

## India agrees to talk duty-free access of 25 items: FM

UNB, Dhaka

India has agreed to discuss the proposed duty-free access of 25 categories of Bangladeshi items without linking it with other issues at secretary-level trade talks in Dhaka later this month.

The Indo-Bangla trade talks, earlier scheduled to begin December 26, were deferred as the Indian side regretted its failure to attend at the eleventh hour.

Foreign Minister Morshed Khan who had bilateral talks with his Indian counterpart Jaswant Singh in Kathmandu told reporters here yesterday that Bangladesh had requested for dealing with the duty-free access issue separately without linking it to other issues as a confidence building measure.

"Indian side agreed to do that ... Let's see the progress at the next secretary-level trade meeting" planned for the third week of this month, Khan said.

The Foreign Minister told a questioner that there had been free and candid discussion on all bilateral irritants with Jaswant Singh and both sides agreed to resolve them through negotiations.

Trade officials here said India preferred to talk on several trade issues linked with each other, but Bangladesh would like to stick to specific issues mainly duty-free access of its 25-category products to India.

An Indian trade bureaucrat, who visited Bangladesh last month,

proposed inter-linked agenda like duty-free access with transit or transshipment.

"Our request was to directly talk about the 25 categories ... We refused to link issues together or accept preconditions," a senior commerce ministry official told UNB.

Indian Prime Minister Atal Behari Vajpayee while visiting Dhaka in 1999 pledged to allow duty-free access of Bangladesh's 25-category items on non-reciprocal basis in a bid to reduce the yawning trade gap with India.

But India delayed the implementation of its Premier's pledge despite hectic lobbying by Bangladesh government and the sending of a list of items long ago.

The balance of trade between the two countries has always been in favour of India. Bangladesh suffered a deficit trade balance of US\$ 149.59 million in 1990-91 that rose to US\$ 771.25 million in 1999-2000.

Bangladesh's export to India rose to only US\$ 65 million in 1999-2000 from US\$31 million in 1990-91 while its imports shot up to US\$ 836.13 million in 1999-2000 from US\$ 180.65 million in 1990-91.

## Fresh agitation after Hasina's return: ALCWC

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Awami League would take up fresh agitation programmes after party President Sheikh Hasina returns from her foreign tour on January 12.

The decision was taken at a meeting of the AL Central Working Committee (ALCWC) at the party's Dhanmondi office last night with acting party president Abdus Samad Azad in the chair.

The impromptu meeting of the ALCWC was held against the backdrop of police baton charge on senior party leaders and former ministers during yesterday's hartal.

Expressing dissatisfaction at 'poor participation' of party leaders and workers in its programmes including yesterday's hartal, the ALCWC also decided to launch an organisational tour programme soon to boost the morale of party rank and file across the country.

The meeting took stock of the latest political situation in the country and expressed deep concern at 'infringement' on democratic and political rights of the people.

It also discussed preparations for observance of the anniversary of Bangabandhu's homecoming today.

## Porn video

FROM PAGE 12  
remand and he admitted his involvement in making porno for the cybernetic bazaar. He also named five others who helped him.

But, police declined to disclose their names "for the sake of investigation".

