

WEF blasts US for backing Israel

AP, New York

They came in solidarity with this terror-wounded city.

But since they arrived, speaker after speaker at the World Economic Forum has lambasted America as a smug superpower, too beholden to Israel at the expense of the Muslim world, and inattentive to the needs of poor countries or the advice of allies.

As the forum wrapped up its five-day session Monday, some of the criticism has been simple scolding by non-Western leaders. But a large measure has come in public soul-searching by U.S. politicians and business leaders.

U.S. Sen. Hillary Clinton, D-N.Y., cited a global poll that characterized Americans as selfish and bent on accelerating the global economy for their own benefit.

"We've not done our fair share to take on some of the global challenges" like poverty, disease and women's rights, Clinton said Sunday. "We need to convince the U.S. public that this is a role that we have to play."

Microsoft Corp. Chairman Bill Gates warned that the terms of international trade were too favorable to the rich world, a disparity that feeds resentment.

"People who feel the world is tilted against them will spawn the kind of hatred that is very dangerous for all of us," Gates said. "I think it's a healthy sign that there are demonstrators in the streets. They are raising the question of 'Is the rich world giving back enough?'"

Held in the Swiss ski resort of Davos in its first 31 years, sponsors decided to move this year's forum to New York to show support for the city after the Sept. 11 terror attacks.

About 2,700 corporate and political leaders, clergy and celebrities came to discuss the world's problems, and have spent much time dissecting U.S. foreign policy, its possible role in breeding terrorism and the potential harms of globalization.

In a curious convergence, the titans of business and politics at the meeting have seized on many of the same socially liberal issues that they have been accused of ignoring at past gatherings.

The forum's agenda may have taken some of the steam out of street protests, which were sparse except for Saturday's turnout of about 7,000 demonstrators, and has even paralleled issues under discussion at the World Social Forum, an anti-globalization conference under way in Porto Alegre, Brazil.

In Brazil, speakers on Saturday condemned the Israeli occupation of Palestinian lands, with one comparing the practice to apartheid-era South Africa's creation of "Bantustans," which were economically poor areas designated as home-lands for blacks.

In New York, guests heard a similar message Sunday.

Zbigniew Brzezinski, former U.S. national security adviser, warned that Palestinian violence risked evolving into large-scale urban terror, while Israel's response "will slide into a pattern of behavior that resembles the South Africans."

However, Israeli Foreign Minister Shimon Peres said Sunday he saw "a ray of hope" for Mideast peace. New talks with the Palestinians could lead to a cease-fire, and mutual recognition of a Palestinian state and Israel's right to exist, he said.

JS session

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A bewildered speaker tried to tame the minister. "Yes, the parliament is functioning very effectively with the assistance of Barrister Nazmul Huda," said the speaker who is also a barrister.

Nevertheless, the communications minister did not speak on the matter for which he sought the floor by pressing button.

A third barrister, Law Minister Moudud Ahmed then appeared on the scene. "That the button system is still working has been proved when Mr. Huda could switch his button off," he said in an attempt to generate humour in the clamorous house.

Industries Minister MK Anwar, who got the floor after several attempts, requested the speaker to allocate a time slot to the lawmakers to speak on point of order to avoid disorder every now and then. "The MPs need to raise certain issues and they should be given the chance to do so, although such issues are not always covered by the provision of point of order."

The speaker should accept a point of order only if it involves violation of the constitution and the parliamentary rules, Salahuddin Quader Chowdhury, the parliamentary affairs advisor to the prime minister, also reminded the speaker.

In reply, the speaker said he only listened to the issues raised on point of order and accepted only the valid ones. He also advised the members to raise such matters while participating in general discussion on a thanks motion on the presidential speech.

The Huda-Sircar tussle took place when a number of treasury bench members were shouting to speak on point of order, a provision that allows the MPs to speak about

violation of the constitution or the parliamentary rules. But in practice, the lawmakers are allowed to raise various issues on point of order.

The speaker then gave the floor to BNP legislator Moshir Rahman who was among a group of angry lawmakers in the treasury bench. But Rahman did not raise anything relating to the constitution or the rules of procedure. What he said were all praises for Prime Minister Khaleda Zia for her over-the-air address to the nation on Monday. "This has been one of the best addresses in the world," he said thanking the prime minister for her polite speech admitting to failures, mistakes and shortcomings.

As Rahman finished, the speaker invited Shahjahan Choudhury of Jamaat-e-Islami to speak. Chowdhury strongly protested a recent government circular temporarily disassociating the MPs from projects involving Food for Work and Test Relief.

