

Myanmar for deeper ties, peaceful border

President hosts luncheon for Gen Than Shwe

UNB, Dhaka

Hoping to strengthen bilateral relations to reciprocate Bangladesh's goodwill, Myanmar Prime Minister Senior General Than Shwe yesterday said the Myanmar-Bangladesh border should be turned into one of peace, stability and prosperity.

He noted that there exist no big problems in bilateral relations between the two countries as of now. "It is our consistent policy to try to reduce bigger issues into smaller ones and to have the smaller matters to be resolved completely."

Speaking at a luncheon hosted by President Iajuddin Ahmed at Bangabhaban yesterday, the visiting PM said the Myanmar delegation came to Bangladesh with the sole purpose of further consolidating this friendship and cooperation.

Prime Minister Khaleda Zia, Mrs Than Shwe, Mrs Iajuddin Ahmed, Speaker Barrister Jamiruddin Sircar, Chief Justice Mainur Reza Chowdhury, former Chief Justice and Chief Advisor to the Caretaker Government Justice Latifur Rahman, ministers, judges, diplomats, editors, leaders of the business community, political leaders and high civil and military officials attended the luncheon.

Despite dynamic economic and commercial relations between Bangladesh and Myanmar, a large potential still remains for the two countries to tap, said the visiting

Myanmar PM.

He mentioned that during the courses of discussions at the prime minister level, the two sides were able to explore further avenues to expand and deepen cooperation between Bangladesh and Myanmar in various spheres.

General Shwe said Myanmar, having close and cordial ties with Bangladesh since its independence, is one of the first countries to recognise Bangladesh and there has always been the common desire to further consolidate this friendship.

The Myanmar premier thanked the government of Bangladesh for the "warm welcome and generous hospitality" extended to his delegation during his two-day visit.

"The sincere expressions of friendship accorded to our delegation is a reflection of the goodwill and understanding that exist between our two countries and our two peoples," he told the function.

President Iajuddin in his address hoped that Bangladesh and Myanmar would closely work to bring peace and stability in the South Asian region.

"We want to develop our economies for the common good of our peoples as we believe that accelerated bilateral trade, investment and cooperation in other vital areas will help both our countries," he said.

The president stressed an urgent need of establishing direct road and coastal shipping links between the

two countries. "In achieving this objective, Myanmar will surely find Bangladesh a very willing partner."

Referring to Shaheed President Ziaur Rahman's efforts for regional cooperation in South Asia for its more than a billion people, he said Bangladesh and Myanmar had a great stake in promoting regional and sub-regional cooperation.

"Bangladesh also attaches great importance to its membership of Asia Cooperation Dialogue (ACD) and we like to make ACD a mechanism to promote peace, harmony and development of our entire region with Myanmar," President Iajuddin said.

He noted that both Bangladesh and Myanmar are active members of BIMSTEC, which enables the two countries to expand the scope of cooperation with neighbours in the southeast. "We may jointly work also to make BIMSTEC a useful instrument at our disposal to promote cooperation."

Dr Iajuddin said Bangladesh is committed to supporting all initiatives to encourage greater people-to-people contact between the leaders, academics, civil and military officials of the two countries.

He hoped that Bangladesh and Myanmar would now enter into a new and significant phase in bilateral relations and that both the countries undertake efforts with a renewed commitment to make bilateral cooperation truly beneficial for the two countries.



Myanmar Prime Minister Than Shwe speaking at a luncheon hosted in his honour by President Iajuddin Ahmed at the Bangabhaban yesterday.

PHOTO: PID

SAARC citizen's charter

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The dialogue expects to have the support of the UN Department of Economic and Social Affairs, New York.

After finalisation of the Citizen's Charter through an intensive discussion in course of the regional dialogue, it would be presented to the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC) Secretariat as well as the SAARC heads of state with an expectation that important components of the Charter will be incorporated into the Social Charter being prepared by the SAARC for endorsement at its next summit, according to the release.

