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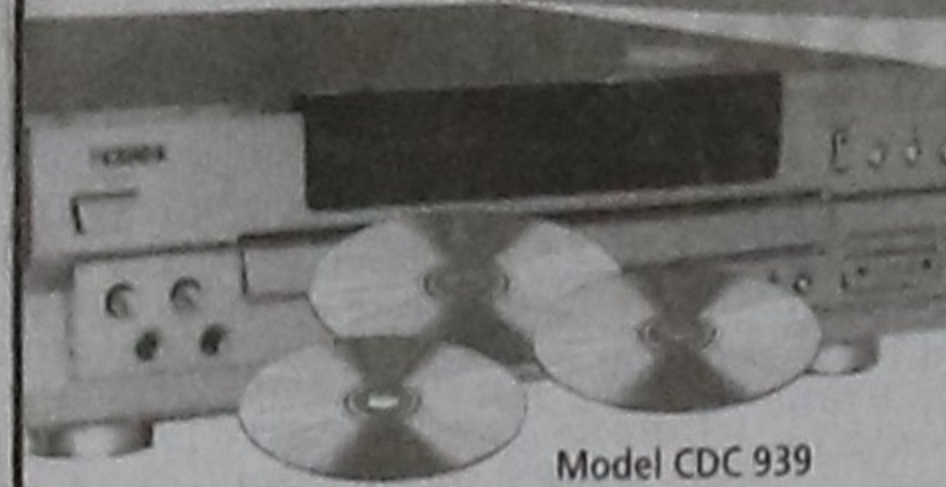
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Rear escape hatch of sunken Russian sub intact

OSLO, Aug 20: Norwegian deep-sea divers investigating the hull of a stricken Russian submarine have found the rear escape hatch intact, a Norwegian military spokesman said today, reports AFP.

"We have confirmed that the rear hatch is okay. There is also air pressure in the hatch, which is positive. That means that it is not filled with water," a spokesman for the Norwegian military command in North Norway, John Espen Lien, told the news agency.

The Norwegian and British rescue teams were discussing with Russian experts "to find the best way to open the hatch," he said.

Lien's comments contradict earlier reports on Russian state television that a massive crack was found on the hatch that would have prevented a vacuum seal with the British rescue submersible.

Lien also denied reports

claiming that the divers believed one sailor to be trapped directly underneath the hatch door.

"No, our divers have not found any man," he said. The 12 divers were working in four teams consisting of three people each. Lowered down to the Kursk submarine in a diving bell, each team is able to stay down for about six hours at a time before being replaced by another team.

The Kursk is lying at a depth of 108 meters in the Barents Sea, after suffering a catastrophic accident on August 12.

The divers were moving slowly because of the depth and difficult conditions around the Kursk, Russian Navy officials said. Each dive was taking several hours, they said, reports AP.

It appeared to be the first time divers had descended to the Kursk since rescue efforts began a week ago. Russian es-

cape capsules tried to reach the Kursk repeatedly, but the Russian navy reportedly had no skilled divers.

A Norwegian video camera was first lowered to check the hull and the water was checked for possible radiation leaks from the Kursk's two nuclear reactors, officials said.

Russian officials said the rescue operations would continue at least through today, but indicated the emphasis was shifting to what caused the tragedy on the Kursk, one of the navy's newest and most powerful submarines.

Vice Adm Mikhail Mutsak said yesterday that any survivors likely drowned as the submarine filled with water.

"The absolute majority of the crew died in the first two minutes of the disaster... including those who were responsible for the command of the ship," Deputy Prime Minister Ilya Klebanov told reporters

Saturday.

Many Russians said the Western aid was too late to make any difference, and expressed anger about the way President Vladimir Putin's government handled the rescue effort and took so long to ask for foreign help. Moscow for days declined offers of Western help.

"They should have accepted help as soon as they learned that the vessel was in distress," said Tikhon Bagryantsev, a Navy retiree whose son, Capt. Vladimir Bagryantsev, was feared among the dead. "Every minute counts there."

Moscow's announcement that the crew was almost certainly dead, just as the British rescue team arrived on Saturday, could be seen as an attempt by some Russian officials to show that the Western squads could do nothing.

Russian efforts to reach the Kursk were frustrated by powerful currents and almost zero visibility on the sea floor.

Mori calls on Shahabuddin

Japanese Prime Minister Yoshiro Mori yesterday made a courtesy call on President Shahabuddin Ahmed at Bangabhaban, reports UNB.

Welcoming Mori, the President recalled Tokyo's "generous assistance for economic development of Bangladesh since Japan's recognition of our independence in February 1972."

