

Border tense as Myanmar continues to mass troops

Nasaka refuses to sign joint statement

By Diplomatic Correspondent

A near conflict situation is prevailing on the banks of the Naf river following massing of around 20,000 regular troops by Bangladesh's south-eastern neighbour Myanmar despite a Flag Meeting between commanders of border forces of the two countries on Saturday.

Detailed reports of the meeting between BDR and Nasaka received in Dhaka yesterday said the Myanmar side displayed a 'bellicose attitude' and refused to sign its proceedings.

The Nasaka commander at the meeting held at Maungdaw in Myanmar said they wanted to defuse border tension but would repair the embankment along the Naf constructed by them and

part of which was damaged.

But BDR Commander Lt Col Rafiqur Rahman Bhuiyan, who led an 11 member Bangladesh team, categorically told the Myanmar side they would not allow further construction or repair of the embankment, the reports said.

He pointed out that the embankment was constructed in flagrant violation of the border treaty between the two countries.

According to sources, the legal and just stand of Bangladesh apparently was not liked by the Myanmar side and their Commander U Kyaw Sanhla along with his team abruptly left the meeting without signing its proceedings.

Besides, the proposal for formation of a Joint Survey Commission (JSC), which was earlier mooted by the Yangon authorities, could not at all be discussed at the Flag Meeting.

Diplomatic sources and security experts pointed out that only an early formation of the JSC could defuse the tension prevailing in the border area.

It was not known till yesterday when the JSC, agreed earlier by both the countries, would be formed and when it would visit the areas adjoining the Naf river.

Foreign Ministry sources however indicated that the JSC will be formed at the 'local command level' involving border

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German, French envoys link fair polls with donor support

By M Anwarul Haq

Ambassadors of two major European powers have linked the country's future as a democracy with impartial and violence-free next general elections.

Uwe Schramm, the German emissary to Bangladesh, observed that free and fair election is a must to strengthen her democratic institutions and ensure continued support and assistance from the international community, especially her partners in progress.

Michel Lummaux, the French ambassador to Bangladesh, echoed similar sentiments and said that the results in the 2001 polls should be acceptable to all.

The two diplomats recently talked to a select group of reporters on completion of a two-day field trip to some development projects on the bank of the river Jamuna at Bahadurabad Ghat and at Tangail.

Both spent a whole day inspecting the riverbank protection and river training pilot programme for the Jamuna, now being implemented at a cost of 70 million Deutsche marks. This is the first Franco-German

project. Germany has provided 60 per cent of assistance for the project, with France bearing the rest.

"The river project is a reflection of our commitment to Bangladesh's development and also of the growing unity among European Union nations," said Schramm who is held in high esteem in the western diplomatic community.

The seasoned diplomat, who took over as the German ambassador nearly three years back, observed that the country is doing reasonably well despite a host of problems.

Schramm and Lummaux also visited the Tangail Infrastructure Development Programme (TIDP); a vocational training centre for rural youth run by the Bangla-German Sampreeti; a waste recycling handmade paper plant conducted by Upama; and the Karotia Growth Centre, the biggest wholesale market in the district. These projects have been completed on German assistance.

The French ambassador was pleased to see the projects along

with the German diplomat and said his country may undertake more joint or independent schemes in future.

Germany provided assistance worth nearly 63 million Deutsche marks last year, up from 50 million Deutsche marks in 1999, revealed Schramm.

However, he cautioned, development aid from his country would shrink in future.

He said that the flow and volume of aid would be determined by five factors including human rights, market economy, participatory governance and rule of law.

Schramm and Lummaux said that both their countries were concerned with the manner elections are conducted in the country.

"All sides must make serious efforts to hold the elections in a peaceful and fair manner," the German envoy said.

He said a need assessment team from the European Union would be visiting the country by

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Army explosive experts (left) run a detector to find splinters from Saturday's explosion at the Paltan Maidan, which left four people killed and at least 50 injured, while a curious crowd looks on from the edge of the cordoned-off area yesterday.

