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Vajpayee asks Indians to prepare for 'eventuality'

Troops build-up on: Pak dialogue offer rejected

AFP, New Delhi

Indian Prime Minister Atal Behari Vajpayee said yesterday that India would do its "utmost" to avoid a war with Pakistan, but warned the country to be prepared for "any eventuality."

"At this juncture, I appeal to my countrymen to be prepared for any eventuality with unity, with courage and with supreme confidence in the justness of our struggle," the prime minister said while addressing a meeting of his ruling BJP party.

"No means will be spared, although we shall do our utmost to avoid war with Pakistan."

Vajpayee called on the BJP to work with all other parties, including those in the opposition, to ensure that the nation remained united.

Vajpayee vowed to stamp out "Pakistan-sponsored cross-border terrorism."

"Our objective is to put an end to Pakistan-sponsored cross-border terrorism ... We shall use all the means and resources at India's command to achieve this objective," he said.

India also said yesterday it was not willing to hold peace talks with Pakistan until Islamabad was seen to be cracking down on militants it says are operating from its soil.

With the shadow of war looming larger, Pakistan's President Pervez Musharraf said on Friday he wanted to meet Vajpayee at the SAARC summit.

But a senior foreign ministry official said such a meeting was highly unlikely.

Though India rejected the idea of talks, Musharraf said New Delhi needed to show openness to cool the heated exchanges between the two neighbours.

"I don't mind meeting with him but you can't clap with one hand," Musharraf told reporters after a dinner at the presidential palace in Islamabad on Friday.

"He (Indian Prime Minister) must show willingness on his side and there will be willingness on our side."

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All help to set up EPZ for Japan: PM

UNB, Dhaka

Prime Minister Khaleda Zia yesterday said her government would extend total cooperation to set up an exclusive export promotion zone (EPZ) for Japan.

In response to the Japan's interest in selling up a separate EPZ in Bangladesh, the prime minister expressed her government's desire to a delegation of the board of investment (BOI) that met her at her office.

Urging entrepreneurs to set up eco-friendly industries in future, Khaleda said her government has in principle decided to shift leather industries from Hazaribagh to a different area outside Dhaka and to set up a garment village outside, shifting RMG industries.

The BOI delegation led by its

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PMO to scrutinise all graft FIRs from today

A blow to making BAC independent

ZAYADUL AHSAN

From today, the Prime Minister's Office (PMO) will scrutinise all the First Information Reports (FIRs), including those of graft cases to be filed against ministers, MPs and bureaucrats of the former Awami League government, sources said.

Accordingly, the director general of the Bureau of Anti-corruption (BAC) and four high officials will submit to the PMO today four FIRs charging ex-AL ministers Amir Hossain Anu and Mohammad Nassim and ex-MP Afsaruddin for graft.

In the face of pressure and

persuasion by some bureaucrats, the PMO made the unusual decision last weekend. And, BAC has been instructed verbally to send copies of all FIRs to the PMO for approval, the sources added.

BAC usually prepares the FIRs upon approval by the PMO. Earlier on December 11, BAC filed a dozen cases with different police stations of the city against former prime minister Sheikh Hasina and six ex-Awami League government ministers as well as 47 former and serving bureaucrats and businessmen.

Never before in the country's history have so many bureaucrats together been implicated in graft

cases. Against this backdrop, some bureaucrats made a move to interfere with BAC's filing of FIR, so that they are not implicated in graft cases in future. Sources said these bureaucrats have convinced the PMO that BAC's cases were 'ill-prepared' and should be scrutinised properly.

Meanwhile, some influential bureaucrats, including an incumbent secretary against whom BAC was to bring gross graft charges, got their names dropped off different FIRs.

Since the parliamentary system of democracy was re-established in

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Laden now based in Peshawar?

AFP, Kabul

Al-Qaida leader Osama bin Laden has escaped to the Pakistani city of Peshawar but continues to move around constantly in the rugged border area with Afghanistan, an Afghan defence ministry source said yesterday.

The source told AFP the suspected terrorist mastermind is now based in Peshawar about 40 kilometres from the Afghan border.

But the world's most wanted man is constantly on the move to elude capture and Afghan intelligence cannot pinpoint his whereabouts, the source said.

"We are not completely sure he is there (Peshawar) at present but we have received intelligence reports that he is using Peshawar as a base."

