

Devious payback deal

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cern over the condition of the workers.

He advised the manager to improve the food and living condition there, which the latter promised to carry out within a month.

But that improvement never happened.

Sidek Abul Hossain, a worker who had worked in the factory for nine months, revealed the cause of their riot to a local daily.

He claimed that they worked for ten to twelve hours a day for a monthly wage of 220 US dollars, and of the sum the management deducted 100 US dollars. He alleged that the company would give no receipt, neither would it assign any reason to the pay cut.

He also said that when they arrived in Brunei and went to work, they were shocked to learn that they were already in debt with the agent in Bangladesh since they had signed a document; that a portion of their salary would be set aside to pay the remainder of their debt.

They said when they were about to board the Brunei-bound plane in Dhaka, they were asked to sign a document but not allowed to read the content.

There are 20 workers in each hostel room in the factory, which have no beds to sleep on.

An anonymous sufferer also sent a letter to the Daily Star where he alleged that the manpower agent in Bangladesh took Tk. 1.60 lakh from each of the workers for the overseas jobs, and they were now forced to give almost half of their monthly wages to the agent.

Brunei's garment industry employs an estimated 20,000 workers, almost all of them foreign. The industry pours 100 million US dollars a year into the state coffers and is the second largest export earner of the country after the oil and gas sector.

Courageous!

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shaw after shopping. The two muggers intercepted their rickshaw at dagger point when it reached Asad Gate.

As the muggers tried to snatch valuables from them, Sufia caught one of them. But the other took away her gold chain weighing about five tolas and worth around Tk 30,000.

Local people and pedestrians rushed to the spot so that the mugger caught by Sufia could not escape. Later he was handed over to police.

A case was filed in this connection.

Iranian minister

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over of the US embassy, according to official biographical details.

He obtained a doctorate in civil engineering from Tehran University in 1987 he had a brief career in the Pasdaran, Iran's Revolutionary Guards.

He was corps commander in Azerbaijan before eventually moving up to deputy chief of logistics at the Pasdaran ministry.

Dadman then moved to state-owned industry, becoming the first managing director of the state fishing company before taking over the railways as managing director in 1997.

He was subsequently appointed deputy roads and transport minister before being given the top spot.

He was a member of the central council of the main reformist party, the Islamic Iran Participation Front, headed by the brother of President Mohammad Khatami, Mohammad-Reza.

Dadman was married with four children.

The Yak-40 is a small Soviet-designed three-engined airliner, commuter plane and business jet which entered service in 1968. It can carry around 30 passengers and has a cruising speed of around 500 kilometres an hour.

Foreigners on own soil

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any emergency including medical ones.

A seriously ill newly wed woman was refused entry into Bangladesh early this month by the BSF personnel manning the corridor after it was shut. The woman had to wait more than ten hours in extreme pain before the gate opened next morning.

A ten-bed hospital, built five years ago at a massive cost now remains as a showpiece. A boundary wall separates the complex. Inside thick dust and spider-net covers most of the walkways and rooms which have been kept under lock and key since 1996.

Three boxes, said to contain costly surgical equipment for operations are rusting in the open.

"The hospital itself is sick. For minor medication, we have to walk more than twenty-five kilometres not to speak of making own arrangements for staying back overnight in

Patgram, the nearest town inside Bangladesh", said Shamsul Huda Pradhan, Union Parishad Chairman of Dahgram-Angarpota.

About two years ago, a seriously injured patient needed hospitalisation after dark. Special permission had to be taken from New Delhi to open the gate of the corridor for taking the patient to Patgram.

For selling paddy or buying commodities one has to walk through the corridor to Patgram. Transport is beyond imagination. Even rickshaws are not available in Dahgram.

The local administration virtually has no control over the enclave. Any problem that arises falls on the deaf years of the Bangladesh Rifles (BDR).

There are 153 small enclaves in India claimed by Bangladesh. These enclaves are mostly located along Lalmonirhat, Kurigram and Panchagarh districts. Some are as small as one acre of land.

BNP to skip JS body meet

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tee in its last (21st) meeting demanded a discussion on the deteriorating law and order situation and the committee agreed to discuss it in its next meeting.

