

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.

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 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

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.

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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 Mujahid, Mosharraf Hossain, ATM Azraul Islam, Jatiya Party leaders Kazi Firoz Rashid, Shah Mohammad Abu Zafar, Mostafa Jamal Haider, ABM Golam Mostafa, Golam Sarwar Milon and Sajifur Rahman and Islami Oikya Jote leaders Ahmed Abdul Qader and Abdur Rashid were present at the meeting.

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 artistes rendered music and presented dance.

Bahadur Bepari was in the chair 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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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 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 Rashid, Suja and Tazul Islam of Awami League, and Zinat Hossain of Jatiya Party. Home Secretary 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 BTTB'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 BTTB network and also help make up for the BTTB'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 BTTB 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.

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.

Replies 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 tranquility 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 unmarked 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 need 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.

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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than 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 terrorist 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 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 Motwala 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-Pakistani 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.

BCI slapped with fine

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related issues also expressed ignorance about the matter. "I have been working in the factory since 1992 but I have never heard of tax evasion or seizure of documents from the factory."

When contacted, an official of Dowel Group who looks after VAT related issues however admitted the VAT evasion cases. He said they had first gone to the High Court to appeal against the orders. But the court advised them to go to the customs tribunal. "We then appealed to the tribunal."

Customs sources said a team of their officials led by a deputy com-

missioner paid a surprise visit to the factory in November 1997 and asked the factory officials to show documents regarding payment of VAT. But they declined to show any document in the absence of the factory manager. The customs team then seized some documents for checking.

The team examined those and detected massive irregularities regarding payment of VAT. It also found that the factory produced plastic sheet and resin by using artificial leather. There was a big gap between import of raw materials and supply of finished products by the company. It delivered huge quantities of goods without paying

VAT.

The customs authorities then filed three cases against the factory and served a number of notices on the factory authorities to appear for hearing.

In a number of hearings, representatives of the factory authorities said the cases were "false" and "fabricated."

Owner of the factory Deboki Nandan Kezriwal, who appeared in one hearing, claimed that there was no proof of VAT evasion and the cases were filed on the basis of assumption.

He demanded withdrawal of the cases.

people have got the right to vote freely to choose their representatives and government, and trial of the killers was held and people got the verdict.

"I've confidence in the people. I've worked for their welfare. And if I get the responsibility for another term, I will be able to establish a golden Bangladesh as dreamt by father of the nation," she said.

The prime minister said this is for the first time, parliament is going to complete its term and hoped that the democratic process would be institutionalised if one or two more elections could be held smoothly.

Referring to three prime objectives of her homecoming in 1981 after an exile of six years, Hasina said she returned to the country to establish democracy and voting rights, and for the trial of the killers of Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman.

After strenuous struggle and sacrifice of numerous Awami League leaders and workers, democracy has been restored.

Hasina said adversaries of Awami League united and used to

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 Motazuddin Ahmed and Advocate Gazul Haq briefly spoke at the reception. They recalled the historic day when Hasina returned home.

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Before the meeting, BNP Standing Committee member and former Vice President Barrister Moudud Ahmed held talks with the CEC 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,