The mobilization behind the Citizen's Social Charter is also intended to articulate the expectations of South Asian civil society on honoring and implementing the citizen's demands incorporated in the Charter. The SAARC governments will be put on alert that they will be accountable to civil society on the issue of enforcing the Charter.

A major goal of the SACEPS work on the Social Charter will be to build a pan-South Asian community of civil society organisations committed to agendas of social change in their respective

countries.

The synergies generated by the periodic interaction of this significant and influential community will serve to draw on their collective strength to influence national leaders as well as to redirect the priorities of their governments towards greater concern for the rights and needs of the deprived in South Asia, the release added.

The SACEPS Task Force has drawn upon the work of Citizens' groups from Bangladesh, India, Maldives, Nepal, Sri Lanka and Pakistan. Each group has consulted with a broad range of people drawn from the organisations of civil society.

The outcome of these national consultations have been incorporated in some very rich national reports which have addressed the specific concerns of the deprived and particularly vulnerable groups from each country. The national reports have been reviewed and the key issues raised by these groups have been incorporated in the interim Task Force Report prepared by Godfrey Gunatilleke of Sri Lanka.

The Citizen's Social Charter for South Asia will attempt to spell out the social and economic rights of the deprived and vulnerable

segments of the people of South Asia.

It would seek to enhance its credibility by incorporating programmes of advocacy initiated through mobilizing civil society groups, to hold the governments of South Asia accountable for implementation of the Charter.

This process of accountability will involve efforts to defend strategies and areas of social activism, which can help to make the charter enforceable, and justifiable in each country of South Asia, the meeting viewed.

The Task Force meeting was attended among others by Professor Muchkund Dubey, President, Center for Social Development, New Delhi, Ms C.P. Sujaya, Treasurer, Center for Women's Development Studies, New Delhi, Basil Illangakoon, Executive Governor, Marga Institute Sri Lanka, D.N. Dhungel, Executive Director IIDS, Nepal, SP Adhikari of IIDS, Ms Khawar Mumtaz, Director Sharkat Gha, Lahore and Ms Khushi Kabir, the Convenor of the Bangladesh Citizen's Group, Professor Abul Barkat, General Secretary of the Bangladesh Economic Association and Ms Rezwana Hasan, Director, BELA.

Hearty send-off

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before his departure.

National anthems of the two countries were played. The Myanmar premier took salute from a decorated dais. Prime Minister Khaleda Zia was also on the dais. Later, Than Shwe inspected the guard.

Two small children presented bouquets to Than Shwe and his wife Kyaing Kyaing.

Tinni murder

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since the murder. The CID has already recorded Shefali's judicial statement.

Police have failed to make any headway into the case more than one month after the murder of Tinni.

The prime suspect in the murder, former lawmaker Golam Faruk Ovi is still beyond the reach of police. Police interrogated a number of Ovi's acquaintances but have failed to get a lead on the whereabouts of Ovi.

Earlier, Keraniganj police took Piyal on a one-day remand on November 18. Again, the CID remanded him for two days on November 26.

The CID quizzed film star Manna for the second time Tuesday as part of the investigation. Abdul Latif, personal secretary, and Dulal Howlader, car driver of Jatya Party Chairman Anwar Hossain Monju were also interrogated Tuesday.

Manna denied any link with the killing, but admitted that he knew both Tinni and Ovi well. Police also reportedly asked him about his staying in India from November 21 to 27.

Keraniganj police recovered the body of Tinni with marks of injury from beneath the Buriganga bridge on November 16. The unclaimed body was handed over to the Anjuman Mufidul Islam, a charity, for burial four days later. They took over the case on November 23 and exhumed Tinni's body from Jurain graveyard in the city on November 25 for a second autopsy.

Police have so far interrogated 25 people, according to a list of 80 that includes 24 models. Police said all of them are somehow or other acquainted with Tinni and Ovi.

