

## India walks out

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different non-tariff and para-tariff barriers raised by India and the latter's blocking entry of Bangladeshi goods to its market even after getting concessions under SAPTA agreement.

Dhaka pointed out how luxury tax was imposed by different Indian state governments on Bangladesh's soap, shirts, melamine, cosmetics and other consumer products, which have good demand in the Indian market.

However, the Indian negotiators said they cannot do anything since the federal government cannot dictate the state governments.

At this point, the Bangladesh side said how the Indians would feel if Bangladesh's different district administrations impose different luxury taxes on Indian goods.

And, when Dhaka wanted to discuss the modalities for the removal of the barriers to the Indian market, New Delhi refused to discuss and almost staged a walkout at around 11:00am. The meeting took tea break to avert the walkout.

The wrangle widened when Dhaka raised the long unresolved issue of zero-tariff access of its 25-category products to the Indian market, a commitment categorically

made by Indian Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee in 1999.

When Dhaka maintained that New Delhi should take steps to implement the prime ministerial pledge, the Indian side said Dhaka will have to reciprocate by implementing its 'commitment' to give trans-shipment facilities to India, according to meeting sources.

The Indian negotiators also mentioned that Dhaka's demand for zero-tariff access of its 25-category products was at the time tagged with New Delhi's demand for carrying goods from one state to another through Bangladesh land routes, a facility popularly known as trans-shipment.

However, Bangladesh said trans-shipment is a politically sensitive issue in the country and so, it cannot be discussed at this forum.

At this point, the Indian side said there is no point continuing the discussion and left the meeting room at around 4:00pm. The meeting was scheduled for a 5:00pm end.

Yesterday's meeting began with introductory statements from the two commerce secretaries. Bangladesh then focussed on the trade situation since 1980.

## HC stays order revoking former chief whip's arms licence

**SUPREME COURT CORRESPONDENT**

The High Court (HC) Sunday stayed an order that revoked the licence of arms of the former chief whip of parliament Abul Hasnat Abdullah.

A division bench of the HC comprising Justice Md. Abdul Matin and Justice Mohammad Marzi-ul-Haq stayed the order that was passed by the district magistrate of Barisal on February 13.

The bench also issued a rule upon the government why the order cancelling the licence of arms of Abdullah under section 18 of the Arms Act should not be declared as done without jurisdiction.

The former chief whip had earlier filed a writ petition before the HC challenging the order.

Senior advocate Baset Mojumder appeared on behalf of the petitioner while Barrister Tariqul Hakim, DAG, Md. Feruzur Rahman, AAG and Nushrat Zaman, AAG appeared on behalf of the state.

The rule is returnable within four weeks.



Former Miss India and social worker, Nafisa Ali (R), shouts slogans against Gujarat state Chief Minister Narendra Modi during a protest march in New Delhi yesterday to condemn the attack on media covering a press conference at Gandhi Ashram in Ahmedabad Sunday.

## Little surplus of gas

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gas is high and will continue to go higher. Then, there is the issue of unmet gas demand in our country. From a macroeconomic point of view, the sector will continue to face problems in the future," he pointed out.

He said the committee converged on the point that the new drilling and exploration for gas reserve was mandatory. "Here a question arises -- whether we want more production sharing contracts (PSCs) with foreign oil companies or we should strengthen the activities of Bangladeshi exploration company, BAPEX, with our own funds," he said.

The committee also felt that the way the World Bank and the Asian Development Bank (ADB) had stopped financing projects in the power and gas sector in the early 1990s and then started advocating for pipeline gas export was "dubious".

The donors stopped the financing at a time when we should have continued our exploration and development of the gas sector," said another member of the committee.

Because of the role of the donors, Bangladesh is faced with a negative situation, he added.

He said the committee reviewed the gas export option in a 20-year scenario. "We have also reviewed the demand-supply situation of the correspondent period and have primarily concluded that there would

not be much of gas left for the country after 20 years if we start exporting now," he said.

