

# Dhaka & Delhi offer to train Afghan officers

PTI, London

India and Bangladesh have offered to train Afghan officers and Indian defence technicians will service the Afghan Air Force's fleet of MIG 21 'Fishbed' interceptors or ground attack aircraft fighters, a leading defence weekly has reported.

"The Afghan Air Force and Army will work together (with India) to find new avenues of co-operation," Afghan Defence Minister Gen Mohammad Qaseem Fahim was quoted by the Jane's defence weekly as saying.

According to Fahim, Afghanistan will receive clothing for the Army and the Air Force, as well as an evaluation of infrastructural support.

Indian defence technicians will also service the Afghan Air Force fleet of MIG-21 'Fishbed' interceptors, the report said.

## NICVD

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to start work on the power lines and we will be able to put the machines in operation by two weeks," said Professor Nazrul Islam, director of the NICVD.

The supplier of the machines had completed installation of the angiogram equipment in December, but commissioning was not possible due to lack of power lines.

The supplier sent several letters to the director of Stores and Supplies of Central Medical Stores Depot (CMSD), the purchaser of the equipment, informing him about the problem, but no step was taken to arrange power connections.

The World Bank-financed Tk 10 crore equipment used for examination of the problems with heart and coronary arteries is also called cardiac catheterisation.

"With the new machines in operation, we will be able to perform about 25 cases of angiograms a day against about ten a day now," Prof. Islam added.

## Meter reader

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gotten wealth, the Titas Board chairman, who is also the energy secretary, took a move to seize a jeep of the company being used by Mahbub full time.

The secretary himself went to Motijheel where the jeep was spotted and seized it. The driver managed to flee.

The energy secretary instructed Titas not to use the jeep till further notice.

Meanwhile, Mahbub is now lobbying politically to save himself. He is trying to convince high officials that his 'political opponents' were spreading lies against him, sources said.

A top official of Petrobangla told The Daily Star they have launched a fight against corruption in Titas. The energy ministry and Petrobangla were holding frequent meetings on the issue for the last few days.

"Some dishonest officers are also involved with the meter readers for their own interest. There is a vicious circle that uses political shelter for their defence," said the official. "Without political commitment, Petrobangla or Titas cannot curb corruption in the sector."

## Loan defaulters

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that they were bank loan defaulters, he said. "The loan defaulters resort to skimming off funds and allowing them to raise funds from the market would only jeopardise the interest of small investors."

"These companies simply raised the money and are not giving any returns to the shareholders," he said.

Another senior SEC official said the decision would also stop the defaulter from eyeing the stock market as an alternative source of funds and would help the banks exert pressure on loan defaulters to return the money as they would not be allowed to arrange funds from the stock market.

The decision to bar loan defaulters would come into effect after gazette notification.

About lock-in on financial institutions, the SEC observed that lock-in had not so far been imposed on these institutions with the idea that such institutions would contribute to development of the stock market.

"We found these institutions rather taking advantage of the situation and dumping shares whenever prices soared on the secondary market," the SEC official said.

Financial institutions have so far been exempted from the lock-in

pledges from Bangladesh, China, Germany, Iran, Italy, Pakistan, Turkey, the UK and the USA to provide arms and military training to the nascent Afghan National Army, Kabul is favouring India's assistance due to "commonality of equipment and traditional bonding," the report said.

Quoting officials, the report said India was keen to gain influence over the Afghan army, albeit limited, to neutralise Pakistan's attempts to regain its sway over Kabul.

Gen Fahim and his nine-member team recently visited the National Defence College in New Delhi to which Afghan officers of the rank of brigadier and above will be sent once the modalities of the training schedules are finalised over the next few weeks.

## Wacky weather

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The met office official however said the actual monsoon is likely to be normal this season, beginning as usual from the second week of June.

At least a couple of depressions are likely to be formed in the bay, which may cause heavy showers this month, Hossain said.

Flash floods are also on the cards this month, he said, quoting a long-range forecast for May.

Heavy rains in March and April in the northeast had already caused floods, damaging rice fields.

Asked on the high temperature prevailing for the past few days, Hossain said May is the hottest month of the year. According to forecasts, there would be a spell of localised heat wave in the southwest and northwest regions in the later part of the month.

He said the heat was subdued due to heavy rainfall, but as showers paused the temperature soared.

## HSC exams

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9,480 the Kamil examinations under the Madrassah Education Board.

