

Dhaka, Yangon agree on road link

Two taskforces formed for feasibility study

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Bangladesh and Myanmar have agreed to establish a direct road link between them to promote business and increase people-to-people contact.

The agreement was reached at official talks between Prime Minister Khaleda Zia and visiting Prime

Minister and Chairman of the State Peace and Development Council (SPDC) of Myanmar General Than Shwe at the Prime Minister's Office in the city yesterday afternoon.

"There has been a total understanding on constructing Bangladesh-Myanmar road network," Foreign Secretary Shamsheer Mobin Chowdhury said as he

briefed the press at the foreign ministry about the official talks. "The issue of road link dominated the Dhaka-Yangon discussion," he said about the high profile discussion that lasted more than an hour.

He said the two countries would jointly sponsor technical and financial feasibility studies on the proposed cross-border road link. The

meeting decided to form two task forces one for examining technical aspects and the other for financial aspects of the proposed roadway, he added.

"The planned feasibility studies would be done at the earliest possible time," Chowdhury said.

The foreign secretary did not rule out the possibility of linking the proposed Bangladesh-Myanmar roadway to the planned Asian Highway.

Besides road link, he said, the two sides also agreed to make coastal shipping arrangement, avoid double taxation and extend visa tenure for Bangladeshi businessmen for at least six months. The two sides also agreed to set up a joint business council, he added.

At the end of official talks, two agreements between the two countries were signed. One agreement provides that foreign ministries of the two countries would meet in the two capitals alternately at least once a year to discuss bilateral issues of all kinds. Such meetings would be held at official levels and then at foreign minister levels.

The second accord aims to promote and strengthen relations in different fields, including art, music, education, research, media and tourism. Foreign ministers of the two countries signed the deals.

The Dhaka-Yangon summit, however, failed to make any progress in resolving the long pending

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PHOTO: STAR

Prime Minister Khaleda Zia receives her Myanmar counterpart General Than Shwe (left) and his wife Madama Daw Kyiang Kyiang (right) on their arrival at ZIA yesterday.

Court orders probe into murder charge against army

COURT CORRESPONDENT

A lower court yesterday directed the officer-in-charge of the Savar police station to take lawful action upon proper investigations into the murder case filed against an army officer and troops in his command.

Selina Akhter of the First Class Magistrate's Court, Dhaka issued the order scrutinising the statements of the complainant and other documents related to the murder of Abul Hossain Litu, a poultry farm owner at Savar.

Mehnaz Hossain Anjana, wife of Litu, filed the murder case with the court, accusing Major Kabir and his troops, who were on duty at the Savar army camp where Litu had died on October 28.

Anajana alleged that Major Kabir and his troops came to the farm on October 28 and tied up her husband

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Police top corrupt, lower courts next

TIB report reveals

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The police department is the most corrupt public institution in the country, followed by the lower judiciary, according to a household survey report released by the Transparency International, Bangladesh (TIB) yesterday.

The survey conducted among 3,030 Bangladeshis between November 2001 and May 2002 found the respondents having to bribe the police Tk 2,066 crore during the survey period. Also, the respondents had to pay Tk 1,135 crore in bribes to lower court employees.

The report titled "Corruption in South Asia: Insights and Benchmarks from Citizens

Feedback" highlighted the high level of corruption encountered by citizens attempting to access seven basic public services - healthcare, education, police, judiciary, land administration, taxation and power.

The survey was conducted in five South Asian countries - Bangladesh, India, Nepal, Pakistan and Sri Lanka.

Commissioned by the national chapters of the TI, the surveys used same methodology to assess service delivery and corruption.

The survey report revealed that 84 per cent of respondents in Bangladesh who interacted with the police during the past year reported corruption. And 75 per cent reported paying bribe while seeking services in the lower judiciary.

The TIB report identifies the land administration as the third most corrupt public service institution in Bangladesh where 73 per cent respondents reported corrupt practices.

The percentages of respondents who encountered corruption in healthcare, education and taxation services are 55.53 per cent, 39.73 per cent, 32 per cent and 19.25 per cent respectively.

In land administration, officials and employees extracted Tk 1,515 crore in bribes from the respondents during the said period, the survey report said.

In healthcare, more than half the users of public hospitals said that

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PHOTO: STAR

Mother (2nd from right) of Mir Zahidul Hossain Robin, a student of Tejgaon College who died at DMCH after being arrested by the joint forces, wails after his body was brought to their Pallabi residence in the city yesterday.

Reuters stringer implicated in Mymensingh cinema blasts

COURT CORRESPONDENT

Reuters stringer Enamul Haque Chowdhury was shown arrested in the Mymensingh bomb blasts case yesterday, as per a submission of the Criminal Investigation Department (CID) to the Chief Metropolitan Magistrate's Court, Dhaka.

The CID sought seven days' remand for Enamul. The CMM Court referred this petition to the Mymensingh Magistrate's Court where the bomb blasts case was filed on December 7.

