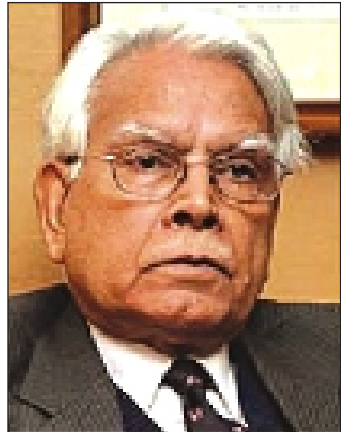


Dhaka hopes boost in ties as Natwar arrives today



Natwar Singh

REZAUL KARIM

Indian External Affairs Minister K Natwar Singh arrives today on a three-day visit at the invitation of his Bangladeshi counterpart to discuss an entire range of bilateral issues to strengthen relations between the next-door neighbours.

Bangladesh pins high hopes on today's scheduled talks between Foreign Minister M Morshed Khan and Singh in finding a common ground for resolving the outstanding bilateral issues, some of which date back to the partition of the subcontinent.

This is the first visit by an Indian minister after the Congress-led United Progressive Alliance (UPA)

government came to power in May 2004.

However, Morshed had earlier visited India twice – in May-June and in November, 2004. Besides, Finance and Planning Minister M Saifur Rahman and Commerce Minister Altaf Hossain Choudhury had visited the neighbouring country during last one year.

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The foreign secretary-level consultations held in New Delhi on June 21-22 led to activating bilateral mechanisms to enhance cooperation in sectors like security, border management, sharing of common river waters and economic ties.

Highly placed sources said

security, bilateral trade, border management, water sharing and UN reform issues will dominate the agenda at the meetings between the Indian minister and Bangladesh leaders.

Singh, who arrives at 10:00am by an Indian Airlines plane, will first hold official talks with Morshed at the state guesthouse Meghna starting at 12:45pm.

High officials from different ministries of both the countries will assist their respective leaders at the meeting.

Morshed and Singh will hold a joint press conference after the talks have ended.

Singh will meet Finance Minister

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No charge sheet a year into Sylhet cinema blasts

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Investigators are yet to submit charge sheet in any of the 3 cinema hall bomb cases in Sylhet city a year into the incidents.

At around 9:00pm of August 5, 2004, bombs blasted in Monika cinema at Bagbari and Rangmahal cinema at Bandarbari in the city.

However, the bomb, kept in the Abokash cinema was recovered unexploded.

Shahad Ahmed, 12, son of Anwar Hossain hailing from Jaintapur upazila died on the spot at the gate of Rangmahal while 5 others sustained serious injuries.

Ten to twelve including the killed street urchin and injured Anwar Hossain were made accused in the case filed with the Kotwali Police Station.

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Pro-BNP lawyers defend clemency to Jhantu

Vow to resist opposition 'anarchy'

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Jatiyatabadi Ainjibi Forum (JAF), a platform for pro-BNP lawyers, yesterday defended the presidential clemency granted to ruling BNP leader Mohiuddin Jhantu, a double-murder convict sentenced to death by a martial law court.

Addressing a grand rally of lawyers on the Supreme Court Bar Council (SCBA) premises, the Forum leaders accused the pro-Awami League lawyers of creating 'anarchy' in the judiciary for political gains.

JAF leaders at the rally announced a six-point resolution in which they vowed to go ahead with counter programmes to resist

Sammilita Ainjibi Samannay Parishad, a forum of the opposition lawyers.

Yesterday's gathering was held amid tension between two factions of pro-BNP lawyers. The faction led by Communications Minister Nazmul Huda was bitterly opposed to holding the rally while the other one led by Telecoms Minister Aminul Haq was determined to press ahead with the programme.

Huda did not join the grand assembly of the ruling party lawyers. But State Minister for Law Shahjahan Omar, who was visibly in favour of the Huda-faction, was present and delivered speech.

Speaking as the chief guest, Law,

Justice and Parliamentary Affairs Minister Moudud Ahmed described the presidential amnesty to Jhantu as 'based on the constitution'.

He said, "Jhantu was tried in a martial law court where he was deprived of his right to self defence and appeal against the verdict."

Moudud also claimed that Jhantu's name was not included even in the first information report (FIR) and there was no witness against him.

"If an aggrieved person, who was tried in the martial law court, now comes to the government with a plea for clemency, we will consider

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Kennedy objects to official news release on his meeting with Babar

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

US Senator Edward Kennedy has expressed dissatisfaction over Bangladesh newspaper reports that he pledged support to the Trade Bill with Bangladesh and lauded Bangladesh government's actions in fighting domestic violence during his talks with the state minister for home, said sources.

The senator told Bangladesh ambassador in Washington DC Shamsher Mobin Chowdhury that he is surprised to read Bangladeshi newspaper reports, as none of the issues were discussed or raised at his meeting with the Bangladesh delegation led by Lutfuzzaman Babar.

Asked by The Daily Star over telephone about the senator's reaction, the ambassador did not

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3 Ctg cops closed for robbery

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Ctg

Chittagong Metropolitan Police (CMP) yesterday closed three cops and an ansar for their involvement in a robbery.

The CMP authorities later filed a general diary (GD) and suspended Assistant Sub-Inspector (ASI) Mirazul Islam and constable Jalaluddin.

