

US slams Musharraf for his bid to broaden powers

AFP, Central Point, Oregon

US President George W. Bush steered clear of criticising Pakistani President Pervez Musharraf's controversial moves to broaden his powers, praising instead his help in the "war on terrorism."

"He's still tight with us on the war against terror, and that's what I appreciate," the US leader told reporters Thursday during a brief trip here before vowing to "work with our friends and allies to promote democracy."

"We'll stay in touch with President Musharraf in more ways than one," Bush said, two days before Deputy Secretary of State Richard Armitage was to convey US concerns over Musharraf's initiatives during a stop in Islamabad.

Bush's comments, which came in response to reporters' questions about the political situation in Pakistan, appeared to strike a less challenging tone than reactions from his own spokesman and the US State Department.

Earlier, White House spokesman Ari Fleischer upbraided Musharraf, saying the US president "expects" the army chief, who seized power in a bloodless 1999 coup, to fulfill his promise to hold free and fair elections.

"It's important for Pakistan to follow the path to democracy. The president believes that the path to democracy is the best path for all nations," Fleischer told reporters.

"We're continuing to monitor events in Pakistan and be in touch with the government in Pakistan," Fleischer said, as Bush stopped here to lay out a plan to prevent wildfires.

2 snatchers held with revolver at Motijheel

UNB, Dhaka

Two snatchers along with a foreign-made revolver were arrested from a bus in the city's Motijheel area yesterday.

Police with the help of local people arrested Salam and Chanchol alias Kajol during their bid to loot the belongings of passengers in the morning.

The two sustained injuries as the passengers beat them.

N' ganj clash

FROM PAGE 12

during the clash. The bullet-injured were identified as Zakir Hossain, Salimullah, Jasim, Mokter, Jahangir, Monir, Abu Salam and Rahman.

Of them, Zakir and Salimullah were admitted to Dhaka Medical College Hospital.

In an instant protest, transport workers put up barricade on Dhaka-Munshiganj road, disrupting traffic for four hours. Additional police were deployed in the area to fend off further trouble.

Delhi: Energy plan

FROM PAGE 12

action-plan over the coming weeks and months," the prime minister said and added that India's 29 state administrations too must participate in the national programme.

"If the central and state governments provide the lead, the private sector and even households will surely follow, not least because energy conservation makes economic sense," he said.

Vajpayee said India's new president, Abdul Kalam, too has agreed to a comprehensive audit of power consumption in his 330-roomed presidential palace, which is serviced by 1,200 employees besides the secret service.

"For too long, throughout the world, energy 'conservation' has in practice meant energy 'conversion'." This time I ask of all of us, to "walk the talk," the premier added.

The two-day global conference is being jointly hosted by the Federation of Indian Chambers of Commerce and Industries (FICCI) and the government, which only recently passed legislation on energy conservation.

The legislation, which India claims is the world's "most comprehensive law," provides for provisions such as energy audits, energy labelling and managing demand.

Demand for power in India is steadily rising by eight per cent per annum, and it is estimated that the country needs a staggering 200 billion dollars to generate new power

Ctg port

FROM PAGE 1

Organised gangs of criminals attacked crew of foreign ships inside the jetty area on several occasions last month and snatched valuables. A container was broken and goods looted on June 30. Snatchers stabbed a crew and snatched money and valuables from him on July 8 from jetty no. 3.

Two CPA security men and an employee of a stevedoring firm were stabbed by snatchers last month, port sources said.

Rupsha Bridge

FROM PAGE 1

visited the project area to see real situation.

According to RBP sources, the bridge will be constructed on 308 pile pillars, which will take a load of at least 3,000 tonnes at a time.

When asked, authorities of the construction firm 'Shimsu-ITD' did not take a serious view of such faults. They cited examples of Pakshey bridge.

Soil condition is mainly responsible for pillars failing to bear the capacity load, they said.

It has been alleged that low quality stone and cement were used in making pile pillars. On the basis of this allegation, engineers and consultants have rejected a huge quantity of low quality stones used by local contractors.

