

D-8 Summit leaders declare war on poverty Mubarak new chairman

UNB, Cairo

The 3rd Summit of D-8 grouping was held in Cairo yesterday with its leaders declaring war on poverty while deciding to enhance trade and economic cooperation.

Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak, who took over the reins of the block for next two years, made a call for fighting out poverty as the leaders of seven other developing countries met with him to discuss working together to strengthen their economies.

"Poverty needs a new international agenda to overcome it," Mubarak said as he opened the summit of a bloc of countries that are predominantly Islamic known as the D-8, or developing eight.

"Although (poverty) is one of the oldest human phenomena, the developments of the past century, especially, those of the last decades, have brought to it such levels that are hardly acceptable politically, economically and even morally," he said.

The Egyptian leader offered no new anti-poverty proposals, saying the remedies have been discussed again and again at international meetings. He cited last year's UN Millennium Summit, at which world

leaders pledged to reduce poverty by half by the year 2015.

"Unless these plans yield tangible results, then the credibility of the world community will lie in jeopardy," Mubarak told the meet.

Bangladeshi Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina, who handed over chairmanship of the D-8 to Mubarak, said poverty along with illiteracy, disease, crime and drugs were holding nations like hers back while rich nations benefited from new technologies and an increasingly globalised economy.

"Though war and armed conflicts have ended in many parts of the world, the fight against poverty, hunger, malnutrition and disease is still continuing," Hasina said. "As we face increasing marginalisation in the world economy, our ability to tackle these challenges is getting increasingly weaker."

The eight nations whose leaders gathered in Cairo are home to some 800 million people, or about 13 per cent of the world's population, but share among themselves only 3.5 per cent of international trade.

Iranian Foreign Minister Kamal Kharrazi blamed Israel for a lack of economic growth in the Middle East.

"The insecurity in the Middle East has had very negative effects

on our economy," Kharrazi told the meeting. "Not only the Palestinians, but other countries in this region have suffered from insecurity caused by the Israeli arms race."

Buying arms in the Middle East is an impediment to economic growth and therefore in general we are suffering with the insecurity in the Middle East."

For their part, D-8 members plan to combat poverty and bolster their economies by supporting private businesses, according to a draft of the summit declaration.

The D-8 comprises Bangladesh, Egypt, Indonesia, Iran, Malaysia, Nigeria, Pakistan and Turkey. All but Iran and Malaysia sent their heads of state or government to the one-day Cairo meeting. Iran and Malaysia were represented by lower-ranking officials.

Malaysian Deputy Prime Minister Abdullah Ahmad Badawi took up Mubarak's theme during his summit speech.

"The best jihad for each Muslim to carry out is to work for the eradication of poverty and for the welfare and betterment of our Muslim societies," Badawi said.

Court order on FFs' council polls today

COURT CORRESPONDENT

The hearing of maintainability on the petition claiming the forthcoming election of Bangladesh Muktiyoddha Central Command Council-2001 illegal was completed through an altercation in the court between the two parties yesterday.

The Fourth Assistant Judge Abu Naser Mohammad Jahangir Alam fixed today for order on the matter whether it would be maintained or not.

Mohammad Amir Hossain Mollah, Commander of Mirpur Muktiyoddha Sangsad filed a civil suit with the Fourth Assistant Judge's Court Dhaka on February 22, claiming the forth coming election of Bangladesh Muktiyoddha Central Command Council 2001 to be held on February 27 illegal. The court fixed yesterday for hearing on the petition for its maintainability.

In the suit, 42 people have been made defendants including Prof Abdul Ahad Chowdhury, Chairman

of Bangladesh Muktiyoddha Central Command Council.

In the plaint the plaintiff said that the present committee announced a new committee violating the rules and orders of the constitution of the council. The committee announced a date for election of the council, to be held on February 27. A voter list was prepared on January 25 in which the plaintiff's name was excluded despite he fought against Pakistani occupation forces during War of Liberation under the Sector No-2.

Another petition seeking temporary injunction on the election was moved in the same court yesterday. The court fixed today for order on the issue.

Advocate Mohammad Anwar Hossain, Mizanoor Rahman alias Mamun and Sanjib Kumar Saha appeared for the plaintiff while GP Abdus Sabur, AGP Nuruzzaman Nani, Abdur Rahman Howlader and more than 50 lawyers appeared for the defendants.

