

Int'l community sees renaissance has taken place: Iftekhar

DIPLOMATIC CORRESPONDENT

Foreign Affairs Adviser Dr Iftekhar Ahmed Chowdhury yesterday said the international community now perceives that a renaissance has taken place in Bangladesh where the people have taken up the control of their destiny.

"The international community is not only recognising steps being taken by the present Caretaker Government, but is profusely encouraging to move forward," he told the diplomatic correspondents at a press briefing on his return from a visit to New York.

In their opinion, he said Bangladesh would be considered a bright example among developing members of the United Nations if the government's various steps and principles are implemented "and there is no reason for us not to be that."

After meeting UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon, Deputy

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DB takes over extortion case against Naser

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Sylhet

The extortion case filed against Naser Rahman, a former lawmaker of BNP and son of former finance minister M Saifur Rahman was transferred to the Detective Branch (DB) of police yesterday.

Following handing over the case records to the DB, a team led by the new Investigation Officer Inspector Mujibul Haque of Sylhet DB is now interrogating the former lawmaker.

One of the 50 corruption suspects Naser was brought to Sylhet and produced before a magistrate's court on Sunday afternoon when he was taken on a 3-day remand.

He was arrested from his family house at Gulshan in the capital on February 3 night.

There are a number of allegations of corruption against the former lawmaker.

On February 17, contractor

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TITAS GAS FIELD

Remedial steps this week to plug leakage

SHARIER KHAN

Bangladesh Gas Field Company Ltd (BGFCL) plans to start remedial measures later this week to stop the uncontrolled gas leakage from the country's biggest gas field Titas in Brahmanbaria sadar upazila.

There will be no involvement of any foreign experts in this operation though the BGFCL's fact finders last month strongly advocated in favour of having a world class expert to oversee the whole matter, considering the unknown risks involving this huge national asset.

Some experts warned that these measures could be very risky if done without any proper planning.

Sources said two local experts -- a retired Petrobangla official and a Buet teacher-- would oversee the job.

According to local people, the gas leakage started around four years back in small proportions. But after last year's rainy season, the leakage became alarming.

Local villagers and farmers have told The Daily Star that gas was leaking through more than 3,000 big holes, including some 30-foot diameter ones, in IRRI paddy fields, water bodies and the Titas river. Gas emitted through some holes is burning with high flames. Experts fear that such leakage can lead to a blowout anytime and wreak havoc in the locality and the country's energy system.

"The BGFCL action will coincide with the formal inauguration of Bibiyana gas field (on March 8)," said Petrobangla sources.

"This has been planned this way so that execution of the remedial

action does not affect the gas supply situation."

At first the Titas field's well number-10 will be shut down, and Bangladeshi exploration company Bapex will conduct a "work over" of this well. "We have already mobilised the rig for the job," a source said.

This shutdown will reduce Titas' gas production by 15 million cubic feet a day (mmcf). Titas produces 400 mmcf using 15 wells while the country consumes more than 1,500 mmcf.

A top official pointed out that if the results of the work over of this well are not satisfactory, the BGFCL will work over wells number 8 and 9 afterwards. The whole job will be funded by the BGFCL.

The work over is planned as per

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JP wants polls after reforms

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

HM Ershad-led Jatiya Party (JP) yesterday at a meeting with the chief election commissioner (CEC) demanded holding the ninth parliamentary election after completion of electoral reforms.

"We want a free, fair and acceptable election. We are not in favour of giving a timeframe for holding the parliamentary election. We hope the Election Commission will hold the polls once it completes the reforms and preparation of a flawless voter list with identification cards," JP Chairman HM Ershad, who led the party's seven-member delegation, told reporters after the meeting.

The Awami League (AL) and BNP during separate meetings with the CEC have already demanded elections by June and July respectively.

The JP chairman however said they have confidence in the Election Commission (EC). "The commission should be given the required time to complete its preparation for the polls," Ershad said.

