

# World Social Summit

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"Some groups in the WSF are against the terrorists," she said with regret.

While most delegates at the Mumbai Resistance were Indian, the participants' list was a kaleidoscope of far-left movements from Turkey to Italy to Chad.

Organisers, however, said the Mumbai Resistance drew 2,000 people, far below the attendance across the street.

At the World Social Forum, activists ranging from pacifist South Korean students to Iranian street vendors handed out leaflets, marched to drumbeats and staged impromptu theatre to press their causes.

Jose Bove, the radical French farmer and emblem of the anti-globalisation movement, urged activists to find alternatives to the World Trade Organisation, which he charged was dictating rules for agriculture even at the village level.

Jeremy Corbyn, a British member of parliament, used the forum to urge a common front against Israel's occupation of the Palestinian territories.

Corbyn was joined by Palestinian civil society activist Mustafa Bargouti, who charged that Israeli Prime Minister Ariel Sharon was biding time as the United States was unwilling to press him during a presidential

election year.

"I urge the world to note our sufferings and force Israel to stop building the wall that Sharon is building in our territories," Bargouti said.

Critics of the World Social Forum, which has drawn little interest from the Indian media, say the gathering focuses only on abuses in the world without offering concrete alternatives.

Individual organisers of the Mumbai meeting have charged alternatively that it is focusing too much on the Iraq war or excessively on Indian issues, mostly the centuries-old Hindu caste system.

Iranian rights activist Shirin Ebadi, the 2003 Nobel Peace laureate, agreed with the Iraq focus but stressed there was more the meeting could discuss.

She said there was "not so much balance" in the selection of speakers, with the opening night seeing only one voice from Europe: British MP and anti-war activist Corbyn.

"This meeting is for a better world and needs to focus on all current international issues and one of the most important ones is the problem of Iraq," Ebadi told AFP.

She stressed the forum could also work to ensure universal protection of human rights and to ease income disparity around the world.

# Musharraf faces quit

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Daulatana, like other passengers, was not informed about the reason for the diversion and alleged that it was intended to prevent her from attending the speech, telling The Associated Press by telephone: "What kind of general is he who is scared of a woman?"

The speech capped a highly charged two weeks. Musharraf struck a deal with Indian Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee to start talks on resolving the standoff over Kashmir; the military has stepped up operations in tribal borderlands to hunt down al-Qaida fugitives; and a car bombing injured 15 people outside a church in the southern city of Karachi.

"We have to carry out operations against foreign elements in our tribal areas, which can be a cause for terrorism, with full force," Musharraf said.

Amid accusations that Pakistani nuclear technology has proliferated to Iran, Libya and North Korea, Musharraf promised to strengthen Pakistan's deterrent while stressing the need to "assure the world that we are a responsible nation and will not let nuclear weapons spread."

Musharraf concluded his speech with a salute and punching his fists in the air. Shouts of protest continued undiminished.

## 3 GIs, 2 Iraqis

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the country's most controversial military deployment since World War II.

The troops move into Iraq next week and any casualty could rock Prime Minister Junichiro Koizumi's government.

"We are making history today. It is the first time that we have Japanese troops going into a combat zone since World War II," US forces spokesman Captain Randall Baucous said.

In Washington, Bremer expressed "doubts" about Shia demands for elections before the transfer of power, but said: "These are questions that, obviously, need to be looked at."

He said Washington may alter the way a transitional Iraqi assembly is selected and make other "clarifications," but gave few details.

# Thai tariff concession

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Khaleda and Thaksin had a 45-minute talks at the Prime Minister's Office soon after the Thai premier flew in Dhaka on a day-long visit to attend an international business conference organised by the Bangladesh chapter of International Chamber of Commerce.

Establishment of a regional road network and enhancing bilateral cooperation in trade and commerce and regional forums came up for discussion between the two leaders, Foreign Secretary Shamsher M Chowdhury told newsmen after the meeting.

The Thai prime minister assured Khaleda of all possible cooperation in Bangladesh's economic development, including in the tourism, aviation and transport sectors.

Thailand want to be a partner of development in Bangladesh, Thaksin said and lauded the leadership of Khaleda and Bangladesh's foreign policy.

The two leaders underscored the need for early implementation of a road network linking Bangladesh, Myanmar and Thailand. They agreed to form a tripartite committee after consulting Myanmar to work out details of the project.

They expressed the confidence that the road link would enhance economic activities, including trade and tourism in South and East Asia.

About a joint venture project for construction of an elevated highway in Bangladesh, the Thai prime minister said the two sides can start negotiating the project after necessary follow-up actions.

During the meeting, Khaleda sought Thai cooperation for development of tourism and enhancing airport facilities in Bangladesh. Increasing air links between

# Carrot of free time fools them all

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Nilphamari

Grameen mobile phone users throughout the district actually wiped off some minutes from their pre-paid and post-paid phone cards while trying to pocket some free talk time. A prankster successfully tricked them into making 10 unnecessary calls.