The gas utilisation committee made this primary observation using both gas reserve estimations by Petrobangla and the recent Hydrocarbon Cell-Norway Department of Petroleum. The Petrobangla estimated the recoverable gas reserve at around 16 trillion cubic feet (tcf), while the Norwegian study estimated it at 20tcf.

Meanwhile, the committee on gas resources has decided to use the USGS-Petrobangla gas resource study as the benchmark.

The USGS-Petrobangla 2001 gas resource study said Bangladesh has an average potential of finding 32.1tcf gas in the space of next 30 years, a 95 per cent potential of striking 8.4tcf gas and only five per cent possibility of hitting 65.7tcf. It also puts the current recoverable gas reserve at par with Petrobangla assessment.

The gas utilisation committee led by former energy secretary Azim Uddin Ahmed consists of two Petrobangla directors, economists, academicians and other energy experts.

The gas resource assessment committee led by BUET Vice-Chancellor Dr. Nuruddin similarly consists of members from Petrobangla, BUET and other energy-related bodies. This committee, however, did not hold meetings regularly.

The gas utilisation committee is looking into a number of issues, including how the government should deal with Unocal's Bibiyana gas field that has a proven gas reserve of 2.4tcf.

Arguing that Bangladesh's gas market was not expanding and so the Bibiyana gas field cannot be developed soon enough, Unocal had submitted a proposal to the government to export its gas through a pipeline to Delhi.

Pipeline gas export may not at all contribute positively to a national economy if governance is weak. This was the summary of a report on the energy situation of Myanmar printed in the current issue of The Economist.

The report headlined "Myanmar - The black hole of Yangon" says, "An energy-rich country, Myanmar is now suffering the worst fuel shortage in the region. Its own citizens are starved of electricity, but the regime sells a steady stream of natural gas to neighbouring Thailand. Yet this export success has not saved the public finances. Current reserves are estimated at no more than \$240m -- enough to cover only the next six weeks of imports. A shortage of foreign exchange has forced the black-market price of gasoline up by 600% in less than a year."

Unocal is the major gas sector developer and exporter in Myanmar.

## Terrorism law

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a similar act, styled the "Public Safety Act" (PSA), which the then main opposition BNP protested as a 'black law' and enforced a series of hartals.

However, the BNP-led government of Prime Minister Khaleda Zia scrapped the PSA and within less than a week on Sunday tabled almost a similar bill in the House.

The proposed law provides for setting up of special courts to try offenders in a period ranging from 30 to 60 days. It suggests rigorous imprisonment from two to five years for crimes disrupting social peace.

Since the parliament is yet to constitute standing committees on different ministries, there is no scope to have a discussion on the proposed act at the committee level. Home Minister Altaf Hossain Chowdhury piloted the bill.

Offences under the proposed law include hindrance to normal air, rail, road and river traffic movement, vandalism on transport and public and private property, mugging, illicit toll collection, terrorism in public places, obstruction to tender bidding, and obstruction to works of government officers and employees and their relatives.

According to the bill, the police will produce the offenders before the court within 24 hours of their arrest and press charges against them within next seven days if the offenders are caught in the act. In such a case, the process of trial

would be completed within 30 days from the date of submission of the charge sheet.

If the accused is not caught immediately, the police will submit the charge sheet within seven days and the trial would be completed in the next 60 days. The proposed law also has a provision for trial of the accused in absentia.

It also provides for a two to five years jail term for bringing false charges. It also allows a magistrate to record a witness's statement right on the spot. A court will accept as evidences audio- and videotapes and recorded conversations.

The proposed law enables the trial and the appeal courts to grant bail to the accused or the convict but the court will have to record the ground for such action.

The government will set up one or more special tribunals in every district and the metropolises with first class magistrates heading them.

## Manju

**FROM PAGE 12**  
address in the House, the JP lawmaker also highlighted the traditional problems concerning national politics and economy, without hurting leaders of the successive ruling parties.

Manju put a question mark on acceptability of national election under non-party caretaker government, saying even now there is no exception to rejection of polls results by the losing party, alleging rigging.

