

Intrusion, killing of Bangladeshis figure at border talks

DIPLOMATIC CORRESPONDENT

The spate of killing of innocent Bangladeshi civilians, cross-border terrorism and intrusion are among the issues taken up at a high level coordination conference between Bangladesh Rifles (BDR) and Border Security of India (BSF) that began in the city yesterday.

A total of 90 Bangladeshi civilians were killed by the BSF since April last year.

The three-day conference is being held at the BDR headquarters at Peelkhana.

Director General (DG) of BDR Major General Rezzakul Haider is leading a 20-member Bangladesh delegation at the talks while DG of BSF Gurbachan Jagot is leading a 12-member Indian team.

BDR Deputy DG, sector commanders, directors and staff officers and representatives from home and

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AL to stage hunger strike defying ban

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The Awami League (AL) is set to go ahead with its mass hunger strike programme at the Osmany Udyan today, defying a government ban on any gathering there.

The AL's scheduled programme is to protest the repeal of the Father of the Nation's portrait law, and 'misrule and persecution' by the ruling coalition.

The Dhaka Metropolitan Police last night prohibited all kinds of rallies, meetings, processions and demonstrations at the Osmany Udyan from 6:00am to 8:00pm. The AL announced last week to hold its hunger strike programme during 9:00am-6:00pm at the same venue.

An emergency meeting of the AL presidium resolved shortly after the prohibition, coming barely 12 hours before the hunger strike was due to begin, that it would go ahead with its programme what come.

The DMP said the restriction has been imposed, fearing breach in law and order at the Osmany Udyan because of the mass hunger strike.

"We'll carry on our planned programme at any cost," AL Presidium Member Abdul Jalil told The Daily Star after the meeting. He also strongly condemned the

government action, terming it a denial of constitutional right.

The AL announced the protest programme on March 14 also to protest the withdrawal of official security of Hasina, breakdown in law and order, large-scale terrorism and extortion allegedly by the government activists, alleged political and religious persecution by the government and price hike of essentials.

Leader of the Opposition and AL chief Sheikh Hasina will lead the hunger strikers. The nine-hour programme will begin at 9:00am at the Osmany Udyan. All the 58 lawmakers and other central leaders of the main opposition party are scheduled to participate in the mass protest while representatives of various organisations and individuals are also expected to join it.

Originally, the AL chose the Paltan Maidan for the hunger strike, but the government refused permission to hold the protest at the traditional venue for political programmes.

The mass hunger strike comes three days after the government scrapped the law enacted by the previous AL government, making it mandatory for government

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57 Feni AL men surrender to court, 14 granted bail

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Feni

Fifty-seven leaders and activists of Awami League, Jubo League and Chhatra League surrendered en masse to the District Magistrate's Court here yesterday.

They were accused in 17 cases including Chandrapur killing case.

The accused include Farooq Hossain Swapan and Jahangir. They were earlier sentenced in absentia to five years imprisonment by the court.

Magistrate Khodeja Akter granted bail to 14 out of 57 surrendered to the court.

The accused along with their supporters entered the court at about 10:30 am.

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Indo-Bangla trade talks on Apr 8-9

DIPLOMATIC CORRESPONDENT

The long overdue commerce secretary-level talks between Bangladesh and India will now be held in Dhaka on April 8 and 9.

The newly appointed Indian commerce secretary is scheduled arrive in the capital on April 7 at the head of a high-level delegation, sources said yesterday.

Both sides are expected to discuss trade and economic issues. Bangladesh is likely to push for duty-free access of 25 categories of exportable at the talks.

Act scrapping display of portrait becomes a law

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The new bill scrapping an act for mandatory display of portraits of Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman in public offices has become a law with the presidential approval yesterday.

President AQM Badrudduja Chowdhury also gave his assent to another bill and accordingly, the government released gazette notification. The other bill that received presidential seal is the Dock Workers (Regulation and Employment) (Amendment) Bill 2002.

The government will start removing portraits of the country's architect, assassinated in a military putsch on August 15, 1975, from government, semi-government and autonomous offices from tomorrow, sources said.

The Jatiya Sangsad, leaving main opposition Awami League (AL) MPs, passed the Preservation and Display of the Portrait of Father of the Nation (Repeal) Bill, 2002 on March 21 amidst boisterous opposition protests.

The previous parliament during the reign of Awami League govern-

ment passed an act making display and preservation of the portrait of the Father of the Nation in public mandatory.

The passage of the bill prompted the AL to agitate in the streets and on the parliament premises. A "mass hunger strike" at the Osmani Udyan held out an olive branch to the demonstration the passage set in motion.

Immediately after the bill was passed, Prime Minister Khaleda Zia held out an olive branch to the main opposition when she proposed an alternative act for display of por

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Govt now for 'slim' cabinet Several ministers may be axed, 'massive' reshuffle in portfolios likely

STAR REPORT

Several ministers are likely to be dropped because of their "poor performance" as well as pressure both from in and outside the ruling coalition to downsize the council of ministers.

Besides, there may be a "massive" reshuffle in portfolios to bring dynamism in the administration.

Sources said BNP policymakers are now unanimous on reducing the number of ministers, state ministers and deputy ministers to a maximum of 45 from 60 due to criticism at home and abroad.

The prime minister and the policymakers in ruling BNP are not

happy at the performance of ministers and state ministers for home, environment and forest, housing and public works, civil aviation and tourism, energy and mineral resources, health and family welfare, and youth and sports.

There is also continuous pressure from donor countries and agencies.

Dr Abdul Moyeen Khan's refusal to accept a new ministry and nomination of Fisheries and Livestock Minister Sadeque Hossain Khoka as a mayoral candidate for Dhaka City Corporation polls accentuated the move for the changes, they said.