But instead of bringing up the issue in yesterday's agenda, the committee Chairman Saidul Haq of ruling Awami League, in the resolution of the 21st meeting, inserted the remark that "ill political efforts of opposition parties are solely responsible for the country's deteriorating law and order situation," Khandaker Delwar said.

He said when they requested the chairman to expunge this irrelevant and false remark from the resolution, the chairman instead made further objectionable and insulting remarks about the opposition parties, particularly BNP and its members in the committee.

He said BNP members in yesterday's meeting had said that the issue of recent border incidents at Padua and Roumari and Indian

troops' frequent attacks at the border should have to be discussed as an urgent issue.

"We also wanted to know why the issue of law and order situation was not put in the agenda," he said.

Besides, the Leader of the Opposition's inadequate security was also suggested for discussion as there were several attempts in the past to kill her, Khandaker said.

At this stage, the chairman shouted at them saying he would not expunge the remark from the resolution as the opposition is responsible for the deteriorating law and order situation because it explodes bombs, damages vehicles and sets fire to properties.

Ruling party MPs who attended the meeting kept silent the whole time, but agreed to discuss the recent border issue in the next meeting. The chairman however refused to discuss the border situation.

Sadeque Hossain Khoka said

members of the committee rarely get a chance not question the home minister as he is usually absent from the meeting.

Moreover, he said the parliamentary committee was constituted in such a way that the opposition members can not play their due role.

Opposition

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BNP leaders Dr Khandaker Mosharraf Hossain, M Shamsul Islam and Mirza Abbas, Jamaat leaders Ali Ahsan Mohammad M u j a h i d , M o h a m m a d Kamaruzzaman and ATM Azhraul Islam, Jatiya Party leaders Kazi Firoz Rashid, Shah Mohammad Abu Zafar, Mostafa Jamal Haider, ABM Golam Mostafa, Golam Sarwar Milon and Saifur Rahman and Islami Oikya Jote leaders Ahmed Abdul Qader and Abdur Rashid were present at the meeting.

Dhaka awaits Delhi's response

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While talking to newsmen at his office in the afternoon, Foreign Secretary Syed Muazzem Ali said: "We are yet to receive Indian response to our invitation to sit for talks here later this month."

He, however, said that he was very much hopeful that the meeting would take place.

Referring to the overall situation along the border, the top diplomat said, "The border is quiet and peaceful and there was no report of any untoward incident in the last 48 hours."

One of the reasons for the reduction in tension was the holding of regular meetings between the border guards of the two countries at different levels, he observed.

Meanwhile, a meeting of the two border forces at the deputy director general level was scheduled for June 2 in Rajshahi.

Replying to a question, the foreign secretary said the next

official level talks, the level of which is yet to be worked out, would dwell primarily on "border management" maintaining tranquillity along the border till all disputed issues are resolved.

"It is hoped that an action programme to achieve the goal could be chalked out at the meeting," he said.

Foreign office sources said adverse possession of land and enclaves are the settled issues with India, while demarcation of still undemarcated 6.5 kilometres of border is the one to be dealt with.

Besides, the maritime boundary between the two neighbours is another unresolved issue and needed attention to be addressed for the mutual benefit, the sources added.

Bangladesh earlier informed India that the May 22-25 talks offered by New Delhi did not suit it.

Bangladesh instead invited Delhi to come to Dhaka for the meeting later this month. Bangladesh,

however, made it clear that it would not press for the venue, sources said.

4 murdered

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thana on Wednesday.

Kala Jahangir shot Jewel from a taxi cab in front of the school at about 9:30 pm, sources said. Jahangir was involved in several murders including Azad, Murgi Milon and advocate Mondal. Murgi Milon was murdered on the court premises while Azad outside the court premises.

Jewel was sent to the Dhaka Medical College Hospital in a critical condition where the attending doctors declared him dead.

Jewel was involved in extortion and terrorists activities in the area, sources said.

Victim's elder brother Shahin Sikder filed a murder case with Mirpur thana but none was arrested till filing of this report.

Indo-Pak chamber leaders

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technology, textiles, agriculture and a large list of other sectors. There is a lot of scope between the two countries as we jointly form a market of over one billion people."

The joint trade forum was established during a historic bus trip undertaken by Indian Prime Minister Atal Behari Vajpayee to the Pakistani city Lahore in February 1999 with the aim of relieving the tense relations between the two countries.