-- Star photo

Bodies of 5 out of 6 victims handed over to relatives

By Staff Correspondent

The bodies of five out of the six victims of Saturday's bomb blasts were handed over to their relatives and friends at the Dhaka Medical College Hospital yesterday.

Four people were killed and at least 50 were injured in a powerful bomb blast at a rally of the Communist Party of Bangladesh (CPB) at Paltan Maidan in the city on Saturday afternoon.

Two others were killed 30 minutes later when another bomb exploded near the Awami League office at Bangabandhu Avenue in the city.

The body of Mohammad Abdus Sabur, 30, son of Mafizuddin, was received by his brother-in-law Salauddin and taken to the deceased's native village in Kurigram.

A clothes vendor in Gulistan for the last eight years, Sabur was returning from Baitul Mokarram Mosque after Asr prayers when the bomb explosion killed him.

An active Awami League supporter, Sabur is survived by a

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11-party announces series of protest programmes

By Staff Correspondent

The left-leaning Eleven-Party Alliance yesterday announced a series of programmes protesting the killings at a rally of the Communist Party of Bangladesh (CPB) in the city on Saturday.

The programmes include a 'mass mourning procession' from the Central Shaheed Minar on January 23, demonstration at Paltan Maidan on January 26, torch procession in different parts of the country on January 30 and a dawn-to-dusk countrywide hartal on February 1.

Saifuddin Ahmed Manik, a leader of Gono Forum, a component of the alliance, declared the programmes at a post-hartal rally of the alliance at the city's Muktangan.

A brief declaration was announced at the rally, which said they would go for a socialist revolution to 'free the country from the clutches of plunderers of national wealth'.

The alliance called a half-day hartal in the city yesterday protesting the bomb attack on the rally at Paltan Maidan in which four persons were killed and about 50 injured.

Addressing the rally, 11-party leaders did not blame any quarter for the bomb explosion but bitterly criticised police for playing the role of 'silent spectators' after the massacre. They claimed that seven persons were killed in the incident.

Participants at yesterday's rally looked scared after Saturday's incident. But workers of component parties of the alliance kept a watchful eye and maintained discipline in and around the Muktangan.

CPB President Manjurul Ahsan Khan said, "If the government fails to protect peoples' life, it

should admit the failure. We will take up arms to protect ourselves.

"CPB is not a party in papers only. We're capable of searching out the culprits (attackers). We're already in the process of collecting information on Saturday's incident".

He said the nation's wealth is being plundered, terrorism is going unabated and their godfathers are moving freely in the society. Only a socialist revolution is the remedy to all these.

Khan said seven Communist Party workers were killed by Muslim League men in Rajshahi in 1950. Eventually, Muslim League vanished.

Workers Party leader Rashed Khan Menon blamed the government and the Home Minister for doing 'mockery' in the name of investigation. "What are the results of investigations into the killings at Udichi function and the murder of Kazi Aref and journalist Shamsur Rahman? There has been no trial."

Sramik Krishak Samajbadi Dal leader Nirmal Sen criticised both the Prime Minister and the Home Minister for the government's failure to nab "godfathers" of terrorists. "How could you (Hasina and Nasim) speak of investigation when you failed to nab godfathers of terrorists in Narayanganj, Barisal, Laksmipur and other places. What investigation will you carry out?"

AFM Mahbubul Haq of BSD (Mahbub), Ahmedul Kabir of Ganotantri Party, Khalequzzaman of BSD (Khaleq), Iqbal Majumdar of Ganotantrik Mazdur Party, Alhaj Abdus Samad of Gano Azadi League,

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Bomb victims at DMCH have to buy drugs

By Staff Correspondent

Almost all of those under treatment at Dhaka Medical College Hospital (DMCH) due to injuries in bomb explosion at the CPB rally in the city on Saturday have to buy life saving drugs and various medical accessories.

Thirteen of the injured were seen at the Emergency Ward - 32 at 7 pm yesterday, four were shifted from the ward and three were said to in critical condition in the post-operative room.

The patients and their attendants as well as CPB leaders alleged that they had to collect life saving drugs on their own.