Summary trial courts will be set up at areas adjacent to examination centres where section 144 of the CrPC within 200 yards of the centre will remain in force during the test period. Such extraordinary measures to prevent cheating are the first of their kind during a public examination in the country.

No political elements including local political leaders, student leaders and managing committee members will be allowed to enter the centres during the month-long examinations. Only the local MP will have access to centres as chairman of the local law and order committee.

Authorities will make video recordings of trouble-prone centres to identify trouble-mongers and examinees adopting unfair means in the examinations. "These video tapes will be used to trace troublemakers and cheaters even after completion of the examination.

The education ministry will take drastic actions against educational institutions and their employees if any one is found to have rendered assistance in unfair means.

The development budget of those institutions will be stopped and its employees excluded from the monthly pay order (MPO).

These measures by the education ministry are only short-term measures against cheating but there will be long-term measures including changes in examination system, curriculum and evaluation of merit.

## Design flaws

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concerned, the Department of Shipping. Its last fitness test was conducted in October 2001. The surveyors of the Department of Shipping issued the 'fitness certificate' which expires on October 18, 2002.

According to officials at different departments concerned, fitness certificates for hundreds of passenger vessels are issued without any checks. After manufacturing, if a vessel gets its first fitness certificate it can get renewed every year.

The surveyors under the Department of Shipping do not leave their office room to check for deviations or other irregularities, sources said. The whole process of fitness test is completed from inside the office of the surveyors, the sources added.

"Before blaming the owners, who took advantage of the irregularities in our offices I would blame the government first for failing to implement the law of the land," said a source.

The report will be handed over to the investigation committee soon. The BIWTA officials would also recommend to the Department of Shipping and the Marine Court to take action against M's S Alam and Brothers, owner of the vessel.

Financial institutions have so far been exempted from the lock-in

## Court orders for proper preservation of Shahriar's video cassettes

COURT CORRESPONDENT

The chief metropolitan magistrate's (CMM) court, Dhaka, yesterday granted a petition seeking proper preservation of video cassettes, seized from writer and columnist Shahriar Kabir.

The Special Branch (SB) of police seized those in connection with a sedition case against Shahriar.

Magistrate Kazi Meraj Hossain passed the order upon a petition submitted by defence lawyers.

Moving the petition, advocates Syed Rezaur Rahman, Zead Al-Malum and Khondaker Abdul Mannan stated that the video cassettes were made on communal harmony and these are to be preserved in an air-conditioned room. If those are not kept properly, those will be damaged, they said.

The prosecution side opposed the petition.

After hearing both the sides the court granted the petition.

Meanwhile, the court also fixed June 15 for next hearing of the case. Shahriar along with his lawyers appeared before the court and prayed for fixing the next date of hearing.

The writer was arrested from Zia International airport on November 22 last year on his return from Kolkata. Police also seized his passport and some video cassettes.

A sedition case against him was filed with the CMM's court on December 8 last year.

## Raozan monk

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and rally to protest the killing.

Meanwhile, Buddhist people of Sanktakia and Lohagara in a Memorandum to the Prime Minister demanded immediate arrest of the killers of Gyanojoti Mohanbhabir before 'Buddha Purnima', the largest religious festival of the community.

Sanktakia-Lohagara Buddha Bixim Samity and Buddha Oikya Parishad sent the memorandum to the Prime Minister through Upazila Nirbahi Officer, Lohagara on Wednesday.

They also staged demonstration before submission of the memorandum to the UNO.

## Kashmir

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"They train young people and send them here to spread terrorism. What else can we expect of them?" Fernandes said, after visiting the army base and the injured.

In Pakistan, Information Minister Nisar Memon rejected India's allegation. "We will not allow any group or organization to use Pakistani soil against any country," he said. Memon warned India not to "venture" an attack on Pakistan in retaliation.

Prime Minister Atal Behari Vajpey called for a meeting of all parties in Parliament to discuss the Jammu massacre.

"We have to discuss how to counter this heinous attack," he said.

Fernandes said: "We cannot have this kind of terror go unpunished, especially when the international coalition is there to fight terrorism." He ruled out immediate war, however.

He said that since India and Pakistan were part of the US-led coalition against terrorism, the situation is tricky.

"If a coalition member targets another member through terrorism, then it is time for the coalition to decide how to deal with the situation," Fernandes said.

He said given the limited resources, it becomes very difficult for BTV to send TV crew to all the programmes of the president as he attends more than one programme outside the Bangabhaban each day.