Three months after Vajpayee's visit, India and Pakistan went to the brink of a fourth war when New Delhi launched a full-scale offensive to repulse Pakistani-backed forces in the Indian zone of Kashmir.

Indian industry officials said they would lobby hard to warm the trade ties, which have been in cold storage since the Kashmir conflict.

"There is tremendous potential for trade as

India's manufacturing sector makes almost everything while Pakistan's industrial base is weak," an Indian industry official said.

Both sides stand to gain as Pakistan relies on costly imports from other countries such as South Korea, Japan and the European Union.

Current bilateral trade stands at

just 7.0 billion rupees (150 million dollars).

Indian industry officials said they would lobby hard to remove a list of just 600 items which can be legally exported by India to Pakistan, and seek equal status with other exporting nations.

Industry officials said illegal trade was two to three times greater than official trade because of the restrictions.

Karachi Chamber of Commerce and Industry president Zubair Motiwalla said import restrictions on India were a major impediment to trade.

"Business and politics are two separate things," he said.

"There is not much scope for promotion of trade between the two countries in the presence of the mandatory list of 600 items which the Pakistani government allows to be imported from India."

Amit Mitra, secretary general of FICCI added that the Indian business team would try to revive the South Asian Association for Regional Co-operation (SAARC) regional forum.

"In a significant move towards second track diplomacy with Pakistan, the FICCI delegation on May 22 will participate in an executive committee meeting of SAARC

chambers of commerce and industry," Mitra said.

"We will follow this up with a round of consultations with SAARC ambassadors the next day," added Mitra. "We hope these people-to-people contacts revive the fortunes of SAARC which has an important trade dimension."

South Asia's top foreign bureaucrats are due to meet in Colombo next month in a bid to revive their seven-member regional grouping, which has been fractured by Indo-Pakistan bickering.

SAARC comprises India, Pakistan, Sri Lanka, Bangladesh, Nepal, the Maldives and Bhutan. In the past two years, there has been no high-level meeting of SAARC.

The summit due in Nepal in 1999 was scuppered by India's reluctance to go into a meeting with Pakistan's military ruler General Pervez Musharraf.

India and Pakistan have yet to resume diplomatic contacts following the Kashmir conflict.

This week, the Indian government said it was not averse to including Pakistan in a "graduated peace process" on Kashmir, the main cause of tension between the two countries since 1947.

Desh Ratna

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ing day (May 17, 1981), Hasina said she came back to be greeted by millions of people but her personal loss (killing of her father, mother and other family members) is irreparable.

She expressed her determination to achieve economic emancipation of the people and lead the nation to a position of dignity among nations of the world.

Earlier, prominent intellectuals and educationists including National Professor Kabir Chowdhury, Director General of Bangla Academy Dr Rafiqul Islam, Prof Momtazuddin Ahmed and Advocate Gaziul Haq briefly spoke at the reception. They recalled the historic day when Hasina returned home.

Dr Rafiqul Islam said that in his 40-year teaching life, he had come across thousands of students but found Sheikh Hasina the brightest among them.

Prof Kabir Chowdhury paid tribute to Hasina for her achievements in different fields of national life. He, however, urged her to combat the menace of terrorism and fundamentalism with a heavy hand.

Ministers and leaders of AL and its front organisations were present at the function. Student leaders greeted Hasina with crests and artists rendered music and presented dance.

Bahadur Bepari was in the choir and BCL General Secretary Ajoy Kar Khokon conducted the programme.

Many of the student leaders came from different parts of the country to attend the reception and to have a meeting with the Prime Minister at her official residence today. The meeting is considered important as the general election is nearing.

BNP lawmakers

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ing that if this was the way the committee conducted its meeting, it would be difficult for them to attend meetings in future. He demanded expunction of the sentence in the minutes of the previous meeting that blamed the opposition for the deterioration of law and order.

The meeting also decided to ask the authorities concerned to provide necessary support to the Coast Guards and the Fire Service and Civil Defence departments to speed up their activities.

Presided over by Sayeedul Haque, the meeting, among others, was attended by Whip Mostafa Rashidi Suja and Tazul Islam of Awami League, and Zinat Hossain of Jatiya Party. Home Secretary M M Reza and high officials of the departments concerned were also present.

NWD, ISD

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ing to the minutes counted.