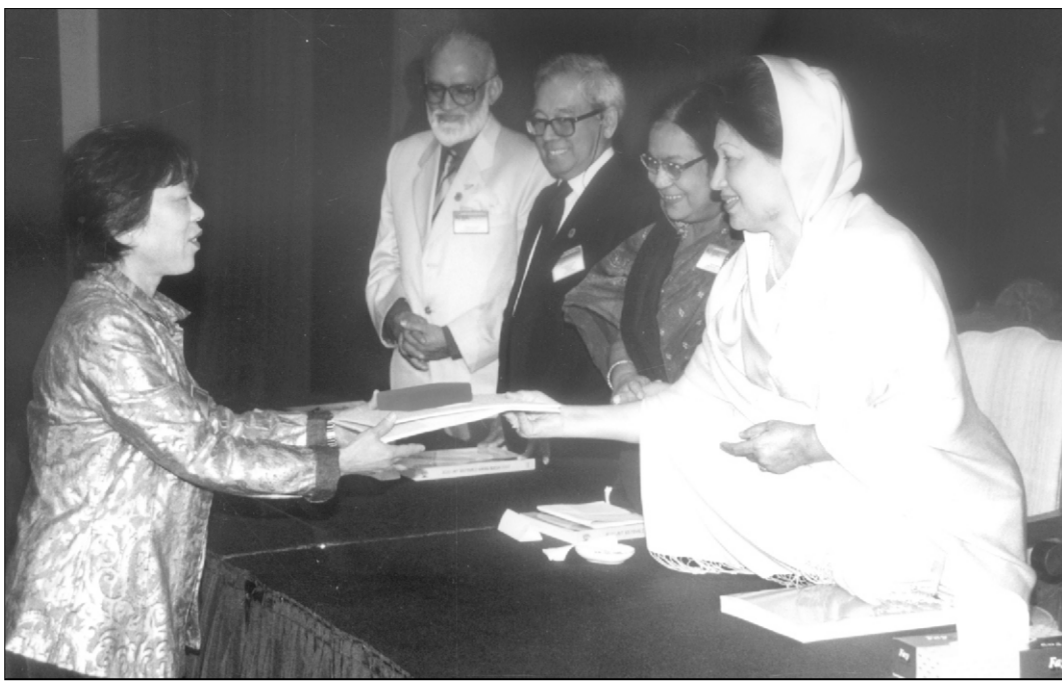
Police arrested him following a case filed with Ramna police by the sister of a victim.

Pintu, with the help of Imtiaz Ahmed Sumon, who resides in Los Angeles, USA, filmed some women in bed within the period of July-August-September of 1999.

"With the help of hidden camera, Sumon and his friends shot their intimate moments at the residence of Sumon and later marketed those through VCD," said a source preferring anonymity.

Pintu hails from Khulna and resided at Mirpur, sources said. But, following press report he went into hiding a month ago.

Two months back, DB police received an anonymous letter where one of the victims narrated how Sumon and Pintu committed the act.



Prime Minister Khaleda Zia distributes awards among winners at the 10th Asian Art Biennale she inaugurated in the city yesterday.

## Police besiege AL office

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processionists sat on the road in front of the Pir Yemeni Market.

After a few minutes, at around 10:20 am, policemen in riot gear led by ADC of Detective Branch Kohinur Mia swung on the sit-in demonstration, charging batons indiscriminately and firing tear gas shells, injuring the party leaders and some activists.

As the sit-in continued, suddenly two empty double-decker buses of state-run BRTC appeared there from the direction of Golap Shah mazar. Police were heard telling the drivers to run the buses through the sit-in.

The buses were just yards away when Motia shouted at the drivers not to "move an inch". A young AL activist lay on the road. Police lifted him by pulling the neck and started clubbing the AL leaders indiscriminately to clear the road.

The injured leaders then left the place and went to the party office. Party workers immediately treated them with ice bags and painkiller medicines.

Police later picked up from the spot three persons including Israfil Alam, Dhaka city unit general secretary of Sramik League, AL's labour front.

In an instant reaction after the incident, Nasim said, "After today's barbaric attacks, AL would not go to this parliament."

Motia told newsmen there that police attacked AL's peaceful sit-in without any provocation although there is no ban on holding meetings and processions.

Both the leaders said yesterday's "unprovoked action compelled the opposition to launch a movement to dislodge the government".

They wanted to know from the policemen on what ground they "laid a siege" to the AL office and barred party men from entering their office.

Policemen on the spot later acknowledged that there was no ban on meetings and processions but they were instructed by higher authorities not to allow such activities during hartal.

