

South Asian rivals restart peace talks

Aziz says Indo-Pak peace to change fate of S Asia

AFP, Islamabad

Pakistani Prime Minister Shaukat Aziz said the peace process with India could "change the destiny of South Asia" as the nuclear-armed rivals launched a new round of talks here on Tuesday.

The two-day talks between Indian foreign secretary Shiv Shankar Menon and his Pakistani counterpart Riaz Mohammed Khan mark the fourth round since a January 2004 deal to resume negotiations after a tense military stand-off.

A Pakistani foreign office official said the negotiations focusing on the six-decade dispute over Kashmir and on limiting nuclear and conventional arsenals on the sub-continent were held in a "cordial atmosphere".

"The two sides will meet again on Wednesday and a joint statement would be issued after the meeting," the official said on condition of anonymity.

Menon, who was ambassador to Islamabad from 2003 to 2006, later met Aziz and told him Tuesday's talks had been "useful and moving in the right direction," the premier's office said in a statement.

He assured Aziz that India would share with Pakistan the results of its inquiry into the last month's firebombing of a train between the two countries which killed 69 people, most of them Pakistanis returning home, it said.

"The ongoing interaction between Pakistan and India can result in the resolution of outstanding disputes between the two countries and change the destiny of South Asia," Aziz said.

India and Pakistan have fought three wars since independence in 1947, two over the Himalayan territory of Kashmir. They each hold part of the region but claim it in its entirety.

They also massed hundreds of thousands of troops along the border after militants attacked the Indian parliament in December 2001. New Delhi blamed Pakistan-backed militants.

The three-year-old peace process has reduced mutual suspicion through a series of "confidence-building measures" including transport links, but it has made little progress on core issues including Kashmir.

It suffered a near-fatal blow in July 2006 when India accused Pakistan's military spy agency and Pakistan-based Islamic militants of involvement in train blasts in the Indian commercial hub of Mumbai which killed 186 people.

Rab catches

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he had been transferred recently," a Rab official quoted Nitai as saying.

Nitai also alleged that Harun took Tk 40,000 from him on March 1 saying that he would use the money to build a mosque in his home village.

Advocate Maifuz said Harun asked for money from him to meet the cost of moving.

Captain Syed Mohammad As-sazid and Captain Yasir Sarwat led the operation. Captain As-sazid said they were earlier informed through a source that Harun does not release any file without a bribe.

Following the information, they set up a net of surveillance to catch Harun red-handed and as part of that plan some plainclothesmen took position just outside his office around 2:00pm yesterday.

The elite force members stopped Nitai as soon as he came out of Harun's office and started questioning him. As he admitted to

Yet India and Pakistan pushed ahead with a meeting of their foreign ministers last month after the deadly bombing of the "Friendship Express".

The countries are also expected to finalise agreements on the rapid return of inadvertent border crossers, the relaxation of visa rules and meetings between border officials, officials said.

Foreign office officials said Pakistan had made proposals concerning the nuclear and conventional military balance between the neighbours, who conducted tit-for-tat atomic weapon tests in May 1998 and still test-fire missiles.

The two countries earlier this month held their first meeting of a panel set up to fight terrorism jointly and agreed to share information.

Political parties

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Party and Jamaat-e-Islami will have to be registered and will be forced to disclose the sources of their incomes and report their expenditures to the EC.

The EC believes total absence of any regulation allows political parties to use their influence unrestrictedly in raising funds and to indulge in using the funds in any manner they deem fit, sources close to the EC said explaining the commission's move.

Affluent persons and business firms contribute large sums of money to political parties hoping that if elected the parties will squarely return such favours, the sources added.

Meanwhile, the EC plans to ask the government to prepare national identification cards dropping the idea of voter ID cards.

The EC now believes that the government is actively considering the preparation of multipurpose national ID cards, the sources said.

"The election commission will send a proposal to the government in this regard," said a source close to the EC.

The EC yesterday at a meeting with Bangladesh Human Rights Commission (BHRC) also disclosed the plan.

The Election Commission informed us that it is giving importance to the idea of national ID cards," former chief election commissioner KM Sadek, who led the delegation of BHRC, told reporters after the meeting.

The former CEC said they placed a set of recommendations for a free and fair election.

Tarique

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High Court.

Azizur Rahman Dul, a lawyer of the Supreme Court, yesterday filed a writ petition challenging the legality of the remand, granted by the Chief Metropolitan Magistrate's Court, Dhaka, on March 8, according to the UNB.

The writ petition is likely to be moved before a regular High Court division bench on Sunday (Mar 18), court sources said.

