

Flag meeting BDR, BSF agree to work for peaceful border

BSS, Rajshahi

A battalion commander-level flag meeting between Bangladesh Rifles (BDR) and Indian Border Security Force (BSF) yesterday agree to work unilaterally for a peaceful border.

The meeting was held near Harudanga BSF camp under Raninagar thana in Murshidabad district, BDR sources said.

Killing of innocent Bangladeshis by both BSF and Indian nationals, border tension, smuggling of Indian goods, phensidi and other narcotics, cattle lifting, trafficking of drugs and arms, security for the people living near the border of both the countries and some other bilateral issues were discussed at the meeting.

The BDR side gave a list of

miscreants, who are hiding in India, to the BSF team and the BSF side also handed over a similar list to the BDR delegation.

The meeting started at 10.30 am and continued till 12.30 pm without break. Proceedings of the meeting was also drafted after signing the agreement by both sides.

Lt. Col. Kamrul Hossain, PSC, Commanding Officer of the 10 Battalion, led the four-member BDR side. Other members of the team are Major Arman Ali Bhuiyan, Second-in-Command of the battalion and its Adjutant Captain Golam Sohel.

R K Razeb Kumar Hazila, Commandant of the 26th BSF Battalion, headed the four-member delegation at the flag meeting and was assisted by his two staff officers Nagi and Kamaljit.

Road accidents kill 4 in Feni, Joypurhat

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

At least four peoples including the NGO officials were killed and seven others injured in two separate road accidents in Feni and Joypurhat yesterday and the day before.

Of them, two were killed in Feni while the rest two in Joypurhat.

Our Correspondent from Feni reports: Two persons were killed and four others injured in a bus-tempo collision at Bandhua Daulatpur on Feni-Parashuram road yesterday.

The dead were identified as Khali, 45, tempo driver, and Golam Mowla Chowdhury, passenger of the three-wheeler.

According to police, the accident took place when a Parashuram bound passenger bus from Feni collided head on with a tempo on the road at around 7 am.

The injured, identified as Mithu, 8, Jhinuk, 32, Jahurul Islam, 12, and Iftekhar, 4, were admitted to Feni hospital.

In Joypurhat, two NGO officials were killed and three others injured in a road accident on Joypurhat-Bogra road in Kalai upazila here Thursday.

Police said a speeding truck hit a motorbike at Basher Shako area in the morning killing Abdur Rashid, 32, and Ibrahim Hossain, 29, officials of Samaj Unnayan Karma Sangstha, on the spot.

Truck driver Lal Mia, helpers Monjil and Sanwar were injured in the accident.

They were admitted to local hospital. The NGO officials were coming to Mokamtala of Bogra from Kalai.

Eating oily fish may cut risk of asthma

REUTERS, London

Eating oily fish like salmon of mackerel regularly may reduce the risk of asthma symptoms, according to new British research.

A study by public health experts at the University of Cambridge suggests regular consumption of fish like salmon, mackerel and herring can have a protective effect. It is the latest evidence that diet is important in determining who is most at risk of developing asthma, and adds to the list of benefits ascribed to fish rich in omega-3 fatty acids.

"This study adds to existing evidence that a diet high in oily fish could protect against asthma," said the National Asthma Campaign in a statement released in response to the study.

"There have now been several studies suggesting an association between intake of certain foods and a lower incidence of asthma. These have shown a potential association between intake of oily fish, fresh fruit and magnesium—which is found in fresh fruit and vegetables and reduced by cooking—and a lower rate of asthma," the National Asthma Campaign statement notes.

The results add to the argument that lifestyle changes could be one reason that asthma rates are increasing.

A team of researchers from the university studied more than 750 volunteers who were already taking part in a much bigger investigation called the European Prospective Investigation of Cancer—a long-term study into the effects of diet on cancer.

They provided details of diet and lifestyles and were also asked if they had ever been diagnosed with asthma.

