

## Saarc Summit postponed

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decision of the government of India not to attend the 13th Saarc Summit when all preparations had been completed the keep the Saarc spirit and process alive," said Chowdhury.

"Bangladesh has also received words of solidarity from other Saarc countries," he said. "Comprehensive and blanket security arrangements were made at an unprecedented level. All Indian security concerns were fully considered and accommodated."

Referring to the presence of an Indian security team here, Chowdhury said, "It is ironic that India undertook the decision when an Indian security assessment team was still present in Dhaka and consulting our security agencies."

The Indian foreign secretary, however, told reporters in New Delhi that an assessment by the Indian high-level security team was factored into the decision and that violence in Bangladesh seemed to have "intensified" recently.

Speaking on the Nepalese turmoil, Chowdhury said, "With regard to developments in the neighbourhood" it is a shared belief that Saarc should not be held hostage in bilateral considerations. "In this respect, he referred to the Saarc Charter that says "Bilateral and contentious issues shall be excluded from the deliberations."

"It is regretted that once again a Saarc summit has been postponed at the last moment because of a decision by the government of India. Such postponements go counter to the spirit of and letter of the Saarc Charter," Chowdhury added.

"It is a sad commentary for South Asia that its largest member state should retract its commitment to the Charter on this excuse," said Chowdhury.

Referring to Indian press reports announcing India's withdrawal from the summit from early morning yesterday, Chowdhury said, "The media reports were flooding in far before the official announcement by the Indian government. I will leave it up to you interpret what that implies."

Asked if the opposition Awami League's assertion that the 'law and order' situation here is out of control had influenced India's decision, Chowdhury said, "I will leave it up to your wisdom to decide what is implied by what."

While the Indian foreign secretary in his statement to the press said that India "wishes to reiterate its continuing and consistent commitment to Saarc process and to increase regional cooperation among member states."

Meanwhile, Pakistan also questioned Delhi's decision. Expressing surprise, Pakistan Information Minister Rashid said, "It is beyond our understanding why India refused at the last minute, we are asking them to explain."

Pakistan foreign ministry spokesman Masood Khan, who is in Dhaka for the summit, also told AFP that Pakistan was disappointed with the Indian decision. "Frequent postponements could tarnish the

image of Saarc. It was a highly anticipated event, not only in India and Pakistan, but all around the world."

Our New Delhi correspondent adds: The Indian foreign secretary told reporters that there is no question of behaving like a big brother.

Asked if this decision would isolate India when even King Gyanendra of Nepal agreed to attend the summit, he said, "There is no threat of isolation."

"What has happened in Bangladesh and Nepal is not ordinary," he added. "There is a serious situation in Nepal and an increase in violence has an impact on India."

## Blanket

**FROM PAGE 1**  
2,000 Rab (Rapid Action Battalion) members, army troops and different intelligence agencies swung into action yesterday, three days before the scheduled start to 13th summit of the seven South Asian nations.

Army troops and Rab men, police and Armed Police Battalion (APBn) formed a chain around the Bangladesh-China Friendship Conference Centre and other venues and Dhaka Sheraton Hotel, where Saarc leaders were scheduled to stay.

The vast field adjacent to the conference centre, which was prepared as parking space, was also kept under constant watch throughout the day. People and vehicles were also off-limits to the road near the conference centre.

Security was further beefed up at the Sheraton Hotel yesterday with only a few people were allowed to enter the premises with vehicles. The closed main gate was opened briefly only to allow foreigners,

boarders, short-listed government officials and security officers to exit from the hotel. People were even barred to walk by the footpath in front of the hotel.

Army, Rab, APBn, police and intelligence men also swarmed the State Guest House Jamuna. Meanwhile, Rab and other intelligence men mounted watch at Gurudwara Nanakshahi temple on Dhaka University campus, a venue where Indian Prime Minister Manmohan Singh was scheduled to visit.

