

Rice defends nuclear

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Paul Sarbanes (news, bio, voting record), D-Md., said the administration was asking Congress to approve the agreement without divulging the safeguards. They will be given to the International Atomic Energy Agency, but Sarbanes said, "I don't know they should be substituted for Congress."

But Sen. George Allen (news, bio, voting record), R-Va., said "this is a good bet," when benefits to India and the rest of the world are taken into account. The two countries share democratic values and there is a shared sense of security, he said.

At the committee hearing, Rice addressed critics who say the plan President Bush agreed to last month with India could dramatically increase India's nuclear arsenal and weaken efforts to prevent the spread of nuclear weapons.

"Civil nuclear cooperation with India will not lead to an arms race in South Asia," she said.

India has never signed the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty and, Rice said, is unlikely to ever do so.

"We are simply seeking to address an untenable situation," she said. "This agreement does bring India into the nonproliferation framework, and does strengthen the regime."

Rice said the "path-breaking" deal "obviously deserves the support of the U.S. Senate." The pact, which must be approved by Congress, strengthens U.S. ties with the world's largest democracy but also upends more than three decades of U.S. law and policy.

Rice also was scheduled to appear later before the House International Relations Committee.

Her appearance comes at a time of growing domestic disenchantment with U.S. foreign policy. Uncertainty over the military course of a rising China, unceasing turmoil in Iraq and stalemated Mideast and nuclear diplomacy over Iran and North Korea pose difficulties for Rice, even though her own performance continues to receive rave reviews on Capitol Hill.

The election season is dawning for members of Congress and those who aspire to replace them. They all are aware of public discontent with the Bush administration's global record on several fronts.

The new US strategic partnership between Washington and New Delhi reverses restrictions on trade with states, such as India, that did not accept comprehensive international safeguards over all their nuclear facilities. The administration's response is that the deal will foster nonproliferation by conditioning India's purchase of foreign-made nuclear reactors on opening its civilian facilities to international inspections.

However, the Congressional Research Service, in a report last week, noted that India would have the sole right to decide which reactors are civilian and which are military, which need not be under international supervision.

Undersecretary of State Nicholas Burns, who played a pivotal role in negotiating the agreement, has offered assurances that "India can be trusted."

But Sen. Barbara Boxer (news, bio, voting record), D-Calif., a member of the Foreign Relations Committee, is critical of the agreement.

"I do not share the view that closer US-India ties will be a coun-

terweight to China, which seems to be the unstated yet driving force behind this deal," Boxer said in remarks prepared for delivery at the hearing. "This type of thinking is not only outdated and dangerous, it flies in the face of reality."

Boxer said India's recent record indicates that it has no interest in being a "hedge" against China. "It is naive to think otherwise," Boxer said.

Opposition

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reign of terror all over the country and did not carry out any development activity. Even then they did not step down.

The prime minister has made it clear that they will complete full term, which ends next October.

She said bomb blasts started during the AL rule but they did not take any step to stop the bombings. "Rather, they gave shelter to the bombers."

She said the bombers have no political identity. They are enemies of the country. "We have introduced speedy trial court to punish them."

She said with the help of police, Rab and other law enforcement agencies, her government has been able to eliminate bomb terrorism and arrest the militant kingpins. "The remaining two top terror leaders will also be arrested," the prime minister told the rally.

Referring to her call for national dialogue to deal with the bomb terrorism, she said all parties and professional bodies responded to her call and joined the dialogue to resolve the problem.

But, she regretted, the main opposition party did not join the dialogue, as "they don't want peace and end to terrorism".

The prime minister said if the BNP returns to power in 2007 elections, Bangladesh will appear as a prosperous country, not a dependent one.

Presided over by local MP Matiur Rahman Talukder, the meeting was also addressed by Commerce Minister Altaf Hossain, State Minister for Finance and Planning Shah Mohammad Abul Hossain, State Minister for Cultural Affairs Selima Rahman, Prime Minister's Political Secretary Harris Chowdhury, Barisal City Mayor Mojibur Rahman Sarwar and Nurul Islam Moni MP.

Earlier, the prime minister inaugurated Amtali Municipality sewerage project by unveiling a plaque.

Frequent power

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Tuesday's hailstorm. "The opposition leader's residence faced a four-hour power cut from 7:00pm on Tuesday," a personal aide of Hasina told The Daily Star yesterday.

Describing yesterday's experience, he said Sudha Sadan and adjacent houses on Road 5 in Dhanmondi suffered power outages for six times until 6:00pm.

