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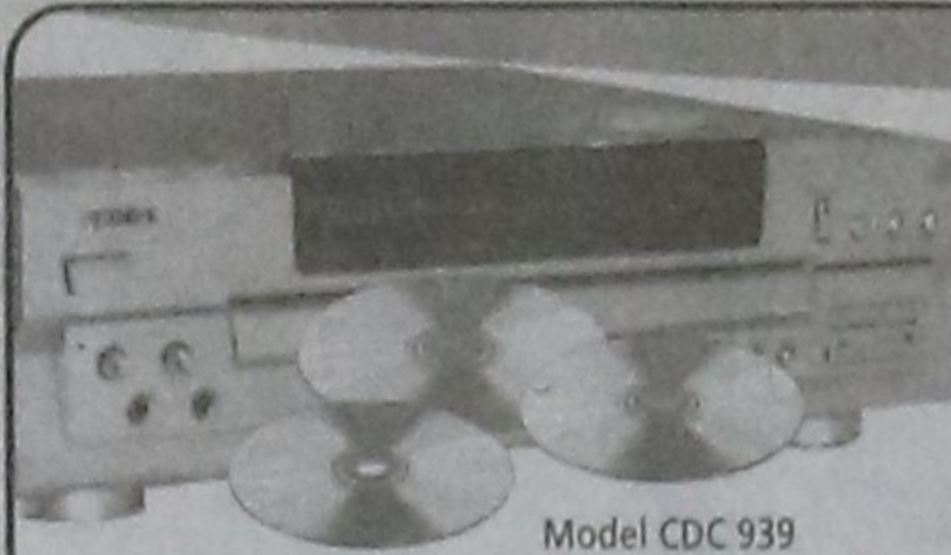
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Declaration of Strategic Partnership signed

Delhi, Moscow won't join any military or political blocs

NEW DELHI, Oct 3: Indian and Russian leaders signed a declaration today pledging not to join any military or political blocs and to avoid treaties or agreements that would infringe on each other's national security interests, reports AP.

The "Declaration of Strategic Partnership," signed by Russian President Vladimir Putin and India's Prime Minister Atal Behari Vajpayee, moves relations between the two countries even closer than the "friendship and cooperation" of Soviet times.

"Today's meeting was extremely important and brought exceptional results," Putin said at a joint news conference. "The talks have shown that the long-term national and geopolitical interests of Russia and India coincide."

Since relations between India and the United States had warmed up after the Cold War, analysts said Russia may have feared its longtime South Asian friend was tilting toward Washington. Moscow is already upset about the expansion of NATO to

its borders in Europe and wants to head off any alliances to the south.

The terms of the declaration, far more specific and binding than any of the statements about future relations made between Vajpayee and US President Bill Clinton last month, show that the Indian-Russian ties developed 50 years ago have not loosened.

Putin called the document "the foundation of our relations."

The declaration, signed at the outset of Putin's three-day visit to India, pledges the two countries to avoid armed conflict directed at one another.

But it goes further, ensuring that neither country will join any alliance or association, or sign any understanding that infringes on the other's territorial integrity or sovereignty.

That guarantee could help India in its dispute with Pakistan and China over borders. The agreement appears to commit Russia to India's side, a reiteration of the stand taken in 1955 by Soviet leader Nikita Khrushchev, who declared that all of Jammu

and Kashmir are an integral part of India.

Pakistan, which has fought two wars with India over Jammu and Kashmir, also claims the region in its entirety and a UN declaration calls for a referendum in the region.

Putin has been said to be contemplating a visit to Pakistan, reversing decades of Soviet policy. However, Russian Foreign Minister Igor Ivanov, traveling with him, told reporters the visit has not been planned yet.

This strategic partnership between the sides is not directed against any other state or group of states and does not seek to create a military-political alliance," the declaration said.

In the agreement, Putin and Vajpayee also promise that their countries would inform each other of planned foreign policy initiatives in the international arena and hold regular political and foreign office consultations.

Putin said, "The traditional partnership between India and Russia has been tested by time and it is the most important

stabilizing factor, not only for the Asian region, but for the whole world."

