

Dhaka unlikely to join Afghan peacekeeping

MANWARUL HAQ

In what could be considered a turn around, Dhaka is unlikely to participate in the Afghan peacekeeping process by committing troops, sources said.

Although the government earlier expressed great interest to play a leading role in peace-keeping in the war-torn country and to participate in reconstruction programmes, policy planners are now learnt to be in a dilemma on the issue.

As early as on January 3, during British Prime Minister Tony Blair's visit here, Dhaka expressed its willingness to send troops under the auspices of the United Nations. Britain's initiative led to the setting up of the special peacekeeping group in Kabul.

Bangladesh now holds the number one position in global peacekeeping.

It is learnt that a section of policymakers in the BNP-led coalition government, particularly a major partner in the coalition, is against involving troops in that country.

This group is against sending any kind of assistance to Afghanistan, except humanitarian.

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People and colleagues of journalist Harun-or-Rashid (inset) parading the Khulna city streets carrying the coffin yesterday to protest his murder.

PHOTO: QUAMRUL ISLAM

Partymen trying to blur identity of Mahima rapists?

NAZRUL ISLAM AND ANWAR ALI, from Puthia, Rajshahi

Ruling party stalwarts in Rajshahi are allegedly trying hard to conceal political identity of the criminals who gang-raped schoolgirl Mahima at Kathalbaria.

Prior to the home minister's visit to the victim's family on February 28, they had also pressurised Mahima's father not to disclose to journalist and other visitors his and the culprit's political affiliations for the sake of his "safety and justice", sources alleged.

But, Mahima's brother Jahangir, an Awami League worker, while addressing AL chief Sheikh Hasina's public rally on March 2 at Puthia, said that terrorists belonging to ruling BNP gang-raped his sister and compelled her to commit suicide. He said they did this heinous act as a political reprisal and demanded their trial.

According to the sources, seven

of the nine FIR-named accused in the Mahima rape and killing cases are directly linked with ruling BNP and the rest two with Jamaat-e-Islami.

Police so far arrested six of the accused, including one accused in the gang-rape case. They said they are trying to nab the rest three accused in the gang-rape case, who are absconding since Mahima committed suicide on February 19.

Of the arrested six, four - Uzzal, Khalil, Mosharraf and Jahangir -- were placed on five days' remand, which will end today. Two others -- Sekendar and Motaleeb -- were sent to Rajshahi Central Jail.

Police sent evidences of the case and the negative of the photo of the rape scene for chemical examination and are expecting the reports in a day or two. Puthia thana police recovered those after filing of

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Police have so far arrested three persons in connection with the murder of journalist Sheikh Harun-ar-Rashid Khokan, crime reporter of The Daily Purbanchal, was gunned down by unidentified assailants in Khalishpur area at about 8-10 pm on Saturday. He was going to his office riding a motorcycle.

Autopsy of Harun's body was done by Dr. Martuza of Khulna General Hospital. Three pellets of bullets were recovered from his body. The pellets have been seized as evidences.

After autopsy, the body was brought to Khulna Press Club where hundred of people from all walks of life paid their last respect to slain journalists.

His namaz-e-janaza was held at Khalna Shaheed Hadis Park after Zohr prayers. It was attended, among others, by leaders of all political parties, lawyers, physicians and top ranking officials of district and police administration including police commissioner and DIG of Khulna Range.

Mister Morol, brother-in-law of slain journalist, has filed a case with Khalishpur thana as complainant naming none as accused. OC

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After namaz-e-janaza, the body

BNP, Jamaat bare their differences

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The BNP and its partner in the ruling coalition, Jamaat-e-Islami, had a heated debate in the Jatiya Sangsad yesterday over a government statement on the communal violence in the Indian state of Gujarat.

The BNP-Jamaat dispute aside, an intra-BNP conflict also marked the day's session. The House also debated the legality of the statement.

Finance Minister M. Saifur Rahman issued the statement yesterday expressing the government's deep concern and shock at the communal violence in India.

