

Foreign secretary to make 'goodwill visit' to India next week

DIPLOMATIC CORRESPONDENT

Foreign Secretary Shamsheer Mobin Chowdhury, Bir Bikram will be flying to Delhi next week on what is being termed a "goodwill visit" to hold talks with his Indian counterpart Chokila Iyer.

The two foreign secretaries will discuss matters of 'bilateral interest' on the afternoon of February 18.

This would be the first high-level meet between top officials of the foreign ministry of the two countries since the BNP-led coalition government took office.

The upcoming meet of the foreign secretaries of the two countries is outside the normal structured format of foreign-secretary level talks where all outstanding issues are discussed. The talks are normally held every other year and hosted in turn by each country.

The last foreign secretary-level

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PHOTO: STAR

Artistes of Agnibina render songs at a function organised by Sammilito Sangskritik Jote at the Central Shaheed Minar yesterday to mark the 50th anniversary of the 1952 Language Movement.

Three gunfights in last 3 weeks

DU halls tense as armed JCD cadres tighten grip

SHAMEEM MAHMUD

Feuding factions of the Jatiyatabadi Chhatra Dal (JCD) have tightened their grip on different halls of Dhaka University with a flurry of firearms.

The factions of the JCD, the student wing of the ruling BNP, are getting primed with guns for consolidating their positions on the campus, sources said.

Armed cadres of the JCD stand on guard on rooftops and in corridors or at the gates of halls. They lock main gates of the halls after 11.00pm and keep keys with them.

General resident students are victims of an evil politics and 'occupy-the-halls policy' of student organisations, many of them said.

"It is not an easy task to recover illegal arms and arrest the cadres, as these activists are sheltered by their godfathers of the ruling party," a high official at the Dhaka Metropolitan Police (DMP) said on condition of anonymity.

When law enforcers went to the halls for raids, they

found the main gates locked and had to wait outside for several hours, perhaps because the information was leaked, the official said.

Sensing police presence, the cadres stash away their arms, he added.

In last two weeks, at least three incidents of gunfight occurred among the JCD factions.

On January 31, the Asad group backed by Asaduzzaman Asad, organising secretary of the DU unit of JCD, captured Haji Mohammad Mohsin Hall by driving the Shishir faction out of the hall. The group traded at least 35 rounds of gunshots with police.

Police backed up by the paramilitary BDR raided the hall and recovered only six rounds of bullets.

Later, police arrested Asad for his alleged involvement in the incident.

The same day, police recovered a gun and a dozen of machetes from Surya Sen Hall in a raid.

On January 29, supporters of the Laltu group tight

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Repeated failure to hold talks fuels border tension

DIPLOMATIC CORRESPONDENT

Delay in holding an overdue meeting between chiefs of border forces of Bangladesh and India is preventing the resolution of several thorny border issues, often leading to civilian casualties.

A meeting of the Director General (DG) of Bangladesh Rifles (BDR) and the DG of Border Security Force (BSF) of India was earlier scheduled to be held last month in Dhaka beginning January 7. However, following a request from the Indian side, the meeting was postponed indefinitely although its agenda had already been finalised, sources said.

In fact, January 7 was the second

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	Sun Rises	Sun Sets
Feb 12		5-52 pm
Feb 13	6-33 am	

Prayer Timings		
Feb 12		
	Azan	Jamaat
Fajr	5-40	6-10
Zohr	12-45	1-20
Asr	4-15	4-30
Maghrib	5-56	6-00
Esha	7-30	8-00
Source: Islamic Foundation		

12 killed in violence, 50 abducted in CHT since Nov

NURUL ALAM, Chittagong

At least 12 persons were killed and many others injured in incidents of violence that jolted the scenic Chittagong Hill Tracts (CHT) in the last three months, police sources said.

Besides, about 50 people were abducted during the period, they said.

About 25 armed clashes took place in the CHT, most of those in Rangamati and Khagrachhari districts.

Police said out of the 12 killings, seven took place in November last year, three in December and two in the first week of this month.

The sources said most of the incidents of violence took place due to rivalry between activists of Parbatitya Chattagram Jana Sanghati Samity (PCJSS) which supports the CHT peace agreement and United Peoples Democratic Front (UPDF) which opposes it.

In the latest incident of violence, a UPDF activist identified as Rupayan Kisa was gunned down at Mohalchhari in Khagrachhari last week.

UPDF blamed PCJSS for the killing but PCJSS denied the charge.

The sources said that such frequent incidents of violence have triggered unrest in the CHT.

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Ctg port workers call off strike

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Ctg

The CBA and non-CBA workers organisations at Chittagong port yesterday called off their tomorrow's strike programme following a fruitful discussion with port officials on their demand for incentive bonus.