In the early hours Wednesday, Grameen Phone (GP) users received a text or sms (short message service) that deluded the credulous bunch to take it as an official announcement coming from the GP. The message read: "Grameen Phone celebrates being the largest service provider in Bangladesh. Forward this sms to 10 subscribers and get 100-taka talk time free."

To grab the boon, unsuspecting phone users became enthusiastically busy in forwarding the message to 10 other subscribers, who in their turn also fell for the ruse. The number of deceived GP users thus multiplied in geometric speed.

Their enthusiasm started to fizzle out only when they noticed that -- upon forwarding the message 10 times -- they were not getting any freetalk time.

The next day, many of these simple folks called the GP customer service and got irked to learn the unpleasant truth -- that it was not GP's message, that GP did not offer any free talk time at all and that they had been duped.

"By sending 10 text messages, a subscriber like me spent 23 taka for nothing," says Zakir Hossain. "Even if only 1,000 users have fallen for it, they have wasted 23,000 taka!"

# Bangla-China Consultations starts in Beijing today

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The sixth round Bangladesh-China Bilateral Consultations starts today in Beijing with a view to widening cooperation as well as reducing the huge trade gap between the two countries.

A Bangladesh delegation headed by Foreign Secretary Shamsher Mobin Chowdhury last night left for a three-day visit to Beijing.

The meeting will discuss bilateral, regional and international issues, sources at the foreign ministry said.

The meeting will also review the progress of the agreements signed during the visits of Prime Minister Khaleda Zia to the China and Chinese premier to Bangladesh in 2002. The two countries will explore new areas of cooperation.

"China is our important trade partner, but we have also huge trade gap with China. We will try to find ways to reduce the gap and increase understanding on political, economic, trade, cultural and consular fronts," said an official.

Invited by Chinese Vice Foreign Minister Wang Yi, the Bangladesh team will also meet Chinese Foreign Minister Li Zhaoxing.

## PCJSS

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in Rangamati district town on Monday, demanding their "equal rights" and "co-existence" in the CHT.

Pahari Chhatra Parishad (PCP) also dismissed the PCJSS demands and demanded abolition of the CHT Regional Council and District Councils.

In a memorandum submitted to the prime minister on January 15, it also demanded the removal of PCJSS leader and CHT Regional Council Chairman Shantu Larma, Rangamati District Council Chairman Manik Lal Dewan and Deputy Minister for CHT Affairs Moni Swapan Dewan.

## Hartal enforced

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The dawn-to-dusk shutdown call was supported by the ruling BNP, Jamaat, Communist Party of Bangladesh, Jatiya Party and several other socio-cultural organisations.

Members of Khulna Press Club brought out a procession yesterday morning. Similar processions were brought out by political parties to express solidarity with the hartal call. The marchers chanted slogans condemning the murder and demanding arrest of the killers immediately. They also demanded resignation of the home minister.

Meanwhile, the police commissioner has punished four policemen for misbehaviour and assault. Inspector Abdul Gafur, ASI Ali Ahmed and Constable Momin were withdrawn for misbehaving with a number of pro-hartal activists and Inspector Ahmed Molla of Detective Branch of police was closed to Police Line for assaulting a picket in the city.

The biennial election of Khulna Chamber of Commerce and Industry was however held yesterday after a lapse of nine years. The event was kept out of the purview of the shutdown.

Members of Khulna District Bar Association abstained from work yesterday to express solidarity with the hartal call.

The dawn-to-dusk shutdown was also observed in all upazilas of Khulna district.

A hartal was observed in Bagerhat as part of a five-day programme. Activities at Mongla seaport remained suspended. Different political parties brought out processions condemning the murder.

The programme includes a condolence meeting today at the press club auditorium and formation of human chain at the Shaheed Minar in Bagerhat on Monday.

# Mob stones Altaf's

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refused to resist the robbers.

They said traders of Kasba cattle market deposited Tk 7.58 lakh with Safiuddin Sarder, a trusted local trader, on Thursday evening as the bank was closed before they could complete transaction and Friday being bank holiday.

Safiuddin kept the money in the iron safe of his pharmacy, Janata Medical Hall, at Torki Bandar. At around 4:00 yesterday morning, a band of robbers barged into the drug store through the back door and tied and beat Safiuddin up for the money. Sensing the swoop on his neighbour, grocer Dwijen Chandra alias Jhantu Mandal rushed to Torki Bandar RRF police camp and asked for help.

However, police declined to come to their aid and instead, detained and interrogated Jhantu, locals alleged. When Jhantu tried to alert the locals by shouting at the top of his voice, RRF constables Sagor and Kamal allegedly threatened to kill him right there. Police freed Jhantu only after the robbers slipped into safety with the booty.