For this, he did not blame the two top leaders of the two major parties. He blamed a section of officials in the caretaker government and the Election Commission who "made the election controversial time and again".

He said, "These officials have been pushing the country towards confrontation by manipulating election and interfering in it in the last 10 years. It is they who are not allowing parliamentary democracy to function."

Manju noted that every time the ruling party resorted to actions aimed at "eliminating" the opposition. Referring to recurrence of parliament boycott, he said, "It's not parliament but the street which has proved to be the centre of politics. We'll not achieve anything be it development, reforms or violence-free society unless we shun the path of vindictive politics."

The former minister urged all concerned to evolve a mechanism which would ensure that election would be accepted by all and parliament would not see its opposition bench empty.

Prime Minister Khaleda Zia and other treasury bench members enjoyed Manju's speech though they looked somewhat irritated at times.

## Unite to protect

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Mohammad Khaled, Jamal Nazrul Islam, Dr. Moynul Islam, Dr. Muntasar Mamun, Father Joseph Jibon Gomez, Dr. Zinobodhi Bhikkhu and Ranadas Gupta took part in the discussion.

Later, videos and stills on the post-election violence were exhibited.

## Shihab murder

**FROM PAGE 1**  
Shihab with the promise that they would give him a bicycle to ride and took him to Dhaka Biriani House at Shajahanpur in Khilgaon. He and Sayed took biriani while Shihab took noodles.

Later, Liton and Sayed took Shihab to a club in the area. Three others, Raju, Sabuj and Nasim, joined them at the club used by eleven-party candidate Julekha Akter Miridha in the last parliamentary election.

The youths then asked Shihab to give them his residence telephone numbers. They also asked about his father's financial condition.

At one stage Raju asked Liton to grab Shihab from behind and Sabuj gagged his mouth. Shihab tumbled on the floor. Nasim sat on his belly while Sayed held his legs tightly. Raju then strangled him, Liton told the magistrate.

Later they bought two sharp knives, a school bag and two shopping bags. They sliced the body into pieces and dumped them in the bags at three separate places in the city, Liton added.

The interrogation of two others also arrested in connection with the murder -- Fazul Haq and Rushidul Islam -- continued for the sixth day yesterday. They are on a seven-day remand. Two others -- Julekha and her daughter Konok -- are also being interrogated by the detectives.

The murder of the schoolboy came to light on the night of March 31 when Liton and Sayed were caught red-handed by detectives when they came to take the ransom money from a relative of Shihab at a sweetmeat shop at Shipaibagh, Khilgaon.

## Campaign

**FROM PAGE 12**  
programme as his election manifesto, Sheikh Enayet Ali termed Taybeur as the most corrupt mayor in the history of KCC.

People of Khulna metropolitan city were kept in the dark about contents of the agreement made with ADB in 1992 for the bank to provide assistance to the flood protection scheme and improvement of the city's drainage system, said Enayet Ali, who is a candidate of Khulna Nagarik Samaj.

Ali told the press conference that Khulna City Corporation had already gone bankrupt owing to unbridled corruption and wastage of money in unproductive sectors.

The incumbent mayor has done nothing good during the last 10 years of his tenure that could ensure his victory in the April 25 KCC election, Enayet Ali said.

Ali said Khulna had now become a dirty city full of garbage. The city-dwellers suffered untold miseries as they are beset with manifold problems including mosquito menace, absence of proper drainage and sewerage, and acute water crisis.

He said KCC had so far failed to ensure four fundamental rights that city's taxpayers are entitled to, namely, a neat and clean Khulna City, adequate water supply, adequate street lights after nightfall and development of road infrastructure.

## Govt dismisses FEER report

**FROM PAGE 1**  
"While the population by and large remains deeply religious, there is no place for religious fanaticism in society. Lintner's description of Bangladesh as a 'Cocoon of Terror' is, therefore, at best a figment of someone's wild imagination."