On Thursday a defence ministry spokesman said separately that bin

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A Hindu family leaves their village in a cart following cross-border firing near the Indo-Pak Line of Control in Akhnour, north of Jammu, yesterday.

2 judicial bodies formed to probe bomb incidents during AL rule

UNB, Dhaka

The government formed two judicial commissions headed by two retired justices for investigation into the bombing incidents and the political cases filed during the Awami League rule.

An official announcement said yesterday that the commissions, each comprising three members, were directed to submit within 90 days their inquiry reports on the incidents and the cases filed from July 1, 1996 to September 30, 2001.

The second commission, which

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Mob-beating kills 3 alleged decoits

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Three alleged decoits were beaten to death by a mob in the city's Demra area on Friday night.

Witnesses said a gang of eight to 10 decoits stormed into a shop at Dellabamail Bazaar at about 9pm and looted cash and valuables worth about Tk two lakh brandishing firearms.

As the shop owner and his employees started shouting 'dacoit, dacoit', a large number of people from nearby areas surrounded the shop. They caught three of the alleged decoits while they were fleeing blasting crackers and firing shots. The others managed to flee with the looted money and valuables.

The mob beat and critically injured them.

Police rescued the victims in an unconscious state and sent them to Dhaka Medical College Hospital (DMCH). One of them died immedi-

ately after being taken there and the rest two after admission.

Identities of the dead could not be known. The bodies were sent to the hospital morgue for autopsy.

Demra police said a case has been filed in this connection.

JCD activist murdered in Khulna

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Khulna

A Jatiyatabadi Chhatra Dal activist was chopped to death allegedly by Bangladesh Chhatra League supporters on Friday night at Mirzapur Road under Khulna sadar police station.

Sources said that Shahidul Islam, 18, was killed as a sequel to previous

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BNP, BCL men murdered in Chittagong

CU CORRESPONDENT

Unidentified gunmen shot dead a BCL leader at Fateyabad under Hathazari thana in Chittagong yesterday evening.

The said leader, Ali Murtaza Chowdhury, 27, is senior vice-president of the Chittagong University (CU) unit of Bangladesh Chhatra League (BCL).

Witnesses said Ali Murtaza was attacked in a hairdressing shop close to his Chareruk residence at around 7.30pm. A gang of four masked gunmen came to the shop by auto-rickshaw and opened fire on him. They fled the scene by the same three-wheeler. Critically injured, Ali Murtaza succumbed to his injuries on the way to Chittagong Medical College Hospital.

Following the incident, the agitated local people and BCL workers put up barricades on the

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12 NSI men sacked

UNB, Dhaka

The government has terminated services of a dozen assistant directors (probationers) from the National Security Intelligence "in public interest".

A notification issued on December 27 said 12 NSI probationer assistant directors were terminated from their services "for their poor performance in examinations and training".

They are Sheikh Golam Mostafa, Md Jamal Uddin, Md Ashraf Kabir, Proloy Kumar Joarder, Shirin Akhter, Mansur Ahmed, Biplobi Rani, Sheuli Badra, Samiran Halder, Sadhan Kumar Das, Md Bashiruddin and Nandan Kumar Banik.

FS leaves for Nepal

BSS, Dhaka

Foreign Secretary Shamsheer Mobin Chowdhury left Dhaka yesterday for Kathmandu to attend the standing committee meeting of South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC).

The three-day standing committee meeting begins in the Nepalese capital today.

The meeting will be followed by the two-day meeting of the SAARC council of ministers, beginning on January 2.

Textile and RMG sectors Crucial meeting today to resolve 3 major irritants

SHAHRIAR KARIM

An inter-ministerial meeting takes place today to work out a comprehensive plan for the textile and clothing sectors in the wake of the worst-ever export crisis caused by the recent global slowdown.

The meeting to be attended by textile, commerce and finance ministers, top economists and business leaders would also aim at hammering out differences of opinion between the textile and garment

sectors on various issues.

The meeting will mainly focus on three issues: the European Union's (EU) SAARC cumulation benefit, setting up of a central bonded warehouse and the country's request to the EU for relaxation of rules of origin for the export of readymade garment (RMG), according to sources.

For the last few years, the country's textile entrepreneurs and RMG manufacturers have been at loggerheads over these issues. While the

RMG lobby views that these would boost the country's apparel exports, the textile industry feels that these would see the fabric and yarn units shut down.