Garments Factory worker Moshir Rahman, one of the bomb victims who lost both his eye, was lying unconscious in his bed 10 in the ward.

His attendant Mostafizur Rahman said, "I have been asked to collect Ciprox tablet, eye drops,

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Benapole-Petrapole goods train service resumes

BENAPOLE (Jessore), Jan 21: Goods train service between Bangladesh and India through Benapole-Petrapole route resumed today (Saturday), reports UNB.

Communications Minister Anwar Hossain and his Indian counterpart Mamata Banerjee formally inaugurated the train service at 3 pm at Petrapole, India.

Earlier, Mamata Banerjee received the Bangladesh Minister at Benapole Checkpost at 1 pm and took him and his entourage in a colourful motorcade to the inauguration venue on the premises of Haridaspur School.

Bahaddarhat killings

Charges to be framed against accused Feb 26

CHITTAGONG, Jan 21: The CMM's Court here today fixed February 26 for framing charges against 22 Shibir activists accused in the Bahaddarhat Killing Case, reports UNB.

ASP (CID) Abdul Kader Khan on Thursday submitted the charge-sheet against the Shibir activists, including its city unit president ATM Mesbaul Karim and general secretary Saiful Islam.

Eight people including six BCL leaders were shot dead in broad day light at Bahaddarhat allegedly by the Shibir cadres on July 12, 2000.

More bodies condemn bomb attack

By Staff Correspondent

Different political and socio-cultural organisations yesterday protested and condemned the Saturday's bomb attack on the CPB rally at Paltan Maidan and demanded immediate arrest and exemplary punishment of the killers.

Expressing grave concern over the bomb attack that left four people killed and over 50 injured, the organisations demanded of the government to ensure security of the commonman and their property.

Some 36 Senate members of the Dhaka University expressed their concern and blamed communal and anti-liberation forces for the incident. They urged the government to take stern action against the persons responsible.

Protesting the bomb attack, Ekattorer Ghatok Dalal Nirmul Committee brought out a procession in the city yesterday. Later, at a rally at Paltan crossing, it called upon the pro-liberation forces to be united to resist the anti-liberation and evil forces.

Supreme Court Bar Association President Barrister Mainul Hossain and Secretary Shahidul Karim in a joint statement expressed grave concern over the incident and demanded exemplary punishment to the killers.

Bangladesh Ganatantrik Ainjibi Samity condemned the attack unleashed by the anti-liberation and anti-progressive forces. A meeting of the samity chaired by its president Barrister

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Ershad applies for release on parole

By Special Correspondent

Former President HM Ershad, now in Dhaka Central Jail in connection with Janata Tower Case, has applied for release on parole for treatment.

In a petition filed before the Appellate Division of the Supreme Court yesterday through his counsel, the jailed former President said he has heart problems and other complications.

The court is likely to pass its order on his petition tomorrow (Tuesday).

The petition was submitted before the court by his counsel Barrister Rafiqul Huq.



Newly inducted president of the Philippines Gloria Macapagal Arroyo (R) receives a kiss from her predecessor Corazon Aquino prior to a mass at the EDSA Shrine in Manila yesterday.

-- AFP photo

Allowance for teachers with third division Govt to consider it if teachers' assocs sign another accord, JS told

Parliament yesterday heard a lively debate on the restriction of government allowances for teachers of non-government schools and colleges who got third division in their academic career, reports UNB.

During the question-answer time, several treasury bench members questioned the logic behind the government order and wanted to know why the teachers, who were employed under the existing rule and have been serving for several years, would not be included in the Monthly Payment Order (MPO).

Responding to a volley of supplementary queries from Ramesh Chandra Sen, Mustafizur Rahman, Abdul Latif Mirza, Abdul Latif Siddiqui and Sharif Khasruzzaman, Education Minister ASHK Sadique said the decision was taken following an agreement between the

school and college teachers' associations and the government on August 24 last year.

He said the teachers' associations made the proposal and also the draft of the agreement envisaging their proposal. Under the circumstances, the government cannot scrap the agreement unilaterally.

The Education Minister further told the House that such provision relating to the third division had been in force for a long time, but it was suspended for some time following a government notification.

