

IMF, Dhaka assessing

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local developments in Bangladesh and discussed policies of the new government.

"The mission will report on its findings to the Executive Board of the IMF early next year," Valdivieso said.

Getting IMF standby facility or Poverty Reduction Growth Facility has become ever more important for Bangladesh as it needs to pay around US\$ 400 million to the Asian Clearing Union in January. Bangladesh can get up to 533.33 million SDR from IMF as its quota.

On the country's economic situation, the IMF mission head said although Bangladesh has enjoyed satisfactory economic growth and low inflation in recent years, 'pressures have been building up as a result of large fiscal and budget deficits and sizeable and mounting losses of the state-owned enterprises.'

"This has been reflected in a steady decline in foreign reserves. In addition, government interference in the financial system and other sectors of the economy has created some distortions," Valdivieso commented.

However, he mentioned that fragility of the country's economic situation was enhanced by the global slowdown that started in late 2000 and in the aftermath of the September 11 events. "These events have affected Bangladesh's ability to generate foreign exchange and increased the downside risks to the economic outlook."

The IMF mission welcomed some of the measures the new government took to address the adverse external environment and the emerging domestic imbalances, but it cautioned against relying on administrative controls.

"The mission does not support the recent increase in the margin requirement on opening of letters of credits for import of an wide array of goods. Also, given the existing macroeconomic imbalances, measures to increase credit and reduce the cost of bank financing of exports should be offset by reducing credit-taking by other sectors in the economy," Valdivieso said.

"Such measures will only increase distortions and reduce medium and long-term growth prospects," he thought.

The IMF mission welcomed other steps aimed at reducing the cost of financing the budget deficit. It welcomed the reduction in interest rates on various National Savings Certificates and "the measures under consideration to contain government spending, in particular those financed by costly suppliers credit and expenditures under Annual Development Programme."

Resident Representative of IMF Marijn Verhoven was present on the occasion.

Rajuk, DCC

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and death of fish in the lake. A task force has also been formed with the Director General of Environment Directorate as convener to take immediate steps to make the lake free from pollution.

Other members of the task force are DCC Chief Engineer, BFDC Director (Marketing), Project Director of Dhaka Urban Transportation Project and President of Gulshan Amateur Fishing Association.

The committee will place short- and long-term recommendations within 15 days.

Taliban to surrender Kunduz

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local Taliban tried to surrender in Kunduz but they were killed by the foreign soldiers," the spokesman said, adding that the death toll was less than 150 as reported in some media.

Reuters adds: The Taliban said they were in control in their southern stronghold, Kandahar, yesterday but announced they were extending a night curfew while US jets rained bombs on them from the skies.

The raids killed 46 people in and around Kandahar, powerbase of Taliban supreme leader Mullah Mohammad Omar, the Pakistan-based Afghan Islamic Press (AIP) said, describing raids on Saturday night and yesterday morning as among the heaviest in 43 days of war.

The Taliban -- struggling to maintain control over the city -- have extended the curfew by an hour, warning residents they would be shot if they came out of their homes after 8.00 pm local time, witnesses arriving at the Pakistani border crossing at Chaman told Reuters.

Heavy US bombings raids overnight and yesterday morning at Maiwand district, 70-km west of Kandahar, killed 42 people. Four civilians were killed in the city.

The US jets may be targeting Taliban trying to escape the city for the inhospitable mountain ranges of central Afghanistan.

Witnesses arriving at the Pakistani border said several Arabs were among those killed near Kandahar as two of their vehicles sustained direct hits by US bombs

on Saturday night. Arabs and Pakistani Taliban from the al Qaida network of Osama bin Laden are among the most formidable and determined fighters in Afghanistan.

There was no sign the beleaguered Taliban were ready to withdraw from the powerbase they captured just seven years ago from the Mujahideen despite reports on Friday that they had done a deal on a withdrawal that would leave the city in the hands of fellow members of the ethnic Pashtun majority.

In the past week, the Taliban have been booting out of the capital Kabul and other major cities by the opposition Northern Alliance, composed mainly of minority Tajiks and Uzbeks.