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KAMAL MAJUMDER SC extends stay on HC order on detention

UNB, Dhaka

The Supreme Court (SC) yesterday extended its stay order by another week on the operation of the High Court (HC) verdict that had declared illegal the detention of former Awami League lawmaker Kamal Ahmed Majumder and three others.

A six-member bench of the Appellate Division, headed by Chief Justice M Ruhul Amin, gave the order upon a prayer by the government as it had not yet received the certified copy of the HC judgment for making grounds for filing leave to appeal.

The hearing on the stay will resume on March 12.

Court sources said the day's SC order do not bar the High Court from exercising its jurisdiction to dispose of the pending individual habeas corpus petitions under

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PHOTO: STAR

Detective police arrested 59 alleged brokers at Agargaon passport office yesterday. The photo was taken after they were taken to DB office at Malibagh in the capital.

RAB MEN KILLING IN SAVAR

Criminal gang identified, suspected killer held

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The law enforcers arrested a suspected killer in the murder of two Rapid Action Battalion (Rab) personnel from Sherpur yesterday and said that they have also identified the gang responsible for the killing.

The detained was identified as Mostak, a professional killer.

Meanwhile, the investigators said that the local criminal operatives shot dead Rab Deputy Assistant Director Humayun Kabir and Constable Phool Mia in Aminbazar on Saturday to avenge the killing of their accomplices and run their drug peddling smoothly.

Three sons of the owner of TCB brickfield, where the two Rab personnel were killed, were involved in the murder, said a man arrested

from Bardeshi village in the area on Sunday.

One of them, Faisal, 24, was placed on a five-day remand yesterday by a Dhaka court along with his father, owner of TCB brickfield Tajul Islam alias Tara Mia, 58, and manager of the brickfield Mohsin, 52.

Sources said Faisal called Kabir over his cellphone before their murder at around 3:30pm Saturday. His phone number was found on Kabir's cellphone call register, they added. Rab personnel arrested Faisal and his father during the operation after the killing on Saturday, while the manager Mohsin was held on Sunday.

Seven of the 26 people, who were detained in the same operation, told the investigators that they had witnessed the incident, sources

said. According to them, six people took part in the killing while around six others were backing them up.

Saleh, detained from Bardeshi village, disclosed names of six killers, an officer of Savar Police Station said.

They include -- top listed local criminal Anwar Hossain Anu alias Anar, Abu Saleh and sons of TCB brickfield owner Faisal, Karim and Fahim. However, it could not be confirmed whether this Abu Saleh is the same person arrested from Bardeshi.

Inspector Akhteruzzaman of Detective Branch produced Tara Mia, Faisal and Mohsin before a first class magistrate's court in

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NEXT BUDGET

Civil society for balance between income, expenditure

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Members of the civil society in a pre-budget meeting with the finance and planning adviser yesterday urged the government to draw up a realistic budget for the next fiscal keeping a balance between the income and expenditure of the government.

The delegation, including top economists, emphasised on the need for government's quick and effective measures to bring down prices of essentials within the reach of the citizens and on cancelling the

development projects taken by the immediate past elected government for political expediency. The civil society members also urged the government to review for the next budget the big projects in power and communications sectors.

Finance and Planning Adviser Mirza Azizul Islam yesterday began a series of pre-budget consultations in his office with different stakeholders.

"We will try our best to fit in the next budget the suggestions that came out of the meeting with the

economists," Mirza Azizul Islam told reporters after the meeting.

He said the members of the caretaker government have no political ambition, so if the government places the budget it will obviously be free of any influence from any political group. "We will be guided by a single consideration and that is our perception of public interest," he said.

The adviser said the civil society

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Verdict in gold smuggling case against Ershad today

COURT CORRESPONDENT

Judgement of the gold smuggling case filed 16 years back against former president and Jatiya Party Chairman HM Ershad is due today.

Judge SM Mujibur Rahman of the First Additional Metropolitan Sessions Judge's Court will give the verdict at 11:00am, court sources said.

On February 6 and 15, the same court had adjourned the delivery of the case as the judgement had not been prepared.

