

ASEAN: Delhi diplomatic efforts see success

PALLAB BHATTACHARYA, New Delhi

Nearly two years of sustained diplomatic and political efforts by India have succeeded in the Association of South East Asian Nations (ASEAN) accepting New Delhi for its separate annual summit partner.

Official circles here have greeted Malaysian Prime Minister Mahathir Mohamad's announcement in Bandar Seri Begawan, capital of Brunei, a few days ago that the 10-nation ASEAN has cleared the regional grouping's summit with India.

It means that when the next ASEAN summit is held in Cambodia, India will be occupying the high table. This, analysts here feel, will help India get a stronger footing in South East Asia, something New Delhi has been seeking for the last half a decade or so as part of its "Look East" policy.

China is already a member of ASEAN + 3 (along with Japan and

South Korea) grouping which has given it a much more pronounced presence, both politically as well as economically, in the region. A suggestion to enlarge ASEAN + 3 to include India was turned down earlier. As part of its efforts to reach out to ASEAN, Indian President K R Narayanan visited Singapore, Prime Minister A B Vajpayee travelled to Malaysia, Vietnam and Indonesia and External Affairs Minister Jaswant Singh made a couple of trips to some countries in that region in the last two years.

ASEAN agreeing to its summit with India clearly follows that Malaysia, which had in the past been reluctant to the idea, has been brought around. It was Mahathir Mohammed who was not been favourably disposed towards the regional economic grouping's summit with India. The ASEAN decision to have summit-level talks with India is as much a vindication of India's "Look East" policy as a boon to the regional grouping which is eyeing the huge Indian

market for its products. India is a key trade partner of a number of South East Asian countries and trade with that region generated a surplus of 315 million dollars last year as against a deficit of about 1.4 billion dollars in the previous two years.

The ASEAN decision came at a time when the grouping itself has decided to go for free trade among its members. In fact, proposals are under consideration for free trade accords between India, Singapore and Thailand.

This, according to official sources here, is of particular importance as the proposed South Asian Free Trade Area (SAFTA) itself has remained a non-starter after reservations about it from some SAARC member-nations other than India and Sri Lanka.

For India, south east Asia is crucial from the sea lane energy security point of view. India can meet part of its energy requirements from some South East Asian countries.

Frequent transfers

FROM PAGE 12

confusion. There is a strong rumour that there will be reshuffle in important positions in DMP, including that of the commissioner.

A top official at the police headquarters told this correspondent, "Policemen have family and children and they are the worst victims of frequent transfer and change".

Expressing frustration, he said, "Whenever a new government comes, it first brings about changes in the police department. But these changes would not bring any better result for the government or for the law enforcers".

Another police official seeking anonymity said each reshuffle involves huge money. "So, some opportunists in the (police) admin-

istration and in the government usually go for reshuffle."

"As political parties use police for their interest, law enforcers always keep themselves busy to make political leaders happy and so people suffer", a DMP official said.

"Due to affiliation with political parties, they (policemen) do not even bother about people's interest. They always try to fulfil the political will of the government", he said.

Another police official said it is not a good practice to bring about changes in the whole set up of political motive. He cited examples of some OCs of DMP who could not be challenged due to their political affiliation during the last days of the Awami League government.

BNP to form bodies

FROM PAGE 12

to the people by the party chief and leaders before the election.

As per instruction of the party chief and Prime Minister Khaleda Zia, all party units have been instructed so that party leaders and activists refrain from all sorts of terrorism, toll collection, tender snatching, illegal occupation of property and such other things. Stern action will be taken against party activists for involvement in such activities.

BNP has decided that all ministers, state ministers and deputy ministers will sit at offices of the party and its front organisations regularly to maintain close contact with party activists. This will help maintain liaison between the government and the party and avoid gathering at the Secretariat.

Party sources said Khaleda Zia has also asked party policymakers to instruct local leaders to take up nation building programmes at grassroots level and involve party activists and people in those.

She has advised party men not to politicise anything.

The sources said party leaders feel that the government should look into the problems of the party activists and innocent people who became victims of repression and oppression during the tenure of the previous government.

A number of ministers said there is no chain of command in the administration now because the previous Awami League government violated rules and norms in implementing decisions.