Asked, Dhaka Electric Supply Authority Chairman Tuhidul Islam told The Daily Star last night that a feeder transformer of Jigatola-Kalyanpur line was damaged due to hailstorms on Tuesday evening that might have caused the power disruptions.

"Our engineers are working at the spot round-the-clock to repair the transformer," he said, adding that he is aware of the power outage at the opposition leader's house.

BNP nominates Gaibandha-4 candidate

UNB, Dhaka

The ruling BNP has nominated Mohammad Shamim Kawsar to contest the forthcoming by-election in Gaibandha-4 parliamentary constituency.

The BNP Parliamentary Board unanimously took the decision at a meeting at the Prime Minister's Office (PMO) yesterday with party chairperson Prime Minister Khaleda Zia in the chair.

The parliamentary board also called upon the voters of the constituency to vote for Mohammad Shamim Kawsar to continue the trend of development, peace and prosperity.

BNP Secretary General and LGRD and Cooperatives Minister Abdul Mannan Bhuiyan, Chief Whip Khondaker Delwar Hossain, RA Gani, Abdul Matin Chowdhury, Health and Family Welfare Minister Mosharraf Hossain, Law, Justice and Parliamentary Affairs Minister Moudud Ahmed and KM Obaidur Rahman were present in the meeting.

BSF kills 1

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Kushiha

Indian Border Security Force (BSF) shot dead a Bangladeshi farmer and abducted another on Nazirakona border in Mujibnagar of Meherpur yesterday morning.

The dead is Mithu alias Jhantu, 36, son of Hashem Gazi, while the abducted is Mona 30, son of Nabib Uddin of Nazirakona village.

Sources in the 9th Rifles Battalion said a BSF patrol team of Hridoypur checkpoint under Chapra Police Station of Nadia district opened fire on the two, while they were going to their cropland near the border at about 5:30am.

Mithu died on the spot while Mona received serious injuries.

The Indian border guards took away the body and injured Mona to their camp.

BDR yesterday sent a letter to the BSF authorities, asking them to hand over the body and injured Mona.

Road closed

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through an area with hillocks has some turns drivers considered to be risky. The R&H officials on April 1 stopped vehicular movement on it and asked all to use the new bypass.

However, the road was damaged on the very next day allegedly due to its poor construction quality. Moreover, several trucks got stuck at different denied points, causing a severe congestion on the road.

The authorities took about 10 hours to clear the road around 4:00am on April 3. The R&H officials immediately closed the road and asked all to use the old bypass again until further decision.

The department has however started repairing the damaged parts of the road.

Hundreds of trucks transporting stones from the country's biggest stone quarry on Bholaiganj border ply on the road every day.

Besides, the road links several upazilas including Gowainghat, Companiganj and parts of Sylhet sadar upazila.

Locals allege about 50 families have not yet got compensation for the land acquired by the R&H for the road.

Coconut waste

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Nessar Ahmed, fined the contractor of Rajarbagh traffic police canteen Tk 5,000 and the owner of Moonstar Hotel at Motijheel Tk 20,000 for lack of hygiene.

The magistrate fined the owner of New Moon Hotel and Restaurant at Fakirpool Tk 30,000 for keeping raw meat, ripe papayas, sweets and drinks in the same refrigerator.

He also exacted Tk 20,000 in fines from four sweetmeat shops at Fakirpool Bazar and another four at the nearby intersection for selling stale sweets and yoghurt, and date-expired Bakarkhani.

Another court, headed by Magistrate Rashedul Hassan, fined Islam Plastic Factory at 7/8, Nurbag in Kamrangirchar Tk 15,000 for producing banned polythene bags. Rashedul sealed off two more factories for the same reason. The court, however, did not find any one except two women workers in those so-called factories.

The court of Rasheud also fined Lysa Bread and Biscuit Factory for using date-expired vermicelli and a resident of the area, Afzal Hossain, for keeping construction materials on a footpath.

Body formed

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additional fare. The drivers also deny going to short distances and suburb areas and often misbehave with passengers, especially women and school-goers.

The government permitted 13,000 CNG vehicles to ply in Dhaka city but the actual number would be two or three times more, Golam Mohammad Siraj MP said, adding that all the CNG vehicles should be checked as there are more than one vehicle with the same registration number.

The CNG drivers charge extra fare as the owners charge Tk 600-700 instead of fixed rate Tk 300 a day, representatives of the drivers told the meeting.

Apparently to put an end to the heated arguments and counter arguments, the minister announced formation of an investigation committee to hear all sides.