The statement said the October 1 general election universally acclaimed as free and fair was yet another milestone in the nation's commitment to strengthening democratic institutions both in letter and spirit. The voter turnout was a record 70 per cent plus. Prominent in this was the overwhelming turnout of female voters.

Bangladesh has been universally described as a moderate Muslim democracy as it is deeply committed to democratic practice and tolerance. These remarks have been attributed to the highest political leadership of the USA, Europe and the rest of the world.

British Prime Minister Tony Blair in a recent message to Prime Minister Khaleda Zia has spoken of his highest regard for the people of Bangladesh and appreciated the

democratic practice in the country.

"The strongest manifestation of religious tolerance in Bangladesh was most visible when there was absolutely no repercussion in the country after the recent communal carnage in Gujarat."

Firm measures by the government and a supreme sense of maturity on the part of the population helped maintain complete peace and harmony in the country in the face of grave provocation, the official rejoinder said.

It is clear that Lintner has resorted to dated events and chosen to use comments which have little relevance to the situation prevailing in the country today, the statement said.

The fact is that a series of high-level foreign political visits have taken place in Bangladesh since the new government of Khaleda Zia took office while many more are expected in near future. "This is a testimony to the global confidence in Bangladesh."

These have been reinforced by statements from the Secretary General of the United Nations. The

World Bank and the USAID during the recent World Summit on Finance and Development where Bangladesh has been cited as the success story in its socioeconomic development, highlighting the rise of female education, autarky in food and increased healthcare conditions. There is no mention anywhere of what Lintner described as "Growing Threat of Islamic Fundamentalism," in Bangladesh.

The government noted with surprise that such a baseless, unfounded story could find a place in a regional and internationally well-known publication like the Far Eastern Economic Review.

It pointed out that the magazine has its own representative in Bangladesh with whom successive governments have had an excellent working relationship.

The government hoped that the Far Eastern Economic Review would not put its credibility at stake, not only in Bangladesh, but also elsewhere in the region by resorting to such "tabloid journalism."

## BNP leader shot

**FROM PAGE 1**  
Sources alleged that the local Imam group was responsible for shooting Mokbul, who had been campaigning for Imam's rival BNP candidate AK Azad in the forthcoming Dhaka City Corporation (DCC) elections.

Sources said after failing to obtain the BNP ticket, Imam Hossain, one of the 23 most wanted criminals of the city, is now contesting the election as an independent candidate.

Imam has reportedly been facing difficulty in his desperate bid to win the election, as most of the BNP leaders and activists are working for BNP nominee AK Azad. On several occasions, Imam had warned Mokbul not to campaign for Azad.

Imam masterminded the attack as Mokbul continued to campaign for Azad, police sources said.

No case was filed and nobody arrested in this connection till filing of this report at 9:10pm yesterday.

In another incident, a grocer identified as Md. Selim, 24, son of Abdur Rashid was shot at block-E, section-1 Mirpur at about 8:15pm.

Unidentified miscreants shot on his chest and neck. The victim was rushed to the DMCH. Reason behind the incident could not be known.

In North Badda, mother and her daughter received bullet injuries in legs when a local miscreant shot on them last night.

Witnesses said the miscreant identified as Saiful shot Nupur Hailer, 35 and her mother Khodeja, 65 as she refused to marry him.

## Defamation suit

**FROM PAGE 1**  
and surprised" to read the news regarding Ramna Batamul case in which he was engaged senior counsel by Barrister Rafiqul Islam Mia, the filing lawyer.

The case is about a deadly bomb attack on Udichi concert hailing the Bengali New Year, Pahela Baishakh, on April 14, 2001. Ten people were killed in the incident.

Awami League raised a contention over the bail of some of the accused on medical grounds.

The suit statement says: Defendant Zillur Rahman made the aforesaid statement purposely and knowingly to defame the plaintiff and it would cause serious damage to his integrity as a politician and lawyer.

His statement was politically motivated, and it was made maliciously to disgrace, defame and humiliate the plaintiff before the public at large.

The statement is derogatory, malicious and highly contemptuous which has lowered the reputation of the plaintiff as a senior lawyer and politician.