Listed criminals

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Army sources said the arrested former chairman is a leader of outlawed Sarbahara Party.

Our Narayanjan correspondent reports that the joint forces arrested Baduzzaman Badu, a suspected criminal, yesterday evening.

He was picked up from the Deobhogh Akhra area and taken to the Fatullah army camp. Badu is a vice-president of the Bangladesh Hosiery Samity and accused in more than 15 cases.

Earlier in the day, former union parishad chairman Abdus Samad alias Fata Samad was also arrested.

Meanwhile, according to the police headquarters, the police have arrested 1,407 people, including five identified criminals, across the country in the last 24 hours ending at 6:00am yesterday.

During their regular drive, police also recovered four firearms. A Dhaka Metropolitan Police (DMP) press release said yesterday that they arrested 256 people during a special drive in the capital yesterday. The arrestees include a con-

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them.

Meantime, another division bench upon a petition on behalf of Saber Hossain Chowdhury, Political Secretary to Awami League President Sheikh Hasina, directed the jail authorities to comply with the earlier High Court order of signing the vokalatanama by Saber, who is now in custody.

Saber was arrested on December 8 from his residence in the city.

Savar case

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petition filed by Mehnaz Hossain Anjona and six others of her family in apprehension of "threat" from the accused following filing of the murder case by her.

Earlier on Tuesday, a lower court directed the officer-in-charge of Savar police station to take "lawful action upon proper investigations into the murder case filed against an army officer and the 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 death of Abul Hossain Litu, a poultry farm owner at Savar.

Mehnaz Hossain Anjona filed the case implicating Major Kabir and his troops who she stated were on duty at the Savar army camp on October 28 when Litu was picked up on charge of keeping unauthorised arms. Litu died later.

This is the first time that a murder case has been registered against army personnel after their country-wide crackdown titled "Operation Clean Heart" to hunt down criminals began on October 17.

So far, 38 people have reportedly died after being picked up by army patrols.

Barrister Amir-ul-Islam appeared in the High Court on behalf of the petitioners.

Trade commission

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revenue and have positive impact on the country's foreign exchange reserves.

Khosru said all the issues pending since March this year when a single-country fair of Bangladesh was held in Myanmar were resolved through this visit of the Myanmar commerce minister who came here as a member of his premier's entourage.

During the visit of the Bangladesh commerce minister to Myanmar last March, the two countries came to an understanding on coastal shipping and account trade for boosting bilateral trade.

A draft Coastal Shipping Agreement prepared by Bangladesh has already been sent to Myanmar authorities while Bangladesh received from Myanmar the draft documents on account trade arrangement that would open up two-way goods transactions without the need for payments in foreign currency.

In 2000-2001, the volume of trade between the two countries was around \$26 million. Bangladesh's imports from Myanmar were worth \$24.69 million while its exports fetched only \$1.09 million, leaving a trade gap of \$23.77 million against Bangladesh.

However, the trade volume in 2001-2002 came down to around \$19 million with trade imbalance still against Bangladesh at \$14.5 million, official sources said.

Bangladesh's main export items to Myanmar are jute carpet, jute yarn, jute twine and pharma-ceuticals while its imports are wood, articles of wood and vegetable products.

BBC to air HR programme this evening

The BBC Bengali service will broadcast an extended programme during its evening transmission today, starting at local time 7:30 pm.

According to a BBC press release, in addition to the normal half hour, there will be an extra hour of programme, during which the recorded proceedings of a panel discussion on human rights in Bangladesh, held at the National Museum on Tuesday, will be broadcast.

The panel discussion, based on a recent Bengali service series titled "I have a right..." is being broadcast to celebrate the 70th anniversary of the BBC World Service today.

The panel discussion, moderated by Bengali service Senior Producer Manoshi Barua, covered a wide range of human rights issues. The panel consisted of Minister for Law and Justice Moudud Ahmed, Editor of The Daily Star Mahfuz Anam, former inspector general of police Enamul Huq and human rights advocate Sigma Huda.

