

Violence may affect Japanese investment
Envoy tells CA

UNB, Dhaka

Japanese Ambassador in Dhaka Masayaki Inoue yesterday voiced concern over the recent political violence in Bangladesh and said if the violence continued it might affect Japanese investment in and cooperation with Bangladesh.

The ambassador said this when he called on President and Chief Adviser Iajuddin Ahmed at Bangabhaban and discussed the ongoing political crisis.

Talking to the envoy, the chief adviser called upon the political parties concerned to call off the ongoing blockade, saying that his caretaker government has taken all possible measures for holding free and fair elections.

Terming the relations between Bangladesh and Japan 'excellent', the president said Japan is working as a partner of Bangladesh for its development.

He hoped that the South Asian

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John Gastright due today

UNB, Dhaka

US Deputy Assistant Secretary for South and Central Asian Affairs John Gastright arrives in Dhaka early today on a two-day visit, with matters of the upcoming election in Bangladesh high on his agenda.

Gastright will meet major political parties' leaders, including BNP Chairperson Khaleda Zia and Awami League President Sheikh Hasina, advisers, Election Commission officials and leading businesspeople.

He is likely to reaffirm the US government's stand for free, fair and credible elections with the participation of all the political parties.

His trip is taking place close on the heels of visits by emissaries from different development-partner countries and agencies in the wake of the current political crisis over the upcoming general election.

INDIAN INT'L FESTIVAL
Bangladeshi film
Nirontor gets
special award

PALLAB BHATTACHARYA, New Delhi

Bangladesh's feature film "Nirontor," directed by Abu Sayeed, won a Special Jury award yesterday in the competitive section of the 37th International Film Festival of India (IFFI) held in Goa.

This was for the first time that a Bangladeshi feature film won an award in the IFFI where the film had also made its debut. Earlier, a short film titled "Agami" and directed by Morshedul Islam from Bangladesh won an IFFI award.

"Nirontor," a non-judgemental film about a lower middle-class family in Dhaka struggling to meet its ends, stars Ilyas Kanchan, Shabnoor and Jayanta Chattopadhyay.

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Ctg port dockers stop container handling for vessels with cranes

RAFIQ HASAN

The country's premier seaport, the Chittagong Port, is headed towards another crisis as the workers this time stopped container handling for vessels with gear (crane) following the directives of the city mayor.

Chittagong City Mayor ABM Mohiuddin Chowdhury yesterday asked the dockworkers not to allow any more gang bookings for ships with gear. Containers will be handled for the three ships that already had been anchored at the Chittagong Container Terminal (CCT), sources said quoting the mayor.

The workers enforced the mayor's new directive from last night bringing the operation at the port to a near standstill, the sources added.

A high official at the port responsible for handling containers assumed that the mayor's new order might have something to do with the countrywide blockade programme.

However, a small number of containers that were handled yesterday had difficulty transporting them in and out of the port yard due to the blockade programme enforced by the Awami League-led 14-party alliance.

Earlier, container handling for a total of 11 gearless vessels was stopped for over two weeks due to a row over the approved operator of gantry cranes.

The Chittagong port resumed the operation of gantry cranes pending the agreement signed with a private company Saif Powertec Limited.

A total of 52 ocean-going ships anchor at Chittagong port. Among them, 11 are gearless vessels that cannot load or unload containers without cranes in the port.

These ships, also known as feeder vessels, mainly transport containers to and from four major ports -- Singapore, Colombo, Port Klang and port Tan Jung Palapus in Malaysia.

Besides being dogged by conflicts every now and then, the port's problems reached a ew height as the feeder operators increased the freight of Chittagong-bound con

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Unknown miscreants set fire to a car on Dhanmondi Road-8 in the city during the Awami League-led 14-party alliance's countrywide blockade yesterday.

3 GIs, 29 Iraqis killed as US reviews Iraq tactics

AFP, Baghdad

Shell-shocked Baghdadis yesterday cleared the bloody wreckage from the latest deadly bomb attack on their city, as the United States sought a new strategy to pull Iraq back from the abyss.

President Jalal Talabani also became the second Iraqi leader to reject UN chief Kofi Annan's call for an international peace conference on Iraq after powerful Shia politician AbdelAziz al-Hakim.

The death toll from Saturday's triple car bombing rose to 60 overnight as more men, women and children succumbed to wounds suffered when the blasts tore through a crowded shopping street at nightfall, medics said.

Meanwhile, at least 29 Iraqis were killed in violence Sunday.

After more than three-and-a-half years of mounting sectarian conflict, the attack, while vicious, was neither unexpected nor especially deadly; more than 1,800 Iraqi civilians were slaughtered in November alone.

But each new massacre hammers a wedge deeper between Iraq's Sunni and Shia communities and chips away at the credibility of the country's beleaguered unity government and the US-led coalition force propping it up.

The bombers were back at work Sunday, when an insurgent wearing an explosive belt blew himself up next to a police station near the northern oil city of Kirkuk, killing three officers, Major General Torhan Yussef told AFP.

Further south, at least 16 people were murdered in and around the restive town of Baquba, according to security and medical sources.