Meanwhile, a top Russian delegation flew to Kabul yesterday to hold talks with the anti-Taliban opposition as Moscow seeks to play a role in the formation of a future government for Afghanistan, sources said.

The delegation, including defense, interior and emergency ministry officials, was due to meet Burhanuddin Rabbani, recognised as Afghanistan's president by the United Nations and most countries, among others.

Russian Defense Minister Sergei Ivanov said earlier that the group would attempt to "establish working contact with the leadership of the legitimate government of this nation."

AFP from UN says, the collapse of Taliban rule in Afghanistan has forced the United Nations to urgently accelerate a strategy for

which it says it has no model as it tries to persuade ancient foes to share power.

The UN special representative for Afghanistan, Lakhdar Brahimi, has outlined a two-year transition to a new constitution and multi-ethnic government, starting with a pan-Afghan conference.

Asked to name his chief obstacle, Brahimi replied: "thirty years of conflict."

The so-called Group of 21 -- the six countries bordering on Afghanistan, major donor nations and other states with a large stake in the country's future -- met here Friday for the first time in three years.

A diplomat who was present said Brahimi asked those with influence over Afghanistan's various ethnic groups -- Iran and Pakistan, but also China, Turkey, "and even India" -- to come to the conference.

In addition to the victorious Northern Alliance -- mostly Tajiks and Uzbeks from the north -- the conference would include the southern Pashtun tribes, who make up half the population, and representatives of the 87-year-old former king, Mohammed Zahir Shah, deposed in 1973.

General Mohammad Quassim Fahim, the Alliance's defence minister, said Saturday that "for the good of the country and for peace in Afghanistan we are ready to take part" in talks outside Kabul, which fell to his forces four days earlier.

Power plant

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Trade Asia (Malaysia) and McConnell International (New Zealand).

According to primary proposals, placed by some of the companies, the plant would not dispose harmful waste. Such a power plant might be set up at the DCC dumping site at Matuail.

The project would take between 18 to 24 months to implement. Some 5000 DCC garbage collectors would supply waste daily to the plant from Dhaka and Narayanganj.

However, the project got stuck at the level of the Ministry of Environment in 1999 when it wanted to scrutinise the primary proposals.

The then Environment and Forest Minister Sajeda Chowdhury took particular interest in it, sources said.

In the early 199, the ministry added names of two unsolicited foreign bidders - Techomtech and Integrated Environment Technology - both represented by one local agency, sources said.

However, as the ministry added two more bidders that did not originally participate, the original bidder protested to the government in writing.

Afterwards, the project suddenly stopped progressing. The Power Cell was supposed to arrange a consultant for the project but could not proceed due to lack of fund.

In recent months, the project got back some life as the Commonwealth Secretariat agreed to finance the consultancy for the project. "We are hoping to proceed with the project once again," said an official.

Ctg: Manhunt

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A team of CMP police led by Deputy Commissioner (North Zone) Nababikram Tripura visited Nazirhat College and surrounding areas yesterday afternoon for investigation.

CMP sources said the team suspected involvement of some other local people in the sensational murder.

Sources said Gopal Chandra earned fame as principal of the college. He was a man of principle and maintained academic atmosphere on the campus. He banned student politics at the college and removed irregularities in the college administration.

Police earlier said the four FIR-named accused are supporters of Jamaat-e-Islami, but local Jamaat leaders said the party has no link with them.

UNB adds: The two arrested teachers of Nazirhat College were interrogated by a special team of CMP headed by AC Monirul Islam.

AC Monirul said the arrested teachers gave them some important information in connection with the murder. Police are verifying the information.

Official sources said the five CMP teams formed earlier to arrest the killers conducted several raids in different areas to nab the culprits.

Laden surrounded

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ground bunkers."

On Saturday night the Taliban envoy to Pakistan refuted earlier claims that bin Laden had left the country with his wives and children.

"Osama is inside Afghanistan but I don't know whether he is in our territory or the area controlled by the Northern Alliance," Salam Zaeef said.