The speaker then shouted at Monirul Haq Chowdhury who was crying for a chance to speak. "I carried out responsibilities of as many as six ministries, was a senior lawyer of the Supreme Court and am now running the parliament strictly adhering to the constitution and the rule of procedure of parliament," a furious Sircar said forcing Chowdhury to sit down. This also frustrated KJSJL's lone MP Abdul Quader Siddiqui who was on his feet to get the floor.

Earlier, BNP MP Rashiduzzaman on his point wanted to know from the chair about the lawmakers' position on the warrant of precedence, alleging that the government officials often undermined them.

"You are above the secretaries," the speaker ruled.

UZ system

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other member, Health Minister Dr Khandaker Mosharraf Hossain, was not present at the meeting, but he had already expressed a positive view on the issue.

A new proposal for direct election of the members of Upazila Parishad was also discussed by the committee yesterday but no decision was taken in this regard.

The meeting discussed in detail the four-tire local government system, power sharing between Member of Parliament and Upazila Chairman, recommendations on local government system made by Nazmul Huda (now communications minister) commission in 1992 and other related issues.

Meeting sources however said Nazmul Huda initially reiterated his views against the Upazila concept, arguing that introduction of this system would definitely create a political conflict between Upazila Chairman and MP.

But other members noted that reintroduction of Upazila system is one of the important election commitments of BNP and it would not be at all wise to ignore this.

They mentioned that a large number of party leaders are preparing for Upazila polls and many MP nomination seekers were given assurance that they would get party nomination for Upazila chairman-ship.

Moudud Ahmed stressed reintroduction of Upazila system

soon as it would decrease people's rush to the capital city. Decentralisation of the administration will greatly relieve the central administration of pressure and 'tadbir', he felt.

A proposal from Dr Moyeen Khan for using of the party's election symbol by the Chairman candidates in Upazila was not accepted at the meeting.

Abdul Mannan Bhuiyan told the meeting, "We do not want to politicise the local governments. A conflict and division would be created at the local level if election symbols of parties are used in local bodies' polls. It would also hinder development at the local level."

The meeting also discussed strengthening of other tiers of local governments and accepted some recommendations of Huda Commission regarding Gram Sarkar and Union Parishad.

Introduction of Gram Sarkar system came up for discussion. Discussion on Zila Parishad election did not proceed as a case in this regard is pending with the higher court.

The cabinet committee will meet again in a couple of days to prepare final recommendations about the entire local government system for placing it at the cabinet meeting.

Cabinet Secretary Dr Akbar Ali Khan and Local Government Secretary AYBI Siddique were also present at yesterday's meeting.