Rupsha AL leader murder

FROM PAGE 12

He harboured the armed cadres to use them as his private security guards. But since last January he stopped payment to these armed cadres suspecting their dual role.

As a result, the armed cadres started keeping aloof from him and also threatened him not to poke his nose in affairs relating to upazila and parliamentary elections, said one of the witnesses of the murder.

Some leaders favouring Haroon in Awami League said that he had played vital role in the 'surrender drama' of the members of outlawed parties in Rupsha area.

arrested in connection with the murder. The BNP leaders were arrested by Rupsha thana police immediately after the murder without looking into contents of the FIR recorded at 3:30 pm on Saturday.

OC of Khulna thana expressed his happiness over the nature of complaint in which none has been named as accused. This is the true FIR which will help detect the real killers, he said.

Today's hartal

FROM PAGE 1

After a lengthy debate, the alliance leaders reached an understanding to relax the hartal by five hours, which was considered by most of the opposition leaders as a "face saving" decision.

Talking to the Daily Star yesterday, a senior BNP leader said that none in the past dared to defy Khaleda. He said the party is now fully under the grip of "undemocratic and anti-liberation elements".

He said BNP hardliners, JP and Jamaat have long wanted Khaleda's downfall and their plan has now entered the final stage.

His role in this matter angered the ring leaders of PBCP's Khulna-Jessore belt.

Haroon's wife Razia Sultana told this correspondent on Saturday night that she accused the members of PBCP of killing her husband. She felt disgusted receiving information about police being politically motivated in dealing with the case. She was taken back to learn that three BNP leaders were arrested in connection with the murder much earlier than the FIR was recorded.

Razia urged the police not to damage merit of the case by falsely implicating any-one in the case.

The IO of the case will interrogate two BNP leaders showing them

D-8 Declaration

FROM PAGE 1

countries to spare no efforts in supporting the global growth and refrain from projectionist tendencies to minimise the adverse repercussions of the slow-down.

The D-8 group leaders reviewed the global economic development and the state of their cooperation at the summit that took place in the backdrop of improving economic conditions among the member countries. "We still have to face significant economic challenges," they said.

The group advocated a dialogue among civilisations and expressed the belief that the United Nations General Assembly (UNGA) would declare the Year 2001 as the "Year of Dialogue among Civilizations" for greater and deeper understanding and strengthened sense of unity and solidarity among the states and peoples of the global community.

The D-8 summit identified the

problem of external debt as a major obstacle to development saying the debt repayment has become much more burdensome to low and middle income developing countries.

"We call on our development partners to take additional measures to reduce the debt burden without negatively affecting other concessional commitments," the Declaration stated.

The leaders also praised some endeavours by respective member states in trade-related areas like the signing of the Agreement on the Simplification of Visa Procedures for Businessmen of the D-8 countries.

The Declaration appreciated the role of Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina and her government in providing able and effective leadership during the period of the chairmanship of Bangladesh when the D-8 took a more concrete shape.



US Secretary of State Colin Powell (L) shakes hands with Palestinian leader Yasser Arafat before a meeting in Arafat's office in the West Bank town of Ramallah yesterday. Powell urged a halt to the deadly cycle of Israeli-Palestinian bloodshed and called on Israel to end its punishing blockade on the Palestinian people.

Diplomats against use of force

FROM PAGE 1

involve a citizen of our country, it is not proper for me to make any observation."

A senior official of the US embassy said, "We do not have the facts on the ground. Practical decisions have to be taken based on ground reality."

A spokesman of the British High Commission in Dhaka gave out his government's clear-cut position on the hostage issue. "So far as we are concerned, we do not want to see use of force. We want the situation to be resolved peacefully."

Asked whether the ransom should be paid to release the hostages, one of whom is a Briton, he said, "Britain's official position is that we do not negotiate where hostages are taken for ransom."

British High Commissioner in Bangladesh David Carter is out of station on a five-week leave and Stephen Turner is monitoring the

situation as charge d'affaires.

Finn Thilsted, the Danish ambassador to Bangladesh, did not, however, give out his government's position, neither on use of force nor on payment of ransom money.

He said that he was in "close contact" with the Bangladesh authorities.

"I have nothing to say," he said. "I am deeply involved."

Three Europeans working as consultants for the Roads and Highways Department Torben Mikkelsen and Nils Hulgard of Denmark and Tim Selby of Great Britain were kidnapped at gunpoint when they were supervising road construction at Betchhari in Naniarchar, 35 kilometres off Rangamati on February 16.