BCL council elects

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Hasibul Islam Mithu Kotowal got 307 votes and Salehin Raza got 287 votes among 24 candidates.

The poll was held in the Institute of Engineers, Bangladesh auditorium on Tuesday with transparent ballot boxes and identity cards for the councillors. A total of 21,000 councillors cast their votes to elect the top two leaders. The chief election commissioner of the council, Balaram Poddar told The Daily Star that 11 votes were not counted, as the ballots were faulty.

Balaram Poddar officially announced the election results at AL office in Dhanmondi after counting the votes around 5:00pm in presence of hundreds of BCL leaders and activists.

After the election results were announced, AL Joint General Secretary Obaidul Quader and other leaders accorded reception to the newly elected president and general secretary on behalf of Sheikh Hasina amid claps and cheers.

Pointing finger at AL's archrival BNP and its student body Jatiyatabadi Chhatra Dal (JCD), Obaidul Quader said they have created a new model for student politics which could be a new model for the upcoming national elections too.

The full-fledged committee will be announced within the shortest possible time, Obaidul Quader told The Daily Star.

Welcoming the new office bearers, outgoing BCL President Liaqat Sikder said the new leadership will forge a people-student united movement to oust the BNP-Jamaat alliance government.

General Secretary Nazrul Islam Babu urged BCL activists and leaders across the country to help the new body snatch victory in the upcoming national elections.

Expressing reaction to journalists, newly elected BCL leaders said they will fight together to establish hoodlums-free campuses.

Saying that the election to elect new BCL leadership was held freely and fairly, the newly elected BCL President Ripon told The Daily Star that they will emphasise students' rights at first and then they will fight to put an end to the misrule of the four-party alliance government.

JCD, Shibir clash

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demanded action against the Jamaat-backed student activists for the sake of "JCD's existence."

JCD President Azizul Barea Helal said they have reports from field levels leaders of Dhaka, Chittagong and Rajshahi that the Shibir men are creating troubles with the JCD.

"We have asked the Islami Chhatra Shibir high-ups to control their fellow workers," the JCD president told The Daily Star yesterday. "If they fail, we will resist them ...we will not remain silent if they [Shibir] make any more trouble," he said.

Moreover, the JCD workers got enraged as the cadres of Shibir are reportedly enjoying administrative supports in reining in different educational institutions.

The local administrations do not dare to take action against the Shibir men due to pressure from the Jamaat leaders while the BNP high command cannot direct the police administration to take action fearing split in the ruling alliance, sources said.

Police could not arrest Shibir's Rajshahi University unit President Mahbub Alam Salehi for his alleged link with the killing of RU professor Dr S Taher Ahmed, though the home ministry on February 13 ordered police to arrest him immediately.

Soon after the ministry's order, the Shibir activists of the university

Recalling the contribution of the father of the nation in establishing the country, the new BCL General Secretary Roton said they will contribute together to build up the nation that Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman dreamt of.

Hundreds of BCL leaders and activists gathered at the Dhanmondi AL office at about 10:00am and the vote counting began 30 minutes later in presence of senior AL and BCL leaders.

Since morning, BCL leaders, activists, candidates and their supporters thronged the AL office.

Additional number of police and plainclothesmen were deployed at the office to avert any untoward incident.

Sweets were distributed on Dhaka University campus including at Modhu's Canteen and Teachers Students Centre.

JCD'S REACTION

Welcoming the new BCL president and general secretary, JCD President Azizul Barea Helal said AL has established autocracy by making junior BCL members the top leaders. "Junior leadership in Chhatra League will damage the stability of the student politics as they have no leadership experience at any level," Helal said.

Asked whether JCD would bring any change in their politics after the radical change in BCL leadership, Helal said the party high command will take the decision in this regard.

"It is not logical that only the current students could get involved in student politics in the country. A situation like that is only possible when there are student unions in every educational institution in the country," the JCD president added.

SOME OTHER REACTIONS

Different front organisations of AL and different student organisations, including Awami Secchwashebek League, Chhatra Sangram Parishad, Bangladesh Chhatra Union, Samajtantrik Chhatra Front, Chhatra Federation and some other organisations welcomed the new president and secretary of BCL.

warned the local police administration not to arrest or harass them.

"We are helpless...We can't take action against any Shibir leader," a senior police officer in Rajshahi told The Daily Star wishing anonymity.

Asked about the JCD grassroots level leaders' grievances against Shibir, a senior leader of JCD said: "They have expressed their feelings as they are dedicated to Chhatra Dal. But it is not possible to take action against Shibir men because of Jamaat-e-Islami."