The trade union leaders called off the proposed five-hour strike as the port authorities assured them of taking necessary steps to meet their demand.

The leaders, however, urged the authorities to fulfil the demand before the holy Eid-ul-Azha. Otherwise, they threatened that the workers would go strike later.

Senior officials of Chittagong

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Miscreants take away Tk 50,000 from cattle trader in city

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Gulshan Police yesterday morning rescued a cattle trader and four day-labourers in an unconscious state from a passenger bus after miscreants served them intoxicated drinks and allegedly robbed the trader of Tk 50,000.

The incident took place when cattle trader Amiruddin, 50, and the four day-labourers Abdul Hamid, 50, Azizul Haq, 50, Ali Hasan, 45, and Golam Rabbani, 40, were on their way to Nilphamari.

Amiruddin, who hails from Nilphamari, was going there to buy cattle for the upcoming Eid. The

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PHOTO: STAR

Extortionists pulled the shutters down on shops at the Gulistan Hawkers Market yesterday when shopkeepers refused to pay them toll.

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Four more contractual appointments

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The government yesterday made four more contractual appointments in the administration, according to official notifications.

With these, contractual appointments rose to 56 in last four months of the government.

Faruque Alamgir, Deputy Director General (News) of Bangladesh Television and Nirmal Chandra Sarkar, Member of Rural Electrification Board, were given one year contractual appointments.

Dr Mohammad Sultan Mohiuddin, Director of the Directorate of Livestock was given two years' contractual appointment.

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Indrani's death remains shrouded in mystery

QUAZI AMANULLAH, Khulna

The suicide of teenaged schoolgirl Indrani Shikder of Mollahat upazila in Bagerhat is now being capitalised by a section of vested interests to create communal tension for their political gains.

Indrani, 17, a student of class ten at HMSM High School in Mollahat committed suicide by taking poison at her house on January 20.

Her neighbour Mithu Lal Mondol on January 23 raised allegations that a teacher at the school is responsible for creating a situation which compelled her to commit suicide. Mithu Lal, aged about 25, propagated that Indrani had no other alternative but to kill herself, being extremely fed up with teasing by the teacher who gave a proposal to marry her. Frequently, she abstained from attending classes to get rid of teasing by that teacher.

But police are yet to ascertain the reason behind her

suicide. They recovered some hand-written letters from Indrani from her house and also from the possession of Mithu Lal and seized those as evidences. Mithu was arrested on the night of February 7. Earlier on that day, Indrani's body was exhumed from the grave in presence of the DC and the SP of Bagerhat. Autopsy of the body was done in the evening.

Later, a judicial confession by Mithu was recorded by Magistrate Mohammad Mohsin at Bagerhat. In it, he admitted Indrani as his wife and said, "I married her on May 23 in the year 2000,"sources said.

When contacted, the SP said, "We are also looking for (Indrani's) school teacher Tushar Hira, who has been absconding since January 22, although there has so far been little evidence with us for proving his involvement in the situation compelling Indrani to commit suicide,"

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PHOTO: STAR

These camels at the Gabtali cattle market are among the 200 such animals imported from India. Prices range from Tk 20,000 to 50,000.

PM's relief fund: AL lawmakers dropped from allocation list

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Lawmakers belonging to opposition Awami League were ignored in the recent distribution of relief materials from the prime minister's relief fund among the destitute through MPs.

Discrimination was found in an allocation list of relief goods placed before the parliament yesterday although Abdul Mannan Bhuiyan, Minister in Charge of the Prime Minister's office in Parliament, told the House that the government believes in balanced development and distribution.

According to the list, the government distributed 48,000 pieces of blankets, 72,100 pieces of sweaters and children's dresses and 1,80,500 pieces of sarees. The ministers got the highest allocations, followed by BNP lawmakers. The two factions (Ershad and Manjur) of JP which are components of the coalition and several independent lawmakers got the least allocations.

Blankets were given to 171 lawmakers, winter clothes to 222 and sarees to 214 for distribution among

the destitute.

The government also distributed money among the destitute, the minister informed the House while replying to a question from Prof Shahidul Islam of BNP. He however could not place the district-wise lists of the people who got money.

The relief goods and money were distributed on the occasion of the holy Eid-ul-Fitr.

Golam Habib Dulal, a lawmaker belonging to Ershad-led faction of Jatiya Party, during the question-answer session blasted the government for not distributing relief materials among the destitute in his constituency.

To another question, Bhuiyan said the prime minister's relief fund is empty now. Further distribution will take place subject to the availability of funds.

UNB adds: Bhuiyan said the previous government left the Prime Minister's Relief Fund exhausted and at present there is no money for donation.

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