The law enforcers secured a four-day remand for interrogation in an extortion case when Tarique, senior joint-secretary general of BNP, was produced in the CMM's Court on March 8. He was arrested on March 7 midnight from his mother's cantonment residence.

The home secretary, the inspector general of police (IGP), the DMP commissioner, the officer-in-charge of Gulshan Police Station and the investigation officer (IO) of the case have been made respondents.

When contacted, a senior counsel for the BNP told the news agency that they knew nothing about the move.

Dubai accident

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forcing Dubai International Airport, the busiest in the Middle East, to suspend its operations for about eight hours. The Airbus is lying idle at the Dubai Airport at present awaiting investigation, Biman sources said.

Meanwhile, Managing Director (MD) of Bangladesh Biman MA Momen ruled out the possibility to compensate Dubai International Airport authorities for occupying their airport for a long time.

"The Dhaka-bound Airbus safely landed at Dubai Airport from the Heathrow," Biman MD told The Daily Star adding, "Dubai Airport also showed green signal to the aircraft for take-off."

The Airbus of the national flag carrier, worth \$90 million, was bought in 1996.

"If the insurance company found that the aircraft is Beyond Economic Repair (BER), they will pay Biman Bangladesh the insurance money, otherwise they will pay for repairing the damaged aircraft," he added.

Meanwhile, out of the two probe committees, one led by Capt Ismail, Chief of Flight Safety, has reached Dubai to investigate the cause of the accident and to assess losses, Biman sources said.

According to Khanal, the prime minister and the Nepali Congress Party can also not afford to be out of

Ctg port

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of meeting the need for power at the port for the next 20 years. The plants would be installed within the port area to reduce the dependence on power supplied by the Power Development Board.

According to its decisions, entry of export containers to the CCT would be allowed 48 hours before the berthing of a ship. Such containers would be allowed to enter the port for 48 hours since the arrival of the ship at New Mooring Container Terminal (NCT) and General Container Berth (GCB).

These would be allowed to enter the port only against an anchored ship. Loading of containers in other ships would not be allowed. If shipping agents violate this, the port authorities would fine them at a very high rate, the meeting decided.

The port authorities would give a notice for auction of import cargo after 20 days of arrival, and after 30 days, the cargo would be handed over to the customs authorities.

The port authorities would also send a proposal to the government to reduce the auction time to 30 days from 45 days now.

Berthing quota for container ships would be increased to 11 from nine. The port authorities would not take any storage charge for containers bound for the Inland Container Depot (ICD) until those reach the destination.

The meeting also decided to continue operation of the CCT by Saif Powertec till expiry of its contract with the CPA for operating gantry cranes. It also decided to allow back up operation at the NCT by Saif Powertec until a new operator is appointed.

The meeting was attended by CPA Chairman Mohammad Moslehuddin, Task Force Commander Brigadier General Hasan Naser, high military officials and members of the CPA.

Using Tarique's influence, Orion got the Gulistan-Jatrabari Flyover project in a tender through manipulation and side-tracking a better offer. Back in January, during the meeting with this correspondent, Obaidul Karim tried to explain how difficult it was for him to persuade the Dhaka City Corporation (DCC) that the flyover project would be a beneficial project for the country.

In recent reports, it has been alleged that Karim gave an expensive Infinity sport utility vehicle to Harris Chowdhury, former political secretary to the then prime minister to win the flyover deal. Sources said Karim also gave a top BNP politician a house in the US for helping him get the project on very favourable terms by compromising national interest.

Briefing newsmen about the outcome of the meeting, Chief Adviser's Press Secretary Syed Fahim Munain, said the council of advisers examined a feasibility study report of PricewaterhouseCoopers on captive power, which says about 600 megawatts of power can be received from captive power system.

The company submitted the report in 2005.

Replying to a question, the press secretary said the Power Development Board in the guideline proposed to buy electricity from captive power plants at the maximum rate of Tk 2.12 as per present gas price.

He said 18 captive power providers have expressed interest in providing power.

The BDR chief said the outcome of the Delhi meeting was positive and the next DG-level meeting would be held in Dhaka in October-November.

The Bangladesh delegation, he

Nepali King must go, says Koirala

AFP, Kathmandu

Nepal has moved a step closer to ditching its monarchy with the Himalayan nation's premier turning on embattled King Gyanendra and calling for him to quit, analysts and officials said yesterday.

The law enforcers secured a four-day remand for interrogation in an extortion case when Tarique, senior joint-secretary general of BNP, was produced in the CMM's Court on March 8. He was arrested on March 7 midnight from his mother's cantonment residence.