The results revealed 333 patients had suffered wheezing in the 12 months before completing their questionnaire and 437 had not. More than 12 per cent of the healthy volunteers reported eating oily fish at least twice a week, compared with just 7.5 per cent of the asthma sufferers.

After accounting for other asthma risk factors, such as body mass index, social class and smoking habits, the researchers found regular fish consumption roughly halved the risk of asthma attacks, wheezing or waking up with tightness in the chest.

Mystery shrouds death of prisoner in Khulna

UNB, Khulna

Mystery shrouded the death of a prisoner here on Thursday.

Police said Kalam, 32, hailed from Botiaghata upazila, fell sick in the district jail on the day and he was admitted to Khulna Medical College Hospital where he died in the afternoon.

But hospital sources said Kalam died before admission to the hospital.

Another source said he was tortured to death inside the jail.

Kalam was arrested from Sallamari ghat in Botiaghata upazila on November 10 and a case was filed against him under the Speedy Trial Act.

The jail authorities prevented local photojournalists from taking photograph of the body at the hospital.

Later, the body was handed over to the family members after autopsy.

South Korean opposition leader quits politics

AFP, Seoul

South Korean opposition leader Lee Hoi-Chang quit politics today in a tearful farewell after his narrow defeat in presidential polls.

"Now I am leaving politics," an emotional Lee, 67, said the morning after his defeat to ruling party candidate Roh Moo-Hyun.

Lee, who lost narrowly to outgoing President Kim Dae-Jung in the 1997 election, presented himself as a hardliner who would preserve the alliance with Washington and stand up to North Korea.

But Roh, backed by a younger generation attracted to his soft line on the North, stopped Lee's second bid for presidency, winning with 48.9 per cent of the vote to 46.6 per cent.

I failed to be chosen by people. I acknowledge defeat and humbly accept that," said the former prime minister and Supreme Court justice.

"I congratulate president-elect Roh Moo-hyun and hope he will become a great president who dedicates himself to the nation and people."

Lee's second bid for presidency fell through as he lost to Roh of the governing Millennium Democratic Party by a margin of 2.3 per cent of votes cast.

"I have firmly believed that it's my mission to build a society where laws and principles are more respected ... (But) I failed to achieve my goal for the second time," Lee said. "My lack of virtue brought about today's result."

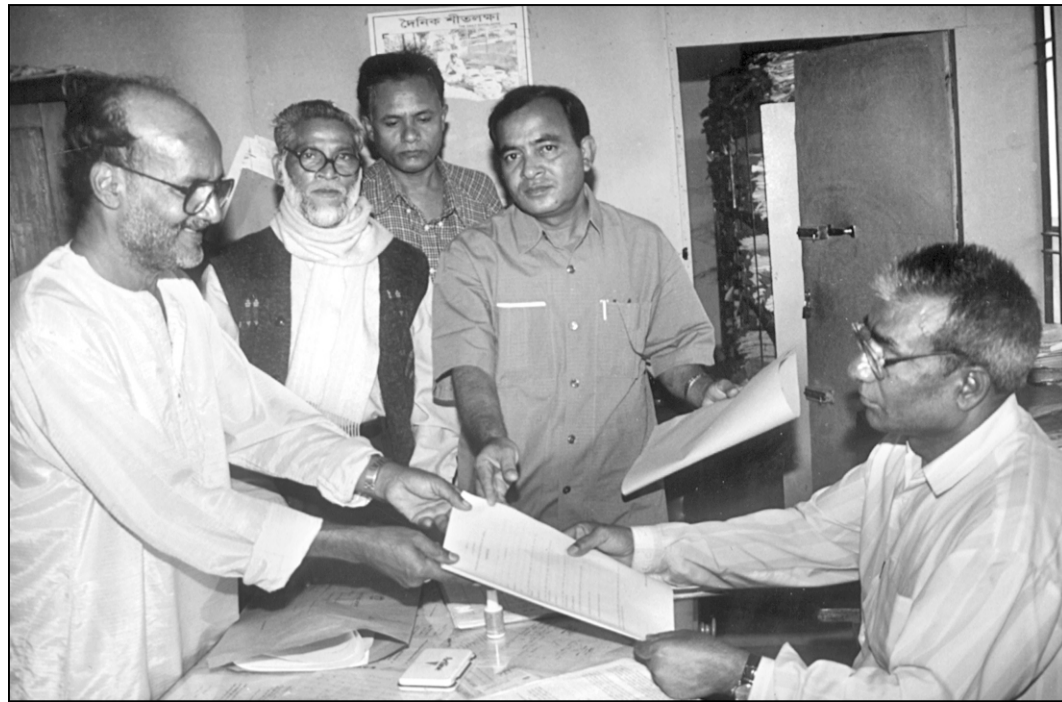
Lee said he hoped the opposition Grand National Party, stunned by his announcement, would turn itself into a grouping closer to the people by distancing itself from vested interests.