In the UK and the USA such news was published in the Bengali newspapers of those countries. Due to the aforesaid act, the plaintiff has sustained a serious damage and loss to his social standing and integrity as a politician and lawyer.

It was noted that a legal notice was served on March 6 for unconditional apology, but the defendant did not reply.

"The statement is not only factually wrong but also baseless and extremely defamatory in nature."

## 4-party rally

**FROM PAGE 12**  
Fisheries Minister Sadeq Hossain Khoka said the AL was harassing the people through enforcing unnecessary hartal. "The government is an elected one and no illogical programme and hartal would affect it," said Khoka, who is also the BNP city unit president.

Presided over by Khoka, the rally was also addressed by Jamaat-e-Islami Secretary General and Social Welfare Minister Ali Ahsan Mujahid, Bangladesh Jatiya Party Secretary General Kazi Feruj Rashid, Islamic Oikya Jote (IOJ) city unit Convenor Abdur Rab Yusuf.

After the rally, a procession was brought out from the Paltan Maidan, which ended at BNP central office at Naya Paltan. Law and Parliamentary Affairs Minister Moudud Ahmed, Industries Minister MK Anwar, Information Minister Tariqul Islam, Food Minister Abdullah Al Noman, Public Works Minister Mirza Abbas, Land Minister Shamsul Islam and Environment and Forest Minister Shahjahan Siraj participated in the procession.

## Dhaka elected a vice president of CBD bureau

REZAUL KARIM, from Hague

Bangladesh has been elected Vice-president of the Convention of Biological Diversity (CBD) Bureau for Asia Pacific region.

Dr Mahfuzul Haq, Deputy Secretary of the Ministry of Environment and Forest, was elected to the post with overwhelming support from participants from countries of the Asia Pacific region.

India was elected another vice-president the CBD Bureau for the region.

The election was held this morning at the Netherlands Congress Centre in The Hague on the second day of the convention, attended by over 2000 participants from around the world.

The Philippines, Malaysia and Samoa also contested for the posts. There was hectic lobbying for the two vital posts.

Bangladesh Ambassador in The Hague FM Shamim Ahmed and Joint Secretary of

the Ministry of Environment and Forest Syeed M Lutfulah are also participating in the convention.

Minister for Environment and Forest Shahjahan Siraj will attend the Ministerial Segment at the convention, scheduled for April 17-18 in The Hague.

## Lightning

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to 35 years of age was killed at Mohiungar Satmatha in the Sadar upazila.

In Mithapukur upazila, general secretary of Movenpur union Manjurul, 30, and a local resident Madhu Sarker died in the incident.

Two unidentified persons were killed in the lightning at Dubdubir char of Nohali union and Sliakhal char of Kolkond union.

The 12 injured school student were rushed to Rangpur Medical College where doctors said the condition of Ratan Chandra of class seven and Joyrani of class six are critical.

## Graft case

**FROM PAGE 1**  
Inspector of the Bureau of Anti-Corruption (BAC) filed the case on January 8 against Rafiqul Islam and former secretary for power, Arbindu Kar.

Zahid Hossain, also the Investigation Officer (IO) of the case, submitted the charge sheet to the Chief Metropolitan Magistrate's Court, Dhaka yesterday against Rafiq. Another accused Arbindu Kar's name was dropped from the charge sheet as his involvement in connection with the case was not found during the investigation.

The IO got approval from the prime minister's office on March 27 for submission of the charge sheet, sources said.

In the charge sheet, 11 people were shown as prosecution witnesses.

Meanwhile, the accused was granted ad-interim bail by the High Court on January 12. The court granted bail for three months from the date of issuing the order.

## Oil export

**FROM PAGE 1**  
Arabs and Muslims without oil wealth should take "effective measures" in accordance with their own means, the president added.

The oil ministry said in a statement that oil exports stopped at 1000 GMT from Mina al-Bakr terminal on the Gulf and the Turkish Mediterranean port of Ceyhan, the two ports through which Iraq's oil flows.