But he said JCD has adopted the strategy of "tit for tat" to tackle the situation.

Talking to The Daily Star yesterday, JCD General Secretary Shafiq Bari Babu said they will strengthen the organisation. "The local leaders and activists of Chhatra Dal will take measures if our activities are hampered anywhere," he said.

About the clashes with Shibir, the JCD leader said: "It is nothing new."

1,500 patients

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regular checking and rounds were hampered seriously during the strike.

An elderly patient, Syed Salamat Ullah, 50, was groaning in severe pain at the surgery ward No. 26. Doctors operated on his left leg on Saturday and he was scheduled to have a dressing yesterday which did not happen until 1:00pm.

Anti-graft body sinks

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These petitions in general point out that the ACC does not have any organisational structure that allows it to file the cases. The ACC signatories of these cases are officially non-existent as there are no such posts they claim to hold in the ACC. The petitioners further argued that the ACC has not framed the rules required for its operation and therefore it cannot legally execute any case.

Twelve other petitions challenge the ACC's screening process for recruitment of its staff from the Bac. There are four more petitions that challenge the legality of the appointment of the ACC chairman and its two commissioners. Of the four petitions, two have been resolved at the HC: one dealing with Chairman Justice Sultan Hossain Khan and the other with Commissioner Maniruzzaman Miah.

ABSENCE OF ORGANOGRAM
Due to the lack of any organogram, the ACC's legal premise remains so weak that in some cases it has faced stay orders in advance. Three such petitions have sought HC stay orders in advance on the ACC approval of framing the charge sheets.

Sources pointed out that since the beginning of the ACC's operation, there has been difference of opinion among its chairman and two commissioners about framing charge sheets, filing cases and screening of the staffs.

At a meeting on August 28 last year, the three widely differed on these matters. Commissioner Maniruzzaman Miah pointed out that since the ACC had not yet

4 JMB leaders

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arrested him in December 2005.

The police could not seek his remand as he is being quizzed by the Task Force Interrogation cell in Dhaka.

Mostafa, a fourth year student of Arabic at Rajshahi University, was engaged with Ahle Hadith Jubo Shangkha, youth front of Ahle Hadith Andolan, Bangladesh (Ahab).

Earlier, police attached all movable property of Jamaat-Shibir cadre Zafar Babu on February 24 implicating him in the case.

Two eyewitnesses in their statements before a magistrate confirmed notorious Shibir cadre Babu was among the group of four assailants.

"The statements of the eyewitnesses are credible as other witnesses, documents and circumstantial evidence corroborate them," a police official said earlier.

The police had earlier implicated Babu's associate Zillur Rahman and Sirajus Salekin, a former Shibir president at Binodpur near Rajshahi University, in the case.

Other suspects now out on bail are Nazrul Islam Bachchu, Monirul Islam and Mizanur Rahman.

Yunus, a teacher of economics and president of RU Bangabandhu Parishad, was killed during his morning walk on December 24, 2004.

He as the RU registrar in 1998 developed enmity with Ahab chief Asadullah Al Galib after uncovering his [Galib's] secret visit to India.

He had rivalry also with Jamaat-Shibir cadres over different issues and even came under their attack in 1995.

Sedition case

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On February 20, 2005 Dhamrai police arrested Sentu, Wahab, Yaqub, Anwar, Faruq and Salam with nine manuals on bomb making and other contraband materials on the Dhaka-Aricha Highway.

They showed the six men arrested under Section 54 of the Criminal Procedure Code and produced them before a first class magistrate's court in Dhaka on February 22, 2005 with prayer for a seven-day remand to interrogate them. The court granted a two-day remand.

Thirteen days into their arrest, the arrestees were released on bail.

Investigating the case, Dhamrai police found that the activities of the accused were seditious.

With approval from the home ministry, SI Zehad Hossain of the police station filed the sedition case against the accused on September 11.

Sentu was re-arrested in November while the others have been absconding since then.

Assistant Public Prosecutor Mahbubur Rahman Siddiqui appeared for the state but no lawyer represented the accused.

25 injured

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revenge, said witnesses.

Some 70 JCD activists attacked several rooms of Sharif Mohammad Hall, a dormitory of the institute, yesterday morning.

The JCD men beat the ICS activists, vandalised and looted the valuables of seven rooms, ICS said.

ICS activists made a counter attack on the JCD men shortly afterwards.

Police deployed at the institute remained inactive during the hour-long clashes, said students.

Later additional police went to the spot and controlled the situation.