He referred to the spectacular economic achievement of Japan since the days of Hiroshima and Nagasaki bombings.

The president also recognised Japan's economic assistance to her neighbours, specially the developing Asian countries, including Bangladesh.

He eulogised their commitment for peace, recalling that its intention for peace is clearly reflected in her constitution, which is called "peace constitution."

The Japanese prime minister appreciated the signing of CTBT by Bangladesh terming it as "a great effort for ensuring peace in the world."

Yoshiro Mori also recalled the peace initiative taken by Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina immediately after the nuclear tests by India and Pakistan in 1998.

He expressed his happiness over the existing bilateral relations between Japan and Bangladesh.

Foreign Minister Abdus Samad Azad, State Minister for Foreign Affairs Abul Hasan Chowdhury, Foreign Secretary CM Shafi Saad, Secretary to President Muhammad Ismail Hossain, members of the Japanese delegation, Bangladesh Ambassador to Japan and Japanese Ambassador in Dhaka were among others present on the occasion.

Two students die in Ashulia boat capsizes

GAZIPUR, Aug 20: The bodies of two students, who were missing after a boat capsized in Ashulia Beldi, were recovered this afternoon, reports UNB.

They were identified as Ariful Islam, 23, son of Shariful Islam and Jewel, 22, son of Abdur Rahim of Madaraganj upazila of Jamalpur district.

Arif was a student of Wilson University in Canada and Jewel, a second year student of Statistics Department of Dhaka University.

Arif came to Bangladesh on vacation and was supposed to go back on August 24.

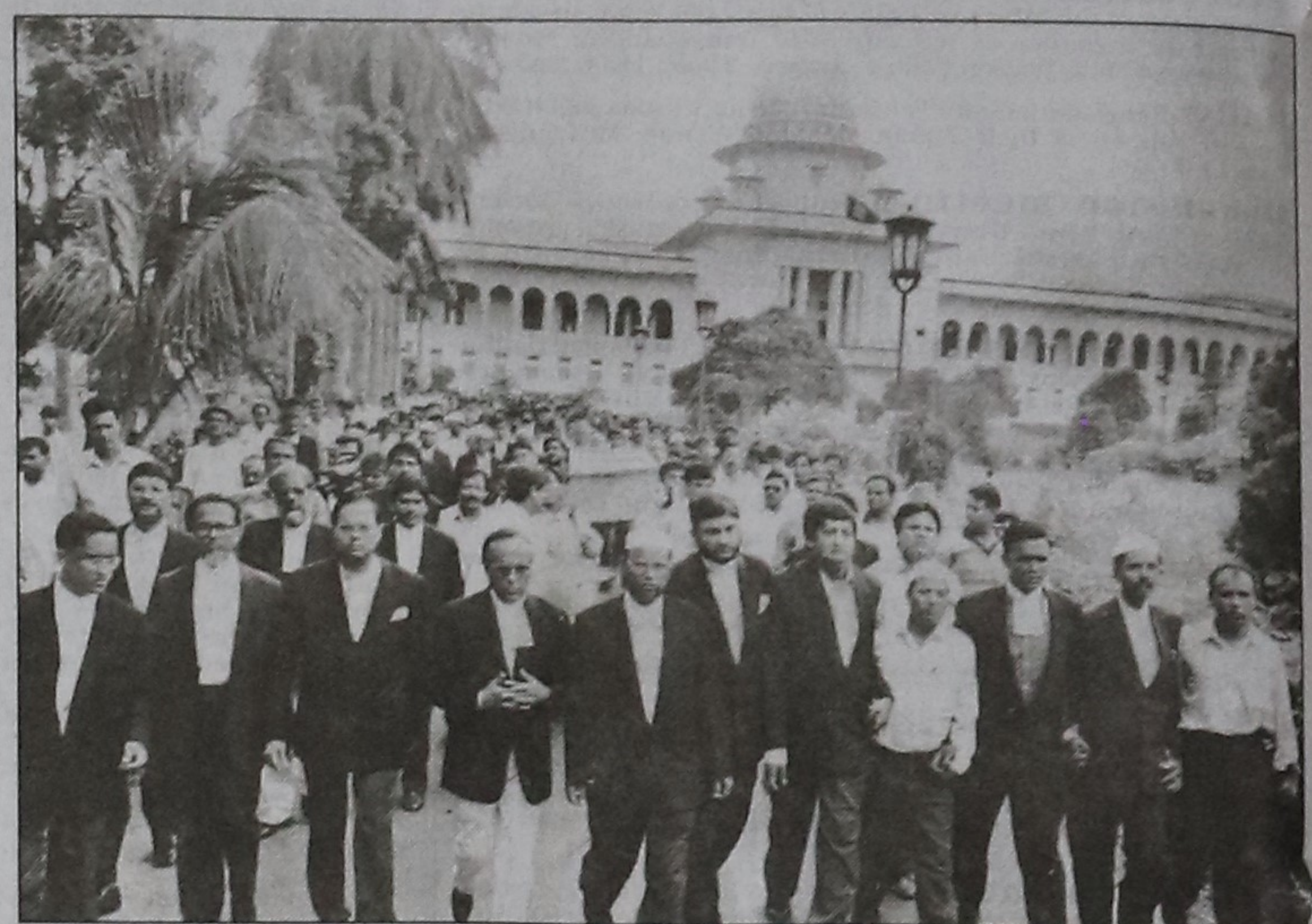
The two young men went for boating along with other friends on Saturday.