But Reuters quoting Salam Zaeef said yesterday Laden was not in Taliban-controlled areas of Afghanistan and did not know if he was still in the country.

"I do not know where he is, whether he is in other parts of Afghanistan, or he has left Afghanistan," Zaeef was quoted as saying by the Pakistan-based AIP.

"But what I know is that he is not in any area under our control," Zaeef said in an interview in the south-western Pakistani city of Quetta.

US Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld has warned that bin Laden might have access to a helicopter that could try to take him to a possible rendezvous with a private jet in Pakistan.

Gas, power sectors

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gas as well as gas export.

The Indian representatives also pointed out problems of government's monopoly control of gas supply and marketing.

The technical session discussed a joint power project by India and Bangladesh in the bordering area of Bheramara.

Addressing the inaugural session as chief guest, State Minister for Energy and Mineral Resources AKM Mohsharraf Hossain said Bangladesh will export gas only if it is found economically profitable.

"Now we have to think how we can make optimum use of our natural gas", the state minister said, adding that only 15 per cent of the people of Bangladesh are now getting the benefit of energy.

The government is fully committed to regional cooperation, he said. Representatives from Nepal and Bhutan stressed the need of mutual cooperation on hydroelectric potentialities in this region to bring more people under energy network.

Speaking as special guest, State Minister for Power Iqbal Hasan Mahmud said the countries of the

region should initiate collaboration in all other vital sectors.

Among others, Energy Secretary Akmal Husain, Power Secretary Mesbahuddin Ahmed, Indian Petroleum and Natural Gas (P & NG) Secretary VN Kaul, Indian Power Secretary AK Basu, Bangladesh Trade and Industry Secretary Dasho Karma Dorjee, Water Resources Secretary of Nepal LMS Karaki and ADB officials addressed the inaugural session.

17 new OCs

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The newly appointed OCs are Saifur Rahman Babul, Ramna; S M Mohiuddin, Motjiheel; Akkhliah Hossain; Tejaan; Mahubur Rahman, Kotwali; Rabiul Islam, Sutrapur; Samsuddin Ahmed, Hazaribagh; Ruhul Amin, Lalbagh; Abul Kalam Azad, Dhanmondi; Abdul Noor, Kafur; Nur Ahmed, Mohammadpur; Mahfuz Alam, Mirpur; Jane-e-Alam Khan, Pallabi; Iftekar Hossain, Gulshan; Nasir Ahmed Siddik, Cantonment; Shadat Hossain, Airport; Shah Mohammad Azad, Badda and AKM Fazlul Rob, Uttara.

Abdel Rahman's son captured or killed in Afghanistan?

AP, Cairo

The son of Omar Abdel-Rahman, a blind Egyptian cleric serving a life sentence in the United States for conspiring to blow up New York City landmarks, reportedly was captured or killed in Afghanistan as he fought alongside other Arab allies of the Taliban.

The London-based Arabic newspaper Al Hayat quoted unnamed Islamic militant sources yesterday as saying that Ahmed Abdel-Rahman was captured by American soldiers on Friday as he was trying to leave the Afghan capital of Kabul for Kandahar, the southern Afghan city that is the Taliban's stronghold.

But another London-based Arabic newspaper, Asharq Al-Awsat, quoted unnamed Islamic militant sources in London as saying Ahmed Abdel-Rahman was killed along with Mohammed Atef, the Egyptian-born militant and close aide to Osama bin Laden, the prime suspect of the September 11 terrorist attacks on New York and Washington.

His elder brother, Mohammed, was reportedly in Kandahar. A third brother, Abdullah, who lives in Cairo, told The Associated Press that the family had only seen the newspaper reports and had not been officially informed that Ahmed Abdel-Rahman was dead in US custody.

No JS motion

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treasury and opposition benches proportionately. "MPs will head the parliamentary standing committees," he said referring to the precedence in the Seventh Parliament.

Meanwhile, a treasury bench member has submitted a proposal to the Parliament Secretariat seeking amendment to the rules of procedure. He suggested that each member of a committee should work as its chairman for a six-month term.