The large community of foreigners in the country, particularly members of the diplomatic circle, is following the hostage crisis with riveted attention.

However, the incident has not induced any sense of insecurity among them. Most foreigners in the country feel safe and secured. The situation here is comparable to that of other 'stable' developing countries.

A European diplomat said Bangladesh is generally a safe country. Although the law and order situation is sometimes bad, but foreigners have never been singled out as targets, he said.

"Abduction for ransom is frequent in many other countries," a western diplomat commented. "Involvement of foreigners in the case has drawn so much media attention."

Another western diplomat said, "A sort of comfort can be derived from the fact that even during so many hartals in Bangladesh foreigners have never been targeted."

Hartal passes off peacefully

FROM PAGE 12

anti-hartal procession was passing the area. Pro- and anti-hartal pickets clashed with each other but there had been no serious violence, witnesses said.

The injured are Abdul Aziz, 28, Salam, 25, Rafiq, 23, and an unidentified youth. Azim was admitted to Dhaka Medical College Hospital (DMCH) and the rest to Sir Salimullah Medical College Hospital.

Paltan area while ruling party MP Mokbul Hossain led another in Dhanmondi area.

Most markets, offices, shops, business establishments and educational institutions remained closed during the shutdown, as usual.

Some private and state-run vehicles were seen in some specific routes of the city while rickshaws plied like other days.

BNP brought out its last procession in the Bijoy Nagar area in the afternoon and held a rally at the Kakrail crossing.

Addressing the rally, BNP leaders condemned the government for failing to arrest ruling party MP HBM Iqbal and his associates who opened fire on a BNP procession during hartal on February 13, leaving three persons killed.

"The government is arresting only BNP men instead of AL leaders and armed goons who are killing people and unleashing a reign of terror in the capital," said BNP city unit Convenor Sadek Hossain Khoka, MP.

strongly condemned the ruling party for not arresting Iqbal and his men.

Among others, BNP leaders ZA Khan, Goyeshwar Chandra Roy, Major (rt'd) Hafiz Uddin (BB), Alamgir Kabir, MP, Joyal Abedin Farooq, MP, Nazimuddin Alam, MP and Ehsanul Haq Milan, MP also addressed the rally.

Our correspondents reported peaceful hartal in Chittagong and Brahmanbaria.

UNB reports from Narayanganj: Explosion of home-made bombs in different parts of the town and burning of KSHIPUR BNP office marked the first 12-hour of the 19-hour hartal yesterday.

Witnesses said a group of youngsters set fire to offices of BNP and its front organisations at KSHIPUR at 10 am. Furniture of the offices was also looted.

Explosion of bombs took place at rail gate N 2 and Deobogh area. Several gunshots were also heard at Deobogh. No harm to anyone was however, reported.

Local BNP leader Taimur Alam accused musclemen of Awami League MP Shamim Osman for all the misdeeds in an attempt to foil hartal. Denying the allegation, Shamim Osman said it was BNP who did it as people rejected the hartal.

Business centres and most shops kept their shutters down during the hartal. Motor vehicles were off the streets. Mills and factories however, operated normally.

Strong tremor

FROM PAGE 1

central Indonesia early yesterday, a day after the area was rattled by a large earthquake.

Two tremors were reported by the Meteorology and Geophysics Agency at 01:17 and 01:33 am local time, each measured at 5.6 and 6.0 magnitude.

"It's as if a truck is passing in front of your house," seismologist Ariyo Fauzi said.

A strong earthquake with a preliminary magnitude of 5.8 also jolted northeastern Japan yesterday morning, but there were no immediate reports of damage or injuries.

The quake struck at 6:54 am local time just below the seabed off the coast of Fukushima prefecture (state), the Meteorological Agency said.

The tremor shook buildings but no damage or injuries have been reported, said a local police spokesman on condition of anonymity. Fukushima is located 239 kilometers northeast of Tokyo.

Success of D-8 lies in enhanced trade

FROM PAGE 1

notably, higher than SAARC trading turnover.

About the problems faced by LDCs in the wake of globalisation, Hasina argued for duty-and quota-free access of their products to foreign markets.

"This is essential, if our export-led industrialisation programmes are to succeed," she said and asked for free flow of foreign capital, both official and private, which she thought requires priority attention.