Pvt jute, textile mills strike called off

Trade union leaders of private jute, yarn and textile mills withdrew today's strike called to press their various demands, reports UNB.

CBA and non-CBA Coordination Council leaders of private jute and textile mills decided to call off their strike after a "satisfactory" meeting with Labour and Employment Minister Ma Mannan at his ministry yesterday.

Council convenor Shahidul Islam, secretary Hedayatul Islam, Abul Kashem Khan, Golam Rasul Khan, Solaiman Hossain and Selim Mollah, joint secretary of Labour Ministry Dalil Uddin Mandal, Director (Labour) Hafizur Rahman and other officials were present.



Lawyers carrying the coffin of Advocate Habibur Rahman Mondal brought out a mourning procession after *namaj-e-janaza* on the Supreme Court premises yesterday. Mondal was gunned down by unidentified assailants near his residence at Banagram in Old Dhaka earlier in the day.

Rab murder: 2 more arrested in Khulna

From Staff Correspondent

KHULNA, Aug 20: Police arrested another 'professional killer' at midnight on Saturday.

He was identified as Motalab, 32, of CSD godown area under Khalishpur thana.

Motalab was arrested following confession statement made by Rangulal Biswas on August 17 in the court of Metropolitan Magistrate Sabir Ahmed.

Rangulal named Motalab as one of the six killers of SMA Rob.

Two witnesses - Homeopath - Abdur Rashid and his 10-year-old son Kader - today identified Motalab as one of the three persons who fired at SMA Rob.

Police said Motalab is involved in some other murders committed in the past. He has been taken on a four-day remand today.

James Chatterjee, another suspect in Rob murder case also gave confession statement under 164 CrPC in the court of Metropolitan Magistrate Sabir Ahmed today. After judicial confession, he was sent to district jail in the afternoon.

Rangulal has again been taken on a two-day remand today.

In another development, police today arrested another activist of Purbo Banglar Communist Party (PBCP) suspecting his involvement in the conspiracy for killing AL mayoral candidate Rab. The arrested was identified as Riaz, 30, younger brother of the Chairman of Batapara Union Parishad under Bagerhat Sadar thana.

Riaz was taken to KMP headquarters for questioning.

5 textile-related assocs to conduct study on impact of new GSP rules

By Staff Correspondent

Five textile-related associations in a joint meeting agreed yesterday to conduct a study on the impact of new GSP rule for apparel export to the European Union countries on the country's textile sector.

The textile-related associations are making contradictory observations regarding the impact of SAARC cumulation rules on the country's textile sector.

The textile producing associations observed that the new rule allowing GSP facility to the apparel produced by raw materials originated from any SAARC country would destroy the textile industry, while the apparel manufacturers said that the new rule would help increase garment export and expand the market abroad.

The joint meeting decided to form a sub-committee to conduct the study.

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Election to 19 pourasavas on Sept 18

Election to Tongi, Comilla and 17 newly constituted pourasavas will be held on September 18, reports UNB.

The new pourasavas are Bagha in Rajshahi district, Sariakandi and Duplechanchia in Bogra, Nozpur in Naogaon, Bhangura in Pabna, Badarganj in Rangpur, Gopalpur in Natore, Domar in Nilphamari, Gaffarganj in Mymensingh, Kuliachar in Kishoreganj, Madarganj in Jamalpur, Dohar in Dhaka, Muksdupur in Gopalganj, and Dherai and Jagannathpur in Sunamganj.

According to election schedule announced by the Election Commission yesterday, nomination papers are to be filed on August 23, the date of scrutiny is August 24 and the last date for withdrawal of candidature is August 31.

Additional District Magistrate will act as Returning Officer.