During AL rule, a good number of projects were approved by the Prime Minister's Office and then sent to ministries and departments concerned for implementation. There are instances that the former prime minister gave instructions even to OCs of thanas, they alleged.

They said Khaleda Zia has advised ministers to go through rules and procedures to restore chain command in the administration. They said they have been assured that no project will be imposed from the PMO.

Party sources said the PM is very much concerned about the law and order situation and the country's economy. She has decided to sit twice a month with senior ministers and the law and order monitoring committee to improve law and order.

They said the PM has instructed

AL govt

FROM PAGE 12

education Prof. Zinnatunnesa Talukder, state minister for youth sports and cultural affairs Obaidul Kader and state minister Syed Ashraf Islam were among those who were supplied with firearms.

The list also include several former MPs including Narayan Chandra Chandu, Mariam Begum, Ali Ashraf, Mostafizur Rahman, Mohammad Moklesur Rahman, Abdul Latif Biswas and Emdadul Haq Bhuiyan of AL and Mohammad Ali, Alamgir Haider Khan, Akhter Hamid Siddique and Advocate Fazle Rabbi of Jatiya Party.

The list shows that some police officials obtained more than one firearm in the name of their relatives. Some ministers and their personal staff were also given firearm licences.

withdrawal of excess police security of the Prime Minister and ministers and their deployment for maintenance of law and order.

The PM has also instructed DCs and SPs to visit thanas regularly to monitor law and order and told them that they would be responsible for maintenance of law and order in their districts.

She has also instructed the home minister and the IGP to make all-out efforts to stop terrorism, snatching and to ease the traffic jam in Dhaka city. Sources said the IGP has drawn PM's attention to the shortage of police force.

The PM has also instructed officials at all levels to drastically reduce government expenditure. She has instructed ministries concerned to encourage unemployed youths and women to set up poultry and dairy farms. The Ministry of Forest has been instructed to start tree planting across the country in a massive way.

Sources at the PMO said Khaleda Zia remains at her office from 10am to midnight everyday. After that she holds meetings regularly with senior ministers including M Saifur Rahman, Abdul Mannan Bhuiyan, Dr Khandaker Mosharraf Hossain, Tariqul Islam, Mirza Abbas and Sadeque Hossain Khoka and discusses various issues.

She has instructed her cabinet colleagues to remain in their offices full time and to meet her at her office after office hour, if necessary, the sources said.

MP manhandled

FROM PAGE 12

M Akbar Ali, MP from Sirajganj-4 constituency (Ullapara). About 100 vehicles were stranded for about two hours.

Shamsul Pramanik, 55, son of late Hatem Ali of village Choria Shika was crushed under the wheels of a bus of Sourab Paribahan at about 11 am.

Police later charged baton and brought situation under control. Police seized the bus and arrested the driver.

Some local BNP leaders filed a case with Sholonga thana against 15 Awami League activists for allegedly manhandling the BNP MP.

Bush praises

FROM PAGE 12

clear that he did not believe bin Laden's reported claims in a Pakistani newspaper on Saturday that he had nuclear weapons.

"Purely on judgment, I can't imagine that he is having nuclear weapons," he said.

Ahead of his meeting with Bush, Musharraf also expressed concern at civilian casualties in the US-led war in Afghanistan.

"The operation against terrorists in Afghanistan continues with no immediate end in sight," he said.

"Sadly enough the civilian casualties in this action are getting projected more as an open war against the already poor, suffering and innocent people in Afghanistan."

"The world in general and Pakistan in particular mourns the loss of those innocent lives and sympathises with the bereaved," Musharraf said, adding that the world must launch a massive relief effort for Afghan refugees.

Gulshan lake

FROM PAGE 12

Baridhara lake water.

WASA officials said since they have no sewerage network in Baridhara area and a large number of residents there connect their sewer lines to the surface drains. The surface drains are connected to the lake at various points.

The officials said the WASA master plan includes expansion of the sewerage network to the Baridhara area but it remains to be completed due to fund constraints.

Meanwhile, the Ministry of Housing and Public Works yesterday formed a committee for an investigation into the death of the fishes in the Gulshan-Baridhara lake.