The per-minute charge for local calls would tax the users of BTBT's fixed telephone, especially who browse the Internet and email.

When asked about the negative side of per minute charge for local calls, the source said digital metering would minimise the pressure on the BTBT network and also help make up for the BTBT's projected revenue loss due to lower rates for the ISD and NWD calls.

The proposals have been pending with the Ministry of Finance for approval since the issues are directly related with the country's revenue earnings.

It is worth mentioning that the BTBT charge more for NWD and ISD calls compared to neighbouring countries.

Kashmir

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north of Srinagar.

Local residents however said the man was first arrested and later died in police in custody, a charge denied by the police.

Elsewhere in Jammu, security forces shot dead 11 militants belonging to the Pakistan-based Islamic Lashkar-e-Toiba militant group, an Indian army spokesman said.

US embassy

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12:30 pm.

After the meeting, when Dan Mozena was asked what transpired between the two sides, he declined to make any comment and soon left the Election Commission Secretariat.

Sources concerned, however, said the US embassy officials had talked about monitoring of the eighth parliamentary election likely by the end of September or early October.

Donor countries, including the United States, are funding training of foreign and local observers for closely monitoring the polls.

Other issues, the sources added, that came up for exclusive discussions between the CEC and the US embassy officials were voter list and law-and-order situation.

Before the meeting, BNP Standing Committee member and former Vice President Barrister Moudud Ahmed held talks with the Chief Election Commissioner.

MK Anwar MP, another central BNP leader and a former minister, also had a parley with MA Syed later in the afternoon. The meeting lasted more than two hours from 3 pm.

Secretary of the EC M Anwar Hossain was present during CEC's meeting with the former top bureaucrat. Other senior officials joined the meeting with files and documents.

"I talked to the CEC about matters relating to my own constituency. That's all," MK Anwar told UNB when asked about the meeting. He,

however, would not elaborate.

Meanwhile, sources said that the Election Commission had decided to review the voter list now available at the district level as well as the entire process in determining the polling centres.

Field-level election officers have been asked to ensure union-wise display of the voter list and to keep sufficient number of forms for necessary correction of the list.

"If any correction is needed, it is to be done as per procedures," the latest Election Commission meeting directed the district election officers (DEO) asking them to send weekly report about the corrections.

The DEOs who will assemble in a meeting here on May 22 have also been asked to bring some reports about the rise of voters and other phenomenon in their respective districts.

"The EC has further decided to go for mass publicity through radio and television about the penalty for being false voters," an EC official said citing a decision taken by the full commission in their bid to ensure a fair and credible election.

With allegations coming that the ruling Awami League is interfering in the process of determining the polling centres, the commission will review the issue in its next meeting on May 24.

Date of NAM summit

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The recently held ministerial meet in Pretoria focussed on Palestine issue and discussions on the Dhaka Summit were held on the sidelines.

Bangladesh was not represented at the meeting by any minister. Dr Mohammad Selim, Chairman of the Parliamentary Standing Committee on foreign Affairs, represented Dhaka at the meeting.

The 13th NAM Summit earlier scheduled for September this year was deferred for six months. The government made the request for deferment at NAM Troika meetings in September last. Apparently it sought shifting of the date keeping in view the coming general elections when a caretaker government will be in place and also due to lack of necessary preparations for the Summit.

The mega meeting complex named Bangabandhu International Conference Centre being built with Chinese assistance is nearing completion. The Centre having huge seating and parking facilities and with modern acoustic system is likely to be completed by July or August this year. A high level Chinese dignitary is expected to visit Dhaka for its formal inaugura-

tion.

Going by the experience of the last NAM Summit in Durban, nearly 5000 delegates including dozens of heads of state or government, foreign ministers, diplomats, high officials and media persons are expected to come to Dhaka for the Summit.

A large number of flats and apartments are now under various stages of construction for accommodating them. These are being built at Banani, Gulshan, Manik Miah Avenue and Mirpur areas. According to sources in the Foreign Ministry and the Works Ministry, 'high quality' accommodation would be provided to around 4000 delegates.

Other infrastructural work include expansion of Zia International Airport's landing and parking facilities and expansion of Sheraton Hotel.

No budget for holding of the NAM Summit has yet been announced.

Former foreign secretary Shafi Sami has been appointed a special envoy to the Prime Minister to oversee preparations for the Summit.