Hasina also called for a meaningful relief for many of LDCs for whom debt burden has become unbearable. She told the function that the least developed countries had hoped that their needs would be considered meaningfully within the framework of WTO, but "so far, much of the commitments remain unfulfilled."

Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak, Pakistan Chief Executive General Pervez Musharraf, Turkish President Ahmed Necdet Sezer, Nigerian President Olusegun Obasanjo, Malaysian Deputy Prime Minister Abdullah Ahmad Badau and Iranian Foreign Minister Kamal Kharrazi made statements on behalf of their countries in the inaugural session.

Earlier, Prime Minister Hasina handed over the charge of D-8 (Developing Eight) to Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak with the hope that the grouping would emerge as a strong and vibrant forum under the new leadership to ensure a future free from want, fear and hunger for the posterity.

Addressing the inaugural session the Prime Minister said a truly globalised world has to be based on 'give-and-take' and a better understanding of mutuality of common interest.

"We in the developing world will open our market, remove barriers as we have been doing, but are the developed countries prepared to reciprocate?" she questioned.

The PM said, "We require finance that is available in the developed country markets, but can we access such funds without the prospect of burning our fingers in the process? We know that the growing digital divide will further marginalise most of the developing countries."

She asked if the developed countries were prepared to work

with the developing ones to bridge this gap for the common good. These are the common issues the developing countries will face in the next decade of globalisation, she said.

The Prime Minister called upon the developing countries to set common goals and common strategies and work together to maximise welfare in this millennium. "We want a win-win outcome of globalisation."

In the international arena, she said, the biggest challenge for the developing countries in this new decade is to build a truly globalised world, taking into account the interest of all parties concerned. "We must proceed in the matter with vision, compassion and commitment."

About the role of countries like Bangladesh in the process of globalisation she said the core issue for Bangladesh, particularly the LDCs, is to eliminate poverty.

About the trial of the killers of Bangladesh's founding father Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, who along with family members was killed on August 15, 1975, the Prime Minister said an open and fair trial convicted and sentenced 15 accused under the laws of the land in force.

The case is in the process of appeal and of the convicted killers only four are currently in Bangladesh, she informed the world leaders, saying the rest are seeking refuge and asylum abroad.

"In the interest of justice, morality and the rule of law, these criminals must not be allowed to seek refuge by crossing political boundaries," she said drawing attention of the D-8 leaders. "This is an aspect of globalisation we must not ignore."

About the cross-continent cooperation, Sheikh Hasina said Bangladesh's total commitment towards the objectives of the Developing Eight and participation in its activities are a manifestation of the policy of Bangladesh government to strengthen relations within regional groupings.

"We are part of other groupings, including SAARC, BIMSTEC, the Growth Quadrangle, all of which provide us opportunities for meaningful economic cooperation," she added.

KU students announce fresh programme

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Khulna

Over 500 students of Khulna University (KU) have renewed their pledge to continue their agitation for realisation of three-point demand to keep the campus free from session jam and politics.

The leaders of KU Students Action Committee (KUSAC) announced a series of agitation programmes on Saturday to press home their demands which include removal of Awami League vice president Abdur Razzak Sarder from the post of treasurer.

The programmes include forming human chain at Shib Bari crossing on Tuesday, sit-in in front of the press club on Wednesday and laying siege to the university on Thursday.

At a press conference held at the KU cafeteria, the KUSAC leaders alleged that female students of first year classes are not being allowed to enter into the dormitories. The girls are being threatened by the outsiders, they said.

The students have been boycotting their classes since January 18 in support of their demand.

They said the students feel insecure on the campus as armed goons have created a reign of terror there.

They alleged that a group of armed youths headed by treasurer's son again stormed into the campus on February 22 and assaulted some KUSAC leaders. They also insulted some girl students, the student leaders said.

The leaders said that none of the probe body has so far contacted students to know the problems. Rather, punishment was given to some students before probe body submitted its report to the Vice Chancellor, they added.

When contacted, the authorities denied the charges. The treasurer said, "I am not authorised to tell anything about what is happening here on the campus."

The Vice Chancellor could not be contacted for his comment on the latest situation of the campus which is gradually taking an alarming turn.

The three-point demand of the students includes withdrawal of punishment on students and accommodation for girl students of first year classes in the dormitories.

The government has appointed Kamrul Islam Siddiqi, district and sessions judge, as registrar of Bangladesh Supreme Court (SC), a SC press release said yesterday.