The entire 90 minutes of the extended transmission will be broadcast on two new frequencies - shortwave 41 and 49 metrebands, 7420 and 5920 kilohertz respectively. The first half hour will also be broadcast on the usual frequencies. The entire programme can also be heard on FM 100MHz in and around Dhaka.

Nobel laureate

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house gases is limited.

As use of natural resources like oil are on the rise and these are depleting, their prices should go up. But it is not happening which is a paradox, Professor Arrow added. "Prices of resources are not increasing compared with other prices; known availability of minerals is increasing."

He said water supply in many parts of the world is critical. Range lands are being exhausted. The condition of humans has never been better: per capita GDP is growing everywhere (except sub-Saharan Africa and some South Asian countries).

Population growth may have bad consequences but is itself an indicator of well being. "Anyway what problems we do have will be overcome with our increasing knowledge," he said, observing that the speed of knowledge acquisition will go down.

"We should worry about long-term future. The rich countries are getting general savings but the poor countries are not. But the poor countries are not consuming less; that is another paradox," Professor Arrow added.

With BEA President Dr Qazi Kholiquzzaman Ahmad in the chair, Prof. Partha Dasgupta of Cambridge University introduced Prof. Arrow to the audience.

Newsmen clubbed

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warned that the authorities would solely be responsible for the consequences should there be any recurrence of such incident.

Meanwhile, the Dhaka Reporters Unity in a statement yesterday also condemned the police action against the newsmen and asked the authorities to act immediately to prevent recurrence of such incident.

Young and wilted

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underweight in 2001 was still 'very high,' according to the WHO criteria.

Maternal wasting is extremely common, 41 per cent, and it indicates that the household food security situation is critically inadequate throughout the year in Bangladesh. Elsewhere in the world, these grades of household food security situation are usually reported only during an emergency situation such as famine or war.

About urban slums, the findings say that living conditions, food security, health and nutrition vary considerably. It is clear that wide-spread poverty, poor health and malnutrition are common to all the slums surveyed in Dhaka, Khulna and Chittagong.

There was a steady decline in prevalence of stunting and underweight among the children population in the slums between 1991 and 2001. However, the prevalence of both is still very high and it is clear that the number of undernourished is increasing.

An alarming finding was that wasting, or low weight for height an indicator of acute food shortage in children aged 0-23 month, was up to 35 per cent in Chittagong slums.

The findings concluded that the

relatively slow decline in the prevalence of malnutrition in the country in the 1990s suggests that the past approaches to improving nutritional status have not been sufficiently effective.

The study recommended that direct nutrition interventions are needed to assist those affected by malnutrition including nutritional rehabilitation, micronutrient supplementation, and food fortification to improve the micronutrient status of the population as a whole.

Actions are also needed to address the underlying causes of malnutrition - particularly household food insecurity. There is a severe shortage of employment in rural areas and the urban slums and the bulk of the population is too poor to afford a nutritious diet.

It also said that for ensuring nutrition, food, agriculture, and development policies and programmes should attach due importance to improving household food security.

Interventions should focus on diversification of crop production, promoting homestead food production, creating better employment opportunities, improving access to credit and targeting food assistance to the poorest households.

Advocacy is necessary at all

levels to increase awareness and to create political will to combat malnutrition.

The study has been conducted by Helen Keller International (HKI) on 'Nutrition, Health and Poverty situation in Bangladesh'

In his address to the audience, Dr Gene George, USAID head of mission, said, "Reliable data for decision making is often missing. The findings on the nutritional status in the country give us a true picture of the mal-nourishment situation mostly in the rural settings."

Among others who also spoke on the occasion were Fazur Rahman, Health Secretary, Dora Panagides, Country Director of Helen Keller International, (Bangladesh), Sjeff Izermans, His Excellency Ambassador of The Netherlands in Bangladesh, Prof AB M Ahsanullah, DG of health directorate, and Dr SASKIA de Pee, regional scientific advisor, HKI.