ADC (DB) Kohinur Mia, who was in charge of the police force at the Bangabandhu Avenue, later told newsmen there, "Police did not resort to indiscriminate baton charge. We just charged batons mildly to clear the road blocked by the AL leaders."

He said, "We asked them (AL leaders) to clear the road for vehicular movement. They declined and scolded us. Some of their activists showed unruly attitude and we took lawful action."

A few minutes prior to the action on the sit-in, police also clubbed and tear-gassed a pro-hartal procession near the Golap Shah Mazar.

After the incident, a group of female activists of the party led by Dhaka Bar General Secretary Mamtaujuddin Mehdi tried to enter the party office to see the injured leaders. Police chased them by firing tear gas shells.

Other than the Bangabandhu Avenue area, rest of city and most parts of the country were peaceful during the hartal hours.

Except auto-tempos and a limited number of buses and mini-

buses with less-than-capacity passengers, no other motorised vehicle plied the city streets during the hartal hours. However, rickshaws moved as usual.

All educational institutions, shopping malls and most of the private offices remained close in the city. Attendance was less than normal at government offices.

Movement of trains to and from the city was normal, railway officials said. Long-distance buses did not leave terminals in the city.

## Rangamati

Our correspondent reported that five AL activist and one activist of Jatiyatabadi Chhatra Dal, student wing of ruling BNP, were injured in a clash at Rangamati College during the hartal hours.

Police and witnesses said, machetes, cocktails, hockey sticks and brick bats were used during the clash between the pro- and anti-hartal activists.

## Netrokona

Hartal was observed in Netrokona district partially. Vehicles did not move in long-distance routes during the first three hours of the hartal. Offices functioned normally.

## Chittagong

BSS reported from Chittagong that the hartal hours passed off peacefully in the port city.

Activities at Chittagong port were normal.

Our correspondents reported from Rajshahi and Khulna that hartal was observed peacefully in the divisional headquarters.

## 11-party alliance condemns attack on deity

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Leaders of the 11-party yesterday strongly condemned the damage of Shanidever temple and demanded exemplary punishment of the culprits.

At a rally at Shaheed Minar in the city they termed the incident as a hurtful and shameful for the nation.

The rally was organised by the 11-party after its leaders visited the temple at Shakhbarbazar yesterday evening.

The leaders at the rally said that the incident was part of a planned aggression on minority communities unleashed by the anti-liberation force of Jamaat-Shibir after the October 1 election.

They alleged that the attack on the temple was the outcome of provocative remarks made by the Jamaat leader Delwar Hossain Sayeedi at Narayanganj three days ago.

They accused Sayeedi of ordering the attack on the temple and demanded his arrest and punishment along with others involved in the attack.

Among other 11-party leaders who addressed the rally were Rashed Khan Menon, Monjurul Ahsan Khan, Khalekuzzaman, Haji Abdus Samad, Mahmudur Rahman Babu and Bazlur Rashid.

## DCC dumping

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"There is a proposal for a 100-acre dumping site in Amin Bazar area but it is now gathering dust at the Planning Commission," the official said.

People in Kalyanpur area said illegal dumping sites are causing public nuisance and pungent smell from the wastes is filling the air, affecting their health.

A local DCC official said owners of private lands were paying money to conservancy officials to have their low-lying lands filled. It is less costly and land owners ignore that the waste dumping sites could generate dangerous gas pockets underground within years and cause explosions, damaging their buildings and other structures.

In Shashanghat area also, DCC trucks are dumping waste in a pond to fill it. There are several other similar sites in the city.

"None of these sites and also the one at Matwail have any environmental clearance," said a DCC official.

## Alam murder

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Investigation Officer of the case Mohammad Aktheruzzaman Bhuiyan said Dulal might be hiding somewhere in the city.

When contacted last night, Investigation Officer of the case Mohammad Aktheruzzaman Bhuiyan said Dulal might be hiding somewhere in the city.