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The prime minister was the only man in the ruling parties who supported the monarchy and now he has given it up," said Rabindra Khanal, a political analyst and professor from Nepal's Tribhuvan University, told AFP.

Koirala had argued Monday that the king, viewed by his supporters as a god-like figure, was trying to undermine a peace deal between the government and the fiercely republican Maoist rebels.

Politicians have already accused the king's allies of stirring a recent wave of deadly ethnic unrest in the south of the country.

The prime minister also said Gyanendra, 59, should have quit last year after protests forced him to relinquish dictatorial powers, state-run Nepal Television reported.

"Even now a new environment would be created if the king abdicates voluntarily," said the prime minister, who has in the past extolled the virtues of a constitutional monarchy, preferring the system to more radical change.

Gunaraj Luitel, a senior editor from the Kantipur media group, said Koirala's damning comments simply reflected the increasing desire in impoverished Nepal for a republic – or at least a significant rolling back of royal powers.

"(He) (Koirala) wants to give a clear indication to the king that he needs to remain outside politics and that if he takes part in political activities his future will be very dark," said Luitel.

"There is a slim chance this monarchy can survive, but there are a vast amount of people who are not in favour of monarchy," the editor said.

According to Khanal, the prime minister and the Nepali Congress Party can also not afford to be out of

Outlaw killed in 'crossfire'

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Kushita

A top cadre of the outlawed Biplobi Communist Party (BCP) was killed in 'crossfire' between police and his cohorts at Barabari under Mirpur upazila of the district early yesterday.

Mirpur police said a team raided the house of Rabirul Islam alias Rabi, 28, and arrested him at about 8:30pm on Monday.

During interrogation Rabi admitted his involvement with the outfit and having firearms hidden in nooks and corners of Barabari village, sources said.

Police reached Barabari GK (Ganges-Kababik) canal at about 3:30am yesterday with Rabi to recover the firearms.

Sensing police presence, the BCP cadres opened fire on them. Police retaliated with fire resulting in an hour-long gun battle between them and the BCP cadres.

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According to police, Rabi got caught in the 'crossfire' when he tried to escape from police van during the shootout and died on the spot.

Police recovered a rifle and five bullets from the spot.

According to police, Rabi was accused in ten cases including two for murder filed with Mirpur Police Station.

He was also a close accomplice of local top BNP cadre Tokon, sources said.

BB asks banks

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"It has been noticed that some banks are not considering the borrower's capital size, business volume, financial requirements, ownership structure, and repayment capability before lending," the circular said.

"It appears that the banks are lending without properly maintaining the credit discipline and compliance policies," it added.

The central bank also said it observed that some of the loans lack necessary collateral and audited financial statements of the borrowers, making it difficult to monitor and recover the loans.

The central bank said in some cases multiple banks lend money to a single company. "Such a practice paves the way for loan diverting by borrowers," the circular said adding that such borrowers usually take new loans from another bank to repay previous loans.

The circular asked the banks to consider inter-bank consultation, examination of audited financial statements of borrowers, and borrowers' ratings issued by credit rating agencies before approving any new loan to large industries and groups of companies.

55 more deer

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director of the safari park and divisional forest officer of Wildlife Management and Nature Conservation department, said both the animals are considered rare species and these are hardly found in Bangladesh.

He also said, "Ma Ma Ching herself had informed us on Monday night about the Goral being kept in her possession and requested us to take away the pet."

With these latest recovery, the number of additions to the safari park rose to 131.

Saarc Car Rally

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Saarc objectives and also act as a curtain raiser to the upcoming Saarc Summit in New Delhi on April 3-2007, the district administration sources said.

The routes have been selected to highlight the places of major tourist attractions of the member countries and possibilities of trade by road among the constituent countries.

The jeeps would leave Bangladesh via Burimari (Lalmorihat) on March 18 covering 1,323 kilometres before entering Bhutan through India. The rally then will leave Bhutan for Nepal through India, from where it would start for Pakistan through Uttar Pradesh in India.

The participants of the rally are expected to travel to Afghanistan, from where they would return to India via Pakistan. They will be received by the Saarc leaders in New Delhi on April 3.

Later, the participants of the rally would leave for Mumbai, from where they would arrive Colombo by sea. After that, the participants will reach the Maldives by ferry officially concluding the event.

The idea of organising the car rally was floated in the last Dhaka Saarc Summit in November, 2005.

The people living around the tank complain of stinks and menace of mosquitoes since the factory started discharging the toxic waste.

When this correspondent reached the Generation Next Fashion Ltd yesterday, the staff and officials were busy preparing themselves for a visit by a team from the World Bank.</p