"We have an acute shortage of camera and crew. There are two units at the Prime Minister's Office and we have to cover 60 ministers and other programmes in and outside Dhaka with a limited number of cameras and crew," said an official of the BTV.

Besides, he said there is too much demand from ministers and organisations to cover their programmes. As a result, he said, the BTV could not cover all the programmes of the president despite request from Bangabhaban, which may have angered the authorities concerned at the president's office.

Sources said the president himself reportedly asked the officials to discourage the BTV cover-



Buddhists in a procession parade down the Chittagong city streets yesterday, demanding punishment to the killers of Buddhist monk Gyanojoti Mohasthobir.

PHOTO: STAR

## New route to Bangkok

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Different countries had constructed their portions of the Asian Highway till the 1970s. But due to earlier reluctance of Myanmar to allow international traffic, the highway from Singapore remained in use only up to Thailand. Now it is operational linking the ASEAN countries, excepting Myanmar.

Yangon's interest in the highway has now increased tremendously.

The Experts Group meeting endorsed Bangladesh's new route plan.

What is most significant is that the Experts Group in a major policy decision agreed that the highway routes will be settled mutually between neighbours on a bilateral basis.

"The decision is a landmark one and will speed up the Asian Highway process," said a top official of the communication ministry.

The old route via Tamabil and Sylhet moving through the Indian states is still in the plan, an official said, but its implementation would require further bilateral discussions between Dhaka and Delhi, he explained.

The Teknaf connection

Officials say the newly proposed Asian Highway entering Myanmar through Teknaf will make it easily functional with less investment at an early stage.

## President skips

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dent's programmes as the Bangabhaban has also refrained from sending any press releases related to such programmes.

However, the Bangladesh Betar and the two news agencies, BSS and UNB, have been regularly receiving invitation letters and press releases from Bangabhaban for covering president's programmes.

BTV sources said Bangabhaban became annoyed with the state-run media as it failed to send its TV crew to all the programmes of the president.

"There is nothing behind stopping of the BTV coverage...we are just avoiding too much exposure," he added.

Clashes leave 70 hurt in Pabna

BSS, Pabna

At least 70 people, including four police personnel, were injured in a series of clashes between two rival groups of people over leasing out of Koramia Bazar under Santia upazila yesterday.

Police and local people said about 1,000 people of two rival groups clashed for hours using lethal weapons and hockey sticks starting at about 9:30 in the morning, injuring the people of both sides.

Police rushed to the scene and brought the situation under control after firing 17 blank shots and teargas shells.

Eleven injured persons were admitted to different hospitals of the district.

Additional police have been deployed in the troubled area to avert further clash.

## Khoka's first task

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challenge, he affirmed.

He promised to do his best to resolve the longstanding crisis facing the citizens in Dhaka. "But I will never promise something unrealistic...I am well aware of our resource constraints and I should not expect the government to deprive the capital in a way that deprives the rest of the country."

Khoka also pledged not to do anything against the interests of the people living in the city. "Many come to Dhaka for a living not by choice, which is why we have to give a second thought before being harsh in resolving certain problems."

"I don't pledge to solve the longstanding crisis overnight for I don't have any divine power nor do I have unlimited power. I cannot do anything unless I get cooperation of all," he said. He underlined a united effort in freeing the capital from its corruption.

To this end, the new mayor said, he seeks cooperation from his predecessor and other former

mayors, and would tap into their experience.

Despite being asked, Khoka preferred not to say anything blaming his predecessor Mohammad Hanif who ended over eight years in office on Tuesday. He seemed polite and generous when replying to questions of Hanif's rule.

"I prefer not to accuse him (Hanif) of outstanding credits of Tk 467 crore the DCC is now burdened with. Instead, I will try to get rid of it at the earliest," he told a questioner. "I think I have many things to learn from him who was the longest-serving mayor of Dhaka."

To a query about corrupt practices in the DCC, Khoka said corruption is rooted everywhere in the society and it's an age-old crisis in our country. And, the DCC is no exception. "What I will try to do is ensure that no fresh act of corruption takes place during my tenure as mayor."

Khoka avoided a direct reply to a question if he would continue with all three public offices of a minister and

## Highway robbery

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On the night of May 9, a group of about 40 armed criminals looted Tk. 5,000,000 as well as gold ornaments and other valuables from the houses of 13 Hindu families at Basantapur in Sh