

# Trade with Nepal Bangladesh team to propose ways to boost trade

UNB, Dhaka

Bangladesh will propose account trade arrangement with Nepal for spurring the two-way trade, now hovering around 5 million US dollars in limited economic interactions.

Commerce Secretary Suhel Ahmed will lead a delegation to Kathmandu on August 25 to place a package of proposals for enhancing the bilateral trade volume by mutual trade concessions.

Bangladesh and Nepal had annual two-way trade to the tune of US\$ 15-16 million four or five years back, but the amount dwindled to one-third now, commerce ministry officials told UNB. The bilateral trade, however meagre, is in favour of Nepal.

Since foreign currency constraint in Nepal is seen as a major stumbling block to more trade between the two countries, Bangladesh will propose 'account trade' arrangement.

Bangladesh has already signed a memorandum of understanding (MOU) with Thailand for such trade

exchanges that do not require hard cash for payments at the time of trading. The country is also in the process of introducing the same trade tool with Myanmar soon.

Account-trade facilitates trading in local currencies and balances the accounts in foreign currencies every six months or one year, relaxing the instant requirement of foreign currency against every LC for every single trade deal.

"We feel account trade will reduce complications of foreign currency and LC problems as well as quicken our trade with Nepal," said Delwar Hossain, business leader from a frontier district chamber.

Meanwhile, Bangladesh authorities have initiated an elaborate plan to activate Banglabandh land customs station, set five years ago to facilitate transit trade with the land-locked Himalayan Kingdom of Nepal via Indian territories.

Land has been acquired for setting up the land port with all necessary physical structures and construction work will start soon. A

temporary arrangement for customs and other trade-related formalities will be made in next three months, officials said.

Commerce ministry officials said Bangladesh has tremendous potential for marketing pharmaceuticals, melamine, cosmetics, biscuits and some other products in Nepal.

The commerce secretary yesterday met trade officials and some business leaders to finalise the proposals to be placed in the secretary-level meeting in the Nepalese capital.

## Landslide

FROM PAGE 12 since July this year.

Officials said they were preparing estimates of losses to crops, roads, bridges, school buildings and other infrastructure so far this year.

Thousands of people displaced by floods are still housed in schools and makeshift shelters across 47 of the impoverished kingdom's 75 districts, they said.

## BRRRI to develop hybrid Aman rice varieties

BSS, Dhaka

Scientists of Bangladesh Rice Research Institute (BRRRI) are now working to develop two hybrid varieties of Aman rice after innovating a Boro variety.

BRRRI Director General A B Siddiqui said the scientists were making efforts to help farmers harvest a rice crop in June or July with a yield of five to ten tonnes per hectare.

He said research for the innovation of the two varieties were at the initial stage.

Four hybrid rice varieties three from India and one from China -- were imported from India and China during the past government. But the Alok, Amarsree, Loknath and Sonar Bangla varieties were rejected by people for their poor yields.

Dhan-2001, a hybrid Boro variety developed by BRRRI, is now in production.

## Woman sentenced to death for killing stepdaughter

UNB, Comilla

A woman was condemned to death by a court here Monday for killing her stepdaughter.

The court also sentenced the ill-fated girl's father and uncle to five years' imprisonment and fined them Tk 10,000 each, in default, they would have to suffer one year more in jail.

The case in brief stated that Parveen Akhter, the second wife of Mujibul Haq of Anandapur village in sadar upazila, strangled her stepdaughter Sohagi on Jan 31, 1997 and dumped the body in a ditch.

Being tipped off by villagers, police recovered the body and arrested Parveen, Mujibul Haq and Shamsul Haq.

After examining the records and witnesses, the additional district and sessions judge handed them to the verdict.

## Benazir

FROM PAGE 12 outside the courthouse.

Such attempts would not only be in bad faith, but targeted against Benazir, unconstitutional and outside the scope of the limited legislative powers given to the government, he said.

Benazir is contesting a law announced in early August which bars convicted absconders from running for election, and an "absentee law" brought in last year which makes personal appearances at court hearings mandatory. Previously defendants could be represented by their lawyers.