There are allegations that low quality stones have been imported from Thailand by Shimizu-ITD company and 'choked cement dust' is being used for making pile pillars.

The last consignment of such 'low quality' Thai stones reached the RBP site on August 10.

Shimizu imported 10,500 tonnes of such low quality stones, which day labourers who are agitating since last Sunday in protest against non-payment of wages, alleged misconduct and sexual harassment of women labourers by Thai personnel of the RBP.

Seventeen women have stopped work at the washing plant and another six women at the kitchen of Shimizu-ITD company, they claimed.

Court fees

FROM PAGE 1

Amir-ul-Islam, also convener of the council, told newsmen that the government increased the court fees three to four times than the normal. He also urged the government to withdraw the stamp duty on certificate of heredity.

He demanded repeal of the Special Powers Act, the Public Safety Act and the Speedy Trial Act, and an end to the unfair use of section 54 of the Criminal Procedure Code.

Among others, Barrister Shafiq Ahmed, Advocate Abdul Baset Majumder, Advocate Md. Ozaer Faruq, Advocate SM Altaf Hossain and Advocate Sayed Ahmed, and presidents and general secretaries of 56 district bar associations were present at the press conference.

Cell phone

FROM PAGE 12

to launch the service by June next year." Posts and Telecommunications Minister Aminul Haque told The Daily Star.

The minister also said there should be a BTB subsidiary to run the cell phone services.

The latest tender cancels an earlier bid to implement the project on a turnkey basis. The turnkey project was on supplier's credit, which ECNEC did not approve of either.

French telecommunications vendor Alcatel, Germany's Siemens, Sweden's Ericsson, Korea Telecom and China Machinery and Equipment Import and Export Corporation (CMEC) had participated in the turnkey tender.

The BTB mobile project would increase, in phases, to one million cellular phones and cost about Tk 2,500 crore, sources said.

BTB officials said the tariff plan for its mobile phones is yet to be finalised.

"It largely depends on the suppliers, as it is a turnkey project," one key official of the BTB mentioned. However, he said the tariff would be competitive.

Another BTB official said the mobile phones would have fixed line connectivity and there would not be any charge for incoming calls.

According to a government-sponsored study, the country, with a population of 13 crore, is likely to have a demand for 25 lakh mobile phones and 10 lakh fixed line phones by 2005.

It currently has some 700,000 landline phones operated by the BTB and about 900,000 cellular phones operated by four private firms.

This move would allow the BTB, which currently enjoys monopoly in landline telephony, to enter the cellular mobile market.

Careers

FROM PAGE 12

They are the modern version of coach supervisors of earlier times, looking after passenger comfort during long journeys. Most of these young men are graduates and some are even pursuing further studies at the university. Their duties include supplying snacks and cold drinks to passengers as well as attending to their other needs.

Lately, new opportunities have opened up in the field of elementary computer work, employing many young men and women in fax, e-mail and courier services.

There are still many unemployed youths in the capital, some of whom lead a life full of frustration due to unemployment as they would not work blue-collar jobs mainly due to the social stigma attached to it. Yet, there are some others who have the spirit of enterprise and challenge, and do not mind doing an honest day's work, and would take up any honest occupation. They are not deterred by the sneers of some sections of the society who regard such occupations as lowly. They ignore such social prejudices and strive ahead with determination.



Deputy Leader of the Opposition in the House Abdul Hamid holds a press conference outside the Jatiya Sangsad Building yesterday, as TV camera-men were denied entry inside.

Official talks today

FROM PAGE 1

The two foreign ministers will lead their respective sides in the official talks, to begin shortly after Sinha's arrival.

The sources said the entire gamut of bilateral relations will come up for discussion in an effort to strengthen neighbourly cooperation.

Dhaka will take the opportunity to express its concern over its huge trade imbalance with Delhi and is likely to reiterate its plea for duty-free access of Bangladeshi products to India, agreed to by the top leadership there earlier.