During his three-week campaign, the pro-US hardliner was backed by an older generation still loyal to Washington and hostile to Stalinist North Korea.

The Korean War generation heavily favoured Lee, who stood for stability and order against Roh's reformist calls for change. Lee's announcement left the GNP, which controls the National Assembly, South Korea's parliament, leaderless.

The GNP will test Roh's ability to govern when he puts his administration nominees through confirmation hearings early next year.

The party enjoys the backing of conservative voters who have opposed Roh's support for outgoing President Kim Dae-Jung's policy of engagement with Pyongyang.



A candidate collects a nomination paper for the union parishad election from the Office of Deputy Commissioner in Narayanganj yesterday.

US closer to war

FROM PAGE 1

Washington's declaration of a material breach, an ominous legal term that could be used to trigger war against Saddam, has no international legal validity at this time as no other Security Council member supported Negroponte's call, considering it a signal of US intentions.

But few defended Iraq's actions after Hans Blix, in charge of chemical, biological and ballistic weapons inspection teams, reported the 12,000-page Iraqi arms declaration mainly repeated old reports and revealed little new data. Both Britain and France sharply criticized Iraq's declaration.

"An opportunity was missed in the declaration to give a lot of evidence," Blix said. "They can still provide it and I hope they provide it to us orally, but it would have been better if it had been in the declaration."

As an example, he told reporters, after briefing the Security Council, Iraq had said it produced 8,500 liters of anthrax but had given no evidence all of it was destroyed.

"So we must ask ourselves 'was there more?'" he said.

But Blix and Mohamed ElBaradei, director of the International Atomic Energy Agency, said Iraq had cooperated well with inspectors when their

teams returned to the country last month after a four-year hiatus.

France, which had been critical of US policies, said it supported the inspectors' assessments. Its UN ambassador, Jean-Marc de la Sabliere, said the declaration "clearly does not answer unresolved and pending questions"

It doesn't lift the doubts about the possible continuation by Iraq of prohibited activities since December 1998, when the inspectors left the country. There are still question marks," he said.

Russia's UN ambassador Sergei Lavrov said it was not up to one member to declare a material breach and said the arms inspectors should not be "pushed into a direction that they themselves do not believe is advisable."

British Foreign Secretary Jack Straw suggested that if there was further evidence of serious violations by Iraq, the Security Council should adopt a resolution authorizing war, although an attack could take place without a vote.

"What we would hope very much is that if there was the clearest evidence of a further material breach the Security Council would accept its responsibilities and then say that the will of the international community had to be enforced by all necessary means, which means

military action," he said.

Blix in his list of missing data said the report did give some new data that had to be verified: an account of precursors for chemical warfare agents, new missile engines and guidance systems and an Air Force document that had once been snatched from an inspector on chemical munitions used in the 1980-1988 war with Iran.

But he said Iraq needed to provide more information about missile engines and 550 mustard gas shells and production of the deadly nerve agent VX.

Iraq, he said, also was testing a new version of its al-Samoud missile, which in test flights had exceeded the range permitted by the United Nations.

But Blix, the executive director of the UN Monitoring, Verification and Inspection Commission, challenged governments like the United States to give him evidence to disprove Iraq's contention it no longer had any weapons of mass destruction.