Benazir has been convicted twice this year of absconding after failing to return from self-imposed exile to appear in two separate graft trials.

She has launched a legal challenge in pursuit of her bid to return to Pakistan to run in the October parliamentary polls.

Benazir was dismissed twice as prime minister, in 1990 and 1996, on corruption charges.

She was convicted of corruption in 1998, shortly after heading into exile. But the Supreme Court overturned the finding on the grounds of bias, and ordered a re-trial.

Benazir and her Pakistan People's Party have accused President Pervez Musharraf of passing "Bhutto-specific" laws to keep her out of the political arena.

Musharraf told AFP on Monday that Bhutto would be immediately arrested if she returned to Pakistan.

## Shazneen

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"The Investigation Officer did not torture Shahid in presence of me when he (Shahid) was on remand," Latifur Rahman said during the cross-examination.

"I did not go to the CID office during investigation of the case, but many high officials of the CID office went to my house" he said.

Latifur Rahman also told the court that he had given a statement to the IO seven days after the incident.

Shazneen Tasnim Rahman, 15, the youngest daughter of Latifur Rahman, chairman of Transcom was raped and murdered at their Gulshan residence on April 23, 1998.

## Hartal

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today's hartal against the killing of Peer Musleh Uddin Ahmed and three madrassah students and demanded punishment to the killers.

The Oikya Jote member secretary Mufti Maulana Abdul Halim Sirajee and office secretary Alhaj Alamgir Hossain Khan in a joint statement said their leaders and workers will be on the city streets in support of the hartal.

They criticised IOJ leader Mufti Fazlul Haq Aminee MP and Mesbahur Rahman Chowdhury as "collaborators of the Alem killer government" and urged the people not to be misled by their false propaganda and unitedly stand by Islam and Muslims.

Mufti Aminee earlier in a statement opposed the hartal call.

# BJP's political gamble over Gujarat polls?

PALLAB BHATTACHARYA, New Delhi

In referring its disagreement with the Election Commission over the timing of fresh assembly polls in western state of Gujarat to the Supreme Court, ruling Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) appears to have taken a calculated political gamble.

The Supreme Court's opinion on two key issues involved in the stand-off between BJP and Election Commission may or may not go in favour of the saffron party. A rejection of the party's stand may leave it crestfallen.

Has the BJP, which rules Gujarat, taken a stand to confront the Commission which rejected the party's demand for early elections in the state?

Deputy Prime Minister L.K. Advani has rejected suggestions that BJP is on a collision course with the Election Commission on Gujarat poll dates issue.

He said it was the Commission's rejection of assembly polls in the state on time because of the law and order situation there and its coming close to suggesting that Federal rule should be imposed in Gujarat which

prompted his party to seek the apex court's view through a Presidential reference.

The Election Commission has concluded that elections to Gujarat legislature cannot be held by September this year as demanded by BJP because the situation in the state, hit by riots for three months from February, is not yet normal. However, it may consider poll dates in November-December this year.

The issues on which BJP-led government has sought the

## NEWS ANALYSIS

Supreme Court's opinion are (1) whether Article 174 of the Constitution stipulating not more than six months gap between two sessions of the state legislature is mandatory and (2) whether Election Commission is competent to suggest imposition of Federal rule in a state if governance there by a state government cannot be carried out as per the Constitution.

The BJP argues since the previous session of the dissolved Gujarat legislature was held on April 6 this

year, the new state assembly has to be held before October 6 this year to meet constitutional requirement.

Opinion among legal experts remains divided whether the constitutional stipulation of not having more than six months' gap between two sessions of the legislature applies to an existing assembly or the old and the new one.

The Election Commission says Article 324 gives it the sole authority to supervise, direct, control and conduct elections to parliament and state legislatures and Article 174 must yield to Article 324 "in the interest of genuine democracy."

The Commission says "elections in the context of democratic institutions mean free and fair elections and not merely a ritual to be gone through periodically."

The BJP has flayed the Commission decision against early polls in Gujarat. The opposition parties, on the other hand, have attacked the BJP-led government's decision to send the Commission's order on Gujarat polls for a Presidential reference as an "assault" on the constitutional authority and dignity.