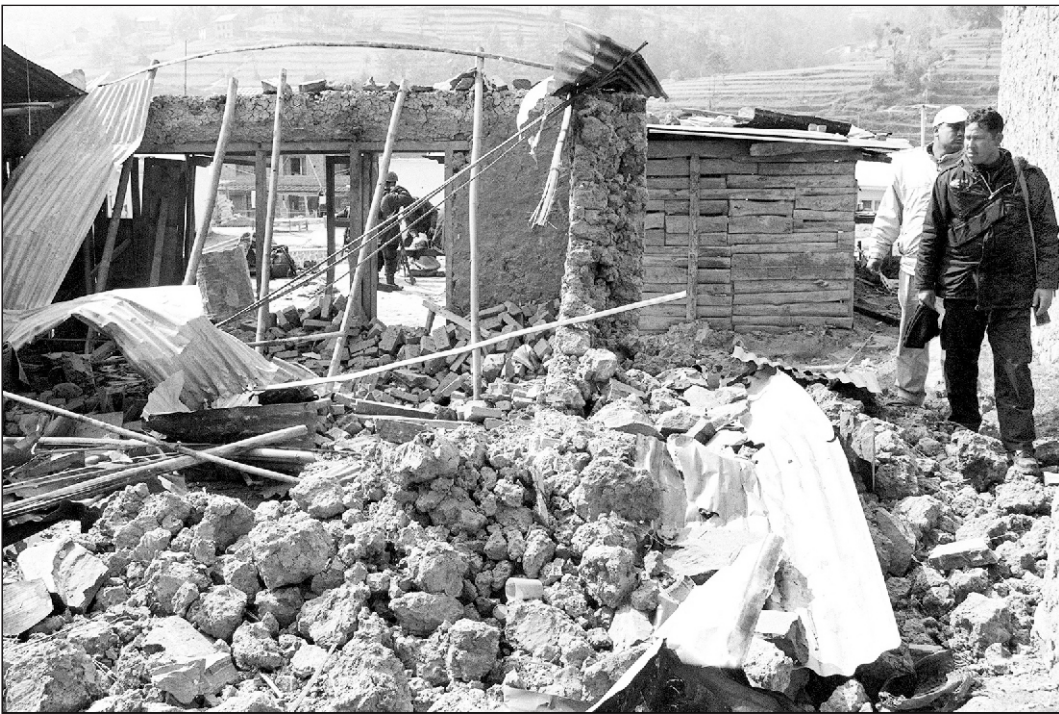


PHOTO: AFP

Police personnel inspect the damaged police post in Bhakundabesi, 120 kilometres east of Kathmandu, yesterday. At least 16 policemen and seven Maoist rebels were killed in the bloodiest attack by rebels on the police post.

AL mulls shadow govt

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ference, which lasted for more than an hour, that she would form more committees to strengthen the shadow government.

As regards the joining of parliamentary session, Hasina said that the opposition would join it, if a congenial atmosphere was created.

"The achievements she projected in her speech on the 100-day run-in programme were initiated during our rule," Hasina told the newsmen adding the 110-day government has achieved no success so far.

Accusing the BNP-Jamaat coalition government of lack of political goodwill and worthiness to run the country sensibly, the opposition leader said the prime minister also admitted that the people are not in peace -- the "simple testimony" for which she also thanked the prime minister.

She blasted the government for deterioration of law and order. Although the government has identified 23 top terrorists, it could not arrest a single terrorist in its first 100 days, she remarked.

Quoting yesterday's newspaper reports, the opposition leader painted a gloomy picture of law and order situation across the country. "The situation is contrary to what the prime minister has said."

The prime minister has talked about the security of countrymen, but she could not manage the security of her own party activists, she went on.

At least 20 activists of the BNP and its front organisations were killed as a result of intra-party feud, she quoted newspaper reports as saying.

About transfers and forced retirements of government officials from the administration, police department and armed forces, the opposition leader alleged that the BNP-Jamaat coalition government in the name of neutralisation of administration was removing the pro-liberation forces.

She said that three senior army officers were given forced retirement and several others are likely soon. "The government is filling the administration with party people and their relatives," she complained.

Referring to price hikes of oil, gas, electricity, water, edible oil and other essentials, Hasina said her government left office, keeping the economy relatively sound.

She said the BNP, while in opposition, criticised borrowings from the banks, but now it has borrowed more than Tk 3,800 only in the last 110 days into its tenure until yesterday. She also blamed the new government for misappropriation of funds.

Hasina strongly criticised the 'double-standards' of the BNP government in taking action against corruption saying the government on one hand implicates the opposition leaders in graft cases and releases the ruling party men, including the prime minister, who were charged with corruption, on the other.

Citing an example, the opposition leader said a charge-sheeted accused in a corruption case filed during the period of the past BNP government has been appointed minister for law, justice and parliamentary affairs.

About communalism, Hasina strongly protested prime minister's statement that blamed the opposition leader for identifying the "Bangladeshi people as communal in the world community".

Deflecting the allegation, Hasina said she mentioned the presence of 'Taliban supporters' in the present government but did not identify the people as communal and supporters of Taliban.

She urged the prime minister to refrain from misleading the people with fabricated information.

