

C'wealth action against Harare unlikely before election



REUTERS, Coolum (Australia)

The Commonwealth is unlikely to take immediate action against Zimbabwe even though its head has said the situation in the southern African nation was deteriorating as it goes into a general election.

The 54-nations, mainly ex-British colonies, are split over whether to suspend Zimbabwe and impose sanctions, like those set by the European Union and United States, as its leaders prepare to hold a four-day summit in Australia starting today.

Commonwealth Secretary-General Don McKinnon declined to reveal what a pre-summit meeting of foreign ministers yesterday had agreed to recommend to the leaders over Zimbabwe, where President Robert Mugabe has been accused of trying to rig a March 9-10 presidential election. But he hinted no punitive measures would be taken until after the ballot.

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Foreign Office minister of State Baroness Amos (R) sits with fellow members of the Commonwealth Ministerial Action Group (CMAG), Nigeria's Sule Lamido (2nd to R), Malaysia's Special Envoy of the Prime Minister Tan Sri Dato' Musa bin Hitam (2nd to L) and Canada's David Kilgore prior to the start of their meeting on the Harare Declaration ahead of this week's Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting (CHOGM) in Coolum, Australia yesterday.

Hasina begins 4-day tour of N-dists today

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Leader of the Opposition in Parliament and Awami League President Sheikh Hasina today begins a four-day tour of six northern districts.

Her tour will cover Natore, Rajshahi, Naogaon, Bogra, Rangpur and Sirajganj districts, party sources said.

Other central leaders of AL will also visit different districts this month as part of a party organisational tour.

Hasina will address a public rally at Sherpur in Bogra today. Later on the day she will meet family members

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Terrorists ransack houses of 5 AL men in Shariatpur

UNB, Shariatpur

Terrorists beat up five Awami League supporters and ransacked their houses at Atong village in Sadar upazila on Thursday night.

Police said the terrorists stormed into the houses of Rab Hawlader, Makbul Hawlader, Ali Akbar Hawlader, Abul Hawlader and Ali Hossain Hawlader at about 9pm. They also looted valuables from the houses.

The victims took shelter in another place.

Police visited the spot.

Gunbattle between outlawed parties Villagers flee houses as horror grips 2 unions in Khulna

QUAZI AMANULLAH, Khulna

Night falls with horror in the six unions in Mohishguni and Mokampur unions where most people except elders have left

Was the gunbattle between activists of Purba Banglar Communist Party (PBCP) and Biplobi Communist Party (BCP) triggered by a trick done by the Additional SP of Khulna?

So claimed the wife of a leading cadre of BCP while talking to this correspondent yesterday.

Armed cadres of PBCP and BCP are harboured by local leaders of ruling BNP and Opposition Awami League respectively for use in political purposes, local people claimed. They were used in the last election, they said.

PBCP cadres fired at least 40 blank shots early morning yesterday at Jelepara of Mohishguni Union although Section 144 is in force with deployment of BDR and extra police.

Mohishguni is not only one of strongholds of PBCP in Rupsha-Terokhada area but also the native village of its top leader Abdur Rashid, who reportedly masterminded all criminal operations in most areas of South-Western districts in the last three years and snatching of another top outlaw Tapan from police custody in the Judge Court last month.

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9 Jubo League, BCL men held at Bogra

UNB, Bogra

Police in a pre-dawn raid yesterday arrested nine Jubo League and Chhatra League men, including a ward commissioner, following Thursday's clash between BNP and Awami League activists at Sonatola.

The arrested, Jubo League leader Shamsuddin Sheikh Helal, ward commissioner of Bogra Municipality, Syed Shahin Ahmed Tuku, Shahidullah, Bidyut Kumar, Ekram Hossain Munshi, Shamsul

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Young man murdered in Mymensingh

UNB, Mymensingh

A young man was stabbed to death at Lawari village in Fulpar upazila on Thursday night.

Police said Abdul Karim, son of Shamsul Haque, was killed over a dispute between two groups of villagers centring Azan from a local mosque.

The followers of Suruj Munshi, muazzin of the mosque, attacked the house of Shamsul Haque and stabbed his son Abdul Karim as he tried to resist them, locals said.

Karim succumbed to his injuries on way to Mymensingh Medical College Hospital. A case was filed in this connection.

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A S M NURUNNABI

Dhaka seems to fall under a spell of work abstention mainly on big religious occasions. In the case of a big festival, the spell continues for quite some time, say, no less than a week. Shorter durations of such work abstention for one reason or another are also considered part of this culture.

This characteristic feature of metropolitan life is widely in evidence for any city dweller, who chooses to stay back in the city without becoming part of the mass exodus which takes place on the eve of the festivals.

During the spell of work abstention, largely due to the mass exodus of city dwellers, a dramatic change takes place in the whole urban panorama. It is as if a magician, by exercising his magical powers, throws the city life into a stupor. The once-bustling city centres, throb-

bing with intense activity and energy in diverse fields lose much of their hectic pace; most of the shops and commercial establishments keep their shutters down. Except for limited movements of motor vehicles and rickshaws, the main city roads look somewhat deserted with the disappearance of jostling crowds and horrendous traffic jams.