## Don's 'killer'

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gold market on three occasions. But he did not get the gold chain he wanted.

Irked by the incident, Ripon went to his father-in-law's place on Monday and brought Rubel to his house in Swambagh to attend a family party at around 5p.m. After the party, Ripon took Rubel to Banga-Bazar where he changed a pair of trousers that he bought earlier.

He returned to Demra around 7:30pm where he suddenly decided to throw the five-year-old into a sewer. Soon after, he regretted his act and tried to pull up his minor brother-in-law. Rubel by then was in an unconscious state, and sensing trouble and the presence of people nearby, Ripon dumped him into the drain all over again.

According to Ripon's confession, he went back to his in-laws' house and declared Rubel to be missing. He even hired a loud speaker and announced the missing news of Rubel. However, tormented by his own sense of guilt Ripon could not sleep that night. On the following morning he made his guilt known before his relatives, and later to Demra police.

After recording Ripon's statement, the magistrate Jogonath Das Khokon sent Ripon to the Dhaka Central Jail. The magistrate also placed Ripon's parents -- Ismail and Gulnahr on a two-day remand for further interrogation.

## Musharraf

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four military chiefs and eight civilian political leaders would sit, and which he, as president, would head.

The council would "serve as a forum for consultation on important foreign policy decisions and national issues," but would have no "intrusive role," Musharraf said.

"This (amendments) order comes into being with immediate effect."

However, a raft of other proposals were dropped, including the proposal to give the president power to appoint and sack an elected prime minister, and to sack the cabinet.

Some two thirds of his original proposals were "deleted," he said.

## SAARC

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cooperation among members of the SAARC, and urged them to unite against poverty.

Terrorism, he said, "is the latest menace to the region."

Foreign ministers or junior ministers from six of the member countries are in Kathmandu for the meeting.

Sri Lanka's foreign minister, Tyrone Fernando, cancelled his trip at the last minute because of a parliamentary vote at home, but his deputy will attend on Thursday.

## Teachers

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coaching centres for their personal gains.

The government paid TK 1,245 crore on account of salaries of more than 3.75 lakh teachers and staff of over 22,583 non-government educational institutions in the country in fiscal 1999-2000. They are also demanding payment of 100 per cent of their salaries from the public funds.

However, the government stance on the issue is different. "If the government pays 100 per cent of their salaries, then non-government educational institutions will become government institutions," a senior official at the education ministry noted.

## Bappi murder

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statements before a magistrate.

Thirty-seven people were shown as prosecution witnesses in the chargesheet. Police seized the country boat as almat (evidence), which was used for the killing.

Bappi, a student of class III of the Armenitola Government High School, was abducted and killed on August 5 and the body was dumped into the Shitalakhya River.

The incident was revealed when two of the arrested confessed to the killing.

Shipon, the main accused, allegedly abducted Bappi for a ransom of Tk 20 lakh.

Shipon asked Bappi's father Alfu Mia on the phone to hand the ransom by 8:00pm over to Shankar near the Shitalakhya River.

Alfu Mia did not give in to the abductors' demand and sought help from the police. Shipon was arrested at Demra the same night.

A case was filed on August 6 by Alfu Mia with the Kotwali Police Station against Shipon and eight unknown people under the Women and Children Repression Prevention Act, 2000.

The decomposed body of Bappi was found floating on the Shitalakhya River nine days after the killing.

# LGRD ministry

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tem in the face of stiff opposition by two of its six members.

The upazila system was first introduced by the government of HM Ershad, but the previous BNP government abolished it in 1991. Considering the importance of the upazila, the BNP enlisted it in its election manifesto as one of the important commitments.

Replying to a question, the LGRD minister said abolition of the existing laws would be needed if the upazila and zila parishad were not introduced. And new law would need to be framed for introduction of the gram sarkar.

Meanwhile, BNP sources said the fate of upazila has become uncertain as most of the party MPs are dead against it, fearing conflict of interest with the upazila chairmen.

They said a good number of ministers and policymakers feel that the upazila system would undermine the status of the MPs since they would have no role in local development activities. But constitutionally the lawmakers have no role in local upliftment programmes.