Besides, the security men, over the past few days, manned the grave of former president Ziaur Rahman and National Mausoleum in Savar, two places where the Saarc leaders were planned to go.

Besides, security forces with sophisticated arms kept strong vigil at several VIP roads, entry and exit points of the capital, railway station, bus stoppages, Zia International Airport, foreign consulates and key establishments.

Rab men in uniform and plainclothes followed movement of people at places adjacent to the venues, and checked suspicious people with dog squad. Over 200 teams of Rab detectives had been working since Tuesday.

## Alliance

**FROM PAGE 1**  
Talking to The Daily Star, BNP policymakers yesterday said that the alliance at this meeting will discuss and take up political programmes to face the opposition parties, particularly the Awami League in the street.

"Awami League is once again hatching conspiracy to topple the government by creating instability and resorting to violence even at the cost of destroying the image of the country," said a top BNP leader, adding, "We have decided to face them to foil their conspiracy."

He said the alliance will soon announce political programmes like public rallies, processions and mass contacts while the government will take a hard line on any attempt to create violence.

The BNP leader said law enforcers have been given instructions to take tough action against the law-breakers, pickets during hartals and those who will be found involved in destructive activities like setting fire and damaging vehicles.

## Nepal king

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dismissed, king takes charge," said the Himalaya Times, a leading privately owned newspaper.

Witnesses in the capital saw only one demonstration under new laws banning free assembly. It was by several hundred pro-royalists near the palace, who shouted: "Long Live the king, peace will now prevail."

Opposition leaders were out of sight and believed to be under house arrest.

Witnesses said security men dragged away G.P. Koirala, leader of the Nepal Congress, and Madhav Kumar Nepal, head of the Nepal Communist Party-United Marxist and Leninist Party, yesterday when they emerged from their homes to try to speak to reporters.

"People are trying secretly to organise meetings but some of the senior leaders have been arrested so they have not been able to. There are army watchdogs at the gates (of the campus). They're asking for information and checking ID," said a 20-year-old student at Kathmandu's Tribhuvan University.

A Supreme Court lawyer, Mitlesh Kumar Singh, called the king's move a "political tsunami. He wants to bring about peace and security... a good thing but I doubt he'll be successful and it's a violation of the constitution."

The king's dismissal of the ruling coalition was condemned by the United States, United Nations, Britain and India as a setback for democracy.

UN Secretary General Kofi Annan led demands for an immediate restoration of democracy in Nepal.

Annan "is deeply concerned" over the king's actions, which are a serious setback for the country, UN spokesman Fred Eckhard said.

"Steps should be taken immediately to restore democratic freedoms and institutions," Eckhard said, noting that Annan had called for "calm and restraint by all parties in the country, so as to avoid actions that could worsen the situation."

Rights groups Amnesty International and Human Rights Watch as well as the International Commission of Jurists in a joint statement expressed fear for the immediate safety of human rights campaigners, political activists and members of the National Human Rights Commission, who have recently faced increasing harassment from both security forces and the Maoist rebels.

The groups are concerned that the steps being taken by the king and his army "have been sweeping, arbitrary and excessive."

The United States, which provides Nepal's army with badly needed weapons and training in its fight against the Maoist guerrillas, said it was "deeply troubled" by the apparent step back from democracy.

State Department spokesman Richard Boucher told reporters in Washington that the United States demanded an "immediate move toward the restoration of multiparty democratic institutions under a constitutional monarchy."

Boucher said that in addition to undercutting democratic institutions, King Gyanendra's actions "undermine the Nepalis' struggle with the Maoist insurgency, which is a very serious challenge to a peaceful and prosperous future for Nepal."

In London, Foreign Office Minister Douglas Alexander summoned the Nepalese ambassador Prabal Rana to convey the British government's "grave concerns" over the king's actions.

## Pak PM

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He also expressed his satisfaction regarding overall security measures taken on the occasion.