Khoka may resign from the cabinet after March 30, the last date

for withdrawal of candidature, although it is not mandated by law.

The sources said there has long been a move to bring change in the home ministry, but most of the senior and experienced ministers declined to take the charge.

They said most of the state ministers, except a few, have proved to be incompetent as "they lack administrative capacity and knowledge". Besides, most of the state ministers have no specific assignment or portfolio although about six months have passed after takeover by the

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PHOTO: STAR

Hatir Jheel, one of the few remaining wetlands in the city, is up for grabs thanks to a Rajuk deviation from Dhaka Master Plan.

Another wetland under threat Rajuk once again deviates from Dhaka Master Plan

MORSHED ALI KHAN

The Rajuk has once again flouted the Dhaka Master Plan, changing land-use pattern of the Hatir Jheel, one of the few remaining wetlands in the city, to accommodate a university, a five-star hotel, condominiums, office blocs, and apartment buildings over an area of 13 acres.

BRAC and Capital Properties have been given the go-ahead to construct two massive complexes on the ecologically important site along the Begunbari canal.

Experts fear that dozens of developers and influential individuals, who have long been eyeing the

237-acre Hatir Jheel, will soon join in.

Rajuk officials, however, claim that they have considered all legal and environmental aspects before changing land-use pattern of the Hatir Jheel and the Begunbari canal from "retention point" to "mixed use", which would allow land owners to build almost anything in the area.

"We have changed the pattern with the precondition that there must be enough space for drainage of rainwater," said Chief Town Planner of the Rajuk Kazi Golam Hafiz, as he showed this correspondent a colourful design of the whole plan.

But the Dhaka Metropolitan Development Plan or Master Plan says that the entire Hatir Jheel must be preserved as an open space.

It is categorically mentioned on pages 46 and 56 of Volume 2 of the plan that adequate measures must be taken to prevent filling up of the area to maintain its efficacy as a retention point.

The plan also says that the Hatir Jheel, which also includes the Begunbari canal, could be developed into a centre of recreation by integrating the Gulshan Lake with the Begunbari canal and effectively controlling development of the entire zone.

It also points out that 34 acres of land in the area have been illegally encroached upon at different isolated pockets. No development should be allowed outside this already encroached area because the Hatir Jheel must be kept for retaining millions of gallons of the city's rainwater.

The plan cautions that if the Hatir Jheel is filled up, water logging in the city will worsen.

Rajuk officials claimed they have not ensured any right of land by changing the land-use pattern and said Capital Properties and BRAC would soon submit a construction

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Hearing on Alamgir's bail petition today

COURT CORRESPONDENT

The Chief Metropolitan Magistrate's Court, Dhaka will hear the bail petition of Dr Mohiuddin Khan Alamgir today.

Alamgir, a former state minister for planning, was arrested at ZIA on his return from Singapore on March 15 under Section 54 of CrPC.

He will also be produced before the court during the hearing.

The Investigation Officer (IO) of the case sent Alamgir to the Dhaka Central Jail on March 22 without producing him before the court on expiry of a two-day remand on March 21.

As per law, an accused must be

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The 'invisible' criminals Identified terrorists filed nomination papers from secret hideouts, police say

ABUL KALAM AZAD

As massive bloodshed during the Dhaka City Corporation polls is feared, the police claim that none of the criminals, who have filed nominations for the post of ward commissioner, could be arrested as they are operating from secret hideouts.

"A criminal can file his nomination paper from the jail," Inspector General of Police Modabbir Hossain Chowdhury told The Daily Star, "There is no legal bar on it unless he is a convict."

"But a criminal is a criminal. And we are committed to arrest them irrespective of their political affiliation," Modabbir noted.

The police IG claimed that all the notorious criminals,

who filed nominations with the Election Commission, did so through 'third persons'. "If they are seen in the public, we would arrest them instantly," he added.

However, various newspapers reported that some of the criminals submitted nomination papers in person.

"The police are checking on the claims," the police chief said.

Out of the 1036 nomination papers filed for 90 DCC wards, more than 270 were for identified top criminals of the city. While many of them are accused in multiple sensational murder cases, they are now using political identity as their shield.

Sources said these criminals are already in hostile

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Announcement

This week's Star Lifestyle has been held over due to newspaper holidays on March 25 and 26 marking Ashura and the Independence Day. We regret inconvenience to our readers.

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BATEXPO begins RMG gets PM's full backing



PHOTO: STAR

Police stop a procession in Shaheed Minar area from marching toward Chittagong WASA office yesterday demanding adequate supply of water to the city dwellers. Chittagong Nagarik Udyog organised the procession.

Forex smuggling case: Nasim's bail prayer rejected

COURT CORRESPONDENT

The Metropolitan Sessions Judge's Court, Dhaka yesterday rejected the bail petition of Bahauddin Nasim, special assistant to Awami League chief Sheikh Hasina, in foreign currency smuggling case.

Judge Ahmed Jamil Mostafa passed the order following a criminal appeal by the defence lawyers.

In its order, the court mentioned that the charges brought against Nasim were primarily proved.

It said the case is at a primary stage of investigation. So, the petition for bail is rejected.

The defence lawyers submitted a

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UP chairman shot dead in Khulna

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Khulna

Yusuf Ali Molla, 40, chairman of Bhandarkot union in Batiaghata upazila, was gunned down last night.

The slain UP chairman was a leader of BNP Batiaghata unit.

According to police, unidentified assailants swooped on Yusuf while he was taking tea at a roadside tea stall at about 8 pm.

They shot him in the chest and head. He died on the spot.

The alleged killers gave several death threats to the UP chairman during last three months.