Elsewhere 10 people were killed, including three in a car bomb attack near a bakery in Baghdad's northern Qahira neighbourhood.

The US military also reported the deaths in action of three more troops, taking its losses since the March 2003 invasion to 2,887, according to an AFP count based on Pentagon figures.

American soldiers killed six suspected insurgents, two women and a child when they called in an air strike to dislodge gunmen from a safehouse west of Baghdad late Saturday, the military said.

British troops, meanwhile, clashed with Shia militia during a search operation in the main southern city of Basra, Iraqi police said.

Amid the carnage, there is a growing realisation in Washington that the current US strategy is failing and pressure is mounting for either a major change of course or a rapid pullout of the 138,000 US troops deployed in theatre.

Attention has focused on the

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4-party stages rallies to protest vandalism at SC

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Leaders and activists of BNP-led four party alliance yesterday held rallies and brought out processions in every thana in the capital protesting the anarchy as well as vandalism at the chief justice's office by Awami League (AL)-led 14-party alliance.

Speakers at the rally said the AL and its allies want to turn Bangladesh into a satellite state by paralysing its economy through their blockade programmes.

Ranna thana four-party activists brought out a procession from Matsya Bhaban under the leadership of city BNP Joint General Secretary Chowdhury Alam commissioner. Sutrapur thana unit of the alliance brought out another procession that started from Dholaikhal area and marched through different city streets. Kotwali thana 4-party unit also held a rally in Naya Bazar.

The BNP-led alliance also organised rallies and processions

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Arrest warrant against Mahfuz Anam in case by Mirza Abbas

COURT CORRESPONDENT

A Dhaka court yesterday issued an arrest warrant against publisher of the Weekly-2000 Mahfuz Anam in a defamation case, rejecting the defence lawyers' oral appeal about his (Anam) absence from it due to political unrest.

Moreover, the complainant of the case was absent from the court and there were irregularities of court process surveyors in serving summons upon the defendants.

On November 9, former housing and public works minister Mirza Abbas filed the case against the editor, publisher and two reporters of the weekly magazine for running a 'defamatory' story and publishing footage on August 25.

Metropolitan Magistrate Mohammad Mizanur Rahman passed the order after acting Editor Golam Mortuza, special correspondent Shuvo Kibria and chief photographer Tuhin Hossain along with their lawyers appeared before it seeking bail.

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FBCCI to stage token protest against deadlock

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The Federation of Bangladesh Chambers of Commerce and Industry (FBCCI) will stage a token demonstration on Wednesday if the caretaker government fails to break the present political deadlock by tomorrow.

"We will observe the programme between 12:00 noon and 12:15pm in front of our office at Motijheel," FBCCI President Mir Nasir Hossain told reporters after an emergency meeting of its board of directors yesterday.

Failure of the caretaker government to solve the current political stalemate has forced us to announce the programme, said the FBCCI president.

He urged the chief adviser to create a level playing ground for all the major political parties to ensure a credible election.

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Jatiya Oikya Front demands resignation of chief adviser

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Jatiya Oikya Front (JOF) observed a sit-in programme yesterday simultaneously with the blockade programme of Awami League led 14-party alliance demanding resignation of the chief adviser.

The JOF, a combine of Liberal Democratic Party (LDP), Jatiya Oikya Mancha and Bangladesh Tariqat Federation, held the programme at Moghbazar and Motijheel areas in the city.

LDP Organising Secretary Mahi

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Advisers Mahbubul Alam, second from left, CM Shafi Sami, left, and Justice Fazlul Haque, centre, meet BNP Chairperson Khaleda Zia at Hawa Bhaban in the capital yesterday. On her right is BNP Standing Committee Member Khandaker Mosharrar Hossain.

Yunus in telecom deal to wire up the poor

AFP, Hong Kong

Nobel Laureate Professor Muhammad Yunus has teamed up with some of the world's largest telecom firms to leverage communications technology to help alleviate poverty, he announced Sunday.

Dr Yunus' successful Grameen microcredit bank, which has helped provide small business loans to millions of poor his native Bangladesh, said linking impoverished communities to the hi-tech world was vital.

"It has become a fast track for getting out of poverty," Dr Yunus said of his Grameen projects that have so far brought mobile phones and Internet links to villages in Bangladesh.

Under a new partnership with telecom firms, including American giants Cisco Systems and Qualcomm, the scheme will be extended into other countries throughout the developing world.

Services and hardware will be offered at cut price rates in the same way as Dr Yunus' Grameen bank offers small loans at low interest rates to stimulate entrepreneurship.

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ENCOUNTER WITH PIRATES
Body of Coast Guard officer recovered

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Khulna

The body of Coast Guard Petty Officer MH Kabir, killed after an encounter between the law enforcers and a gang of pirates near Mongla seaport on Friday night, was recovered from river Pashur yesterday.

The rescue team also recovered a sub-machine gun and 90 rounds of bullet from the spot.

Meanwhile, two separate committees-- one by Rapid Action

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Prayer Timing		
December 4		
	Azan	
Fajr	5-15	5-50
Zohr	12-45	1-15
Asr	3-45	4-00
Maghrib	5-19	5-22
Esha	7-00	7-30
Source: Islamic Foundation		