Enamul was produced before the court yesterday, after his completion of three days' remand with the Detective Branch police. The DB sought permission from the CMM's Court for recording Enamul's confessional statement. CMM Mohammad Ayub granted the permission and forwarded it to Metropolitan Magistrate Shafiq Anwar.

Enamul was taken to Shafiq's chamber at 10.00 am where his confessional statement was recorded for six hours beginning from 10.30 am.

In his confessional statement, Enamul said he had prepared the controversial Reuters news story being instigated by AL leader Saber Choudhury.

He had developed good terms with Saber as a sports reporter of BSS.

On the day of the event, Enamul made a mobile phone call to the

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6 more die after army arrest in last two days

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Six people, who were picked up by the joint forces in the capital, Chittagong and Comilla, died after interrogation in the last two days ending at 2:00am yesterday.

In the capital, a Tejgaon College student, arrested by the army on December 8, died at the Dhaka Medical College Hospital (DMCH) yesterday.

An army team picked up 17-year-old Mir Zahidul Hossain Robin from his Pallabi residence at about 12:20am after it failed to arrest his BNP leader father Mir Mohammad Hossain.

Later in the day, an unconscious Robin was handed over to Pallabi police. Police had him admitted to the DMCH on the same day where he died at around 1:20am yesterday.

However, sources in the armed forces claimed Robin was well when they had handed him over to police.

After autopsy, his body was handed over to his family at around three in the afternoon.

In Chittagong, the stepson of a businessman of Boalkhali died at

around 10:00pm on Monday immediately after his admission to a local thana health complex.

Quoting sources, our correspondent reports that the joint forces picked up Abu Tareq Rubel from near his residence at Charandwip at around 3:30pm during a drive to nab notorious criminal Jhontu Dakat.

Rubel, who had tried to get away seeing the troops, was beaten up. The troops also swooped on local people, who had protested Rubel's arrest, and left at least 15 injured.

Boalkhali police claim the army had informed them of the 24-year-old's arrest and asked them to take him in their custody at around 8:00pm.

An hour later, the troops brought Rubel to the station. Police refused to take him into custody, as his condition was critical. He was later shifted to the health complex where on-duty doctors declared him dead.

According to army sources, complaints by local people against Rubel had prompted his arrest at around 4:15pm.

The sources also said the troops had handed Rubel to police in good

health. They added police had issued a certificate saying Rubel was received in good health.

Rubel's body was sent to his village after autopsy.

Meanwhile, the body of one Jasim Uddin, found at the Chittagong Medical College Hospital (CMCH) Sunday night, was handed over to his relatives yesterday. He was buried later on.

The army picked up Jasim from a relative's house in the city's Pahartali area Sunday night.

Army sources denied any link with the death and said they had heard of a person beaten to death by the mob Sunday evening.

Police, however, said they had no report of any such incident. They claimed that they had turned down an army request to receive an arrestee as he was in a critical condition.

Jasim, a 22-year-old employee of a private jute mill, hailed from Comilla. Police claim Jasim was engaged in drug trafficking.

Locals said a team of joint forces picked up Jasim and Bashar Kasai

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PHOTO: AFP

Bangladesh speedster Talha Jubair rejoices after bowling out West Indian opener Chris Gayle on the second day of the second Test at the MA Aziz Stadium in Chittagong yesterday.

Hosts turn around on pace trio

SPORTS REPORTER, Chittagong

Young pacemen Taposh Baishya and Talha Jubair bowled their hearts out to dismiss the West Indies for 296 on the second day of the second and final Coca-Cola Test at the MA Aziz Stadium yesterday.

The lion-hearted duo put up a rare exhibition of quality seam bowling in association with experienced left-arm paceman Monjurul Islam.

They shared seven wickets to restrict the visitors to the lowest total in an innings by any opposing team against Bangladesh since they were granted the Test status in June 2000. The previous lowest score was 373 by Sri Lanka in the second Test at the Sinhalese Sports Club ground in Colombo last summer.

In probably their second best day since Bangladesh's baptism against India, the opening pair of Al-Shahriar and Hannan Sarker did not let the good work of the bowlers go in vain.

They put on 40 runs before bad light stopped play with seven overs left in the day. Al-Shahriar mixed caution with aggression to score 21 while his partner Hannan was batting on 12.

They will start day three still 62 runs behind and the home crowd will expect nothing less than a similar approach as their 55-minute occupation of the crease so far.

The play begins at 9:06am today, 24 minutes earlier than scheduled to make up for the time lost.

Taposh was the pick of the three seamers finishing with a career-best 4-72.

The lively Talha took two wickets for 58 runs and Monjurul, who justified the inclusion of a third paceman in the team, picking up the wicket of danger man Ramnaresh Sarwan.

Although the visitors, resuming the day on 38 for one in reply to Bangladesh's first innings total of 194, added 258 runs it could have been a different story had West Indies captain Ridley Jacobs and Daren Ganga not put on a valuable 99 runs for the sixth wicket.

The tourists really faced the music against a fired-up 19-year-old Talh who had started the West Indies top-order slide dismissing opener Chris Gayle.

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