

China, Russia veto US on Myanmar

China and Russia on Friday vetoed a US resolution calling on Myanmar's military junta to stop persecution of minority and opposition groups, killing the measure in the UN Security Council.

The vote was 9-3 in favour of the resolution, with three abstentions. But two of the negative votes came from permanent members with veto rights.

Both Russia and China, which had not cast a double veto since 1972, made the point the United States needed to listen to their complaints carefully. They argued that human rights violations were not the purview of the Security Council unless they endangered regional or international peace and security, which Myanmar did not.

"I hope some of our partners

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Hectic lobbying to get lucrative shipping jobs

RAFIQ HASAN

Strong lobbying continues for the lucrative posts of chief engineer and ship surveyors at the office of the director general of shipping as the current Chief Engineer Commander Monirul Islam is going for retirement on January 16.

The chief engineer is responsible for supervising issuance of survey certificates against around 8,500 vessels plying various domestic routes in the country. He also looks after the test and examination related issues of ship drivers and engineers.

There are allegations that the chief engineer and surveyors under him give certificate without surveying the vessels properly in exchange of bribe while plying of faulty passenger launches often causes disasters.

The surveyors allegedly take Tk 3,000 to 5,000 for issuing an annual survey certificate for a vessel plying the domestic route while they take Tk 20,000 to 25,000 for giving approval for a vessel to cross the Bay, sources said. The number of accidents in the Bay of Bengal increased recently as the unfit vessels often cross the sea and go to Chittagong through obtaining certificates from a surveyor.

The Chittagong port magistrate arrested a number of such vessels and informed the director of shipping about the matter on several occasions, said the sources.

But the launch owners have continued operating faulty vessels through maintaining 'good relations' with the chief engineer and surveyors while the government's initiatives to stop plying of faulty passenger vessels failed on several occasions due to a nexus between launch owners and ship surveyors.

In last two decades, major ferry disasters claimed around 5,000 people in the country.

The government is considering appointment of a navy officer as the new chief engineer but hectic lobbying is going on to influence the high-ups for appointing a chief engineer from the existing six ship surveyors.

Sources said the ship surveyors are lobbying with the government high-ups and offering handsome amount as bribe for getting appointment as chief engineer and ship surveyor.

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All quiet on EC front

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The acting chief election commissioner, three other election commissioners, the EC secretary and top election officials did not come to the Election Commission (EC) office yesterday.

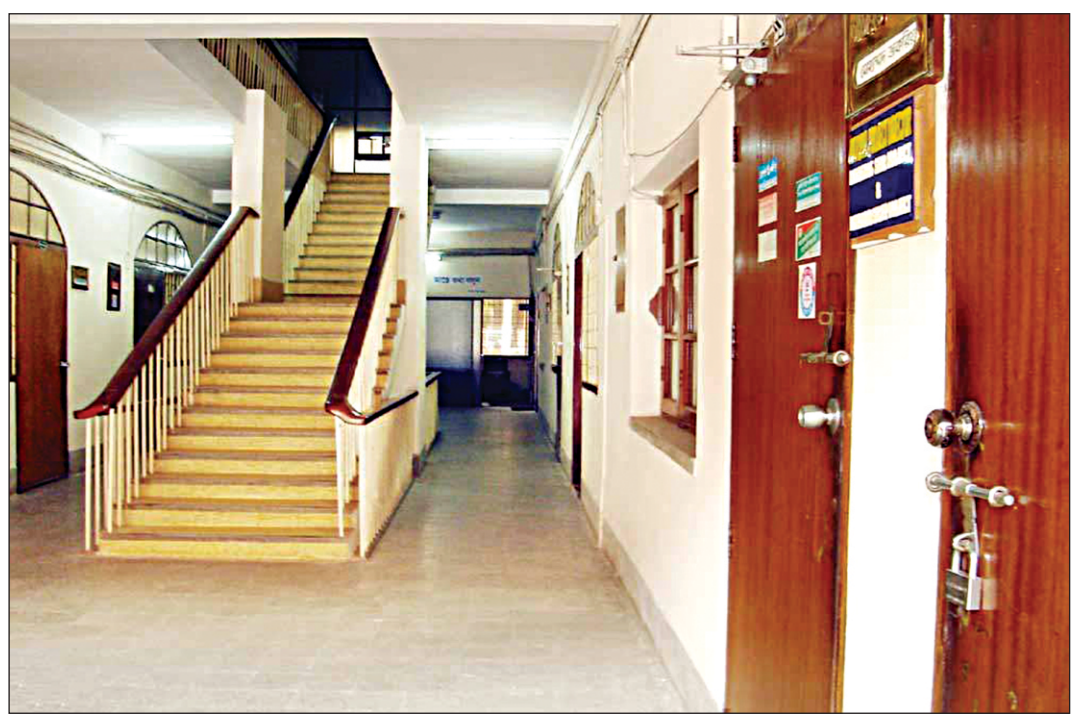
The EC had earlier cancelled leave for all its officials but it stopped the election-related activities following the declaration of emergency by President Iajuddin Ahmed on Thursday night.