"While individual governments have stated that they have convincing evidence to the contrary, UNMOVIC at this point is neither in a position to confirm Iraq's statement, nor in the possession of evidence to disprove it," he said.

Osman Bahini

FROM PAGE 12
arrested along with another person - Amir Hossain-- during a raid at a rented house at the Burma Colony at Nasirabad under Panchlala thana in the city at about 2:30 pm, police said.

Mentionably, eight fire-arms including one US-made M-16 and one Chinese AK-47 recovered from a tea garden at Kanchan Nagar in Fatikchhari by army a few days back belonged to the Osman Bahini.

The notorious gang created a reign of terror in Fatikchhari upazila for long.

Traffic scenario

FROM PAGE 12
these areas from midnight. In doing so, these trucks have to move back and forth between the construction site and the place where they bring their supplies from. This phenomenon creates traffic jams as trucks often pull over by the road and take up the entire road space while loading and unloading the supplies.

During the entire process, other vehicles have to often wait till the trucks complete their deliveries. Even an ambulance, for instance, carrying an emergency patient, may be caught up in the blockade.

Thus, a mechanism needs to be in place in order to control the flow of non-mechanised vehicles as well as the midnight traffic. The city-dwellers expect the authorities concerned to soon address the issue for the sake of road safety.

Mymensingh blasts Bhuiyan protests Hasina's remarks

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

BNP Secretary General Abdul Mannan Bhuiyan has protested Awami League President Sheikh Hasina's remarks about the recent bomb explosions in Mymensingh and termed those "false, imaginary and motivated."

In a statement yesterday, Bhuiyan said the government is determined to find out the criminals involved in the barbaric incidents and give them exemplary punishment. He mentioned that a judicial inquiry committee has already probing the incidents.

The BNP leader recalled that a number of bomb explosions during the Awami League (AL) rule left many people dead and injured. Each time the AL government ignored BNP's demand for formation of judicial probe body and filed 'false cases' against its leaders and activists, he said.

Bhuiyan, who is Minister for LGRD and Cooperatives, said that as in the past the AL president is again making motivated remarks to hide the actual culprits involved in the Mymensingh explosions, impede proper investigation into those and trial of the elements.

He asserted that law would take its own course regardless of what Sheikh Hasina says.

Dust, fumes

FROM PAGE 12
including food items at my shop from being covered with thick layer of dust. Frequently, I clean dust but that is not enough to keep the goods in hygienic condition."

Similar situation prevails at Moghbazar, Mouchak, Malibagh, Tongi Diversion Road, Nilkhet, New Market, Satmasjid, Sayedabad and Jatrabari crossings and roads in the areas. Mirpur area and different areas in the city old part are also facing such air pollution.

Meanwhile, a recent study by the Department of Environment (DoE) said there is more than 40 microgram of fine particulate matter (diameter less than 2.5 micron) in per cubic metre of air in the City. Presence of particulate matter of less than 10-micron diameter is 100 microgram per cubic metre of air.

And on an average, there is 150 microgram of fine particles in per cubic metre of air in the city. At times, it rises up to 300 microgram in the Jatiya Sangsad Bhaban area and this is the highest level that the monitoring machine can measure, the study said.

According to the United States Environment Protection Agency, the permissible level is 15 microgram for particles of less than 2.5 micron diameter and 65 microgram for particles of less than 10 micron diameter.

Trade promotion

FROM PAGE 12

because of the long time needed for transportation.

"The cost is also high. India can save on the cost if Bangladesh is allowed to supply such items to the North East. It will benefit both as the cost will be much less." Chowdhury also asserted that India must allow duty-free access for Bangladesh goods or charge a nominal five percent tax.

"But that has not happened though discussions have been going on for the last 20 years.

"As a neighbour, we expect the Indian government to help us market our goods in India. That is the only way we can survive," he said.

Countries like Thailand and Canada are helping Bangladesh in this fashion but India is not doing this, he said.