Prior to this appointment he was district and sessions judge of Sylhet, the release added.

Khaleda returns today

UNB, Dhaka

BNP Chairperson and Leader of the Opposition in Parliament Khaleda Zia returns home tonight from Singapore.

She left for Singapore Thursday night for medical checkup, according to a party press release.

Kamrul new SC registrar

BSS, Dhaka

The government has appointed Kamrul Islam Siddiqi, district and sessions judge, as registrar of Bangladesh Supreme Court (SC), a SC press release said yesterday.

Prior to this appointment he was district and sessions judge of Sylhet, the release added.

BCS viva voce timing

UNB, Dhaka

The viva voce of the 21st BCS examinations, scheduled for February 28 at 10 am, has been shifted to 2 pm the same day due to unavoidable circumstances, said an official handout.

BNP office ransacked

OUR CORRESPONDENT, N'ganj

The ruling party armed cadres ransacked the BNP office in KSHIPUR under Fatullah thana during hartal hours on Sunday.

A group of AL cadres attacked the BNP office in KSHIPUR at around 10 am. They ransacked the office and set the furniture ablaze.

No casualty was reported.

Storm lashes B'baria: 50 houses damaged

UNB, B'baria

Storm swept Arai and Pakshimul unions in Sarail upazila yesterday evening damaging some 50 dwelling houses.

The storm also uprooted a good number of trees and electric poles, witnesses said.

Abductors

FROM PAGE 1

Mikkelsen, Nils Hulgard of Denmark and Tim Selby of Great Britain on February 16 from Betchhari area of Naniarchar.

Highly placed sources said two of the British experts, David Douglas and Jon Crawford, went to Ramgati yesterday. David Ryan, the third expert, stayed back in Dhaka for coordination. They arrived in Dhaka on Saturday.

It could not be known immediately whether the three experts belong to the anti-terrorist unit of Scotland Yard or the Special Branch of British.

British officials said they do not belong to the Scotland Yard but would not say exactly which unit of police they come from.

Officials in Dhaka said that Britain had earlier offered to help Bangladesh authorities who are trying for a negotiated end to the hostage crisis.

Power disruption

FROM PAGE 12

the current power disruption to shutdown of a 'breaker' at the Ghorashal end of Ghorashal-Tongi 230 KV grid line. He hoped that the situation would improve by today.

Meanwhile, DESA is yet to replace or repair the burnt 132/33KV transformer breaker of Mirpur grid sub-station. This has been causing 12 to 18 MW loadshedding a day in the area.

Cargo handling at ZIA

FROM PAGE 1

ground handling charge has been fixed on the basis of size and capacity of an aircraft as per international rule.

The private operators are not allowed to use their own personnel or equipment for security reasons, they say.

"The international airport is a highly secured zone," said a senior Biman official. "Besides, private operators are our clients. We provide their services as we do for other airlines."

Another official said there would have to be changes in the government policy, should Biman decide to let air-cargo operators use their own logistics and personnel. However, he admitted that there are countries like Singapore and Hong Kong

Basu bids bye

FROM PAGE 1

belonged to the Congress, I learnt quite a lot from him. Many of them are no longer in this world. I pay my respects to them also."

He also made it very clear that he was against the felicitations showered yesterday. "I am against this simply because I had made politics my career. So what is there to felicitate me for? I have not done anything extraordinary," he concluded.

Immediately after his speech, Basu was presented with a silver salver, a shawl and a flower bouquet by the Speaker of the West Bengal Legislative Assembly Dr Hashim Abdul Halim. After that the former chief minister unveiled the portrait of Bimal Chandra Sinha, a member of the Bengal provincial council in the 1950s. Then he inaugurated a web site, which was followed by the adieu assembly. He walked ramrod straight to the white Ambassador car waiting for him.

The next assembly will resume after the state elections, but without the legendary Basu.

where private operators use their own staff and equipment.

However, private operators say they need these facilities to survive in the increasingly competitive market.

"We are new in this sector," said Hasmat Haider, a director of Best Aviation Ltd, said, "and unless we are given access to such facilities, we don't stand a chance against foreign carriers."

Best Aviation Ltd and Bismillah Airlines run cargo flights on Dhaka-Bangkok, Dhaka-Dubai, Dhaka-Muscat and Dhaka-Ostend international routes.

On the domestic route, they carry shrimp fry from Cox's Bazaar to Jessore. Best Aviation has also introduced cargo helicopter services.