PM: Tanneries

FROM PAGE 1

guideline for them, as there are no guidelines in the leather industry though there are 250 tanneries across the country.

"Leather industry is 100 per cent export-oriented. It is free from quota restrictions in exporting," the delegation noted.

The businessmen also placed several demands before the Prime Minister, including reopening of closed tanneries, BMRE of leather industry, cuts in bank loan interest for leather sector and steps to provide cash incentives for export of leather and leather products.

Industries Minister MK Anwar and State Minister for Commerce Barkatulla Bulu were present.

Cricket

FROM PAGE 1

Bangladesh, trailing by 199 runs, were 125 for three at stumps on Saturday.

The home side was staring at survival on the fourth day before the elements came as a blessing in disguise.

But Bangladesh captain Naimur Rahman said that he would have been happier had his team batted to save the match.

"If the result is a draw that is an achievement in itself. But to do so without a fight is meaningless," Naimur said.

"Still I don't think the match is over. The Zimbabweans are capable of pulling off a win at any stage tomorrow."

Bangladesh were bowled out for 107 runs in the first innings. Zimbabwe responded with 431.

Transfers

FROM PAGE 1

(BKB), has been transferred to Janata Bank and Sajedur Rahman of Janata Bank to BKB.

The changes are the first by the new government. What changes are being planned in the boards could not be known.

Laden

FROM PAGE 1

Middle East Saturday, was not made for public release via the al-Jazeera television network used by bin Laden for propaganda purposes in the past. It is believed to be intended as a rallying call to al-Qaida members, the paper said.

Bin Laden has publicly issued four previous videos since September 11, always denying carrying out the atrocities.

IMF

FROM PAGE 1

quite gloomy. Exports clocked 12 per cent negative growth in September alone. For the last three months, it is running in the negative."

And with slump in exports, revenue also followed suit by falling 7.7 per cent short of target till October. The October was a total disaster, the NBR sources said.

Meanwhile, the finance minister yesterday told the IMF team that improving law and order situation and reforming the public administration are high on the government's agenda.

He told the team that due to mismanagement of the past government the country's fiscal deficit burgeoned to 6.2 per cent of GDP.

He also said recent steps of the government to cut bank rates and interest rates on savings instruments have 'yielded positive result'. He added that more actions were underway.



A 17-member delegation of the Bangladesh Scouts led by its president Monzur-ul-Karim called on President Shahabuddin Ahmed at Bangabhaban yesterday.

28 more killed in Kashmir violence

REUTERS, Srinagar

Twenty-eight people including 17 Muslim rebels have been killed in the past 24 hours in India's troubled Kashmir region, police said yesterday.

They said Indian security forces shot dead 11 separatist militants in two gun battles Sunday in the state's Poonch district, 300 miles Southwest of Srinagar, the summer capital of Jammu and Kashmir.

"Both gun battles were continuing when last reports came in," a police spokesman said.

In another incident, eight people were separatists and one civilian were killed near Surankote in the same district, police said.

Earlier Saturday evening, three policemen were killed when rebels attacked a patrol at Tral, south of Srinagar.

Witnesses said angry policemen retaliated and torched nearly 40 shops and other buildings in the township.

A 10-year-old boy died in the blaze, they said.

"They (policemen) fired indiscriminately and set ablaze shops in the area," Rashid Ahmad, a resident of Tral told Reuters.

A police spokesman denied the charge and said the shops caught fire in the fighting between militants and policemen.

"The fire broke out during the encounter between militants and policemen. We don't know yet if any civilian died due to bullet injuries," he said.

A frontline Kashmiri militant group Sunday claimed responsibility for the attack in Tral and said it had killed four police, not three as the authorities claimed.

"Our Mujahideen (holy warriors) attacked the SOG patrol at

Tral and killed four policemen. Mujahideen also took away four rifles from the spot," a spokesman of Hizb-ul-Mujahideen told newspaper offices in Srinagar.

SOG or Special Operations Group is the counter insurgency arm of Jammu and Kashmir police.

Elsewhere, four militants and a civilian were killed in separate shootouts in the Himalayan region. At least a dozen militant groups are fighting New Delhi's rule in India's only Muslim-majority state. Officials say about 30,000 people have died in nearly 12 years of conflict.