The Pakistan PM pointed out that the heads of state and government of the Saarc countries were ready to join the summit—and pre-summit meetings and other formalities were on.

Shawkat Aziz was quoted to have said, "Security arrangement and the situation in Dhaka was OK and in favour of holding the meet peacefully and properly."

He observed that the recent situation in Nepal is "totally internal" affair of that country.

Agreeing with the Pakistan PM, Khaleda said there was no flaw in the arrangements and security guaranteed according to requirement of the heads of state and government of the Saarc nations.

The Bangladesh Prime Minister thanked Shawkat Aziz for making the call and expressing his disquiet.

## 6,000 acres gobbled

**FROM PAGE 12**  
The Gazipur district authorities' report said they have identified 1,363 acres of land for recovery. It blamed five developers for grabbing over 18 acres.

The reports said the authorities of the three districts have filed 164 criminal cases against the land grabbers and are going to lodge another 159 cases.

The parliamentary standing committee on land ministry discussed the reports at a meeting yesterday.

Committee Chairman and ruling BNP lawmaker Mahbubur Rahman later told reporters some developers grabbed over 2,000 acres of government land in Savar.

Amin Mohammad Foundation, Northern Holdings, Ashulia Model Town, Probhathi Housing and others have grabbed the land, he said quoting the district administration.

Besides developers, industries have grabbed land, he added. "We visited Savar on January 7 and found a few developers grabbed large areas of government land," the committee chairman said.

"Then we asked the district administrations to report in detail the status of grabbed lands in the three districts."

The Dhaka district administration in its report said nine developers have grabbed 238 acres of public land in Dhaka Metropolitan area and Savar upazila.

Jamuna Builders grabbed 19.26 acres, Metro Makers Development 24.28 acres, Amin Mohammad Foundation 3.32 acres, Samat Housing 13.80 acres, Eastern Housing 69 acres, East West Property Development Ltd. 102 acres, Chan Mia Housing 1.05 acres, Fercon Real State 1.33 acres, and Mohammadia Housing Society has grabbed 2.45 acres, it said.

In Narayanganj, New Town Residential Project has grabbed 1.59 acres, Ananda Meghna City 8.38 acres, and Ananda Builders 11.44 acres, the district administration's report said.

In Gazipur, Dhaka University Samabay Samity has grabbed .88 acres Southern Development Property Ltd. 5.09 acres, Hi-tech Garden 5.45 acres, Plash Griha Nirman Samabay Samity 5.69 acres and Parijat Housing Ltd. .32 acres.

## Murder charge framed against Haji Selim

COURT CORRESPONDENT

A Dhaka court yesterday framed charges against former Awami League (AL) lawmaker Haji Mohammad Selim and 31 others accused of killing Mizanur Rahman, member of Sultanganj Union Parishad in Kamrangirchar.

Judge AR Masud of the Speedy Trial Tribunal-4 fixed February 8 for the trial and summoned the plaintiff and some other prosecution witnesses to appear before the court that day.

Selim and 24 others on bail and three in custody pleaded not guilty and demanded justice after the charges were read out to them.

In the case filed with Kamrangirchar Police Station, Mizanur's brother Mohammad Afsaruddin alleged assailants led by Selim gunned down his brother on March 31 last year.

He filed the case the next day and accused Selim and 38 others of the murder. However, the investigation officer pressed charges against Selim and 31 others on June 22, showing 40 people as prosecution witnesses.

The accused out on bail are Selim, Mohammad Mafizul Islam, Hedayetul Islam, Ali Ahmed, Tara Miah, Mohammad Arif, Biplob, Golam Mohammad, Mohammad Babla, Abul Hossain, Amir Hossain, Mohammad Kashem, Mohammad Hanif, Abdur Rashid, Mohammad Shafiq, Mosharraf Akhter, Mohammad Baten, Mohammad Zuman, Khokan, Raihan, Abul Member, Afsar, Aziz Miah, Mohammad Jahangir, Mohammad Akbar and Kalu.