"Recently we have been allowed duty-free marketing of 124 Bangladeshi products in Thailand. We hope the Indian government will also act in the same fashion. Simply because we expect West Bengal to be the springboard of our developing trade infrastructure, and that can only happen with the assistance of the Indian government."

During his two-day visit, Chowdhury met the Chief Minister and also his predecessor Jyoti Basu.

"Both have stated their willingness to develop healthy relations with Bangladesh," he said.

Chickenpox

FROM PAGE 1

He said, "Drugs are not usually effective. But proper home care is important. Scabs should not be peeled off unless they disappear on their own. The scabs should be destroyed or burnt to prevent the spread of the germs."

Normally, chickenpox is a mild illness, but it can cause serious complications, including pneumonia, encephalitis and serious bacterial infection.

"Some patients may have a few blisters, but many have several hundreds. When blisters break, scabs form and the blisters may get infected by bacteria again (a secondary infection)," said Professor Amin.

Some children have symptoms like fever, abdominal pain or a vague sick feeling that usually last about three to five days.

Although a patient suffers from chickenpox once in a lifetime, the chickenpox virus can stay dormant in the body and can cause skin eruption called shingles later in life.

Firecrackers seized

FROM PAGE 1

by the army experts, according to police sources.

The officer-in-charge of the police station said that the owners of the warehouses are manufacturers of crackers and fireworks, and they have been in this business for generations. "They are not engaged in criminal activities," he added.

The superintendent of police of Narsingdi told the newsmen that the primary investigation revealed that crackers of different sizes were recovered, and there were some ingredients which could be used to make powerful bombs.

Lt. Col. Faruk, Commanding Officer of the Joint Forces in Narsingdi district, while talking to the press yesterday said that someone could use these explosives for acts of sabotage.

In connection with the case filed with the Sadar Thana, police will produce the two female detainees before the court.

As many as 128 people, including 27 listed criminals, were hauled up during the Operation Clean Heart across the country in the 24 hours ending at 8:00am yesterday.

The joint forces of the army, the BDR and police recovered 34 firearms including four pistols, eight revolvers, eight pipe guns, and five shotguns along with 40 rounds of ammunition.

The latest spate of arrests pushed the number of people rounded up since the start of the anti-crime crackdown on October 17 to 9,575, including 2,108 listed criminals. The joint forces have so far seized 1,734 firearms and 28,588 rounds of ammunition.

In Khulna, the joint forces arrested seven listed criminals from the city on Thursday night. They included Kazi Enayet Ali 34, and Selim 26.

The members of the joint forces arrested Enayet from Baro Boyra area. He felt sick after being handed over to police on the same night. Later, he was admitted to Khulna Medical College Hospital for treatment. Enayet is the younger brother of former AL lawmaker, Sekander Ali Dalim.

The joint forces also seized four pipe guns along with ten rounds of cartridges from Kaiya Bazar of Batiaghata on the same night. They arrested five listed criminals from Ramnagar area of Rupsha and recovered one revolver from their possession.

Our Comilla correspondent reports that the joint forces arrested four people with forged notes. A team of joint forces raided different parts of Nangalkot and arrested Mohammad Yasin from Haripur area along with 43 Tk 100 notes.

The Bangladesh commerce minister earlier complained to the West Bengal chief minister that Bangladesh trucks bringing in goods into India were unnecessarily held up at the border. The Chief Minister assured of looking into the matter, he said.

Earlier, Chowdhury was present as chief guest at the Industrial Trade Fair that began in Kolkata yesterday.

In his speech there he said Bangladesh needs Indian help to survive in the field of trade and business.

Inaugurating the Bangladesh pavilion at the fair, Bhattacharyya said West Bengal is ready to cooperate with Bangladesh in trade promotion.

"The moment we get an official letter from the Bangladesh government, we will grant them the land for the Trade promotion Centre" he announced. He also spent some time at the pavilion.

Schoolboy

FROM PAGE 12

Srimangal and took her son to the Srimangal Police Station on Thursday probably to earn sympathy from police.

