

House arrest for Suu Kyi likely to be extended

AFP, Yangon

Myanmar's opposition leader Aung San Suu Kyi will likely spend another year under house arrest, a source close to the military said yesterday as the country's pro-democracy party demanded the release of political prisoners.

"Despite strident calls for (Aung San Suu Kyi's) immediate release, there are signs that the military authorities are preparing to extend her house arrest for another year," the source told AFP.

OIL-FOR-FOOD SCANDAL Indian parliament rocked for 2nd day

AFP, New Delhi

India's opposition forced parliament to adjourn for a second straight day yesterday as it stepped up attacks on the government over allegations a minister got kickbacks in Iraq's oil-for-food programme.

Opposition members refused to allow proceedings to start as they bayed for Natwar Singh to be thrown out of the cabinet.

Natwar Singh, who resigned as foreign minister over the scandal but remained minister without portfolio, and the Congress party which heads the coalition government were named as beneficiaries in a UN report on the oil-for-food scandal.

The report alleged that Natwar Singh and the Congress party profited from separate oil allocations by the government of Saddam Hussein, reportedly given to those who sup-

ported the regime.

But he remains a minister without portfolio and Prime Minister Manmohan Singh has promised him his old job back if two separate probes set up by the government clear him.

"Natwar Singh resign," shouted opposition members as they stormed the speaker's chair in the lower elected house of parliament.

Speaker Somnath Chatterjee appealed for calm but his request went unheeded as opposing members tried to shout down each other over the scandal.

"I am sorry to say the house is being held to ransom by some members who have been elected to represent the people in the house," he said before adjourning the lower house.

The upper house whose members are appointed also adjourned as opposition members there also turned up the heat on the government.

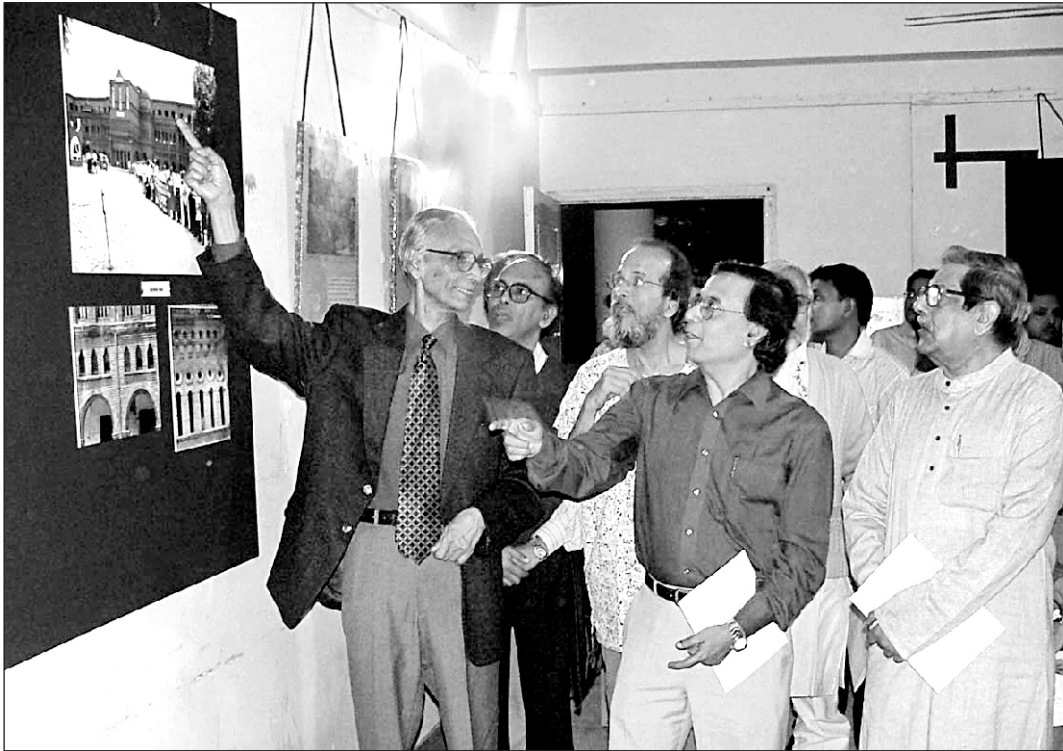


PHOTO: STAR
Emeritus Prof ABM Hossain, Prof Dr Anisuzzaman and other guests at the inaugural ceremony of an exhibition on 'Historical Architecture and Heritage of Chittagong' that began at the Shilpakala Academy in Chittagong yesterday. The Heritage Research and Documentation organised the event.

Security fears as Nato readies Afghan push

REUTERS, Brussels

Nato allies are in intensive talks to allay security concerns among nations key to a plan to expand peacekeeping in Afghanistan amid growing violence there, alliance sources said yesterday.

The Netherlands, one of three nations earmarked to lead the expansion into the more dangerous southern region in the first half of next year, has raised questions over whether Nato will have sufficient forces to handle serious trouble, they said.

Nato Secretary-General Jaap de Hoop Scheffer is due on Monday to meet New Zealand Prime Minister Helen Clark, who insists it will not transfer to Nato a 120-strong reconstruction team in Bamiyan province unless the alliance guarantees robust support.

"The Dutch want reassurance. If things go wrong, they want to be sure that there are others out there who can help them," said one Nato source who

requested anonymity.

"The Dutch are in daily contact with allies and we shall see how this goes," said a Nato official. "The secretary-general is fully aware of the discussion taking place in the Netherlands."

A spokesman said Dutch Defence Minister Henk Kamp was still weighing up security and other considerations. A decision to deploy 1,100 Dutch troops to southern Afghanistan would require parliamentary approval, he added.

The Nato-led ISAF mission currently has some 9,000 troops in the capital Kabul and the relatively calm north and west. The move to the south will take troop numbers up to 15,000 and will allow the US-led coalition to cut the size of its force there.

Britain, Canada and the Netherlands have expressed a desire to share the lead in the expansion. Aside from New Zealand, there are also talks with non-Nato nations including Australia.