Miah Delwar Hossain, Shafiqul Islam, Salah Uddin and Tiger Anu are absconding and Joyal Abedin, Tunda Ismail and Jane Alam in custody.

## Outlaw held for threat to journo

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Sakhira

An alleged activist of outlawed Purba Banglar Communist Party's (PBCP) ML-Janauddha faction was arrested yesterday from his house for threatening with death eight journalists and a police officer.

The arrestee, Alamgir Hossain Monju of village Dadpur in Tala upazila, is a PBCP activist, police said.

The outlaw gave the threat to journalists of Sakhira and the officer-in-charge of Tala Police Station in a letter on Tuesday. A police team was quizzing him till last night.

Meanwhile, the district administration has taken security measures for local journalists. Police have been deployed at the reporters' club and offices of local dailies.

Superintendent of Police Abdur Rahim said, "We will hunt down the outlaws involved in threatening journalists."

## Asma Kibria

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Asma declared that her peaceful movement would begin with a 30-minute silent protest tomorrow afternoon when she and her family members would take to street. They will demonstrate in front of their Dhanmendi residence from 3:00pm to 3:30pm. She urged all to participate in the demonstration.

"My lone voice is not enough... Please come and join us in the protest programme," said a sobbing Asma, also an artist.

Nazli Kibria, daughter of the slain minister, said she would launch an international campaign against her father's killing. "I will go to the international community and expatriate Bangladeshis in different countries, and seek their support," she said.

An emotion-charged Nazli again blamed the government for negligence to treatment of her injured father. "My mother and other family members tried their best to manage a helicopter but failed," she added.

She also alleged the government has resorted to "falseness" about international probe into the carnage. "They (government) have not yet made any formal requests for this," she said.

The rally, chaired by Barrister Rakanuddin Mahmud, also addressed by Prof Anisuzzaman, Barrister Amir-ul-Islam, Prof AK Azad Chowdhury, Prof AAMS Arefin Siddique, Abdur Razzak MP, Mosatafa Jamal Mohiuddin, Shirin Akhter, Mamunur Rashid, Tarana Halim and Kibria's sister Sharifa Musaddit.

They stressed unity of pro-liberation and progressive forces against the ruling alliance, and said it continues in power, such killings will not end.

## Rice offers

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Secretary Rice said the failure to investigate these acts only foster "the climate of impunity further encouraging such attacks."

Rice hoped that the Bangladeshi qualities of resilience and fortitude would aid Sheikh Hasina and the people in pursuing justice for these crimes in a peaceful and lawful manner.

## Global warming sends

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how well countries can adapt to climate shift.

But a common expectation is that widespread misery is lurking, a few decades down the road.

According to a study quoted by Rajendra Pachauri, chairman of the UN's top scientific authority on climate change, by 2050 as many as 150 million "environmental refugees" may have fled coastlines vulnerable to rising sea levels, storms or floods, or agricultural land that became too arid to cultivate.

In India alone, there could be 30 million people displaced by persistent flooding, while a sixth of Bangladesh could be permanently lost to sea level rise and land subsidence, according to the study.

Pachauri's body, the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC), estimated in 2001 that by 2100, temperatures would rise by between 1.4 C (2.5 F) and 5.8 C (10.4) compared to 1990 levels, driven by atmospheric carbon pollution which stokes up heat from the Sun.

The mean global sea level would rise by between nine and 88 centimetres (four and 35 inches).

Those increases depend on whether carbon dioxide (CO2), doubles or nearly quadruples from the pre-industrial levels of 280 parts per million (ppm).

Global warming will also add significantly to Earth's worrisome water problems.

Already around 1.4 billion people live in water-stressed areas, a term defined as having less than 1,000 cubic metres (35,000 cubic feet) of water per person per year, said Nigel Arnell of the Tyndall Centre for Climate Change Research at Britain's University of Southampton.

