

Dhaka iterates support to Palestinian struggle

BSS, Doha (Qatar)

Bangladesh yesterday reiterated its unwavering and unreserved support to the just struggle of the Palestinian people to establish an independent and sovereign state with Jerusalem as its capital.

Foreign Minister Abdus Samad Azad made the assertion while addressing an extraordinary session of the Islamic Countries' Foreign Ministers (ICFM) in Doha, Qatar.

He also renewed Bangladesh's support to the right of the Palestinian refugees to return to their homes and hearths to live in peace and dignity.

"We believe that a just and lasting peace in the Middle East can only be achieved on the basis of full recognition of all the legitimate rights of the

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Bangladeshi shot dead by BSF in Chuadanga

UNB, Chuadanga

A Bangladeshi youth was shot dead by Indian Border Security Force on Nimala-Rajapur border in the early hours yesterday.

Villagers said Alar Uddin, 25, son of Nabih Uddin of frontier village Harishpur, went out of home following a quarrel.

"As he crossed the border, BSF personnel shot him down," says a witness.

Border security has been tightened in recent times following the April 18 deadly skirmish at Baroibari on Raumari frontier between BDR and BSF.

The body of the youth was not yet returned, family sources said.

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	Sun Rises	Sun Sets
May 27		6.40 pm
May 28	5-11 am	

Prayer Timings		
May 27		
	Azan	Jamaat
Fazr	4-20	4-50
Zohr	12-45	1-20
Asr	5-00	5-15
Maghrib	6-45	6-50
Esha	8-00	8-30
Source: Islamic Foundation		

The rice that never reached Bangladesh

And vicious circle still trying to hold back JS probe committee report

REAZ AHMAD

A parliamentary probe committee report revealing a food import scam involving Tk 30 crore about a year back has not yet been placed before the parliament despite repeated reminders from the committee to do so.

Members of the probe body suspect that a vicious circle in the Food Ministry was frantically trying to hold back the report from being tabled in the House.

The Parliamentary Standing Committee on Food Ministry at its 28th meeting in mid-last year decided that the report would be placed in the 19th session of the Jatiya Sangsad. The Sangsad's 23rd session, considered the last one, begins on June 6.

The probe body headed by ruling party lawmaker

Mirza Azam expressed its strong resentment that the Standing Committee is still to place the report in the Sangsad.

The issue was on the agenda of almost all the subsequent meetings of the Standing Committee which met seven more times since its 28th meeting. Resolutions were taken in those meetings that the report would be tabled in the parliament but it was not done, committee members told this correspondent.

The JS body at its latest meeting on May 20 again decided that the report would be placed before the parliament in its 23rd session.

The probe body found that some Tk 30 crore was paid against two separate consignments of rice import

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The left-leaning 11-party formed a human chain in front of the Jatiya Press Club in the city yesterday protesting attacks on journalists in different parts of the country.

'Journalists must unite to resist increasing attacks'

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Journalists at a daylong seminar in the city yesterday called for unity to protect themselves from repression.

The speakers at the seminar on journalist harassment identified the division among journalists as the main reason behind harassment.

They also observed that the ongoing attacks on journalists would continue, if the difference is not removed.

Renowned journalists, columnists and district correspondents of different dailies from across the country joined the seminar organised by Mass-line Media Centre (MMC) at the LGRD seminar room.

Chaired by MMC Chairman Dr Ahmed Kamal, the seminar was attended by renowned Poet Shamsur Rahman as chief guest and Prof Serajul Islam Chowdhury of Dhaka University as special guest.

They expressed grave concern over the recent spate of repression on journalists, including arrest, killing and detention, and felt the necessity of objective and unbiased reporting.

Most of the participants blasted the prime minister's

comments on the press and observed that such comments by the head of the state would fuel repression.

Responding to a question about the increased attacks on journalists and growing intolerance to press, Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina recently explained that the incidents have links to 'media-terrorism' and said it is necessary to examine whether the journalists harassed have their accreditation cards.