Dhaka's annual exports to India is worth around 50 million US dollars against imports of about 1.2 billion dollars.

The Centre for Policy Dialogue (CPD), a leading non-government think tank in Bangladesh, noted that Bangladesh's formal and informal trade deficit with India stood at 2.74 billion dollars in 1999.

In this regard, Dhaka is also likely to insist on an early meeting of the Joint Economic Commission (JEC), where issues of Dhaka's concern on bilateral economic ties are likely to get focussed attention.

The issue of trans-shipment which the Indian side has been demanding for many years has

already been shifted as an agenda of the JEC meeting, it was learnt.

Considering the asymmetrical economic parameters, Dhaka is likely to request Delhi to make unilateral concessions in several areas as a manifestation of a policy gesture to create congenial conditions for furthering improving bilateral economic ties.

Bangladeshi business leaders say they are not only facing insurmountable difficulties in exporting 'a limited basket of items' to Indian due to high tariff barriers but also being discouraged in setting up business houses and offices in India.

Hundreds of Indian business concerns and citizens are working in Bangladesh. This has to be reciprocated, they feel.

The issue of frequent incidents of border firing by BSF and killing of innocent Bangladeshis is also likely to come up for discussion at the talks. The Indian minister may be requested to take steps to minimise the incidents that strain bilateral ties.

Outstanding border issues including demarcation of 6.5 kilometres, transfer of enclaves and adverse possessions are also likely to be raised by Dhaka.

Bangladesh side is also

Hamid to boycott CPA confce

FROM PAGE 1

they need to gather experience as the next CPA conference would be held in Dhaka.

The deputy leader of the opposition said he wrote to the acting speaker on Aug 7 requesting him to include an opposition member in consultation with the leader of the opposition, but his request went unheeded.

Following a reminder on Aug 20, a deputy secretary replied that none else could be put on the delegation at this stage and requested him not to stay out of the delegation.

Asked whether acting Speaker Siddiqui could lead the delegation, as there is no deputy speaker to take up the presidency in case the president falls sick, the opposition leader refrained from making any comment.

Hamid, however, termed the attitude of the acting speaker naked partisanship and said he informed the acting speaker about his decision not to attend the conference as

a mark of protest.

He said he would inform the CPA secretary general about the matter and convey to him his regrets about not attending the conference.

Opposition whip Mirza Azam was present in the press conference.

Meanwhile, parliament authorities yesterday barred photojournalists and cameramen of both print and electronic media from entering the Sangsad Bhaban to cover a press conference of the opposition.

The parliament security first obstructed all the journalists. Later, getting the green signal from the higher authorities, only the reporters were allowed in.

Deputy Leader of the Opposition Md Abdul Hamid Advocate requested the Sergeant at Arms to allow cameras, but to no avail. Finally he held the press conference sitting on the wall by the lake outside the parliament building.

An angry deputy leader of the opposition said, "The acting speaker

obstructed me from doing my work and forced me to hold press conference outside the parliament building. What they (govt) are doing across the country was manifest in their behavior today in parliament."

He said earlier also, the speaker had not let the cameramen in the parliament that forced them to hold press conference outside the parliament building.

Reacting to the incident, Awami League whip Mirza Azam, who was also present in the press briefing, said the speaker (acting speaker) did not do the right thing and this showed that "this government does not believe in democracy".

Regarding the 48th Commonwealth Parliamentary Association conference in Namibia, he questioned how eight officials could be inducted in a 16-member delegation that will attend a parliamentary conference on global plane.

Dengue onslaught

FROM PAGE 1

Nuri Begum. She hailed from Rajshahi.

When contacted over telephone last night, Deputy Commissioner of Kurigram Mezbaul Alam said, "I have not heard of any death from dengue in the district. I came to know about Nuri from newspaper reports."

Civil Surgeon of Kurigram Dr Md Mzaffar Hossain also denied that Nuri died of DHF.