The proposal was included in the order of the day at the fifth sitting of this session, but was not moved in the House.

The committees formed in the maiden session include Business Advisory Committee, House Committee, Committee on Private Member's Bills and Resolution and Standing Committee on Privileges.

But Standing Committee on Public Accounts, Committee on Estimates, Committee on Public Undertakings and Committee on Public assurances, considered very important, are yet to be formed.

Dacoity in city

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rescued the manager but failed to arrest any of the culprits. The victim was admitted to Dhaka Medical College Hospital.

In another incident, police arrested Fatullah thana unit JCD president on charge of demanding toll from a bank official.

Shrimp trade in 3 dists

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elder brother Mosharrif Mir was slaughtered the same day.

According to office bearers of Sathkira Jubo Samabaya Samity, hoodlums of the ruling party and the PBCP have taken over two shrimp farms of Tala upazila at gunpoint. Police neither arrested the armed goons nor did they save the fish farms from being looted, they said.

The alleged miscreants of BNP, PBCP and BCP looted at least 11 fish farms of Khulna, Bagerhat and Sathkira districts during last one month. Besides, owners of at least 30 fish farms have received death threats after refusing to pay toll. These fish farm owners are fearing for their lives.

Police officials in these three districts, however, expressed their ignorance about such incidents, saying no case was lodged with any police station.

Meanwhile, at least 60 fish

processing plants of Khulna, Bagerhat and Sathkira districts are on the verge of closure due to sharp fall in export and outbreak of viral diseases in most of shrimp farms, sources said.

Several thousand men and women have already lost their jobs in the processing plants and fish farms of greater Khulna, which earns the country over Tk 700 crore a year in foreign exchange.

Demand for processed frozen shrimps by foreign buyers has registered a sharp decline due to recession caused by September 11 attack on the WTC and subsequent US bombing in Afghanistan.

The price fall has also forced the traders to stop export of processed frozen shrimps since production cost is much higher than the rate now being offered by the foreign buyers, said leaders of the Khulna unit of Bangladesh Frozen Food Exporters' Association.

Javed digs deep

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before Al-Shahriar fell for 40.

Javed, who joined the elite trio in Bulwawa last April with an undefeated 85, has so far remained at the crease 415 minutes and faced 320 balls. He has struck nine fours.

The highlight of the day was a century partnership between the dapper Javed and pugnacious Bashar. The pair remained inseparable for more than two sessions.

The stand was finally broken 15 minutes into the final session when Bashar was holed out at mid off while attempting to hit left-arm spinner Grant Flower out of the ground. Substitute fielder Paul Strang, who came here as a replacement for injured Zimbabwe captain Brian Murphy, took a simple catch.

Bashar struck a dozen boundaries 150-ball knock. The departure of Bashar her-

alded a mini collapse with veterans Aminul Islam and Akram Khan disappointing once more.

A nervous Aminul tentatively pushed forward only to be caught by Trevor Gripper at silly point after scoring one.

His long-time pal Akram fared marginally better. The popular Chittagongian made just two before being bowled by Grant.

Grant, who is not a regular bowler in the Zimbabwe line-up, was again the leading wicket-taker with three for 37. He captured a career-best 4-41 in the first innings. However, the arrival of young Ashrafui steaded the ship and together with Javed saw out the remaining 95 minutes of play. (Scoreboard and more stories on page 13)

BNP leader gunned down

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charge of the police station be closed.

At around seven in the morning, a group of three armed men, led by one Jamal, went to second-floor residence of the 40-year-old BNP leader at 101/4 Sher-e-Bangla Road, Katashur and pressed the doorbell.

Babul woke up, came out of his bedroom and opened the door. The gang first asked him to come with them to the ground floor.

As Babul refused to do so, a brief altercation took place. At one stage, the gang pulled out their weapons and shot him once. Babul tried to close the door in vain as the assailants pushed the door open and shot him twice more in the chest and abdomen.