The other accused are Nayek Delwar Hossain, ansar Khalilur Rahman and microbus driver Abul Kalam.

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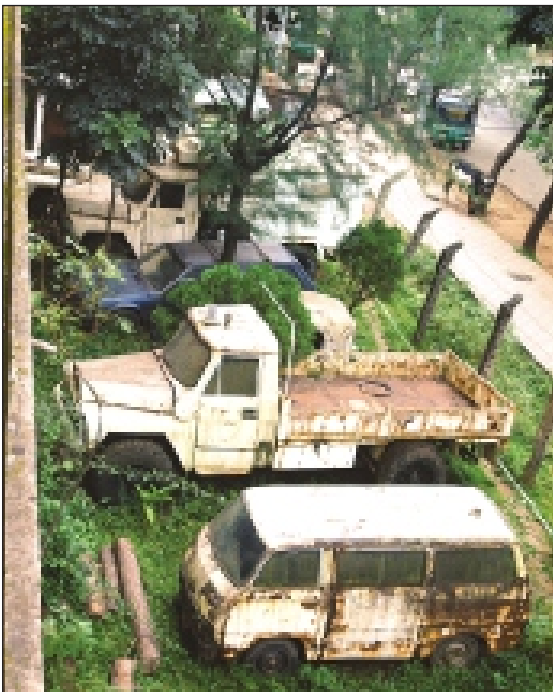


PHOTO: STAR

Condition of Trust Adhunik Hospital's post-operative room and its vehicles. The hospital has remained closed for years.

Hospital for FFs shut for years, tools rusting away

SHAHEEN MOLLAH

Valuable medical equipment and vehicles worth over Tk10 crore at the capital's Trust Adhunik Hospital, an organisation of Muktiyoddha Kalyan Trust (MKT), are rusting away as the hospital has remained closed for the last six years despite freedom fighters' repeated demand to reopen it.

The hospital could not be reopened as some anti-liberation forces within the Ministry of Liberation War Affairs have been opposing it, some influential MKT

members wishing anonymity alleged.

Sources said five vehicles—of them, three modern ambulances with operation theatre facilities—left abandoned on the hospital compound are going almost out of order. The hospital also has a modern operation theatre and a laboratory for pathological tests, but the equipment is on the verge of ruining and may not be usable again.

A two-storey rehabilitation centre for the freedom fighters was constructed in 1979 on 13 acres of khas land near the Mirpur National Zoo. It was later turned into the Trust Adhunik Hospital in December 1991, aiming at providing freedom fighters with healthcare and subsidised treatment for their families.

Initially, the hospital was functioning well, but soon due to unknown reasons it was leased out to Umma Medical College Hospital, a non-

government organisation, on January 15, 1994 for ten years.

However, the contract was scraped in 1997 and later the hospital was leased out to Captain Mansur Ali Medical College Hospital which ran until 1999. Since then the hospital has remained closed.

There is enough fund, furniture and equipment to run the hospital, yet why has it been kept closed over the years? wondered some freedom fighters.

MKT Health Advisor Prof M Amjad Hossain said reopening of the Trust Adhunik Hospital is a demand of the time as about 1.75 lakh freedom fighters are above 52 years of age and often need treatment due to old age.

Prof Amjad said only one cabin is allocated at the Dhaka Medical

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Japan may hold off on its bid for UNSC berth

AFP, Tokyo/ New Delhi

Japan indicated yesterday it may be ready to hold off on its bid to win a permanent seat on the UN Security Council after the proposal was opposed by the United States, China and the African Union.

Japan had made joining the Security Council a key foreign-policy goal and has been on a joint bid for seats with Brazil, Germany and India as part of the so-called Group of Four or G4.

"We are not dead set on pushing for a vote" at the United Nations on reforms, Foreign Minister Nobutaka Machimura said.

"We will analyse the situation with G4 nations and African countries. We want to carefully consider the situation and decide whether to move toward a vote," he told a news conference.

On Thursday, an emergency

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PHOTO: STAR

A crane removing an electronic hoarding from near Sonargaon Hotel yesterday. Set up for beautifying the city ahead of the postponed Saarc summit, the billboards are to be installed afresh before the November summit.

Join hands to save country from misrule

Gono Forum conference told

BDNEWS, Dhaka

Mainstream opposition leaders and civil society representatives yesterday renewed their call for greater unity of the pro-liberation, patriotic and democratic forces to save the country from what they said was 'misrule' of the alliance government.

They envisioned a prosperous Bangladesh in lieu of the current poverty-stricken, violence-ridden, fundamentalist-infested and politically divided motherland. They also hoped that the country would surely have a pro-people government in future.

The optimism came from the inaugural session of the national conference of Gono Forum held at the Institution of Engineers in the city with its President Dr Kamal Hossain in the chair. Top ranking leaders from all major opposition

parties were on the dais.

'National unity for making a worthy change,' was the slogan of the conference.

Dubbing the alliance government as 'anti-democratic and autocratic', former president and Bikalpa Dhara Bangladesh President AQM Badruddozza Chowdhury alleged that the BNP-led alliance now plans to plunder national wealth. He called for a greater unity to oust the 'corrupt' government.

Dr Kamal Hossain, in his address, urged people to forge a greater unity once again like 1971 to resist the anti-people evil forces.

He requested the audience to go door to door to make people understand the need of the time and participate in the united movement.

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