Most of them live in southern and southwest Asia, the Middle East and the Mediterranean.

By the 2050s, water availability in these water-stressed regions -- but also in parts of central, north and south America -- may be further crimped because of changed rainfall patterns.

Between 700 million and 2.8 billion people in such areas will be affected, depending on population growth and the pace of temperature rise.

Sari Kovats of the London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine put forward a study co-authored by four World Health Organisation (WHO) scientists that gives a snapshot of global health problems caused by climate change.

Between the 1970s -- when temperatures first rose significantly -- and the year 2000, climate change cost around 150,000 lives from malnutrition, diarrhoea, malaria and floods.

That tally will "approximately double" by 2020, mainly because of diarrhoea, which is propagated easily in floods, and hunger, Kovats said.

## Telcoms ministry

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BTRC and appointed the officials to it on January 30, 2002.

All the five commissioners were picked from retired civil servants including the one with controversial track record of tampering with his age in the government's record.

Three out of these five commissioners are ex-BTTB officials and the one that had resigned last year belongs to that group. The industry took his resignation as a window of opportunity to inject new blood into the BTRC.

The telecoms minister, through whom the BTRC reports, has been, however, busy with fulfilling the wish list of his cabinet colleagues' children on various telecoms deals.

As a result, the issue of timely filling the vacant commissioner's post, despite having strict legal naming any party, he said those defeated in the 2001 general elections are now trying to "destroy the country's image through malicious propaganda in a planned and motivated way."

He cited a "mysterious" circular issued by a New York-based organisation of expatriate Bangladeshis that urged all expats for sending protest letters to Bangladeshi missions abroad against 'lawlessness' in Bangladesh.

The organisation also prepared a "draft protest letter" and sent it to its members with a note of caution: "Don't circulate this alert after Sunday, February 20, 2005."

A policymaker of the ruling party indicated certain 'mystery' behind such note of caution. He said if they really want to mobilise opinion of the expatriates, they can express their observations regarding Bangladesh at any time -- there is no need to create any bar fixing the date in the circular.

He said they have downloaded such cyber-propaganda from the internet.

Moudud said as the government's positive activities are not being highlighted in the media accordingly, vested quarters are taking advantage of the technology to turn the tide in their favour.

He said the government is going to enact a cyber law so that the latest technology can be used in positive and effective way for development of the country.

"Despite ongoing propaganda, when any foreigner visits Bangladesh, they find contradiction between it and real scenario of the country," the law minister added.

He urged all at home and abroad to refrain from "malicious propaganda".

## HC declares illegal

**FROM PAGE 12**  
Chowdhury delivered the verdict after hearing the writ filed by the removed additional judge challenging the president's order.

Attorney General A F Hassan Arif conceded that the order of Shahidur Rahman's removal "has not been done in accordance with the constitutional provision."

The allegations of bail fixing against Shahidur were not proved beyond doubt, he added.

He referred to the report of the Supreme Judicial Council (SJC) headed by the chief justice that said, "There is total absence of material in support of the allegations nor can it be said that the allegations are without any basis."

The council had however recommended that "Shahidur Rahman should not continue as an additional judge."

The court in its verdict observed, "It appears that the Supreme Judicial Council has gone beyond the authority given by Article 96 (6) of the Constitution."

Article 96(6) says, "If, after making the inquiry, the Council reports to the President that in its opinion the judge has ceased to be capable of properly performing the functions of his office or has been guilty of gross misconduct, the President shall, by order, remove the judge from the office."

The SJC has not said that the additional judge committed 'gross misconduct' and the allegations brought against the sitting additional judge were proved 'beyond any doubt', the court observed.

Allegations of bail fixing against Shahidur Rahman were raised by Supreme Court Bar Association President Barrister Rakanuddin Mahmud at a lawyers' meeting in October 2003, six months within Rahman's appointment as an additional judge of the HC.