Hearing the robbery and alleged police inaction apparently to aid the robbers, local people threw up benches and burning tyres to barricade Barisal-Dhaka highway from

6:00am. They also threw bricks and vegetables on Home Minister Altaf Hossain Chowdhury's motorcade which was driving by the area to Dhaka at around 9:30am as the minister ignored their demand to talk to them.

The mob also held a protest meeting on the highway. Afterwards, high police officials, who were escorting the home minister, came back and said the minister has asked them to talk with them (locals).

People demanded immediate arrest of the criminals, recovery of the looted amount, punishment to the "truant" policemen of the camp and assurance on safety and security of lives and assets of the traders.

The police officials assured them of immediate action against the criminals and punishment to the police personnel who neglected their duty. The highway was eventually opened to traffic at 11:00am.

A case was lodged with Gournadi Police Station without naming anyone and no body was arrested nor anything recovered.

Deputy Inspector General, Barisal Range, Golam Mustafa admitted the robbery, but denied that bricks and vegetables were thrown on the motorcade.

# Amendment to constitution

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tant bills are expected to be passed in this session.

Earlier yesterday, a high-profile meeting between Prime Minister Khaleda Zia and nine of her senior cabinet colleagues discussed the details of the draft proposal to bring vital constitutional amendments to increase the seats.

The meeting finalised the draft of the bill expected to be placed before tomorrow's cabinet meeting for approval.

As per the expansion plan, 400 lawmakers will be elected through direct voting while the 50 reserved seats would be distributed proportionately among parties having representation in parliament. A party commanding no less than eight lawmakers in parliament will have a woman legislator, the meeting observed.

Despite staying off the House, the AL is likely to flex its muscle in the streets, as the government is set to take some unilateral decisions in this session.

It has been away from the House since the last budget session in July last year and put several demands before the government since as preconditions for its return.

The president will address the inaugural day of the New Year's session at 4:00pm today. The Business Advisory Committee headed by the speaker will sit at 3:30pm to fix the schedule of the session.

Speaker Jamir Uddin Sircar yesterday said that he would not take any step to bring the AL back to the House.

"I am unlikely to have any desire to initiate any step to bring the opposition to parliament after the main opposition's 15-point demand and the opposition leaders' comment on parliament," the speaker told newsmen at his office at the Jatiya Sangsad. With almost no chance of AL's change in stance regarding joining the House, the main opposition party would stage protest against the unilateral government move to raise the seats.

The bill on raising the number of seats in parliament will be passed in the eleventh session. The AL has already rejected the government plan, terming the initiative "motivated."

"We must further protest the government's motivated plan on increasing seats in the Jatiya Sangsad. As the government is doing

# Manik murder

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Sources said the KMP was grilling six people -- contractor Syed Amjad Hossain, telephone mechanic Kamal Hossain, day-labourers Afzal Hossain, Saidur Howlader and Shajahan Talukder and Mostafa Kamal -- arrested in Icegati union in Rupsha upazila on Friday.

"Police are yet to get any vital information from the arrestees," said a police officer, requesting not to be named.

The sources said the puller of the rickshaw that was taking Manik home from Khulna Press Club was tracked down yesterday, but the tight-lipped KMP did not confirm the report.

Unofficial sources said the rickshaw of Hazer, 35, was found at a Karikar Para garage under Daulatpur Police Station.

## Noab condemns

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at Noab, strongly condemn this heinous crime against a fearless and honest journalist. We demand speedy investigation and punishment to the perpetrators of this heinous act.

"We categorically state that such an act of terror will never silence the media in Bangladesh. The tragic death of Manik Saha only illustrates how insecure the environment is for working journalists. Several journalists have been killed in that region in recent years, but very few of the killers have been brought to book. We recall that the killers of Shamsur Rahman, a correspondent of daily Janakantha in Jessore, are yet to be punished even after three years."

The statement said, "We strongly feel that the law enforcers must tighten their grip on the criminals who attack media persons. We demand greater protection for journalists while performing their professional duties."

"We, at Noab, extend our heartfelt sympathy and condolences to the family of Manik Saha, and commit to uphold the principles that he and many other courageous colleagues have laid down their lives for."

# Rapist get death penalty

OUR CORRESPONDENT, N'ganj

A tribunal in Narayanganj yesterday pronounced death sentence to a man for murdering a child after rape.

Judge Mohammad Mofizul Islam of the Special Tribunal for Prevention of Women and Children Repression gave death penalty to Akhter Hossain, son of Abdul Mian of Dewli Dourapara, for killing eight-year-old Rima of the same village.

The tribunal delivered the verdict after examining 10 witnesses.

Akhter raped Rima and then strangled her on April 24, 1997 when she went to bathe in the Shitalakkha river, sources said.