Such a departure from the normal pattern of city life proves so attractive to one normally exposed to the furor of civic life that one feels like attempting to experience a dose of unusual peace and tranquility of

the city environment a day or two after a big festival. This is possible if one takes a solitary ride on a rickshaw or a car through the previously congested roads like the Mirpur road, Elephant Road, Shahbagh Avenue, Topkhana Road, North South Road, etc.

The picture is, of course, a transitory one, staying only for a day or two after the end of the big festivals. The city life is reactivated gradually as more shops begin to open, more vehicles start plying the roads and the city dwellers, after enjoying their holidays in their

respective village or town homes, trickle back to the city.

Some may feel that most city dwellers take a relatively long time to resume their normal activities after enjoying the holidays following the big festivals. Whatever the substance of this feeling may be, the reality is that a vast majority of city dwellers are village-based. Rooted in villages, people engaged in various occupations in the city, make a beeline in large numbers for

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DOWN TO EARTH

Work abstention syndrome



PHOTO: AKM MOHSIN

Fishermen in the city's Swarighat sort out frozen fishes imported from Myanmar and India.

Exotic fish dish...

Hilsa, ruhi, even the koi now comes from abroad

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Fish is an inseparable menu on the Bangalees' dish and the most important source of animal protein for the average Bangladeshi, too.

But drying up of rivers, disappearance of ponds, wetlands and rapid water pollution have all led to the decline of fish population. The result is a rise in demand for imported fish and a change in the Bangalees' taste.

The growing demand for fish has prompted fish traders of age-old wholesale market at Swarighat on the bank of the Buriganga to import fish from neighbouring India and Myanmar.

On top of the list are hilsa, ruhi and pangas (fillet) from Myanmar. Carps like ruhi, katta and pabda are imported from India. Even small fishes like koi, shingi, and magur (cat fish) are also coming from India.

Sea fish from the Bay of Bengal and the coastal rivers of the Sundarbans are also coming daily to the city to meet the ever-increasing demand.

Swarighat importers say local production including that of hilsa is too inadequate to meet the demand in Dhaka city and the areas close by, and even northern Bangladesh. Nearly 1.3 crore (13 million) people now

live in the city, and to cater to such a huge market where demands are growing everyday the traditional traders and aratdar of Swarighat are resorting to import, say the traders.

But the importers face problems in the form of poor transportation and packaging. From Myanmar fish are brought by boat and unloaded on the coast of Cox's Bazar, mainly at Teknaf, the southeastern most town of Bangladesh, bordering Myanmar.

The imports from Myanmar are very crudely packaged and kept fresh by ice on bamboo baskets. These are then put on Dhaka-bound trucks or on boats for Chittagong. But the delay by traffic snarls at the entrance to the capital often leaves the ice melting and fish on the rot, said Abdul Mia, a long-time trader at Swarighat, who feels bitter about the losses on each consignment he has to count.

The demand for fish from Myanmar is growing in the city because of the tastes of carps and pangas which are grown naturally there. But the fish from India is not so much popular because of the artificial rearing. Fish

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No action yet against 264 presses at fault

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The deputy commissioner's (DC) office of the Dhaka district administration is acting to "punish" 264 printing presses under a directive from the Directorate of Films and Publications (DFP) for their alleged violation of the Press and Publication Declaration and Registration Act 1973, officials of the district administration claimed.

But the DFP officials categorically denied having given any such directive to the DC's office. They said the whole thing might be a case of 'forgery'. The director general of the DFP told The Daily Star last week that his office had not given any such instruction.

A source in the DFP believed some low-level employees might have initiated the move to extract some benefits. He said there had been some fraudulent moves in the past, which were ultimately foiled by some officials in the department.

An official at the DC's office said the DFP sent the list of 264 printing presses in the city to the DC's office recently and asked it to take punitive actions against them 'for violating Clause 24 of the Press and Publication Declaration and Registration Act 1973' because the additional district magistrate issues licenses to the printing presses.

Clause 24 requires the presses to keep the DFP constantly posted about what periodicals, weeklies,

monthlies, yearlies or books they are printing by sending it four copies of each publication, they said.

With the official mandate, the DC's office is now moving in to cancel the licenses or impose hefty fines on the presses allegedly at fault. The deputy commissioner last week admitted to have initiated

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Housewife gangraped at Rajshahi

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Rajshahi

A housewife was gang raped at Khulpara in the city on Thursday night.

Police said, four youths -- Tuhin, Majid, Saidul and Deldar -- stormed into the house of a day labourers Harun-ur-Rashid. They confined Harun in another room at gun point and raped her wife.

Harun somehow escaped and informed the police about the barbaric act over phone. Police rushed to the spot and caught one of the four rapists.

Medical test of the victim was done in Rajshahi Medical Hospital yesterday.

A case has been registered with Boalia thana in this connection.