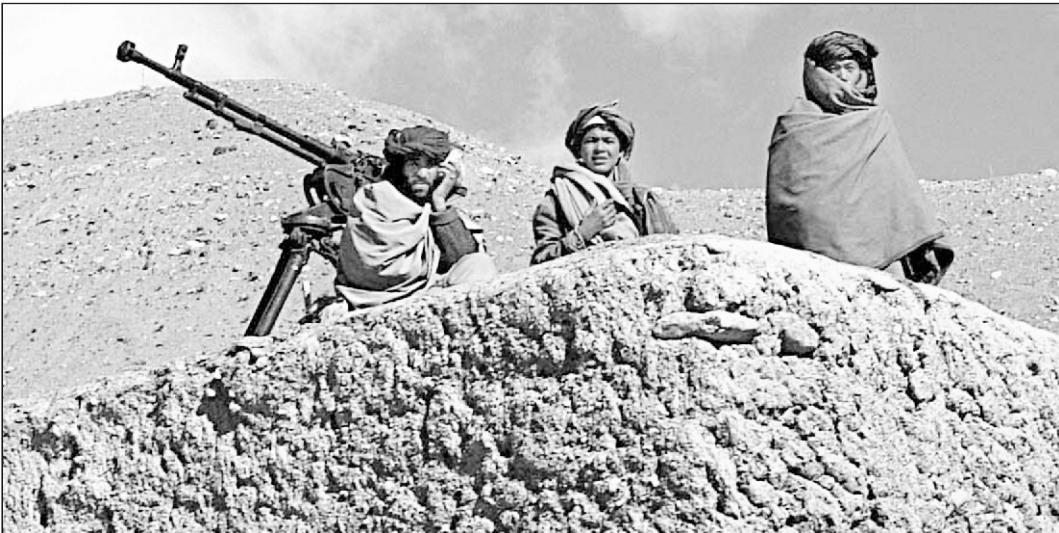


PHOTO: AFP

Northern Alliance soldiers under Bamiyan province leader Khalili Karim man a post yesterday. Interim leader Hamid Karzai hoisted Afghanistan's new flag Tuesday marking a new era, and called for a national army to reign in warlords who control much of the country.

Shady trade in the shadow

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looking girls and men show sure signs of sleepless nights. Some elderly women cook food on a makeshift firewood cooker nearby.

The trade continues overnight on the 23.20 acres of the rare green space in the city. At daybreak, the commercially important nearby Gulistan area begins to emerge from its night-time slumber and the 'night traders' of the park retreat to their corners and drift off to sleep.

Hundreds of commuters, unable to find public toilets in the area, enter the park. Many sleeping rough on the pavements at Gulistan sneak into the park and respond to the call of nature.

Each of the remaining 1,459 trees in the park is a sorry sight. Every day, hundreds of people enter the park for one simple purpose -- to relieve themselves. Human urine makes the soil under trees wet with its pungent smell pervading the air.

There is no toilet in the entire area, said Mohammad Nazrul Islam, who used to run an illegal shop on the southern edge of the Osmany Udyan. Hundreds of people every day use the park as a toilet.

"The only toilet in the area is inside the Golap Shah Mosque, which is open only to worshippers. To keep the park clean, you immediately need at least two public toilets," Islam said.

Commissioner of the Ward No. 56 Chowdhury Alam said he pursued installation of a toilet around the park several times, but the mayor turned down several sanitation schemes.

"There is no public toilet around Gulistan and all my efforts went in vain, as the mayor and the former chief engineer, Shamsul Haque Bhuiyan, opposed my scheme for

public toilets," Chowdhury Alam said.

The DCC has ten full-time cleaners to keep the Osmany Udyan clean. Roni Das, a young cleaner of the DCC, was found helping his grandmother sweep a small part of the park on Sunday morning. Roni said it is impossible to stop people from urinating in the park. He said dozens of prostitutes and drug-addicts live in the park, and make it dirty with rubbish.

Squatters of the Osmany Udyan do their washing in the pond of the park. The pond water looks black and infested weeds and insects. Three sewerage outlets, one of them from the Bangladesh Secretariat across the road, flow into the pond round-the-clock.

The cash-hungry Dhaka City Corporation did not overlook the financial potential of the pond. The pond was leased out for three years almost a year ago for Tk 55,000 on an association called the Mahanagar Chhinomul Babshayee Punarbasha Bohumukhi Samobay Samity for fish cultivation.

To make things worse, the association is now cultivating African catfish in the water. Every day drums of discarded animal giblets, dead animals and other food leftovers are dumped into the pond as fish feeds.

On the western side of the pond, Titas Gas has raised boundary walls to grab a large chunk of the parkland. Tucked away in the walls is the Zaman Construction Company that has built a large shed for the construction work of the Police Control Room on the adjacent land owned by the Bangladesh Railway.

The old police control room has been shifted elsewhere. The area will be converted into a car pool for

government offices, said a security guard. Alarming is the fact that government vehicles regularly crisscross the Osmany Udyan through the western part, defying the ban on the plying of vehicles.

The look of the Osmany Udyan on its eastern side is probably at its worst. Although the DCC has recently demolished the illegal party offices and shops on the parkland, the entire area looks hardly fit for anything other than toilets.

The 150 trees chopped down last year by land grabbers still lie abandoned on the ground. The illegal concrete sheds remain locked. A signboard put on by an association of freedom fighters claims a chunk of the parkland, while the association's office has been set up only yards away.