According to a reliable BNP source, the prime minister herself is convinced that the upazila would create conflicts between the MPs and chairmen.

But sources in the local government ministry said it has prepared a suitable proposal that has ensured that no such conflict arises between the MPs and the upazila chairmen.

They said it has been proposed to set up a permanent office of MPs in their respective constituencies, having staff and facilities like telephones and IT. Each MP will get Tk 1 crore a year for local development. Besides, the MPs would advise on all local development activities in their respective constituencies. MPs will become chairman of their respective district's zila parishad by rotation.

Officials further said there would no conflict between the MPs and upazila chairmen under the proposed recommendations.

But all the proposal could not satisfy many ministers, particularly Communications Minister Nazmul Huda and Science and Information Technology Minister Dr Abdul Moyeen Khan.

But there are many policymakers who feel that it would be suicidal for the BNP if it does not introduce the upazila system, an important part of the local government. Moreover,

## Truck loaded with fabrics hijacked in N'ganj

OUR CORRESPONDENT, N'ganj

A truck loaded with fabrics was hijacked by a gang of robbers from Ramarbagh area on Dhaka Narayanganj road on Tuesday night.

Police said, Aminul Islam, owner of Badhan Dyeing of Fatullah, bought fabrics worth Tk 10 lakh from Narsingdi and was carrying the goods in a truck.

As the truck reached Ramarbagh on Dhaka-N'ganj link road, the robbers blocked the road with another truck.

They dragged Aminul off the vehicle at gunpoint and fled away with the truck loaded with fabrics.

Police could not recover the looted goods till yesterday evening.

A case was filed with Fatullah police station yesterday.

the BNP's shifting stance on the upazila has also attracted criticism from various quarters.

It did not feel the need for the upazila while in opposition and then decided to reintroduce it if voted to power. But now, it is again turning its back to the system.

Meanwhile, sources said the LGRD ministry, which guessed that the upazila system may not be approved, decided to proceed with the gram sarkar system. The proposed gram sarkar would not be an administrative unit but a voluntary and supportive unit of the union council.

Under the proposed structure, each ward of the union council would be a unit of the gram sarkar and as per Article 59 of the constitution, it would not be an administrative unit but a voluntary and supportive unit of the union council.

The gram sarkar would have 13 members including a chairman, three women representatives, two farmers (landless, marginal and mid-level ones), one professional, one worker, two farm labourers, one freedom fighter, one teacher and one businessman.

Besides, representatives from local government office, financial institutions, cooperative societies, ansar and the VDP and NGOs would also be members of the gram sarkar. But they would have no voting power. The tenure of the gram sarkar would be five years.

The gram sarkar would assist the union council by implementing various activities including preparing plans to construct village roads and culverts; reviewing the ongoing projects; encouraging farmers to increase production; expanding literacy programme; campaigning for family planning; and collecting information on deaths, births, marriages and divorces etc. It would also be involved in health services, formation of cooperative society in villages, setting up of small and cottage industries, poultry and dairy farms etc. It will also assist in maintaining law and order and supervise VGF and VGD activities. Welfare of women and children, sports and cultural activities and protection of environment will fall under it's ambit. The union parishad will fund the gram sarkar.

## Police, slum dwellers clash at Cox's Bazar: 50 injured

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Cox's Bazar

At least 50 people were injured in a clash between police and slum dwellers here yesterday. According to police and local people, a contingent of police led by a magistrate went to charpara near Cox's Bazar sea beach at 10:50am to evict slum dwellers from the area.

The slum dwellers, equipped with lethal weapons, swooped on policemen.

In face of strong resistance, police opened fire, leaving 50 injured.

Police arrested five people from the spot.

# Dam bursts in India, 25 feared dead

REUTERS, Bhopal

A dam burst under the pressure of heavy monsoon rains in central India on yesterday, washing away at least 25 people, officials said.

Officials said the 125-year-old dam in Katangi in Balaghat district in the state of Madhya Pradesh had developed cracks on Tuesday after several days of heavy rains. Less than a week ago, the region was suffering its worst drought since 1987.