The declaration, signed in Hyderabad House, a former mansion of one of India's princes, also commits India and Russia to close cooperation at the United Nations and to working together for reduction, and eventual elimination of nuclear weapons, and nuclear nonproliferation.

The latter appears to be a concession by India, whose government has repeatedly said it supports global elimination of nuclear weapons, but opposes the Nuclear Nonproliferation Treaty that limits them to the United States, Russia, France, China and Britain.

Reuter adds: Putin today called for concrete efforts to restart peace talks between India and Pakistan and defuse tension in the region.

There was no immediate reaction to the comment from New Delhi, which has traditionally balked at third party intervention in its difficult relations with Islamabad.

Hasina urges Saudi govt to take more manpower from Bangladesh

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina yesterday urged the Saudi Government to take more manpower from Bangladesh, reports UNB.

"Our workers are hard working and sincere. Your government can take more labourers from our country," she said when newly appointed Saudi Ambassador in Dhaka Abdullah Bin Mohamed Al-Obeid Al-Namla called on her at the Secretariat.

Hasina said the government, which is trying to expand its labour market, has sent a team to survey the labour market in Middle-East countries, including Saudi Arabia.

She said her government is also striving to expand export of other country products, including processed food and agricultural products.

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INSTANT IMPACT: India's young left-arm fast bowler Zaheer Khan, who took three wickets on his debut, unsuccessfully appealing against Kenya's top batsman Ravindu Shah during the opening match of the ICC Knock Out tournament at the Nairobi Gymkhana ground yesterday. — AFP photo

JCD activist beaten to death in Sirajganj

From Our Correspondent
 SIRAJGANJ, Oct 3: A JCD activist was beaten to death in front of his residence at village Dakatipara under Sadar upazila of the district at 6.30 pm today.

The dead was identified as Jahangir, 24, son of Abu Zafar Mollah and a student of Karipur RIM Degree College, police said.

A gang of armed miscreants numbering ten led by opponent Jel Hossain stabbed and beat him mercilessly.

He died on the spot and four others who tried to save him were also beaten by the miscreants.

Local people said, the incident was a sequel to yesterday's clash between two groups one led by Jahangir and other led by Jel Hossain. Ten people were injured during the clash.

A case was lodged with Sirajganj Sadar thana.

Fans break into gunfight at football match

A frenzied brawl between football fans supporting two teams erupted into a gunfight at the west gallery of Bangabandhu National Stadium last night, reports UNB.

A dozen people including some hawkers were injured.

The soccer violence ensued as the supporters of Arambagh and Rahmatganj sporting clubs shouted and provoked each other while cheering their teams to win the match.

Hundreds of spectators at the gallery panicked on hearing sudden gunshots amid the melee, an eyewitness said.

The rival fans chased each other inside the gallery and at one stage police swooped wielding batons and clubbed the unruly fans.

Police brought the situation under control after about three minutes.

Rahmatganj won the match 3-1 a tiebreaker.

Fire from exploding transformer burns 3 trucks in city

By Staff Correspondent

Fire from an exploding overhead transformer swept down on three trucks loaded with imitation bangles and drums of chemicals, completely destroying two and partially damaging the other at Armanitola in the city.

One of the trucks escaped with partial damage when its driver managed to drive it away from the inferno.

The fire also partially gutted a nearby warehouse. The highly inflammable imitation bangles and the chemicals kept burning for about two hours spreading toxic fumes in the congested area of the old town under Kotwali thana.

Fire fighters said the fire started at around 6 a.m. and continued till 7-45 a.m. before they could bring the blaze under control with the help of five fire brigade vehicles.

Fire fighters were yet to estimate the extent of damage till writing this report.

2 suffer burn injuries as dacoits hurl crackers

By Staff Correspondent

Two inmates of a house and a pedestrian suffered burn injuries when a gang of dacoits hurled crackers at them at Sheikh Shaheb bazar at Lalbagh in the city yesterday evening, hospital sources said.

The injured were Salman, 20, Sujon, 12, inmates of a residence and Tajul Islam, a pedestrian.