The meeting will take place at the conference room of the textile ministry.

Finance and Planning Minister M Saifur Rahman, Commerce Minister Amir Khosru Mahmud Chowdhury, Textile Minister Abdul Matin Chowdhury, officials of different ministries and sector corporations and leaders of the Bangladesh Garment Manufacturers and Exporters Association (BGMEA), Bangladesh Textile Mills Association (BTMA), Bangladesh Knitwear Manufacturers and Exporters Association and Bangladesh Specialised Textile Mills Association (BSTMA) are invited to the meeting.

"Hopefully, we would reach a consensus. We have to do whatever is good for the country," the commerce minister told The Daily Star yesterday, hoping that the two lobbies would thrash out an amicable solution.

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SI Abul Bashar

Suicide by Simi Cop arrested for negligence of duty

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A police officer of the Kilgaon police station was arrested yesterday on charge of neglecting his duties that led to the suicide of a female student at Khilgaon area in the city Sunday.

Sources said Sub-Inspector Abul Bashar was arrested following an order of Home Minister Altaf Hossain Chowdhury. The home minister visited the residence of Simi, a final year student of Narayanganj Institute of Fine Arts, who committed suicide after being

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JCD activists ransack 30 TTC rooms

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A group of activists of the ruling party backed student organisation Jatiyatabadi Chhatra Dal (JCD) ransacked about 30 rooms of the Teachers Training College (TTC) building after one of their comrades was beaten up by students of TTC yesterday.

Sources said students of TTC beat up a JCD worker, as he allegedly demanded toll from one of them. The JCD activist was identified as Emdad and a student of Dhaka College.

Later, Emdad informed his friends at Dhaka College about the matter following which a gang led by Kamal attacked the TTC building and ransacked furniture in most of the rooms on the second floor.

Police went to the spot after the incident and arrested Kamal, Zahid, Palash and Manik for their alleged involvement in the incident.

INSIDE TODAY

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On the brink Between the Lines Kuldip Nayar

Focus 5

Palestine: An SOS to the European Union
Letter from Europe
Chaklader Mahboob-ul Alam

	Sun Rises	Sun Sets
Dec 30		5-22 pm
Dec 31	6-41 am	

Prayer Timings		
Dec 30		
	Azan	Jamaat
Fajr	5-30	6-00
Zohr	12-45	1-15
Asr	3-45	4-00
Maghrib	5-25	5-30
Esha	7-15	7-45

Source: Islamic Foundation

BTTB's submarine cable project delayed by 6 months

'Inappropriate' consultant blamed

ABU SAEED KHAN

The much-coveted submarine cable project of the Bangladesh Telegraph and Telephone Board (BTTB) has been delayed by at least six months, mainly due to the authorities' lack of vision and selection of an 'inappropriate' consultant for it, sources said.

However, the BTTB is now evaluating the bids to roll out the first submarine cable system that would link the country to the information highway. TyCom of the USA, Alcatel of France and China Cable Company are vying for the contract.

Bangladesh is more than five years behind its neighbours to have terrestrial access to global connectivity. Bureaucratic bottleneck and technology-sceptic policy have long been hindering this project styled Bangladesh Submarine Cable Network (BSCN).

The BSCN project was supposed to be commissioned by end-2002. But it is now highly unlikely apparent that the project would be completed before June 2003 even if the best of efforts is given.

After a long delay the BTTB appointed a consultant in October to guide the government on the project. However, it is now being alleged that the consultant is 'unable to properly deliver' the results within the stipulated

Cops 'buy' freedom from terrorists!

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Outnumbered, outgunned and outmanoeuvred, Tejgaon police had to finally resort to negotiations with JCD terrorists to free 18 fellow policemen trapped inside a hotel during a fierce gunbattle Friday night between two factions of the ruling party backed student front over drug trade in Nakhalpara and Tejkunipara areas in the city.

Witnesses and police said two factions of the local JCD (Jatiyatabadi Chhatra Dal) fought a fierce armed battle Friday night in Nakhalpara and Tejkunipara areas in the city over control of drug trade there.

The feuding groups exchanged over a hundred

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JCD activists allegedly ransacked about 30 rooms at the Teachers' Training College in the city yesterday.

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