Earlier, the prosecution and the defence had completed their arguments and the court recorded statements of eight prosecution witnesses including the complainant and investigation officer (IO) of the case.

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More relief goods seized from BNP, Jamaat men's houses

Joint forces detain Dinajpur journo

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The joint forces yesterday arrested Dinajpur bureau chief of the daily Inqilab and a Jubo Dal leader in Satkhira and recovered 340 corrugated iron (CI) sheets meant for relief from the houses of local BNP and Jamaat-e-Islami leaders.

Police and Rapid Action Battalion arrested 1,442 people including 793 wanted criminals, 25 convicts and four accused under Arms Act in 24 hours ending at 6:00am yesterday, home ministry sources said.

Members of the armed forces arrested 47 people including 19 criminals during the same period.

In Dinajpur, law enforcers

arrested Mahfuzul Haque Anar, bureau chief of the Inqilab from his office at Jail More yesterday morning.

There are allegations of massive corruption, abuse of power and tender manipulation against him.

He was sent to jail with one month's detention.

In Satkhira, the joint forces on Sunday night arrested local Jubo Dal leader Nazrul Islam, who is also a top listed criminal in the area and a close associate of former BNP MP Habibul Islam Habib, from Kazirhat Bazar in Kalaroa upazila.

Accused in at least 13 cases, he faces charges for robbery, extortion, mugging, land grabbing and

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Musharraf asks Yunus to open Grameen Bank in Pakistan

UNB, Islamabad

Pakistan President Pervez Musharraf yesterday urged Nobel laureate Professor Muhammad Yunus to open Grameen Bank in his country and also sought support and technical advice from him for making their poverty-alleviation movement a success.

"Poverty alleviation is one of our targets. We urge you to open Grameen Bank office here and seek your support to make our endeavour a success," Musharraf told the Nobel laureate when he called on the Pak ruler at president's camp office in Rawalpindi.

Musharraf congratulated Prof Yunus on his winning the Nobel Peace Prize and said the people in

Pakistan feel very proud of this great achievement, and that Grameen Bank is an example for the whole world.

He listened to Yunus' experience and success story with great interest during the 45-minute-long meeting.

Economic Adviser to the Pak president Salman Shah, Minister of State Omar Ayub and other top officials of the finance ministry were present during the meeting.

Appreciating the micro-finance movement of Prof Yunus in alleviating poverty, the Pakistan president said, "It's your invention; you have changed the destiny of the people and the whole world recognised your endeavour."

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Fire at towel factory in CEPZ

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Ctg

The building of a towel factory in Chittagong Export Processing Zone was gutted yesterday.

According to sources, the fire erupted at Tareq-Azim Textiles Mills at around 3:30pm due to electric short-circuit.

Firefighters and members of Bangladesh Navy and Air Force could not bring the fire under

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Prayer Timing		
March 6		
	Azan	Jamaat
Fajr	5-10	5-45
Zohr	12-45	1-15
Asr	4-30	4-45
Maghrib	6-07	6-11
Esha	7-30	8-00
Source: Islamic Foundation		



Tigers' injury scare

SPORTS REPORTER

Bangladesh suffered a blow ahead of their first big challenge in West Indies as inform opener Shahriar Nafees and ace left-arm spinner Mohammad Rafique were left out of the squad for today's first official World Cup practice match against New Zealand.

"Nafees went to a local dentist yesterday (Sunday) following toothache and has had a tooth extracted. He is in a bit of pain now. Rafique has complained of back pain. The others are all fit," Bangladesh assistant coach Mohammad Salahuddin told TigerCricket.com yesterday.

The Bangladesh think-tank named a 12-member team after yesterday's morning practice session leaving out Nafees, Rafique

and Rajin Saleh. Left-handed opener Nafees's absence paves way for veteran Javed Omar to play his first match on the tour.

The game against World Cup's serious contenders New Zealand will be played at the extended Three Ws Oval in Cave Hill, Barbados and starts at 7:30pm Bangladesh Time.