Dhaka City Unit of All-party Action Council staged a demonstration yesterday protesting price hike of petroleum products and gas.

Forced eviction Appeal to PM to get back house

By Staff Correspondent

Oli Ahmed Patwari, evicted from his Mirpur residence in the city by local youths 11 days ago, has appealed to Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina to get his house back and for the safety of his family.

Patwari, accompanied by two of his daughters, made the appeal at a press conference at the Jatiya Press Club yesterday.

A gang comprising four young men broke into the Patwari's residence brandishing firearms and weapons around 2 am on August 10. They beat up the female members of the family and asked the family to vacate the house immediately. Patwari's daughter Mariam Ahmed Pinu said.

The four men, all brothers - Shafiq, Toufik, Taju and Maju - lived in the house just adjacent to theirs and are backed by the local commissioner, Pinu said. The men who have been threatening them for the last four months to vacate the house, earlier attempted to set up a gate on their land, she added.

Patwari filed a case with the Chief Metropolitan's Court Dhaka on May 15 which issued a show cause notice upon the de-

fendants as to why a legal action would not be taken against them. The defendants refused to attend the court and began to put pressure on Patwari to withdraw the case.

"Then in the night of August 10 they broke into the house, smashed down two rooms and removed the tin fence that separate their house from that of the men. They also looted valuables," Pinu informed.

The incident was reported to the Mirpur police at about 5:30 am on the day who investigated the matter and observed that the case should be filed under Public Safety Act and Women and Children Repression Prevention Act.

Police arrested three men in this connection and filed a case under normal section of the penal code and produced them in the court, Pinu added. The accused were later granted bail by the court and are now harassing them.

Since the night of the incident, the family has taken shelter at a relative's house, Patwari told the conference. He

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Mondal murder political, says family

By Staff Correspondent

Family members of Advocate Habibur Rahman Mondal, who was a probable ward commissioner candidate in the next DCC election, suspect that he was killed by his political rivals.

They said that they had shifted to a fourth floor flat only two months back, fearing attack on him (Mondal) from his political rivals.

Police however think the killing was not a political one. "This is not a political murder," DC of Detective Branch Abdul Hannan Khan told a group of newsmen at the DB office in the city yesterday afternoon.

He also expressed his interest in handling the case.

The DB official suspected that Mondal was killed in connection with the triple murder in the city's Dayaganj area. He (Mondal) was defending the accused in the case. Hired goons probably gunned him down, the official said but he could not say who might have hired them.

The triple murder took place when a bus carrying supporters of the Commissioner of Ward No 83, Saidur Rahman Shahid, was attacked on Dayaganj bridge in Sutrapur thana on May 11.

Eight persons were accused in the case filed in this regard.



Teachers and employees of non-government schools and colleges staged a sit-in on the road in front of the Shikha Bhaban yesterday, disrupting traffic for an hour. They have been agitating to press their six-point demand including 100 per cent salary from the public exchequer since July 10.

Star photo

Mori, Mosharraf to talk nuclear, Kashmir issues

ISLAMABAD, Aug 20: Japanese Prime Minister Yoshiro Mori arrived here amid tight security today for talks with military ruler General Pervez Musharraf about economic sanctions, nuclear non-proliferation and Kashmir, reports AFP.

His plane touched down at a military airbase just after 4 pm after a flight from Bangladesh, where he started an eight-day tour of South Asia on Saturday.

Crack police and army units were seen patrolling the streets of Islamabad ahead of his arrival and had taken up positions around the hotel where his delegation is expected to stay.

Mori was welcomed by Foreign Minister Abdul Sattar and received flowers from traditionally dressed Pakistani girls before his motorcade left for an official reception.

Officials have said his discussions with Musharraf tomorrow will focus on Pakistan's nuclear weapons programme, its dispute with India over Kashmir and eco-

nomie sanctions. International terrorism and the ongoing civil war in neighbouring Afghanistan are also on the agenda, they said.

Mori is due to fly to India to meet Prime Minister Atal Behari Vajpayee on Wednesday.

His arrival here comes amid an escalation of Muslim separatist violence in the Indian zone of Kashmir which New Delhi blames Islamabad for fomenting. Pakistan says it only provides moral and diplomatic support to the militants.

Tokyo imposed sanctions, including a freeze on new non-humanitarian grants and loans, after Pakistan and India conducted tit-for-tat nuclear tests in 1998, which sharply raised the stakes in their 53-year-old row over Kashmir, a divided Himalayan territory claimed by both countries.

Reports in Japan have said Mori will partially lift the sanctions but Japanese officials here have said normal economic relations cannot resume until Pakistan and India sign CTBT.

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