The incident took place when the gang of six entered a tin-shed house at Sheikh Shaheb bazar at about 7:15 pm.

Sensing the presence of the dacoits, the inmates of the house cried out for help. Responding, the local people came and chased the gang along with the pedestrians.

The miscreants tried to escape from the area by hurling crackers in which the three were injured. The wounded were rushed to Dhaka Medical College Hospital.

However, Lalbagh police said that they were not informed about any such incidents.

In another incident, a housewife sustained bullet wounds when a gang of dacoits opened fire as she cried out for help at Namapara of Mothertek at about 10 pm on Monday.

The dacoits entered the house of one Amir Uddin and started looting valuables, police and hospital sources said.

Moti Begum, wife of Amir, cried for help but as soon as she raised her voice, the gang shot at her.

They then took away 15 tolas of gold ornaments, Tk 25,000 in cash, and other valuables worth about Tk 1.5 lakh.

Critically injured Moti Begum was sent to the DMCH. A case was filed with Khilgaon police station.

US co officials blast Dhaka for failing to pay gas bills

By Staff Correspondent

Officials of US oil companies yesterday bitterly criticised Bangladesh authorities for what they called not paying the bills for the gas they supply and also for not allowing export of gas.

The visiting US energy official, Calvin Humphrey, assured the US companies that he would raise the issues at meetings with Bangladesh officials.

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Humphrey, Principal Deputy Assistant Secretary for International Affairs in the US Department of Energy, addressed a breakfast meeting sponsored by

American Chamber of Commerce in Bangladesh (AmCham). It was attended by officials of US oil companies.

"There is absolutely no excuse for companies not being paid for the services they provide or the natural gas they deliver. Contracts must be honoured. I am aware of the fact that some US firms are not being paid and I can assure you that this is an issue that I am pursuing here in Dhaka, and will continue to be an advocate of this until sanctity of contracts become the status quo in Bangladesh business practice,"

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Sheets of water all around. A family on rafts in search of a high land in Moheshpur upazila in Jhenidah district yesterday. — Star photo by Delwar Kabir

600000 high-tech workers to get US visas in next 3 yrs

WASHINGTON, Oct 3: The US Senate passed election-year legislation today to provide 600,000 new visas over the next three years for overseas workers sought by the burgeoning high-tech industry, reports AP.

"There is overwhelming unanimity that we must act in this fashion if we are to keep our economy strong," said Sen. Spencer Abraham.

The 96-1 vote, while expected, followed weeks of partisan wrangling over efforts by Democrats to also allow more illegal immigrants and political refugees to remain in the United States.

The majority of high-tech workers who take advantage of these visas come from India and China.

"The short-term problem is how to fill the key positions immediately so that we don't lose opportunities to foreign competitors or so that we don't force American businesses to move offshore to where skilled workers might live," Abraham said.

Sen. Orrin Hatch, a Republican, said Democrats "have tried to make this into a political brouhaha, which it didn't deserve."

But Sen. Harry Reid, a Democrat who supported the visa bill, expressed disappointment that it

lacked measures to benefit other immigrants. "I think the (Republican) majority made a terrible mistake in that regard," he said.

The Senate bill would allow the Immigration and Naturalization Service to issue up to 200,000 six-year temporary visas annually for the next three years to skilled foreign workers.

Under present law, the government issued 115,000 H-1B visas during the fiscal year that ended Saturday. With no new legislation the ceiling would fall to 107,500 this year and to 65,000 next year.

An alternate House bill, vehemently opposed by computer software companies, would lift the ceiling entirely on the six-year visas but condition them to employers' paying the immigrants at least \$40,000 a year and not using them to replace Americans on their payrolls. It was approved by the House Judiciary Committee.

Technology companies contend that 300,000 jobs are going unfilled for lack of qualified workers; labor unions argue the companies want more immigrants to put downward pressure on the wages of Americans holding the same jobs.

Despite bipartisan support for

letting high-tech companies major campaign contributors to both parties in this election hire more immigrants, House Republicans have disagreed among themselves on how to do it.