Mahmud alleged that the appointment was made on political considerations, ignoring the question of efficiency and integrity of the person.

As the allegations against a sitting judge of the HC were serious in nature and stirred political upheaval, the SJC took up the matter for investigation and submitted its report to the president.

The president, acting upon SJC's recommendations, removed

the judge. Writ petitioner Syed Shahidur Rahman himself pleaded his case while Attorney General Hassan Arif stood for the government.

## Bangladesh

**FROM PAGE 12**  
Improvement in transport and trade services, a boost in the recruitment in public administration including the implementation of the revised pay scale and high profitability of private sector banks are expected to lift the services sector, the report said.

During the first four months of FY 2005, manufacturing output increased by 8 per cent as against the corresponding period of the preceding year. The increase was driven by export oriented production particularly garments and knitwear.

## 97 former

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They urged the government to ensure exemplary punishment of people involved in violation of human rights.

Referring to smuggling of fire-arms, bomb blasts and grenade attacks even at shrines, the statement said perpetrators of these crimes are hitting the root of the country's liberal social and political system.

They called upon government officials and law enforcing agency personnel to discharge their duties properly to uphold the constitution.

Signatories to the statement include former cabinet secretary Hossain Tawfique and secretary M Mokammel Huq, former central bank governor Dr Mohammad Farashuddin, former principal secretary Abdus Samad and secretary AKM Moshir Rahman, and many other former secretaries, acting secretaries, additional secretaries and joint secretaries.

Some 14 retired foreign secretary including former foreign secretary Faruque Chowdhury and Shafi Sami, former high commissioner A. H. Mahmood Ali, and Mostofa Faruk Mohammad and some 36 retired police officers including former inspector general of police (IGP) Abdur Rakib Khanokar, Ismail Hossain and Nurul Huda.

**FROM PAGE 1**  
The statement came on the eve of the second spell of the opposition-sponsored strike to protest the January 27 gruesome grenade attacks on an Awami League rally in Habiganj that killed former finance minister Shah AMS Kibria and four others.

"The business community commends the government's decision to seek international assistance in the investigation process and expects the killers will be brought to justice in the shortest possible time," the statement said.

"The business community once again repeats what it has been saying over the last several years that political differences ought to be resolved in the Jatiya Sangsad," said the statement jointly signed by MCCI President Kutubuddin Ahmed, BTMA Chairman MA Awal, BEF President M Anis Ud Dowla

and FICCI President Mahub Jamil. The statement also condoled the death of Kibria and others.

**BGMEA FOR WITHDRAWAL OF HARTAL**  
Bangladesh Garment Manufacturers & Exporters Association (BGMEA) in a separate statement yesterday urged Leader of the Opposition and Awami League chief Sheikh Hasina to withdraw the hartal in the interest of the country's export-import business.

"As the garment exporters are trying hard to survive in the quota-free regime, the hartal will badly hit the RMG sector," said BGMEA Secretary Md Fashur Rahman in the statement.

Foreign buyers will also lose confidence in Bangladeshi garment exporters if the situation continues, Rahman said.

## Pay Commission

**FROM PAGE 1**  
scrutinise the recommendations in the light of the government's financial capabilities, a finance ministry source said.

This committee will then file a report to the PM on the implementation of the new pay structure, to be in effect from January 1 this year in retrospect.

Finance Minister M Saifur Rahman earlier said as its implementation will cost an additional Tk 5200 crore a year, implementation of the new pay structure may be staggered.

Thanking the commission for their hard work to prepare the report in a short time, Khaleda Zia said her government is always sincere about the welfare and interest of the government officials.

She said her government provided dearness allowance and increased medical allowance and festival bonus for the civil servants after formation of the Pay Commission.

## Trade bodies say strikes

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Finance and Planning Minister M Saifur Rahman, Principal Secretary to the PM Dr Kamal Siddiqui and Finance Secretary Zakir Ahmed Khan, among others, were present on the occasion.