Eight injured JCD activists were admitted to Dhaka Medical College and Hospital while the injured ICS activists took treatment from local clinics and hospitals.

Earlier on April 2, at least 50 students were injured in a clash between ICS and other student bodies, including JCD and BCL, at MM College in Jessore.

Rallies in Khulna

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pre-election commitment of Prime Minister Khaleda Zia who was elected an MP from Khulna-2 constituency in 2001.

BSOA Secretary General MA Kafi presided over the rally that was addressed, among others, by Prof Rafiqul Islam, KM Alam and Sadek Al Hira.

Our Pabna Correspondent adds: Hundreds of consumers held a rally in front of the office of Pabna Pali Bidyut Samity at Chahmatore in the district protesting load shedding, excessive service charge and corruption.

Among others, former MP Shamsuddin Ahmed Khabir, Awami League leader Makbul Hossain and Bhangura pourasava Chairman Baki Billah addressed the rally presided over by advocate Shawkat Hossain.

Ershad

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Under the laws of the land, one cannot contest a national election within five years of execution of a punishment for criminal offence.

Ershad recently declared that he would contest in the by-polls as the restriction on him expired.

The Gaibandha-4 constituency fell vacant after ruling BNP MP Abdul Mottaleb died of a heart attack on March 11, 2006.

Thaksin hands

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from now on. I need to rest," Thaksin said.

Thaksin's party won parliamentary elections Sunday, but the opposition boycotted the vote, and early results showed that nearly 40 percent of voters cast protest ballots.

Since he is not a member of parliament, Chitchai is unlikely to remain in the job after lawmakers meets to name a prime minister within 30 days. Thaksin's announcement came despite his assertion Tuesday that he would remain in a caretaker role until parliament met.

"It's not that I'm not willing to fight, but when I fight, the nation loses," Thaksin said. "I don't need to see bloodshed among Thais. Thai blood must not paint the land of Thailand."

Chitchai, 59, who was recently appointed to oversee security affairs, is a close associate of the prime minister. The two studied together in the United States and both joined the Royal Thai Police department, where Chitchai rose into senior positions.

Thaksin announced his resignation after a meeting Tuesday with Thailand's revered King Bhumibol Adulyadej. It is not clear what, if any role, Bhumibol had in the decision, but Thaksin had said that only the king could force his ouster.

While some opponents praised Thaksin's departure, others remained guarded, fearing he would continue to control the government.

Opposition leader Sondhi Limthongkul, who helped organise rallies that drew as many as 100,000 protesters against Thaksin, said that if the prime minister continues to dominate the government through proxies, his People's Alliance for Democracy will protest again.

Pipob Thongchai, another alliance leader, said a final demonstration planned for Friday would go forward. Demonstrators who had camped in front of Government House for weeks were packing up and moving out Wednesday.

Thaksin said his party on Sunday won 57 percent of the popular vote and virtually all 500 seats in Parliament, but official results had not yet been announced. Roughly 37 percent cast a protest ballot for no candidate, according to preliminary results.

By-elections in 38 constituencies left with no winning candidate were scheduled for April 23, but the main opposition Democrat Party said Wednesday it would boycott that contests as well.

"We will join elections once there have been political reforms," the party's deputy leader Sathit Wongnongthong said.

Thaksin's announcement late Tuesday drew cheers by more than 1,000 anti-government protesters camped outside his office, watching the speech on a large TV screen.

But supporters of Thaksin, who enjoys strong support in rural areas in part because of his generous social welfare and economic assistance programmes, were upset.

"He's fought against drugs. He's fought the mafia," said one Bangkok taxi driver, wiping away tears. "I'm very sad."

Thaksin was the second Thai leader to step down under pressure in the past decade and a half, but this time without bloodshed. In 1992,

demonstrators against a military strongman were gunned down before the king stepped in to end the fighting and usher in a period of stable democracy.

Opposition to Thaksin gained momentum in January when the prime minister's family announced it had sold its controlling stake in telecommunications company Shin Corp. to Singapore's state-owned Temasek Holdings for a tax-free \$1.9 billion.

Critics allege the sale involved insider trading and complain a key national asset is now in a foreign government's hands.

Thaksin also has been accused of stifling the media and mishandling a Muslim insurgency in southern Thailand that flared under his rule.

No immediate

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planning ministry office on Tuesday. According to the energy ministry's claim, the BPC incurred a loss of

Tk 2,700 crore in the last fiscal year due to price hike of petroleum in the international market. This year, the loss is expected to be much more.

The energy adviser said the government, instead of increasing the fuel