"The cruel incidents that led to a huge loss of lives and damage to properties have cast a slur on humanity and are condemnable," Saifur read out the statement on behalf of the government.

It hoped that the Indian government would take speedy, stern and

effective measures in checking the spread of the communal strife and that communal harmony would soon return to India.

The official statement on the Gujarat issue sparked off a multi-dimensional debate in the House, the first one being on the process of issuing it.

Speaker Jamiruddin Sircar allowed Saifur to issue the statement, suspending the question-answer session, a process that was termed unprecedented by many including Law Minister Moudud Ahmed.

Deputy Speaker Akhtar Hamid Siddiqui also shared this view and assured the House of avoiding such a practice in the future.

Saifur's statement came minutes before the one-hour question-answer session was due to end. The statement over, Speaker Sircar resumed the question-answer

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Another tale of rape and murder

NAZRUL ISLAM and ANWAR ALI, from Natore

Alleged BNP-backed terrorists killed another teenager after gangraping her in a village here.

Sabina, 15, daughter of late Mokkel Ali of Poalsua Daripara village in Gurudaspur, was gangraped twice with only 19 days apart -- on February 9 and 28.

Sabina, who sought trial of the culprits, was murdered being a victim of the rapist's vengeance.

The local hoodlums hung her body from a treetop in front of the rapist's house in Shiduli village to flaunt their power that anyone demanding justice must meet with the same fate.

On February 9, Sayem, a BNP activist, raped Sabina at her house taking the advantage of absence of her mother and elder sister, sources said.

At around 8.30pm, the BNP activist equipped with a firearm forced his way into her house.

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Can we afford to leave the LDC now?

Syed Muazzem Ali

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Saifur hints at substantial ADP cut

Japan economy bottoming out: Takenaka

	Sun Rises	Sun Sets
Mar 4		6-03 pm
Mar 5	6-17 am	

Prayer Timings

Mar 4

	Azan	Jamaat
Fajr	5-30	6-00
Zohr	12-45	1-15
Asr	4-15	4-30
Maghrib	6-07	6-12
Esha	7-30	8-00

Source: Islamic Foundation

Gujarat violence dying away

Activists being moved out of Ayodhya

AFP, Ahmedabad

India sent additional troops to Gujarat state yesterday to help mop up remaining pockets of sectarian violence after days of fearsome bloodletting left nearly 500 dead.

There were no immediate reports of any overnight unrest in the state which had witnessed India's worst communal riots in nearly a decade following the massacre on Wednesday of a trainload of 58 mostly Hindu activists.

Defence Minister George Fernandes, who has been overseeing the deployment of around 3,000 troops in four cities since Friday, said another full brigade was being

Curfews were still in place in some quarters of Ahmedabad, but the situation was slowly edging back to normal with vehicles and residents out on streets still littered with

burned out cars, stones, shattered glass and other reminders of the previous days' carnage.

Home Minister L. K. Advani arrived in Ahmedabad yesterday to tour some of the worst-affected areas.

The army had been called out in Gujarat after the state authorities were pilloried in the national press for failing to take swift and sufficient preventive measures to curb the violence after the initial train massacre.

Despite isolated incidents in

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The rich urged to tear down trade barriers

AFP, Coolum, Australia

Commonwealth leaders have called on rich member countries to tear down trade barriers and work to help eradicate poverty for all its 1.7 billion people.

Globalisation and how best to channel its benefits to developing countries, who make up the bulk of the 54-nation body, has emerged as a dominant theme at a meeting of Commonwealth Heads of Government here which is set to issue a declaration later.

Conference spokesman Joel Kibazo said the leaders had yesterday discussed the key issue of market access for developing nations in their last session, before they went into a retreat here, in a measure of the importance the issue is being accorded here.

Even the location of the talks, in a tiny but affluent seaside resort more used to hoards of surfers and tourists than visiting heads of state and packs of journalists, has served the underscore the huge gap between rich and poor.

Ugandan President Yoweri Museveni summed it up yesterday when at the launch of a new investment fund for Africa he accused developed countries of over-eating and over-consuming.

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