Chief Engineer of the DCC Brigadier General Mahbubur Rahman Khandakar said the Engineering Department is responsible for repair works in the park. Recently, the iron fences around the park were repaired, he said.

Thanks to repairing of the fences, buses and other vehicles cannot enter the park anymore, Fazley Elahi, chief estate officer of the DCC, said.

When asked about the chopped-down trees, Elahi replied that these were under the protection of police as ordered by the court.

"We are thinking of auctioning the trees," he said.

Asked whether they have any plan to protect the park, the estate officer said that a delegation from the Citizen's Committee has recently agreed with the mayor on taking over the park and monitoring its maintenance together with the DCC.

"I think it is a good idea," said Fazley Elahi.

Shazneen case

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Rahman, Chairman of Transcom Group was raped and murdered at their Gulshan residence on April 23, 1998.

Latifur Rahman, filed a murder case, with Gulshan thana on April 24, 1998, accusing Shahidul Islam alias Shahid, a domestic help at his house.

Mojibur Rahman filed a rape case accusing seven people including Shahid with Gulshan thana after six months of investigation into the murder case.

All the accused -- Hasan, Shahid, Badal, Shaniram, Minu and Parvin -- were present in the court during the hearing.

Advocate AB M Sharfuddin Khan Mukul, Mahbub Ahmed, Sheikh Baharul Islam, Ali Hossain and Saima Khanam appeared for the state while Advocate Mohammad Ali, Mosarraf Hossain Kajol and Saika Ferdous for the accused.

The murder case, pending with the first Additional Metropolitan Sessions Judge's Court, Dhaka was earlier stayed by an order of the Supreme Court.

The order will remain valid till disposal of the rape case.

The trial of the rape case began at the special court on July 9, 2000.

4 appointed

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Ministry of Establishment and Deputy Secretary of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs Ahmed Fazlur Rashid to the Local Government Division.

Project Director of just-abolished Jamuna Bridge Division Benu Gopal Dey has been transferred as deputy secretary to the Ministry of Industries.

Two held

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the money and shot him.

Meanwhile, Sabujbagh police are yet to arrest anyone in connection with the killing of owner of a long-distance bus services Jubo Dal leader Abu Nasir Mohammad Towha. Towha, also general secretary of Sayedabad Bus Owners Association was shot dead in front of his residence at Sabujbagh in the city on Monday.

Sabujbagh police said they are investigating the case.

Buddhadev

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of foreign agents operating out of Bangladesh are unfortunate as they run counter to fostering better Bangladesh-India relations."

Reuters news agency in a recent story from Guwahati quoted Mr Bhattacharjee as alleging that Pakistan's Inter-Service Intelligence was sponsoring armed groups in Bangladesh.

The spokesman also refuted a report carried by Kolkata-based Ananda Bazaar Patrika that militants have set up bases in the Chittagong Hill Tracts.

PM: China

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relations between the Chinese Communist Party and Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP) would be strengthened.

BNP Secretary General Abdul Mannan Bhuiyan also led a party delegation to China in December 2000.

The visit of the Chinese delegation is taking place as part of the exchange.

As part of the long friendship, Chinese Premier Zhu Rongji visited Dhaka in January. During the visit seven memoranda of understanding were signed between the two sides which further expanded the economic, trade and cultural relationships.

Khaleda said apart from party delegation, there would be exchange of youth and child delegations between the two countries.

Cai Wu extended greetings from President Jiang Zemin and other leaders to Khaleda and said the Chinese leaders were eagerly waiting for her visit to Beijing.

The Chinese Vice President on his own behalf as well as on behalf of the Chinese leadership congratulated Khaleda and her party on the victory in October 1 parliamentary election.

During the tour, the Chinese delegation visited Chittagong and Cox's Bazar.

3 murdered

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Unidentified young man was shot dead at Indira Road in the city's Tejaoga area yesterday afternoon.

The man aged about 27, was shot in his head.

Tejaoga police recovered the body at about 2.30 pm and sent it to the DMCH morgue for autopsy. A case was filed with Tejaoga police station, but none was arrested in connection with the murder.

Meanwhile, a student of Ideal School and College was shot by unidentified hoodlums in front of his Rampura residence yesterday evening.

Salaudinn, 17, was shot in the right thigh while talking with his elder brother Nurul Islam at about 2 pm. He was admitted to DMCH.

Nigerian riots

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died were drowned or trampled to death in a stampede from showers of shrapnel that drove many into the filthy waters of drainage canals. Authorities said they were preparing to bury hundreds of unclaimed bodies.