The EC, however, is yet to officially declare the postponement of the election scheduled for January 22.

The main entrance of the EC office was found closed at 3:00pm yesterday while no security guard or police was seen there.

The election materials including different gazettes were scattered on the EC premises.

A few mid-level EC officials who came to the office declined to make any comment about the absence of top EC officials.



Empty corridors of the Election Commission office in the capital yesterday as it postponed all activities relating to the January 22 parliamentary polls.

Excavation starts in Narsingdi in search of ancient civilisation

BISHAWJIT DAS, back from Narsingdi

Archaeologists yesterday started the excavation work of the Wari-Bateswar in Narsingdi, hopeful of unearthing nearly 2,500-year-old structures revealing substantial information about the civilisation that once flourished there.

Former chief adviser to the caretaker government Justice Habibur Rahman officially inaugurated the digging at the site under Belabo upazila, some 70-km off the capital.

The excavating team of Jahangirnagar University (JU), led by Prof Sufi Mostafizur Rahman, has so far dug out a 'highway' inside a fortified town.

One of the significant discoveries during the excavation, the 180-metre long, six-metre wide and

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Former adviser to caretaker government Justice Habibur Rahman accompanied by archaeologists inaugurates excavation of relics dating back to more than 2,500 years at Wari-Bateswar in Narsingdi yesterday.

BDR, BSF trade gunshots on Satkhira border

UNB, Satkhira

Indian Border Security Force (BSF) and Bangladesh Rifles (BDR) exchanged gunfire across Bhomra and Gazipur borders in the district Friday night and early yesterday leaving a Bangladeshi cattle trader wounded by bullet.

BDR sources said BSF troops of Ghodzadanga camp fired towards the BDR men at Bhomra about 9:00pm Friday without any provocation that left cattle trader Jahangir Hossain, 30, injured. BDR returned the fire.

BDR sent Jahangir to Sadar Hospital from where he was shifted to Khulna 250-bed Hospital.

In another incident, BSF of Pakhirdanga outpost fired towards Gazipur at about 3:00am yesterday, which were returned by BDR. None was reported hurt but the border skirmishes raised tension among the residents along the border.

4 of a family killed in blast in C'nawabganj

20 bombs recovered in Kushtia

STAR REPORT

A woman and her three daughters were killed when a powerful bomb went off in their house at a slum in Chapainawabganj town yesterday morning.

Meanwhile, the law enforcers recovered 20 bombs in Kushtia on Friday.

The dead in Chapainawabganj blast were identified as -- Mariam, 34, a municipal sweeper and her daughters -- Shantona, 3, Sheuli, 5, and Shilpi, 10.

The victims were garbage pickers and might have come across the bomb while searching for reusable stuff in the dustbins, the police said adding that the bomb might have exploded when they tried to break it open for selling it as scrap at their Hujrapur Rail Colony slum house.

Shantona and Sheuli died on the spot at around 7:30am, while the other two succumbed to their injuries at the District Sadar Hospital some three hours later. Parts of their bodies were severely distorted due to the blast, hospital sources said.

Besides, another bomb exploded in a dustbin near the house of former BNP lawmaker Harunur Rashid, some 400 yards off the slum nearly half an hour before the first blast, but none was hurt.

Later, police recovered three bombs from the dustbin and defused those.