The government decision would not, however, affect those teachers who are already included in the MPO list, he said.

Ruling party MPs argued that the teachers were appointed by the managing committees under existing rules so they should not be deprived of being listed in

MPO and of government benefits. This decision would be disastrous for the families of thousands of teachers, they said.

Some MPs questioned the legitimacy of teachers' associations' signing the agreement sitting in a cosy atmosphere in the capital without considering the interest of teachers in rural areas.

One MP said many people having third division in academic career became eminent scholars later in their life. Abdul Latif Siddiqui said Mohit Lal Majumdar, who got third division, became a renowned teacher of Bengali Department in the Dhaka University.

Another MP said if government officers having third class

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KU closed sine die

From Staff Correspondent

KHULNA, Jan 21: Khulna University was closed sine die today following untoward incidents on the campus.

The decision was taken at an emergency meeting of the Academic Council of the university. The vice chancellor presided over the meeting.

Resident students, both male and female, were asked to vacate their halls by 5 pm today.

Earlier, some unruly students attacked the administrative building and female students' hall at noon today.

The vice chancellor, treasurer, deans and heads of all departments, provosts and officials were heckled by the agitating students. They were pressing to solve the seat crisis in the lone female residential hall.

A six-member committee was formed to probe the incident. The probe body headed by Prof Dr Md Abdur Rahman of the FWT discipline has been asked to submit its report as soon as possible.

Riot police have been deployed in and around the university.

Court incidents Only CJ can order probe: Nazmul Huda

By Special Correspondent

Barrister Nazmul Huda, leader of the Sarbodalaiya Ainjibi Parishad (All-party Council of Lawyers) yesterday said that only the Chief Justice could order an investigation into the January 11 incidents in the court.

"There can be investigation by a Judge, not by police, because the Chief Justice is the custodian of the Supreme Court. Without his order, police can not enter its premises", he said deploring the unilateral initiative by police to investigate a case under PSA filed against him and 15 other lawyers.

He said there can not be any such initiative by police under political pressure. Only the Chief Justice can initiate an investigation, which he opined, should be done by a Judge.

Speaking at a meeting of the Parishad held at the South Hall of the Supreme Court Bar Association, Huda also refuted the Prime Minister's allegations that they had kicked on the door of the Chief Justice and created anar

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Hartal passes off peacefully

By Staff Correspondent

The eight-hour hartal called by the left-leaning 11-party alliance in the capital yesterday passed off peacefully, partially disrupting life.

The hartal was called protesting the bomb attack on a rally of the Communist Party of Bangladesh (CPB) at Paltan Maidan in the city on Saturday in which four persons were killed and about 50 injured.

The rally was held to protest government's alleged failure in different sectors and press its various demands.

Main opposition party BNP extended its supports to the hartal.

BNP and ruling Awami League brought out separate processions blaming each other for the attack.

The BNP procession led by its city unit president Sadeque Hossain Khoka MP and general secretary Abdus Salam was intercepted by police when it was proceeding towards Paltan Crossing after parading Nayapaltan and Bijoynagar roads.

The Awami League procession, brought out from its central office and led by State Minister for

Shipping Mofazzel Hossain Chowdhury Maya, paraded roads in Paltan, Topkhana and Jatiya Press Club areas.

During the hartal, CPB, Workers Party, Jatiya Samajtantrik Dal, Bangladesh Samajtantrik Dal, Gano Forum, Ganotantrik Biplobi Jote, Chhatra Union, Juba Union, Samajtantrik Chhatra Front, JSD-backed Chhatra League and Khetmajur Samity brought out processions during the hartal, but most of those were confined in Paltan area.

During processions, activists of the parties chanted various slogans demanding resignation of the Home Minister and blamed the government, fundamentalist forces and 'conspirators' at home and abroad for the bomb attack.

Police picked up two activists from Dhanmondi, three from Uttara, two from Ramna, two from Motijheel and seven from Shampur areas on charge of picketing. All were released later, police and CPB sources said.

Activists of different leftist parties were active on streets

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