"Some 10,000 people have been shifted to safer places and a few villages are under eight feet of water," a senior Balaghat police official told Reuters by telephone.

"Chances of more villages meeting the same fate cannot be ruled out as rains continue," the official said, adding that those swept away were feared dead.

Erratic monsoon rains across South Asia caused a severe drought in large parts of India while trigger-

## BELA notice

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flow of the water body.

It said the water bodies in and around the Dhaka City are being gradually encroached upon by vested interest groups in connivance with the statutory authorities for individual and self-gain in defiance of legal norms and procedures.

The notice also said the ineffectiveness and the inefficiency of public agencies against such unlawful tampering with public property adversely affected public interest and undermined the rule of law.

The copy of the notice was also sent to the prime minister, ministers in charge of the LGRD and Cooperatives, Land, Environment and Forest Ministries as well as Khondokar Mahubb Uddin Ahmed MP of the Dhanmndi-Mohammadpur constituency for them to take necessary actions in this regard.

# Hasina: Hartal

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rid of misrule.

"We will have to wage movement to free the nation from torture and terrorism, from misrule and corruption," she said calling upon the youth front of her party to take the lead in uniting the people.

The opposition leader said the government created an anarchic situation across the country, which is compelling people to resist this "tyrant and corrupt regime".

She observed that the BNP-Jamaat alliance government is not at all sincere about running the administration, and that they could not ensure good governance rather presented the people with misrule.

The ex-PM alleged that the government is busy amassing wealth through corruption and mentioned the wheat scandal and "corruption" in buying fertiliser, plane fuel etc.

"Why this poisonous wheat was imported?" she questioned and told her audience that without permission of the prime minister the time for wheat procurement could not be extended and Tk 100 crore could not be allocated.

She said everybody knows who is behind this import of toxic wheat and why.

About the import of environment-polluting fuel for Bangladesh Biman, the Awami League president said use of such fuel by the national airlines would pollute the environment as well as increase chances of plane crash.

Referring to the government

ing floods and landslides in eastern India, Bangladesh and Nepal. The floods have killed nearly 1,000 people since mid-July.

Balaghat district officials said an air force helicopter had reached the region with relief materials and villagers were being evacuated to safer places.

The Press Trust of India news agency said about a dozen villages were affected after the dam, which irrigated about 10,000 hectares (25,000 acres) of land, burst.

It said local authorities had set up 13 relief camps to shelter villagers displaced by the rains and flooding.

Nearly 1,000 people have died in eastern India, Nepal and Bangladesh since the middle of July after heavy monsoon rains triggered widespread flooding, landslides and disease.

## Bad rice distributed through VGF cards in Brahmanbaria

UNB, Brahmanbaria

The local administration has allegedly distributed uneatable rice among 100 families of Bishupur Asrayan project in Nabinagar upazila through VGF cards.

Admitting the matter, the local UNO (Upazila Nirbahi Officer) said necessary action would be taken in this regard.

The Deputy Controller of Food told UNB Tuesday that he had no knowledge about it.

The food official of Nabinagar upazila could not be reached for comments.

## Naushin murder

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one person. A resident of Madhya Badda, Nazrul went to Ultra Badda to meet his brother.

The baby was rushed to a local clinic and then shifted to the Dhaka Medical College Hospital where doctors declared her dead.

## 3.25 lakh more Grameen phones by Dec

BSS, Dhaka

Grameen Phone, a private cellular phone company, will put another package of 3.25 lakh mobile phones for sale by December next.

With the release of the new package, the number of the company's cellular phones will stand at 10 lakh, a Grameen Phone source told BSS yesterday.

The company has been working with the aim of taking all the 64 districts of the country under its network and the number of Grameen Phone connections would stand at 20 lakh by 2004, the source added.

## T&T director

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in the second case. The court also issued a warrant of arrest against the T&T director.

Acting on the order, a team of Ramna police seized the properties from Tawfiq's residence at Malibagh in the presence of the witnesses to the case.

Police also arrested two persons - Bulbul and Badsha -- for their alleged involvement in the criminal incident.