His team is trying to track him down.

Dulal went to the residence of Saiful Islam, a neighbour of Alam, with a bag full of money and a blood stained shirt a day after the killings, he mentioned.

Alam and his housemaids Rahima, Sakhina and Kamala were killed at his New Jurain residence in Shyampur area on the night of January 2.

## Highway robbers

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Finally, the villagers surrounded the robbers near Boalsata bridge at around 9:30pm and started beating them with sticks, bricks and shovels. In a few minutes, most of the robbers were dead while some of them managed to escape.

Upon receiving the information, a police team from the Keraniganj Police Station reached the spot at around 10:30pm to find the six dead, aged between 35 and 40. They took the bodies to the police station at night. Later, the bodies were sent to the Mitford Hospital morgue for autopsy.

Police arrested Mostafa Chowdhury from the spot, suspecting his involvement in the robbery. Mostafa, hailing from Shibchar of Madaripur district, claimed himself to be a passenger of the robbed bus.

Police also recovered a Chinese Rifle and several lethal weapons from the spot.

Villagers said two more rifles used by the robbers were also found in the beel and handed over to the local UP member.

A case was filed with Keraniganj thana.

The villagers alleged that robbers were very common in the area and they guard their neighbourhood at night.

Many villagers said they were 'very happy' over the killings of the robbers.

"Now that we will have some respite," said Khorshed Mia of Boalsata village.

## IMF stance

FROM PAGE 1

get the standby support to the balance of payment at five per cent interest rate. This could later be converted into soft loans under poverty reduction strategy facility.

Meantime, both the World Bank and the IMF have taken a critical view of the report of the recently formed expert committee on reforms. They say the report is basically a compilation of earlier donors' reports and does not have any political will embedded.

## 3 US lawmakers hail Dhaka's moderate stance in world affairs

UNB, Dhaka

Three US lawmakers in separate letters to Prime Minister Khaleda Zia expressed their keen interest to help promote common interests of the two countries as they appreciated Dhaka's moderate stance in world affairs.

They are Joseph Crowley, Chairman of the Bangladesh Congressional Caucus, Benjamin Gilman, Chairman of the Congressional Committee on International Affairs, and Congresswoman Carolyn B Maloney.

A plaque has also been sent to the Prime Minister recognising Bangladesh as a moderate, democratic Muslim country.

The members of the US Congress in their letters congratulated Khaleda Zia on her party's overwhelming victory at the October 1 general election and her assumption of the office of the Prime Minister of Bangladesh.

Two US expatriates Golam Mehraz, President of the US-Bangladesh Friendship Society, and Gias Ahmed, Trustee of the society, who are on a visit to Bangladesh handed over the letters and plaque to the Prime Minister at her office yesterday evening.

They thanked the Prime Minister for constituting a new ministry on Expatriate Welfare and Overseas Employment and expressed their resentment over the "misleading statements" issued by some political leaders during their visit abroad.

"Against the backdrop of the volatile world situation," they said, "such practice will act contrary to long-term interests of the country."

Talking with the two, the Prime Minister urged them to work with utmost sincerity to protect and

uphold the interest of the country as well as to contribute to the development of their native land.

Political Secretary to the Prime Minister Mosaddek Ali was present.

## AL can't sit in JS with fascist Govt: Nasim

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Awami League lawmakers would not join the coming parliament session, party Organising Secretary Mohammad Nasim said yesterday.

"After today's police attacks, we can't go to the parliament," Nasim told reporters after police attacked AL leaders at Bangabandhu Avenue during hartal hours.

Referring to Prime Minister Khaleda Zia's recent call to the main opposition for joining the parliament session, he said, "We can't sit in the parliament with this fascist government."

Responding to a query, Nasim also said AL's participation in the January 17 parliamentary by-polls has become uncertain following yesterday's attacks.