The bill approved by the Judiciary Committee would require companies using the visas to increase the median pay of their US workers in addition to establishing job projections for them.

50 houses torched, by miscreants in Satkhira

From Our Correspondent
 SATKHIRA, Oct 3: About 50 makeshift houses were torched at Kaliganj-Lebukhali under Baniapara thana here Monday by miscreants, allegedly led by OC of a local police station.

More than 60 people including women and children were hurt during the incident. The miscreants also hurled hand made bombs at the villagers.

Villagers, who tried to resist, suffered serious burn while about 350 families living in the makeshift houses on the Khas land fled fearing attack.

The motive behind the attack was to grab the khas land for shrimp culture, sources said.

Number of voters go up by 24pc

By Staff Correspondent

The number of voters in the country has increased by more than 24 per cent compared to that before the last general elections.

In Bhola district, the increase is more than 50 per cent.

Election Commission (EC) sources said the rise in number of voters was due to a "well planned and well organised" door-to-door drive to register voters which continued from May 15 to June 24.

As per the draft voter list, there are now 7,46,75,749 voters

in the country. In 1995, there were 6,01,41,877 voters.

An EC official said that in 1997, population of the country was 12.43 crore. And as per the 1991 population census, there should be 7,41,82,240 voters -- people aged 18 years and above -- in the country now.

In Bhola, the number of voters has risen from 7,35,84 to 10,60,670. The sharp rise prompted the EC to investigate the matter.

A team of EC officials who

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One held in Ctg on charge of killing his Kuwaiti employer

A Bangladesh national who allegedly killed his employer in Kuwait a year ago was arrested from Mirsharai in Chittagong yesterday, police sources said, reports UNB.

They said Bilal Kabir Miah, 39, son of Sabit Miah of Ekhlashpur village in Begumganj upazila of Noakhali, worked in the house of Haji Ali Mousa Al-Mohamed in Kuwait.

He allegedly killed his master on October 10 last year, put the body in a refrigerator and fled to Bangladesh using a friend's passport.

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Sutrapur double murder case : 2 accused held

By Staff Correspondent

Police yesterday arrested two FIR listed criminals in connection with the double murder case in Sutrapur in the city.

A team of Ramna police accompanied by its officer-in-charge ABM Sultan Ahmed arrested Arif, 25 and Shah Alam, 26 from Segun Bagicha area at about 4 in the afternoon.

Police said that the two FIR listed youths were absconding since the murder, which took place inside the Rifle club at Sutrapur on September 16.

Tenagurs Moshin and Saem were called out from their residence and their mutilated bodies were recovered from the sewerage line on the following day.

Export Promotion Bureau
 Information Division
 122-124, Motijheel C/A
 Dhaka-1000

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Tender Notice

Sealed tenders are hereby invited by 3.00 PM on 10.10.2000 from renowned advertising agencies/designers to design and print the following publicity materials for the Dhaka International Trade Fair-2001. Tender schedule can be purchased from the common service section of Export Promotion Bureau during office hours till 9-10-2000 at Tk 400 (four hundred) only (non-refundable).

a) Folder : 5000 (five thousand) copies
 b) Poster : (1) Bangla-2000 (two thousand) copies
 (2) English-2000 (two thousand) copies
 c) Application Form : (1) For local participants-1500 (one thousand & five hundred) copies (Black & White)
 (2) For foreign participants-1000 copies (three colors as per specification)

2. Design lay-out of folder and posters along with sample of paper have to be submitted with the tender proposal.

3. Publication section of the Bureau may be contacted for more details.

Abdul Mazid Bhuyan
 Member-Secretary, Publicity Sub-Committee
 Dhaka International Trade Fair-2001 &
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FBCCI Election-2000

Notice for Projection Meeting

Projection Meeting will be held on 10th October 2000 at 10:00 A.M. in the Conference Centre (7th Floor) of FBCCI (60, Motijheel C/A, Dhaka) under the Chairmanship of the Chairman, FBCCI Election Board.

All voters of the FBCCI Election 2000-2002 are requested to attend the meeting.

Secretary
 Election Board, FBCCI

Editor: Mahfuz Anam

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