"Nuri died on way to Gaibandha from Rajshahi, 35 km from the district town. It is a remote area, close to Jamalpur district," he said.

Asked if he had taken steps to confirm if the girl died of dengue, he said, "We don't have the facilities for such sophisticated diagnostic tests, which are available only in Dhaka."

The deputy commissioner has asked the local paurasava authorities take measures for spraying insecticide in all passenger buses coming to Kurigram from the capital.

Our Pabna Correspondent reported that four persons with suspected dengue fever are under treatment at the Sadar Hospital.

The civil surgeon yesterday told this correspondent that all the four had symptoms of dengue, but doctors were waiting for blood tests for confirmation.

The four are Munirul Islam, 22; Laluddin, 35, from Sujanagar upazila; Enamul Huq, 22, from Pabna town and Mokshed Ali, 38, from Dogachhi in Sadar upazila.

The civil surgeon's office yesterday urged the higher authorities to take steps to ascertain if Aedes mosquitoes exist in Pabna. For this, an experts team from Dhaka is likely to arrive here today.

Meanwhile, crisis of beds for dengue patients continued in most of the city hospitals. Despite repeated calls for arranging extra beds for them, the government could allocate only 76 beds.

Till yesterday, the health ministry could not arrange extra beds for dengue patients in any hospital while the number of patients continued to rise.

Patients with symptoms of dengue usually rush to the Dhaka Medical College Hospital for admission and they have to be accommodated on the floor. Most of the patients are children, doctors said.

Meantime, entomologists have cautioned that the current dengue outbreak will last at least till late October since Aedes population in the city and other urban areas is stated to be quite substantial.

"From previous experience, we know that dengue outbreak usually lasts till September, but this year we apprehend a longer period of Aedes breeding than in the previous years," said Dr Monzur Choudhury, a leading entomologist.

He went on, "From house to house surveys, we know that density of Aedes population in the city is quite high. With the frequent rains, Aedes has an added advantage for laying eggs and that favours dengue attack this year."

Vehicle vacuum

FROM PAGE 12

vehicles charge the passengers the same fare as two-stroke autorickshaws, despite the price of CNG is about five times lower than petrol.

When asked, some owners and drivers of CNG-run three-wheelers have reasoned that the fare is the same because the price of a CNG-run three-wheeler is around Tk 55 thousand more than that of a two-stroke three-wheeler.

The price of a cubic metre CNG is Tk 7.45, while petrol sells at Tk 28 a litre. A CNG-driven vehicle with gas of Tk 6 runs the same distance as a two-stroke three-wheeler with petrol of Tk 28.

Tendulkar

FROM PAGE 1

Giles. The Don had compiled 29 centuries in his illustrious career.

Tendulkar's maiden century at Headingley, also meant he is now only four tons behind the all-time mark held by another legendary compatriot Sunil Gavaskar.

Law and order

FROM PAGE 12

taking no pre-emptive steps despite prior information from intelligence agencies on some major incidents of crime.

They mentioned that the government has already taken various short-term and long-term measures to detect roots of crimes and deal with criminals and their godfathers. They referred to enactment of the anti-terrorism law and deployment of paramilitary BDR in the city to check crimes and said those did not yield desired results due to a section of law enforcers' negligence to duty.

But a member of the cabinet committee told this correspondent that some steps taken by the committee, including BDR deployment, failed due to opposition from within the ruling party. He however did not want to be identified.

He said that despite inadequate cooperation from police, deployment of BDR was causing gradual improvement of law and order. But most of the ruling party leaders in the city deadily opposed BDR deployment as criminals were being arrested irrespective of their party affiliation.

Officials noted that the prime minister had asked the home ministry to take all steps needed to curb crimes, especially killing, abduction and extortion. But she is now quite annoyed with the performance of the home ministry in this regard.

Against this backdrop, the prime minister has now given directives for immediate formation of judicial probe body after any major incident of crime and for taking stern action against those involved in it.

As per her directives, several judicial probe bodies have already been formed, including one for the Dhaka University incident and another for the mosque-related incident at Malibagh.