"From today begins the movement to unseat this government," the former home minister stated.

In her reaction, AL leader and former agriculture minister Motia Chowdhury said, "In my 40-year political career, it never so happened that police clubbed leaders in a peaceful rally."

Motia said police prevented AL leaders and workers from exercising their democratic rights although there was no ban on meetings and processions.

She came down heavily on the government for besieging the AL office using police force and for not allowing partymen to enter the office.

## Waqar wrecks hosts

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lunched at 103 for three.

But the hosts completed their all too familiar collapse after the break, losing their last seven wickets for 20 runs.

Although Wasim Akram bowled only sixteen legal deliveries before limping off the ground with hamstring strain and pace demon Shoaib Akhtar stayed on the reserve bench, wickets tumbled at regular interval after Waqar won the toss and invited Bangladesh to bat.

The only high point in the Bangladesh innings was Habibul Bashar's 53. Mr Consistent of the international newcomers completed his eighth Test half-century with the help of eight boundaries in 107 minutes.

The dashing right-hander also featured in the highest stand of 63 runs for the fourth wicket with Aminul Islam, who made 25.

But once Bashar was spectacularly caught at mid-on by Danish Kanaria after playing early against a well disguised delivery from Waqar just into the second hour after the lunch break, Bangladesh's hopes of putting up a decent total went up in smoke.

Waqar, who bowled without success in the morning, then came close to a hat-trick dismissing his Bangladesh counterpart Khaled Mashud for a first ball duck.

But veteran Enamul Hoque denied the paceman from Punjab comfortably pushing the ball down to short mid-wicket.

However that could hardly deter the determination of Waqar who

mopped up the rest of the Bangladesh batting with clinical efficiency.

The 31-year-old exponent of the old-ball produced reverse swing time and again to baffle the lower order. Debutant off-spinner Fahim Muntasir played along the wrong line only to see his off-stump cart-wheeling.

Waqar also bowled Sharif in similar fashion and fittingly ended the Bangladesh innings by having Enamul caught in the slips by Inzamamul Haq.

Leg-spinner Danish, who has been the tormentor of Bangladesh in the Multan Test last year, evenly shared the other four wickets with Abdur Razzak.

The morning however looked bright for Bangladesh as they scored 59-2 in the first hour.

Mehrab's recall after three months ended on 11 when the right-hander offered a bat-pad catch to Shahdab Kabir at forward short leg. His opening partner Al-Shahriar looked impressive with four elegant boundaries through the mid-wicket region.

But Shahriar's habit of playing too much on the on side ultimately brought about his downfall. He was adjudged leg-before for 18.

Young Ashraf's one-day style cricket cost his wicket when he tried to clear the cover fielder of Kanaria, but only succeeded in offering an easy catch to Youhana. He made 27 off 31 balls that included three fours.

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## Stern meets PM

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cash-incentive programme as an alternative to the food for education programme.

He also appreciated the government's programmes to provide free education to female students up to the higher secondary level and a monthly stipend of Tk 65 to each of the girl students securing first and second divisions in the secondary level.

During the meeting, the Prime Minister detailed her 100-day programme and other reform measures to overcome the impasse inherited from the past Awami League regime.

She also focussed on the short- and long-term plans to strengthen the economy left shattered by the past government.

The PM sought World Bank's assistance in implementing reforms and development programmes of the government in various social and financial sectors for the welfare of the common people.

Khaleda Zia mentioned the development programmes undertaken in sectors like agriculture, rural development, power and energy, water resources, telecommunication and health, and hoped World Bank would render assistance for their implementation.

The WB executive briefed the Prime Minister on his visit to Bangladesh and his experience from meetings with some ministers and visits to a number of WB projects in Bangladesh.

He also praised the social programmes of BNP undertaken during 1991-96 period and its success in reducing the child mortality rate.