Muslim separatist violence has mounted across the strife-torn region since the launch of the U.S.-led strikes in Afghanistan.

India consistently accuses Pakistan of arming and aiding Kashmiri separatists. Pakistan denies the charge.

SEC report

placed in JS

BSS, Dhaka

State Minister for Finance and Planning Anwarul Kabir Talukder yesterday placed the Securities and Exchange Commission annual report for 2000-2001 at the Jatiya Sangsad here.

The report provided a statement on state of the country's share market including performance of the Dhaka and Chittagong Stock Exchanges.

The report also gave a detail of regulatory steps taken by the commission to vitalise the share market and at the same time protecting the interest of the investors.

Northern Alliance at Kabul's gates

FROM PAGE 1

southern Kandahar, power base of the Taliban supreme leader Mullah Mohammad Omar.

US Vietnam War-vintage B-52s again carpet-bombed Taliban forces dug in north of the capital Kabul yesterday in the 36th day of the campaign. And hundreds of opposition troops, backed by tanks and artillery, were poised for an assault at Bagram airport, some 30 km north of Kabul.

The opposition said if its forces near Kabul pushed toward the capital they would halt outside the city, where opposition figures are hated for the internecine battles for power in the early 1990s that killed some 50,000 residents.

After meeting with Musharraf yesterday, Bush said opposition forces were encouraged to detour around Kabul.

"We will encourage our friends to head south ... but not into the city of Kabul itself. And we believe

we can accomplish our military missions by that strategy," Bush said.

A Taliban spokesman admitted yesterday the fundamentalist militia had strategically withdrawn from three provinces -- Samangan, Jowzjan and Sara-i-Pol -- but disputed alliance claims that Faryab had also been captured.

"There is nothing to worry about," the spokesman told Pakistan-based Afghan Islamic Press. "Our forces are re-grouping and left those places under a strategy."

Another report says, Taliban set up security checkpoints across the capital, Kabul, yesterday as their enemies advanced rapidly on the city from the north.

Taliban armed fighters searched vehicles and passengers for arms, satellite telephones and communications equipment.

Some 30 Taliban troops have been killed in northeastern

Depression over Bay

UNB, Dhaka

The depression over west-central Bay and adjoining south-west Bay moved north-northeastwards over west-central Bay and adjoining area.

It was centred about 1140 kms west-south-west of Chittagong port, 1105 kms west-south-west of Cox's Bazaar and 940 kms southwest of Mongla port at 6 pm yesterday.

A Met office special weather bulletin said the depression is likely to intensify further and move in a north-northeasterly direction.

Maximum sustained wind within 44 kms of the depression centre is about 40 kph rising to 50 kph in gusts or squalls. Sea will remain moderate.

Maritime ports of Chittagong, Cox's Bazaar and Mongla have been advised to hoist distant cautionary signal number one (R).

All fishing boats and trawlers over north Bay and deep sea have been advised to remain close to the shore

BGMEA team leaves

for US today

BSS, Dhaka

A four-member delegation of Bangladesh Government's Manufacturers and Exporters Association (BGMEA) led by Commerce Minister Amir Khasru Mahmud Chowdhury will leave Dhaka for USA today.

The delegation will visit USA to persuade US government to import tax-free and quota-free ready-made garments from Bangladesh.

BGMEA president Kutubuddin Ahmed, vice president Shaful Islam and director Alamgir Rahman will be accompanied the minister.

"The delegation will meet high level US federal officials, including commerce secretary M Donald D Iovans and US Trade Representatives (USTR)," the BGMEA president said.

Bomb incidents during AL rule

Judicial inquiry to be conducted, JS told

UNB, Dhaka

Home Minister Altfat Hossain Chowdhury yesterday told Parliament that judicial inquiry into each bombing incident during the Awami League rule will be conducted to find those behind the incidents.

He disclosed the plan in reply to a call-attention notice moved by BNP member Mohammad Giasuddin of Narayanganj, who was central vice-president of Krishak League, the peasant front of Awami League, until he joined BNP before the election.

