

Taking up the role of a facilitator, SMIDO lined up a Canadian company called MITC which brought in PCI Energy Group, the parent company of Caterpillar.

The US company is focussing more on some 60 BSCIC industrial estates where small industry owners grapple with frequent power failures.

"We are exploring the possibility of setting up small plants with a total capacity of, say, 500-600 megawatts," says Caterpillar's local dealer Nazmul Haque.

On Saturday, the investment delegation sat down with interested local entrepreneurs under SMIDO's aegis.

On Wednesday, Caterpillar put on display a "complete purchase" 1.2 megawatt plant, which is "ready to run".

are really trying to give something to the nation," says CPGTCL chairman Rafiqul Alam Jorj, who sells electronics products at Dhaka Stadium market.

"The faster the barriers are removed, the faster we can produce results," Jorj says.

On part of SMIDO, says chairman G H M Obaidul Hoque, the job is to bring the right people together.

Much of the encouragement has come from Maniruzzaman Chowdhury, a former BSCIC chairman and chief adviser to SMIDO, who has helped them put it all together. "This also goes much in line with the present day emphasis on small projects throughout the world," Chowdhury says. "These are the days of balancing with big projects."

Even in the US, he says, 50 per cent of employment is generated by small enterprises.

"There's another reason why we should go for small projects now. If one big plant is down, then we pay a heavy price."

And the need of the hour is a level playing field, he says, referring to the proposed higher gas prices for small private plants.

But Brazil wasted countless chances as Andorran defenders repeatedly turned over the ball and forced goalkeeper Koldo Alvarez into several dramatic saves.

The first of many misses came in the eighth minute, when Giovanni took a cross from Cafu and fired a header point blank that Alvarez knocked away with a reflex save.

Two-time FIFA Player of the Year Ronaldo had a long and frustrating afternoon.

Alvarez seemed to have the shaven-headed 21-year-old figured out, twice flogging him one-on-one on breakaways as Brazil repeatedly caught the Andorran defense flat-footed.

The afternoon was a personal show by Ronaldo, who's successive runs through the Andorran defense drew 'oohs' and 'aahs' from the crowd.

But again he was disarmed at the last moment.

Brazilian coach Mario Zagallo substituted freely, sending in Carlos Germano for Taffarel, Goncalves for Aldair, Ze Carlos for Roberto Carlos, and Denilson for Rivaldo.

Accused killers

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missioner Anwar-ul-Alam in Ottawa as saying, "Bangladesh has requested Canada to conclude an extradition treaty with the South Asian country (Bangladesh) and arrange for the accused killers to be sent back to face trial."

"The men are among a group of soldiers charged with the August 1975 assassination of Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, known as the Father of Bangladesh independence, and 28 members of his family. It led to installation of a military regime," the Canadian press observed.

Garments quota

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seriously consider increasing the quota," he was quoted to have told the minister.

Eizenstat, however, said Bangladesh should take measures to check over shipment of garments to the US.

Brazilian team

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right calf last weekend.

After a careful farewell, the players were in low spirits in practice Tuesday.

The Brazilians hardly looked themselves as they sleepwalked through the opening minutes, falling to press an Andorran team that seemed awed to be on the same field as the four-time world champions.

Andorra took nine minutes to cross the midfield stripe and never seriously threatened Brazilian keeper Taffarel.

Uttara plots

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Wednesday. Asked whether any 'deal' was made to calm down the employees, the official replied in the negative but said, "We explained to them that if any plots are left after serving the general public the employees would get the allocations."

He quoted the employees and said, "They (the employees) said that they themselves would extract plots if necessary for obtaining allocations."

Another source said the employees were also agitating because Rajuk had just employed 55 personnel under master role without proper procedure.

Power plants

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last overhauled in 1993. The other one with a capacity of 40 MW commissioned in 1989, is yet to be overhauled.

Three power plants at Ashuganj, each having a production capacity of 150 MW, were commissioned in 1986, 1987, 1989. These were not rehabilitated till now. The two other 50 MW plants at Ashuganj were last overhauled 10 years ago.

The 210 MW plant in Raozan and 190 MW plant in Khulna were last overhauled in 1993 and 1989 respectively.

Ctg port

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erational activities of the port.

The situation at Chittagong port, particularly the handling of containers, has been aggravating day by day during the last two months. This has resulted in the maritime trade suffering a serious setback.

Shipping circles suggested the authorities to come up with early positive and effective approach to overcome the prevailing situation of the Chittagong Port.

Editor: Mahfuz Anam

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