On recovery of her body from the river the next day, the victim's father Abdul Hye lodged a case with Bandar Police Station.

Akhter confessed to his crime.

Special Public Prosecutor Borhanuddin Sarkar moved for the plaintiff while Foyez Ahmed, Aminul Haq and Kazi Ahammad Ali argued for the convict.

## JCD men assault

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the RU teachers were visiting the JCD leaders injured in a clash with the Islami Chhatra Shibir (ICS).

The JCD leaders blamed the RU vice-chancellor and some Jamaat-aligned teachers in the administration for the violence of January 14, according to sources.

They criticised the administration for sending an ICS activist to the Combined Military Hospital in Dhaka by air at the expense of the university.

JCD President of RU unit Motiar Rahman said, "The administration is always against us, but now it has proved that it stands for the ICS."

When contacted, the RU professor said the administration is bearing the medical expenses of both the JCD and ICS men and the ICS worker was flown to Dhaka as his condition deteriorated. He, however, admitted the misconduct of the JCD activists at the RMCH but refuted the chase.

Meanwhile, 95 ICS leaders and activists were sued by the JCD leaders Thursday night. Four JCD leaders filed four separate cases with Motihar Police Station.

The JCD leaders alleged that most of the accused ICS men are roaming at large on the campus.

# EU to consider option

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up the issues in his meeting with the commerce minister, ministry sources confirmed.

"You will have to improve the investment climate in spite of a number of problems, including over-population, that beset Bangladesh," Lamy was quoted as saying to the commerce minister.

Businessmen and the commerce minister meanwhile complained to Lamy that China had been taking some unfair advantage in international trade by undervaluing its own currency by 40 percent.

They wanted to know if the EU could fix a ceiling for China in the post-MFA period to ensure a level playing field. They cited the example of the US in their defence where China has been given the maximum trade ceiling until 2008.

Lamy said the issue too is a cause for concern for the EU businessmen, but it all depends on the WTO (World Trade Organisation) that actually bars imposition of such ceiling, he said.

The commerce minister meanwhile moderated the question-answer session.

Answering to a volley of questions from local businessmen, Lamy emphasised market access for countries like Bangladesh. The LDC demands will be raised in future

# DB takes Jayanti murder case

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Gulshan police yesterday handed over the case docket and other documents regarding school-teacher Jayanti Munshi Reza murder to Detective Branch (DB) of police.

The DB yesterday submitted a petition to the Court of Chief Metropolitan Magistrate and sought a five-day fresh remand to quash prime accused Azam Reza, Jayanti's husband.

The court however fixed today to hear on the issue in Azam's presence.

On Friday, Azam was sent to Dhaka Central Jail after the four-day remand expired.

Munshi Ruhul Kuddus, investigation officer of the case, suspects Azam, a Dhaka Bank executive, killed his wife.

"There are enough evidences to prove that Jayanti was killed by her husband," he headed.

He said the DB sought fresh remand to determine whether anyone else was involved in the killing.

Jayanti, a grade three teacher of Australian International School, was found dead at her Banani residence on January 9.

An unnatural death case was lodged with Gulshan Police Station the same day and later a murder case was filed after autopsy report confirmed that she was killed.

discussions with the United States and the WTO, he assured.

Lauding the South Asian Free Trade Area (Safat) treaty, Lamy predicted the regional economic bloc will lure in greater foreign investment for Bangladesh.

Abdul Awal Mintoo, president of the Federation of Bangladesh Chambers of Commerce and Industry, and representatives from Bangladesh Garments Manufacturers and Exporters' Association and Bangladesh Textile Mills Association were also present in the session.

## Anti-graft body

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the time to submit the committee report till mid-February. We will do so by that time," he told The Daily Star.

The committee will recommend no major changes in the bill, he added.

The much-talked-about bill was placed in parliament on July 10 last year. The committee first met on September 13 and then on November 15 to scrutinise the bill. It decided to sit again by December 12 but failed as the law ministry did not send to it proposals for amending the bill.

The development in the last seven months is that the government has decided to drop two ministers' names from the selection committee under the bill.

Chaired by Khandaker Mahbub, the committee meeting held at the Jatiya Sangsad Bhaban yesterday, two months after its previous meeting, was attended by committee members and senior officials.

# Detention of 13 Indians: HC asks govt to explain

UNB, Dhaka

The High Court (HC) yesterday issued a rule upon the government to show cause why the detention of 13 Indian nationals, who had already served prison sentence, should not be declared unlawful.

The court, in its rule returnable in eight weeks, also asked the government to explain

why other similarly incarcerated persons should not be released forthwith.

The order came upon a public interest litigation writ filed by Bangladesh Legal Aid and Services Trust (Blas) challenging the "unlawful detention" in prison of the Indian nationals after the expiry of their sentence awarded by Rajshahi District and Sessions Judge's Court two and a half years ago.