The Home Minister said inquiries would be instituted into the bomb blasts at Udichi function in Jessore, Kadiani mosque in Khulna, CPB rally at Paltan Maidan, Church in Gopalganj, Awami League office at Chashara in Narayanganj and Awami League MP Sheikh Helal's meeting in Bagerhat.

Citing experts' reports, the minister said that similarities in the type of blasts and splinters collected from the incident sites suggest that the materials gone into the making of the explosives may have come from the same source.

He said police investigations into these bomb blasts had been completed, but the investigation reports did not implicate anyone in any incident.

Chowdhury assured all that these bomb cases would now be settled through judicial inquiries.

In response to a question about former AL MP Shamim Osman, the Home Minister said there are three cases against Shamim who is now out of the country.

Regarding the June 16 bombing of Narayanganj Awami League office that left 22 people dead, he said CID had conducted an investigation of the blast. Most of the accused in the case are now out on bail.

About the current law-and-order situation under the coalition government, the Home Minister said police has been ordered to improve law and order by "discharging their duties without political considerations, influence, fear or pressure."

Police have also been ordered not to go for any political harassment because this government wants to establish the rule of law instead of establishing the rule of a particular "quarter or party."

NCTB taking steps

FROM PAGE 12

selected to print 4.73 crore copies of text books for primary level students.

The printing works of textbooks for primary level students are to be done in 150 packages and one printing house will take care of each package.

As many as 106 printers so far have collected papers from the board go-down and started printing of books. Earlier, the NCTB asked printers to collect papers from the Karnaphuli Paper Mill from November 8.

"The paper mill will initially supply 40 metric tons of paper everyday while the quantity will increase significantly in the following weeks," another top official of the NCTB said.

A special cell in the education ministry has been formed to monitor the progress of printing works while State Minister for Education Ehsanul Haque Milon has been designated to oversee the develop-

ment.

Tk 7 crore has been tagged for printing, binding and transportation of the books this time while Tk 11 crore was spent last year. The government bears the expenditure for printing and binding of the primary texts while the World Bank, the Asian Development Bank (ADB) and the NORAD will bear the cost of paper.

There will be no crisis of textbooks in the country in the academic year 2002 as the printing jobs have been distributed among several hundred experienced printers, a leader of the country's printing industry told The Daily Star recently.

He said the country faced a severe textbook crisis last year as the printing work of about eight crore textbooks were awarded to only three organisations of Beximco Group, which had no experience in printing textbooks of such a huge volume.

4 terrorists held with arms in Laxmipur

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Laxmipur

Police arrested four terrorists and recovered arms and ammunition in two separate incidents at sadar upazilla of Laxmipur district yesterday and hauled several cock-tails at the police men.

Meanwhile BSS adds, a gang of about 100 terrorists attacked Chandrayan highway police bus yesterday and hauled several cock-tails at the police men.

The miscreants also encircled the police bus reportedly in retaliation of arresting their leader Qamrul and two other accomplices.

On receiving the information, ASP Md. Amin along with extra force rushed to the spot and opened fire on them.

Police arrested four terrorists while others fled away.

PARC report

FROM PAGE 12

administrative reforms.

The committee report would be submitted to the relevant authorities for implementation of the recommendations soon to ensure good governance, sources said.

The PARC was formed by the Awami League government in 1996. It completed its recommendations in June this year.

Some 260 recommendations were submitted to the former government which implemented only three.

These are systems for payment of utility bills at one bank branch for a designated area in Dhaka city, payment of travel tax and airport taxes etc while buying air tickets and receiving complaints at the Secretariat with acknowledgment letters to complainants.

Nothing was done to address major issues involving reform of the bureaucracy which is still governed by rules dating back to British and Pakistani colonial periods.

The sources said the government is sincere to bring about administrative reforms and so the high level committee has been formed.

Revenue earning

FROM PAGE 12

income tax while the target was Tk 903 crore.

The government may go for further bank borrowing to meet the expenditure because of the deficit in revenue collection.

According to banking sources, the government borrowing from banks and savings system stood at Tk 28,000 crore till November 6.

Of the amount, Tk 500 crore was borrowed from Bangladesh Bank, Tk 800 crore from commercial banks through treasury bill and Tk 850 crore was managed through savings instruments.

VCs & pro - VCs of varsities

FROM PAGE