Kadir, who rose to notoriety by torturing several youths, confessed to killing the boy. Later, police took him to Sylhet and dug the body out of Kadir's house at about 4:30pm yesterday on his confessional statement.

Police also took to custody two teenagers -- Emran and Kamran -- who happened to be Shahad's friends, both from the same area. They killed Shahad with a sharp kitchen knife, they admitted.

Shahad's father Abdul Mosabbir filed a case with the Sylhet Kotwali Police Station.

Toll-takers

FROM PAGE 12

tionists roam the Dabuapara Bazaar, Kachchupara and Kaokhali areas, added the sources.

Recently, some non-tribal people have been set free on ransom after abduction.

Superintendent of Police of Chittagong Matiur Rahman told The Daily Star that illegal toll-collection by the tribal extortionists was a common phenomenon.

The tribal gang abducted a businessman from the neighbouring Rangunia tea garden, the police officer said.

Police will launch a drive soon to nab the toll-takers, he assured.

Caught in cycle of poverty

FROM PAGE 1

one cannot really make a living out of it. Thousands migrate to the capital or elsewhere for manual jobs.

Four of the seven thanas in the district are 'extremely flood-prone', said Deputy Director of the Department of Agriculture in Gaibandha Mohiuddin Ahmed said. "Severe flood and erosion bring in fresh misery each year."

However, he said, the situation has improved a lot from what it used to be ten years back "when the bulk of the population simply starved during the period".

"Since introduction of the high yielding variety of paddy such as the IRR1 and Boro, the situation has improved as harvesting begins when the worst time hits.

"Our official figure says the district produces about 1.5 lakh metric tonnes of surplus rice every year. But this does not go a long way towards eradicating poverty because most people are landless peasants," Ahmed said.

None of the 89 non-

governmental organisations (NGOs) working in the area have any micro-credit scheme for what they call "the ultra-poor" of Gaibandha.

Their micro-credit schemes are for those who have the means to pay back. Only one NGO called the Gano Unnayan Kendra has some activities for the impoverished of the char areas.

Many complain that a group of users take advantage of the situation, lending money at an extremely high rate.

Every individual this correspondent has talked to claimed they had borrowed money at an interest rate of 20 per cent.

There are instances when borrowers were forced to pledge their labour days in advance to repay the loans with interest.

Imtaj Ali, an erosion victim with five children, a wife and his mother to feed, said that in his lifetime he had shifted homes more than seventeen times. Having lost all of his twelve bigwas of land to the Brahmaputra, he now lives in a

makeshift hut on the embankment of the river. Imtaj said when he had borrowed Tk 2,000 from a loan shark, he could not even cope with the payment of Tk 400 per month as interest. Eventually he and his family were half-starving in the current harvesting season because he had to agree to work in the fields for a nominal fee to repay the loan.

The Gaibandha Sadar lawmaker and veteran Awami League leader Lutfur Rahman told The Daily Star that all his efforts to attract investment for industries had gone in vain.

Gaibandha has been gripped by 'chronic poverty' that cannot be overthrown unless investments are made, he said.

In this regard, he blamed successive governments for their indifference to development of the western part of the country.

"This area has prospects for potatoes, jute and many other items. But even my personal efforts to set up a cold storage in the region have failed. There is simply no investor," the MP said.

The common people are unani-

mous that lack of proper leadership is behind the failure to attract investors.

Gaibandha have had successive MPs belonging to opposition parties. They said it is well known that MPs from the opposition benches have little or no say in policymaking.

An official of a leading NGO that has some programmes for the poor in the district said the four rivers were a curse for the people.

He said during last flood season, they counted 12,000 displaced families, desperately in need of help. "We requested help from Dhaka but nobody showed any interest," he said requesting anonymity.

Many people believe Gaibandha could be a centre for industrialisation although it is situated about 20 kilometres off the Dhaka-Dinajpur highway.

They said investors could benefit from cheap labour. After the building of the Bangabandhu Bridge, it is about five hours away from the capital.