Shahriar's reception

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Committee, is facing sedition charges and was released from the Dhaka Central Jail recently.

The unidentified rickshaw-puller sustained fatal head injuries in the attack and died from his wounds at the Chittagong Medical College Hospital (CMCH) in the evening.

The police and eyewitnesses said the rickshaw-puller was injured in front of the press club while he was passing through. At that time, miscreants allegedly belonging to the Jamaat-backed committee hurled a bomb from a speeding microbus on him.

The reception started amidst a tense situation as activists of so-called 'Rashtrodrohi Prothirodhi (traitor resistance) Action Committee', backed by Jamaat-e-Islami and its student wing Islami Chhatra Shibir, staged demonstration to subvert the reception. The civil society here under the banner 'Shahriar Kabir Civic Reception Committee' organised the event.

The Jamaat-Shibir-backed committee had earlier declared Shahriar Kabir unwanted in Chittagong and said that they would resist the reception from being held.

At one stage, while the reception was going on, police chased the agitators in front of a petrol pump just 200 yards away from the Chittagong Press Club. Three bombs exploded at the time leaving three youths injured, witnesses said.

About 200 police personnel were deployed in and around the venue anticipating trouble.

Later on, the agitators regrouped at the same place and staged fresh agitation. Police did not take any action this time, though.

The Chittagong University Teachers' Association (CUTA) President Dr Iftekharuddin Chowdhury chaired the reception.

Former ambassador and central Awami League leader Ataur Rahman Khan Kaiser, columnist Abed Khan, Resident Editor of Prothom Alo Abul Momen, President of Chittagong Union of Journalists (CUJ) Mohammad Idris, General Secretary of Bangladesh Mohila Parishad in Chittagong Noorjahan Khan, President of Bangladesh Arthoniti Samity (economic association) Prof. Mainul Islam, leader of Hindu-Bouddha-Christian Oikya Parishad Rana Das Gupta, and Komol Sen Gupta of Association of Development

AB flight fiasco

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Department.

Hundreds of pilgrims were thrown into a state of uncertainty as the company failed to operate its promised flights by a chartered aircraft since January 28.

Mir Nasiruddin said the company had obtained permission from the Civil Aviation Authority of Bangladesh (CAAB) to operate Hajj flights on certain conditions. It was not allowed to start the flights despite arrival of its chartered aircraft, a Tri-Star with a capacity of carrying 360 passengers, on Saturday due to its failure to furnish necessary documents of obtaining landing rights in Jeddah from Saudi authorities and over flight rights from Indian authorities.

The aircraft which arrived on Saturday did not have the registration number that was shown on the documents furnished by the AB. That was the reason the Indian authorities did not grant it over flight rights.

The state minister further said investigators from the ministry would also look into the process of permission given by the CAAB in early October last and who are responsible for it. Since it was given during the caretaker government's tenure, he was never told of it.

Asked how could he absolve himself of responsibility since the CAAB is under his ministry, he said he could not.

Reminded about his assurance

Agencies of Bangladesh, among others, addressed the civic reception.

Abul Momen referred to Shahriar Kabir's contribution as a valiant freedom fighter during the War of Independence and later as an advocate for human rights.

"Shahriar deserves special mention for his contribution in the movement against

the razakar and al-badr, collaborators of Pakistani occupation force," he said.

Abed Khan termed Shahriar a 'torch-bearer' of human rights and said he stood firm against state repression on humanity.

Other speakers regretted that the state was victimising Shahriar Kabir simply because he had raised his voice against the repression.

In reply to the warm reception, Shahriar Kabir expressed his resolve and vowed to continue his fight against all kinds of oppression and repression in the society.

He alleged that BNP-led four party coalition government is plotting to turn Bangladesh into a country that resembles Pakistan and Afghanistan.

While narrating some horrifying incidents of repression on the minorities as well as opposition leaders and activists across the country, Kabir said never before had the nation experienced such atrocities.

Iranian FM

FROM PAGE 1

During his Dhaka trip, he will meet Prime Minister Khaleda Zia and hold official talks with his Bangladesh counterpart M Mosharraf Khan.

The talks will cover bilateral, regional and international affairs. The two countries are expected to discuss ways of increasing bilateral trade.

The two-way trade between the two countries is in the neighbourhood of US\$ 40 million in favour of Bangladesh.

Iran had earlier expressed its desire to cooperate in the energy sector and expressed its interest in setting up a oil refinery, but no progress