The study was supported by USAID, Embassy of The Netherlands in Bangladesh and the Institute of Public Health and Nutrition, (IPHN). Thirty-eight other partner organisations extended help to the project.

Caribbean sweep

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very successful tour of the subcontinent.

Flying in from India where they drew the final Test in Kolkata and won the seven-match one-day series 4-3, West Indies carried on the fantastic work by clinching the three-match ODI series 2-0.

Led by Ridley Jacobs in absence of injured Carl Hooper, the tourists won the first Test in Dhaka by an innings and 310 runs.

Having scored their new low in the first Test (87 in the second innings), Bangladesh showed a lot of determination and improvement in the second Test.

Needing 62 runs more to make West Indies bat again, Bangladesh struggled against a more penetrative West Indies attack in a trying condition early in the morning, where the wickets offered variable bounce.

Hannan Sarkar was undone by a delivery from Drakes in the fifth over that never took off after pitching on the off-stump.

Left-arm paceman Pedro Collins removed Habibul Bashar for a duck with a great snorter, which the right-hander could only fend off to wicketkeeper Jacobs.

Opener Al-Shahriar was looking good to carry on the fight that started after tea on Tuesday but he was trapped leg before by an in-swinging from Daren Powell.

After the three quick dismissals Sanwar Hossain and Mohammed took the score to 100 but both perished while going for indiscreet shots.

Sanwar, on 24, unnecessarily flashed Jermaine Lawson and ended up offering a regulation slip catch. With the lunch break only minutes away, Ashraful went for an adventurous drive over extra-cover but was caught by Sarwan off the same bowler.

Alok and Enamul Hoque produced 73 runs for the seventh wicket after Bangladesh captain Khaled Mashud left his team at 137 for six.

The pair defied the West Indies attack for nearly two hours with Enamul playing the best supporting role. Braving a barrage of blows on his body, the veteran left-hander stood

firm on the crease and saw off 64 balls, letting Kapali do the scoring.

Kapali reached his 50 in 93 minutes off 67 balls. But the talented cricketer who was closing in on his maiden hundred departed in the last over before tea while hooking Powell behind the wicket.

His dismissal brought a quick end to the Bangladesh innings as West Indies needed only 20 balls to clean up the tail.

Alok Kapali was adjudged man-of-the-match but man-of-the-series went to West Indies pacer Jermaine Lawson, who took 11 wickets in the series including a magnificent 6-3 in Dhaka last week.

West Indies will fly home on Saturday.

ADAB slates harassment of NGO leaders

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The Association of Developments Agencies in Bangladesh (ADAB) yesterday condemned harassment of non-governmental organisation (NGO) leaders and demanded that it be put to an end, said a press release.

The press release signed by Md. Aminul Islam, an ADAB director, also demanded the government create a positive environment for the NGOs.

Representatives of some 203 NGOs participated in the meeting. The activities of some NGOs that recently resigned from the ADAB were criticised. The executive committee of the ADAB was also asked to take necessary action against these NGOs as they have been engaged in activities against the interest and unity of the NGO sector.

The demands were raised at the 28th annual general meeting of the ADAB held at the ICMA auditorium. The meeting was presided over by Dr. Kazi Faruq, president of the ADAB.

CU heroes of '71

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Faridpur. The CU gate road no 1 was named after him. But the CUCSU or the university authorities are yet to observe his death anniversary.

Shaheed Mohammad Hossain, lone Bir Protik of the university, was an employee at the engineering office in the university. He was the lone son of his four-member family and hailed from Shafiqnagar village under the Hathazari thana of Chittagong district.

On April 11, the occupied Pakistani forces attacked Hathazari thana and raided the house of the Mahbul Alam for in search of Mohammad Hossain with the help of the local 'rajakars'. The Pakistani army set fire to the house after failure to catch him. He fled to India in May and took the commando training. After taking the training he came back to Chittagong with a special assignment to free the port and obstruct the supply of arms and ammunition to the Pakistani army.