Mokhesur Rahman, superintendent of police (SP) in

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Critics of Iraq plan must offer alternative

Says Bush

REUTERS, Washington

President George W Bush made clear yesterday he would not back off his plan to send more troops to Iraq despite bipartisan hostility to the idea and he accused his critics of failing to offer an alternative.

Bush's announcement this week that he would add 21,500 troops in Iraq to try to quell sectarian violence was greeted by scathing criticism on Capitol Hill. The United States has about 130,000 troops in Iraq now. The extra troops would go to Baghdad and the volatile Anbar province.

Democrats in Congress and even some Republicans, said they doubted the plan would work, given that past force increases failed to halt the bloodshed and

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Correction

The story "Khaleda, Huda, Altaf yet to submit tax papers" published in the January 12 issue of The Daily Star carried an inadvertent mistake. The report mentioned that Lt Gen (ret'd) Mahbubur Rahman had not submitted his "statement papers of wealth, income and tax return". But, in fact, he had submitted those papers. We regret the error.

Prayer Timing		
January 14		
	Azan	Jamaat
Fajr	5-30	6-05
Zohr	12-45	1-15
Asr	4-00	4-15
Maghrib	5-36	5-40
Esha	7-00	7-30
Source: Islamic Foundation		

BARAPUKURIA POWER PLANT

Coal shortage forces PDB to go for outsourcing

KONGKON KARMAKER, Dinajpur

One of the two units of the country's first coal-based power plant at Barapukuria remains out of operation due to coal shortage as production at Barapukuria coal mine was suspended more than seven months ago.

Coal extraction was suspended in June last year to shift equipment for another 'phase development', mine officials said.

According to mining experts, at least 3-4 months are required for phase development, which expired in October last year.

A coal stock to run the plant for three months was kept when production at the mine was suspended.

Considering the long delay, Power Development Board (PDB) has floated tender for coal supply to maintain smooth power generation during the current IRRI-Boro season.

The power plant is now operating the first 125 MW unit and producing power using reserve coal, plant sources said.

The plant now has a stock of at least 30,000 tonnes of coal while it requires 2,500 tonnes a day.

Earlier, the plant authorities had informed Petrobangla that its operation might stop due to shortage of coal.

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'No comment,' says Jalil on new caretaker government

UNB, Dhaka

Awami League (AL) leadership refrained from making any comment on the formation of a new caretaker government.

"No comment," AL General Secretary Abdul Jalil told reporters after a meeting with party chief Sheikh Hasina at Sudha Sadan last night.

However, AL presidium member Suranjit Sengupta said, "We are closely observing the development."

Kashmir issue to top Indo-Pak talks

Indian FM goes to Pakistan

AFP, Islamabad

Indian Foreign Minister Pranab Mukherjee met with Pakistan President Pervez Musharraf at the start of a two-day visit yesterday aimed at improving ties between the two countries, with the disputed Kashmir region at the top of the agenda.

"India wants good neighbourly relations with Pakistan," Mukherjee said in his arrival statement.

He said India wanted the peace dialogue over Kashmir, launched in January 2004, to be successful.

Ahead of his arrival, officials here said Pakistan would like a "detailed" discussions on the dispute over the Himalayan region divided between the two countries and claimed by the nuclear-armed rivals in full.

Details of the meeting were not immediately available but sources said discussions had focused on Kashmir.

"We have made reasonable progress in three rounds of composite dialogue... and during my visit, I would like to share the perceptions of the leaders of Pakistan on these issues," Mukherjee added in his statement.

He also said he would extend an invitation for the summit of South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (Saarc) in India in April to Pakistani Prime Minister Shaukat Aziz.

Pakistan has said that progress on Kashmir here was essential in sustaining the momentum of the peace dialogue, which has improved ties between the two countries.

Musharraf told a delegation of US students Friday Pakistan and India needed to move ahead on conflict resolution along with the confidence building measures to achieve durable peace.

"If resolve and flexibility is shown by the leadership, we will be able to resolve the disputes, including the Kashmir issue," Musharraf said.

He said durable peace in South Asia could be achieved only through a negotiated settlement of the dispute over Kashmir, which has caused two of the three wars since independence from Britain in 1947.

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