Meanwhile, the government has decided to deploy BDR in the capital again to improve law and law order

and asked intelligence agencies to help their role in a massive hunt for criminals to improve the prevailing situation.

Besides, a number of long-term steps like modernisation of police force, strengthening of the CID, better training of police and formation of counter intelligence unit are in progress, sources mentioned.

Fertiliser

FROM PAGE 1

the agriculture ministry on August 17 asked the customs commissioner to help enable the importers unload the fertiliser "as early as possible".

But customs officials said the quality of the fertiliser will be chemically tested before unloading. The ships are now being guarded by customs security personnel.

President of Mongla Customs C&F Agents' Association Syed Mustahid Ali said that 15 importers opened LC for importing 19,213 tonnes of TSP fertilizer from Yunan Phosphate Fertilizer Industrial Company Ltd of China. He claimed that customs officials stopped unloading the fertilizer without asking the importers to show necessary documents and properly checking those.

The ships will have to pay 7000 dollars per day as demurrage due to the "unreasonable" decision of the customs authorities to "serve ill motive of another group of importers". Ali alleged while talking to this correspondent.

It was learnt that the customs authorities have sent samples of the TSP fertilizer to BSTI and Soil Research Development Institute for chemical test.

Meanwhile, the Chinese exporter has expressed dissatisfaction at this. The importers have been informed by the exporter that another contract for supply of one lakh tonnes of TSP now stands cancelled, the sources said.

Secretarial probe report

FROM PAGE 1

Till yesterday, the food ministry probe body headed by Joint Secretary Yakub Ali however remained tightlipped, not to divulge anything of the findings.

Meanwhile, another committee headed by a director at the directorate of food -- Aminul Haq -- is now on a whirlwind tour of nine districts to probe allegations of purchase of low-quality imported wheat during the procurement.

Following a government instruction to segregate the low-quality insect-infected wheat from good lots in all public granaries, district controllers of food (DCFs) in Pabna, Bogra, Mymensingh, Satkhira, Dinajpur, Tangail, Jamalpur,

Netrokona, and Manikganj outright denied having any bad quality wheat in stocks under their disposal.

This irked the food ministry and the food directorate alike, prompting the authorities to form the committee for verification.

Meanwhile, on Monday, the disaster management and relief ministry also cautioned the food ministry against distribution of low-grade foodgrains under its post-flood relief programmes. The relief ministry also wanted the food ministry to segregate the bad lots from the good ones.

Meanwhile, some food officials reportedly involved in the scam

embraced Islam.

Mohammad Alauddin, accused of murders and other crimes in 11 cases filed with Tejoaga police station, was staying in Tejoaga area when he was killed. He ran in the last Dhaka City Corporation election for ward commissioner.

Mohammad Hannan alias Pichhi Hannan, accused in 11 cases filed with Tejoaga police station, is hiding at Joydebpur, sources said.

Liakat Hossain and his brother Hannan, both accused in a case filed with the Motijheel police station, are now hiding in Keraniganj near the city. Hannan is the former general secretary of the Siddeswari College students union.

Agha Shamim, another most wanted criminal and booked in three cases filed with the Kotwali police station, has left the country for Sweden along with his family members.

Jafar Ahmed Manik, accused of murders and other crimes with Motijheel and Sabubagh police stations, has also left the country.

Sagar alias Tokai Sagar, accused in seven criminal cases filed with Cantonment, Kotwali and Ramna police stations, is now in the United States. The cases include two under the Explosive Substances Act.

The Detective Branch (DB) of Police arrested Khorshed Alam alias Rasu from the city's Dhanmondi Club on May 28.

Rasu, who operated in the Moghbazar-Siddheswari area, is accused in two cases filed with Ramna police station.

The DB also arrested Khondokar Naim Ahmed alias Titon from his rented Cantonment house on June 12. Titon is accused of murders and other crimes in five cases filed with Dhanmondi and Hazaribagh police stations.