Habibul Bashar's men have already won two games against Bermuda and Canada but this will be the first real test for the Tigers because they have a point to prove after only winning matches against the minnows recently.

Bangladesh had their last big match against West Indies in the ICC Champions Trophy where they went down badly and after that they have played 14 matches

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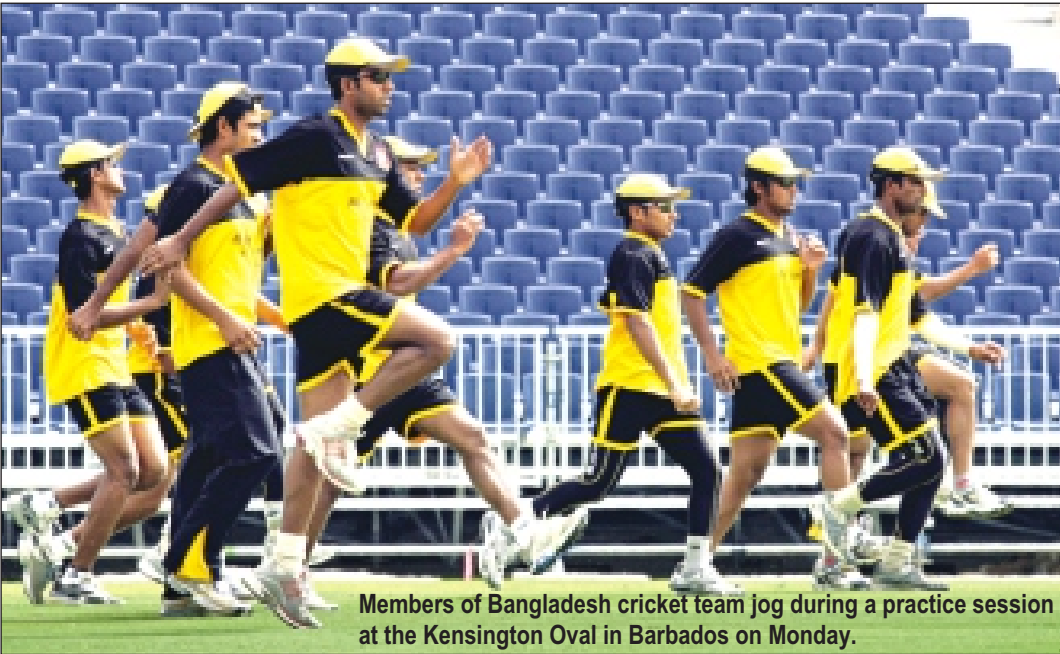


PHOTO: AP

Members of Bangladesh cricket team jog during a practice session at the Kensington Oval in Barbados on Monday.

28 die in Baghdad suicide bombing

AP, Baghdad

A suicide car bomber struck a busy commercial district Monday, killing at least 28 people and injuring more than 50, police said.

The attack near the well-known Mutanabi book market in central Baghdad was the first major blast in the city in several days sending a huge pillar of black smoke as flames spread to shops, cars and book stalls.

The death toll from police was preliminary and could rise. At least 54 people were injured. The commercial zone is mixed between Sunni- and Shia-owned businesses and shoppers.

"Papers from the book market were floating through the air like leaflets dropped from a plane," said Naeem al-Daraji, a Health Ministry worker who was driving about 200 yards from the blast and was slightly

injured by broken glass from his car window.

"Pieces of flesh and the remains of books were scattered everywhere," he said.

People began driving the injured to hospitals in private cars without waiting for ambulances to arrive.

Sporadic car bombs and attacks have hit the capital in recent days, but none with mass casualties since a blast Friday killed at least 10 people.

In other violence, gunmen opened fire on Shia pilgrims in two separate incidents around Baghdad on Monday, killing five people, police said.

On Sunday, US and Iraqi troops poured into Baghdad's main Shia militia stronghold, encountering no resistance in the one-time Sadr City combat zones but testing the

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