World Bank Country Director Fredrick T Temple, PM's Principal Secretary Dr Kamaluddin Siddiqui and ERD Secretary Anisul Haq Chowdhury were present during the meeting.

## Afghan meet

FROM PAGE 12

to British Prime Minister Tony Blair to commit troops to the ISAF depending on the progress of the UN Trust Fund, which will contribute towards the expenses of maintaining non-western troops in Afghanistan.

An agreement on the deployment of 4500 international troops in Kabul under the auspices of the ISAF was signed between British General MC Coll and Afghan interim minister Yunus Qanooni on January 5.

Bangladesh Permanent Representative in New York Dr Iftekhar Ahmed Chowdhury is currently monitoring the progress of the UN Trust Fund, sources said.

Bangladesh, one of the 24 countries to send representatives at the installation of the new Afghan interim government headed by Hamid Karzai, looks forward to participate in construction work and export economic goods including tea, which has a great demand in Afghanistan.

Several Bangladeshi companies and NGOs including BRAC are interested in participating in the reconstruction process of Afghanistan.

## Opportunity sans major outcome

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Musharraf extended his hand to Vajpayee before the TV cameras as the summit was being telecast live.

Vajpayee reciprocated the friendly gesture by taking the hands of his adversary into his own. Musharraf also repeated the act on the concluding day of the summit. He also had an unscheduled and unpublicised informal talk with Vajpayee.

The senior Indian leader however urged him to take measures against the terrorists who had carried out a suicide attack on the Indian Parliament last month, triggering the standoff along the Indo-Pak border and bringing the nuclear rivals close to war.

Vajpayee coolly reminded Musharraf to take actions against the terrorists while repeating his accusation against Pakistan of harbouring them.

They discussed some of the bilateral issues dogging the two neighbours. Khaleda Zia took up the issue of review of the Ganges water sharing treaty that was signed by her predecessor Sheikh Hasina in New Delhi in December 1996. The treaty provides for a review after two years.

The review was not carried out in 1998. Khaleda had made it an election pledge to raise the issue and the Kathmandu trip gave her that opportunity.

When the SAARC was born after a summit of South Asian leaders in Dhaka in December 1985, its charter forbade raising bilateral issues.

But bilateral issues nonetheless have ever since overshadowed the SAARC and its future, postponing several summits.

This time, the leaders at Kathmandu stressed the need for amendment to the charter allowing discussion of bilateral issues to ease tensions apart from the much-talked about issues of poverty alleviation, terrorism and trafficking of women and children, the issues that affect all the members.

Bangladesh leader, Prime Minister Khaleda Zia used the opportunity provided by the postponement to have a 45-minute meeting with Indian Prime Minister Atal Behari Vajpayee calling on him at his hotel suite.

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The Indian premier agreed to the initiation of a process to have the review as laid down in the treaty. Both sides also agreed to take up the issue of trade imbalance that

heavily favours India. Both leaders also invited each other to visit their countries at an appropriate time.

Khaleda also raised the issue of repatriating the Pakistanis stranded in Bangladesh since the War of Independence when she had a meeting with Pervez Musharraf. Musharraf, instead of rejecting the request, resorted to diplomatic parlance, saying that he would look into the matter after addressing the repatriation of some three million Afghan refugees now camped in Pakistan.

Maybe that is Pakistan's priority, but the tale of stranded Pakistanis or Biharis, some 250,000 of them living in filthy shanties without a future, has unfortunately failed to raise any sympathy in Pakistan.

Pervez Musharraf himself is a Muhajir or an immigrant whose family like the Biharis migrated to Pakistan from India after India was divided in 1947.

Although the 11th SAARC summit failed to achieve anything concrete, it did raise hopes that its leaders through dialogues would be able to make dents on the solid wall of poverty plaguing the region, the home to a large segment of the world's population, make peace with each other to improve their lives and foster cooperation to make the dream of a European Union or ASEAN-type of grouping in South Asia come true.