The local journalists at the seminar described their limitations and sufferings they face to discharge their duties. They cannot even move freely in the face of repeated threats by terrorists, they said.

Noted Journalist ABM Musa expressed his deep concern over the recent rise in harassment of journalists across the country. He also felt the necessity of investigation into the harassment incidents, which spiralled despite the country's return to democracy a decade ago.

He, however, said, "We should look into whether the journalist became imbalanced by getting more freedom of writing due to fierce competition among newspapers."

Eminent Journalist Ataus Samad denounced the recent rise in harassment on journalists. "We have no

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Delhi tightens laws on foreign visitors

AFP, New Delhi

Indian government has tightened laws on foreign visitors, who must now be registered with police within 24 hours of their arrival, the Times of India said yesterday.

"It is to deter the illegal entry of foreigners into the country," the newspaper quoted a home ministry spokesman as saying.

"There has been an influx of a large number of foreigners into the country particularly from Bangladesh, Afghanistan and Pakistan. Many of them have overstayed, burdening the economy," he added.

The Foreigners (report to police) Order, 1971, was enforced and made public through advertisements in prominent national dailies this

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Vajpayee-Musharraf talks likely in early July

XINHUA, New Delhi

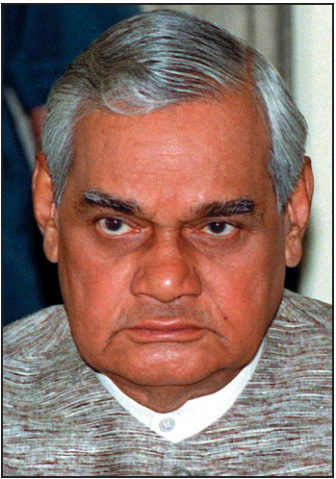
The proposed summit meeting between Prime Minister Atal Behari Vajpayee and Pakistan Chief Executive Pervez Musharraf is likely to take place sometime in early July, highly placed sources in New Delhi said yesterday.

The prime minister will be undergo knee surgery on June 7 and he may take a week's time to recover, according to the Press Trust of India.

In view of this, the talks would in all probability take place in early July, the sources said, adding New Delhi was awaiting response from Islamabad.

UNI adds: Former All Party Hurriyat Conference (APHC)

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Atal Behari Vajpayee



Pervez Musharraf

Devaluation: The inevitable has happened, will it work?

INAM AHMED

It is always a possibility on Thursdays. But when it happened on Thursday last, it was a surprise to many. Because with the election just round the corner and the next budget barely two weeks away, a major devaluation was something least expected.

However, the drastic measure showed, as Bangladesh Bank Governor Dr M Farashuddin said in his reaction, the situation was going to such an extent that politics and budget could not hold it back anymore.

But now, once the 'inevitable' has been done, the question is whether it will address the concern for which the devaluation was made.

Moreover, concern is now expressed whether the 5.5 per cent devaluation to repair the external imbalance that has grown over the last few months will lead to an

internal imbalance.

The possible wide-ranging impact of the devaluation starting from increased debt service liability in taka terms to widening fiscal deficit may now destabilise the strong internal balance, many fear. Moreover, the question also arises why the government and the central bank did not pay heed to early warnings about balance of payment (BOP) imbalance.

News Analysis

The Centre for Policy Dialogue (CPD) in its interim Independent Review of Bangladesh Development (IRBD) for 2001 circulated in November last year said: "The apparently positive development in import growth, however, is generating pressure on the forex reserve in the backdrop of deceleration of workers' remittance growth and slowdown in aid disbursement. The three major macro-economic challenges which the

Bangladesh economy has to confront in the coming months of fiscal year 2001 relate to maintaining low inflation and stability of taka while pursuing economic growth."

Renowned economist Dr Debapriya Bhattacharya said, "The devaluation may give a short respite but what is needed now is more direct measures to shore up forex

reserves."

One measure could be to increase flow of foreign direct investment (FDI) but it cannot be attained on a short term. The other prospects could be faster disbursement of foreign assistance accumulated in the pipeline.

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