Upon hearing the shots, local people rushed to the spot and found the victim in a pool of blood. Babul was taken to the Dhaka Medical College Hospital (DMCH) where the duty doctors declared him dead. The body was later sent for autopsy.

Riziya Begum, wife of the victim, witnessed the killing from close quarters. In fact, she was about to open the door when her husband asked her not to and opened the door himself.

Police sources said that Babul, son of late Hafizuddin Master, knew the killers.

They also said Babul had been at odds with local BNP leader Nuru over a piece of land behind his residence. The former had taken

over its possession at least 15 days ago.

Local Government and Rural Development and Co-operatives Minister Abdul Mannan Bhuiyan, Fisheries and Livestock Minister Sadek Hossain Khoka went to the DMCH yesterday afternoon to see the body of the victim.

Riziya said that Babul used to threaten to kill him for quite some time. She could not, however, confirm the identity of the killers.

The victim's brother-in-law, Masud, said that Babul had told him on Saturday that he feared an attack from some of his associates.

Babul also asked him to come to his residence to talk. He did get to Babul's residence but could not find him as he had gone out for prayers.

The victim's namaz-e-janaza of the victim was held at a madrasah at Sat Masjid Road in the city after Asr prayers yesterday. Later, he was buried at Katsur, police said.

Babul was the second among three brothers and father of a six-year-old girl, Jitu and a ten-year-old son, Jewel Ahmad. Babul, a businessman, hailed from Motlab in Chandpur.

The Detective Branch of Police arrested Ahsan for his alleged involvement in the killing.

The duty officer of Mohammadpur police station, however, said last night that they were yet to receive any case in connection with the killing of the BNP leader.

Hasina's foreign trips as PM discussed in JS

UNB, Dhaka

Former Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina's foreign trips came under pungent questioning in Parliament yesterday, with BNP lawmakers asking about the money spent for her 52 trips and whether the country gained anything out of those trips.

Newly appointed Foreign Minister Moshed Khan avoided replies to many supplementary questions from Mashur Rahman, Mehedi Ahmed Rumi, Prof. Shahidul Islam and Nazimuddin Alam of BNP.

He said people know what the former prime minister brought for the country through her trips that cost the national exchequer nearly Tk 60.88 crore.

Khan said the Bureau of Anti-corruption (BAC) would investigate if the then government had committed any corruption in undertaking those trips.

On a supplementary question from Nazimuddin Alam about the expenditure for Hasina's visit to Miami to look after her daughter, who was expecting a baby, the foreign minister said he would

give reply if the member gave a notice.

Replying to another query from Mashur Rahman if Ambassador Mrs Shelley Saidia Hossain Zaman is a cousin of ex-PM Hasina and if she is a foreign national, Khan said Shelley is a close relative of the former prime minister, but he did not know if she has foreign nationality.

In reply to a question from Whip Ashraf Hossain, Khan said ambassadors and officials in foreign missions, appointed by the Awami League government, were called back following the set rules of the government.

He, however, said the government had not yet taken any decision about the calling back of Cyril Siddik, now Bangladesh Ambassador to Bhutan.

Some 33 ambassadors and officials were appointed by the Awami League government, the foreign minister told Prof. Shahidul Islam.

More changes in admin

FROM PAGE 1
member of the Tariff Commission, Establishment Ministry OSD (Joint Secretary) Abidur Rahman Member (Finance) of PDB, Joint Secretary of the Information Ministry

Mustaqquddin Ahmed member of BADC and WAQF administrator Muazzem Hossain member of Bangladesh Handloom Board.

The services of Col Abul Kalam Azad of Bangladesh Army have been placed under the Health and Family Welfare Ministry for appointment as Director of CMSD on deputation. Meanwhile, the duties of CMSD Director Col Mohammad Ali, working on deputation, were entrusted with the Armed Forces Division for his return to the Army.

Second Secretary (Press) of Bangladesh High Commission in New Delhi Dr Nasiruddin and Deputy Chief Information Officer of Regional Information Office, Chittagong, Abdul Mannan have been made Deputy Press Secretaries of the Prime Minister under the PM Office.