But an OPEC source in Vienna told AFP the oil cartel had no plans to organise a collective ban on crude exports following the Iraqi move.

The Organisation of Petroleum Exporting Countries "is for order and harmony in the oil market and should not be dragged into a political crisis in the (Middle East) region," the source said.

In Doha, OPEC general secretary Ali Rodriguez told AFP on the sidelines of an oil conference that he was consulting member countries about Iraq's gesture.

Iran's supreme leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei called on Islamic oil-producing countries Friday to suspend their exports to Western countries and those that have relations with Israel "for a symbolic period of one month".

Libya voiced support for the call. Iraq has periodically halted exports under the UN oil-for-food scheme in recent years, the last time on June 4, 2001, for a month in protest at efforts to introduce "smart sanctions" against Baghdad.

OPEC member Iraq has proven reserves of 112 billion barrels and a current production capacity of 2.2 million barrels per day (bpd).

## 140 foreigners moved from Bandarban jail

BSS, Bandarban

A total of 140 Myanmar and Thai nationals were shifted to Comilla and Noakhali jail from Bandarban jail yesterday on charge of agitating in custody.

Deputy Commissioner in-charge of Bandarban, Shamsul Kibria Chowdhury told newsmen that at least 552 Myanmar and Thai prisoners were demanding for their return to their respective home countries.

The government has also decided to send the foreign prisoners to their home country by phases.

According to official sources, a total of 105 Myanmar and Thai prisoners were sent to Comilla jail while 35 sent to Noakhali jail on Friday from Bandarban jail.

The foreign prisoners have been demanding repatriation as their jail terms have ended long since. Accordingly the authorities have started sending them back to their home countries.

## Tanneries

**FROM PAGE 12**  
Hundreds of brick kilns and other industries have already polluted the local environment, he said.

If the tanneries are shifted to the area, there would be another movement for their relocation in a space of ten to 15 years, Naser Khan forecast.

UP Chairman of Madhyapara Mohammad Serajul Islam said the agricultural lands would soon be polluted, if the tanneries are set up, because of the canal dug to drain the wastes to the Turag River.

"Ultimately, the same wastes will flow into the Buriganga through the Turag downstream," he said. "What is the use of shifting tanneries to a new area if the same problem persists?"

## Hasina

**FROM PAGE 12**  
jobs would get back their jobs when the Awami League would return to power.

The pro-Awami League CBA leaders of the Water Development Board informed the former prime minister that as many as 200 employees had been sacked in the last five months, while a large number of others given 'harassment transfers'.

President of the WDB Sramik League Sultan Ahmed and General Secretary Mollah Abul Kalam Azad also addressed the meeting, attended by Awami League leaders Abul Kalam Azad and Abdur Razzak.

## Editor gets bail

**FROM PAGE 1**  
Alleging that his arrest was a conspiracy, Moyeen pointed out that no lawyer from the plaintiff side pleaded against his bail prayer in the court.

The editor said the incident was a preplanned attempt to throttle the newspaper and expressed his determination to keep up his tirade against corruption and crime despite all odds.

Meanwhile, the Committee to Protect Journalists, Bangladesh chapter, yesterday condemned the incident. It also urged all to stop filing defamatory cases against journalists under the Criminal Procedure Code.

## Outlawed bodies

**FROM PAGE 12**  
Bangladesher Biplobi Communist Party (BBCP) led by Hafiz, Purbo Banglar Sarbohara Party (BSPS) led by Anwarul Kabir, two factions of Bangladesher Sarbohara Party led by Khaled Reza and Mamun, Purbo Banglar Communist Party led by Mufakkar or Barun, Communist Union led by Joha, Sramojibi Mukti Andolon and former Gonobahini (JSD) are the groups operating in the region.

Khulna, Shatkhira, Bagerhat, Magura, Meherpur, Narail, Kushtia, Jessore, Jhenedah, Chuadanga and Pirojpur are the districts where the outlawed parties operate in, the minister told the House.