On May 16, Mohammad Hossain and his group went for an operation with the ship despatching mine and blew out the 'Panama Ship' of the Pakistani army.

But Mohammad Hossain died in the deep sea due to shortage of oxygen when he was returning after operation.

His body was found in the jetty no 15 of the port. His relatives could not recover the body fearing attack by Pakistani army. The Bangladesh government awarded him with the title of 'Bir Pratik' for his heroism and gallantry in the War of Liberation.

Shaheed Farhad Uddin was the third son of Rafiq Ahmed Chowdhury, forest officer of the Banskhalia under Chittagong district.

He was organiser of the then Bangladesh Chhatra League (BCL) at school level and worked at the Allaol Hall freedom fighter camp in the university. On March 29 a guerrilla team led by Farhad killed eight Pakistani soldiers in an operation at the Probortak hill intersection.

The team also ambushed and carried out some successful operations in the university area and Chowdhuryhat area.

He formed a 'Freedom Action Committee' in the Cox's Bazar and Dulahazra in April. During an operation there he along with his group, was caught by the 'rajakars'. The rajakars tortured them brutally and handed them over to the Pakistani army on May 5. The Pakistani army sprayed bullets on them and all his comrades died on the spot. Farhad received bullet injuries in his right chest. But the Pakistani army thought that all are dead.

Farhad took shelter in a mosque where he prayed whole night to god reading the holy Quran. A 'rajakar' saw him and informed the Pakistani army. The army beat him mercilessly on the mosque premises to know the information about the freedom fighters' camps. They shot him dead as he refused to give them any information about it.

Shaheed Ehsanul Haq resided at the Mustari lodge in the city, the cultural hub of the artistes of the 'Swadhin Bangla Betar Kendra'.

He helped the artistes make the programmes and carried it to the 'Kalurghat Betar Kendra' for airing. Haq also stocked a truckload of arms, ammunition and gunpowder to supply to the freedom fighters.

On April 7, the Pakistani army raided the house on information from the 'rajakars' who held him with Dr. Shafi, his brother-in-law.

The Al-Badar cadres also looted the house and later they used the house as torture camp. After that day Ehsanul Haq and Dr. Shafi were not found.

It is believed that the Pakistani army killed them. Shaheed Prof Aboni Mohan Dutta is another martyr of the CU. He was active organiser during the liberation war. He supplied food for the freedom fighters and gave money.

On May 8, two armed men picked him up from his Gassivale Hill Professors Quarters residence to the circuit house. They also picked up his brother Sudhir Dutta. The two brothers could not be traced yet from the torture camp of the Pakistani army.

Shaheed Engineer Probash Kumar is one of the martyrs who sacrificed his life at the early period of the liberation war.

He was the sub-assistant engineer in the engineering section of the university. He was kidnapped from the Surson Road in the city on the way to his home from the university on April 21. From that moment he was missing. It is also believed that the Pakistani army killed him.

Fatikchhari

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1996 and he could not dare to come to the country till 2001. However, my son felt free and secure this year to join the Eid celebrations with us, thanks to the army-led anti-criminal drive," said Abdur Rashid, an elderly person.

Fatikchhari earned a bad name for it in 1985. It all started with the politics of vengeance, terrorism and killing the rivals. The violent antagonism between two student organisations Bangladesh Chhatra League (BCL) and Islami Chhatra Shibir (ICS) - over the issue of holding supremacy had virtually turned the largest Upazila of the country into a taboo and caged since then. At least 100 people including leaders, activists and cadres of both the organisations have been murdered during the period. Besides, some 50 innocent people including businessmen and expatriates were also killed.

Reports have it that 17 gangs of criminals and 20 other sub-groups under those gangs had imposed a reign of terror and ruled the roast in Fatikchhari upazila since 1985. Many inhabitants of the upazila used to call the area as a 'valley of terror, panic and death.'