According to separate notifications of the Ministry of Establishment issued yesterday, Director General of Women Affairs Department Begum Rezina Akhter Khanam (Joint Secretary) was transferred to the Establishment Ministry as OSD.

Joint Secretary of the Election Commission Abu Solaiman Chowdhury was appointed the new Director General of Women Affairs Department.

Joint Secretary of the Establishment Ministry Nazrul Islam has been transferred to the Finance Division while Director General of Islamic Foundation Abdur Rashid Khan was appointed Joint Secretary of the Establishment Ministry.

Joint Secretary of Cabinet Division Mohammad Abdus Sattar has been made Chairman of Bangladesh Road Transport Corporation (BRTC). The former BRTC Chairman Azmal Chowdhury was made member of Bangladesh Export Processing Zone Authority (BEPZA).

Member of BADC, KM Abul Kalam, has been made Director of BTMC.

According to another notification issued on Saturday, Secretary of Muktiyoddaha Kalyan Trust Abu Khalid Mohammad Abdus Shukur has been transferred as deputy secretary to the Ministry of Law, Justice and Parliamentary Affairs.

Director of Muktiyoddaha Kalyan Trust Mohammad Siddique has been made more changes in admin

Thousands exposed to health hazards

FROM PAGE 1
lake area should be immediately implemented.

After being engaged by the government more than a year ago, consultants of the project, Vitti Shapoti Brindo, have submitted a comprehensive proposal in this regard with the Ministry of Housing and Public Works.

Local people, who have staged several protest rallies over the last one week, said that the Tk 100 crore project to save the lake should be revived immediately.

They said a vested quarter is delaying the project in the hope that more plots could be extracted from the lake and lakeside area.

The Gulshan-Banani-Baridhara Lake has been the target of a section of rich and influential property developers. A section of Rajuk officials has contributed to plundering of the lake.

With the massive pollution at hand, the authorities continued pointing fingers at each other.

Twenty to 30 drains have been connected with the lake in the last 20 years, Dhaka City Corporation (DCC) Zone-9 officials informed.

Officially, the lake belongs to the Rajuk and the water body has been leased out to the Bangladesh Fisheries Development Corporation

(BFDC) for pisciculture and maintenance purposes, Rajuk officials said.

BFDC officials, meanwhile, said that they were giving technical assistance to the Gulshan Salkhin Matsha Shikari Samity to cultivate fish in the lake.

Schools of dead fishes have been seen floating in the lake water since November 9 and stench has made breathing difficult for people living on the lakeside and in its adjoining areas. A large number of dead fishes have already been dumped under ground.

Experts believe that toxic waste streaming into the lake has wrought havoc on the fish population by reducing the biochemical oxygen demand (BOD) in its water.

After testing the water of the lake Department of Environment (DoE) has already declared that the lake water is extremely polluted and also requested people not to eat fish of the lake or bathe in the water.

BFDC officials said that fishes worth at least Tk 25 lakh have died in the lake so far. The samity puts the loss even higher.

In a letter to the corporation, it claimed fishes worth nearly one crore taka have died, said BFDC officials.

Rajuk Superintendent Engineer Emdadul Islam blamed the BFDC for allowing the DCC to let the drain water fall into the lake a few months back. "We have leased out the lake to the corporation for pisciculture. They are also supposed to take care of its maintenance."

BFDC Chairman Khan Mohammad Belayat Hossain, however, said that the Rajuk was supposed to resist the DCC from connecting the drain with the lake. "We are only the lessee. Since the Rajuk is owner of the lake it was their responsibility."

Sources said that the Rajuk has already asked the BFDC to sue the DCC for pollution of the lake water. Rajuk officials also questioned as to how the DCC permitted a dying plant beside the lake.

According to local people, a few months back a drain along Road No 11 of Baridhara was connected to the lake and it started the rot.

The BFDC issued a letter to the Department of Environment (DoE) and a copy of the letter was issued to the DCC zonal office on September 30 after the colour of water of the lake begun changing at many places.

The DCC, on behalf of the Dhaka Urban Transport Project (DUTP),