

'US wants to see fully functional democracy in Bangladesh'

UNB, Dhaka

US Assistant Secretary of State for South and Central Asian Affairs Richard Boucher has said Washington is very keen to see a fully functional democracy in Bangladesh and is appreciative of the steps taken by the caretaker government.

He hoped that there would be a more detailed timeline to be announced by the government leading to the arrangement of a free and fair election at the earliest.

Boucher made the remarks during a meeting with Foreign Secretary-in Charge Md Tuhid Hossain at the State Department on Thursday.

John Gastright, deputy assistant secretary of state for South and Central Asia, and Karen Aguilar, director of the Office of Bangladesh and Pakistan Affairs, were present during the meeting.

SEE PAGE 15 COL 5

Another 1275 fowls culled in Jaldhaka

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Nilphamari

Another 1,275 fowls of indigenous species were culled in Berubon village of Shimulbari union of Jaldhaka upazila on Thursday night and Friday morning as avian influenza, commonly known as bird flu, is spreading in the upazila.

Earlier on 10 May, over 4,500 bird flu-affected domestic fowls were culled in West Gulmonda Master Para village in the upazila.

There are more reports of death of fowls from suspected bird flu in different parts of the upazila.

The culled fowls include 1,104 chickens, 48 ducks and 123 pigeons from 231 households, Upazila Livestock Office sources said, adding that 340 eggs were also destroyed and buried.

Tazul Islam, a farmer of Berubon village of Shimulbari union under the upazila, brought samples of his dead domestic chickens to the Upazila Livestock Office wherefrom those were sent to Bangladesh Livestock Research

SEE PAGE 15 COL 4

Costliest RPCL project starts test operation

SHARIER KHAN

Bearing evidence of corruption in the past, the country's costliest power project -- \$120 million 70 megawatt third phase Mymensingh power plant of Rural Power Company Ltd (RPCL) -- has finally started test operation two years behind schedule.

A highly placed source in the RPCL said that with the aim of commercial operation from August, the plant is now generating around 60 MW of power. "Given the present level of daily load shedding of 2,000 megawatt, this small addition to power supply is also a good news."

He went on, "It is true that the plant is very costly and it had landed in a deep financial mess because of corruption in the RPCL in the past. But we had signed a contract for this project with

German company Siemens, and it had to be completed."

The power project being implemented at a cost three to four times that of similar projects of Power Development Board (PDB) was supposed to go into production in 2005. But financial problems alongside conflicts with the plant's controversial operation and maintenance contractor LIPPS had slowed down implementation of the project.

"On the brighter side, this power plant is becoming fully operational soon," says RPCL Managing Director Md Nazmul Hossain Chowdhury. "Rural Electrification Board (REB) in a study has determined that once we can complete this project, RPCL will become financially sound within the next five years."

The third unit of this power plant also converts the simple cycle

plant into a combined cycle one. Two previously installed simple cycle 70 MW units used gas to generate power. The new unit will use steam created by power generation in the old units, and generate 70 MW additional power without using extras.

"The combined cycle technology is costlier than simple cycle. Secondly, air cooling system of this plant uses recycled or made up water instead of using direct water sources, and that is also costly," said a top official. "But we believe that the project could have been implemented with \$90 to 95 million at the maximum."

The RPCL has already paid the project's contractor Siemens \$100 million. The company that refrained from completing the project for months demanding payment, will be paid the rest by

SEE PAGE 15 COL 3



PHOTO: STAR

Bangladesh fast bowler Mashrafe Bin Mortaza (C) is being chased by his teammates after taking the wicket of India opener Wasim Jaffer off the first ball of the Test match that began at the Chittagong Divisional Stadium yesterday.

Sachin, Sourav thwart Tigers

BISHWAJIT ROY from Chittagong

Bangladesh pace spearhead Mashrafe Bin Mortaza jolted the visitors with a wicket off the very first ball of the first Test but the much-vaunted Indian top-order capitalised on a batting paradise to consolidate their position on the first day yesterday.

Sachin Tendulkar (80) and Sourav Ganguly (82) kept the post-lunch scare, initiated by Tigers' fast bowling pair Mashrafe and Shahadat Hossain, at bay as they built on an unbeaten 163-run fourth wicket stand to put India on a strong 295 for three in 77 overs before stumps were drawn at the Chittagong Divisional Stadium.

Rahul Dravid won the much-desired toss and decided to bat without any hesitation but a braveheart Mashrafe drew first blood to enliven a holiday crowd by cleaning up Wasim Jaffer in the very first delivery to become the first Bangladeshi to take a wicket off the first ball of a Test match.

The right-handed Indian opener shouldered arms to invite an off-cutter, which pitched outside the line, onto his off-stump.

SEE PAGE 5 COL 1

Inefficiency stands in way to reaping benefits of DNA labs

SHAHEEN MOLLAH and EMRAN HOSSAIN

When facilities for DNA profiling are available in the country to detect an accused with 100 percent accuracy, success of the technology is not properly harnessed due to law enforcers' lack of knowledge in it and their failure to arrest suspects for the test.

Sources also said the number of cases being referred for DNA testing are fewer.

The National Forensic DNA Profiling Laboratory at Dhaka Medical College Hospital (DMCH) has so far received 100 cases, including 20 rape cases referred by DMCH One-Stop Crisis Centre, since its operation started on January 23 last year.

But unfortunately, DNA (deoxy-ribonucleic acid) test results of most of the rape cases have remained incomplete for a long time as investigators failed to arrest

and bring the suspects to the laboratory for their DNA test.

Laboratory officials said such a test can be carried out in just two weeks. The DNA test of a dead body takes two days, they added.

Experts said crime scene evidence collected by law enforcers is not satisfactory and enough but DNA profiling requires more evidence.

They said because of their inexperience the law enforcers sometimes destroy the evidence that cannot be detected with bare eyes. They suggested organising training for the law enforcers to make them more efficient and skilled in collecting evidence.

Meanwhile, individuals facing criminal offences most often cannot seek the facility since it requires coming through a legal system.

The cases brought for DNA

SEE PAGE 2 COL 8

Bangladesh lacks real practice of secularism

Says Indian envoy

UNB, Chittagong

Indian High Commissioner Pinak Ranjan Chakravarty yesterday said democracy would be stronger in Bangladesh if it could establish a 'real secular country like India'.

"Bangladesh is a secular country but there is no real practice of secularism... as there is a religious ministry here," he said while addressing a function on the occasion of foundation laying of Chandranath Temple in Sitakunda.

The high commissioner said democracy is very strong in India as there is no division or discrepancy among the people of different faiths and values and real secularism is practised there.

He suggested that Bangladesh follow his country for practising real secularism, which would help it establish a strong democratic country removing all discrepancies among the people of different beliefs and values.

SEE PAGE 15 COL 5

National debate contest opens

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Kushtia

A two-day national debate competition titled "Third National NDF-BRB Cables Debate Festival-07" began in Kushtia yesterday.

Pro-vice-chancellor of Dhaka University Prof AFM Yusuf Haider inaugurated the festival at Kushtia Zila School by hoisting the national flag.

Earlier, a colourful procession was brought out which paraded different roads of the town. Participants of different educational institutions across the country joined the procession.

A large number of people gathered at the debate ground around noon when it was opened for all.

SEE PAGE 15 COL 3

Prayer Timing		
May 19		
	Azan	Jamaat
Fajr	4-10	4-45
Zohr	12-45	1-15
Asr	5-00	5-15
Maghrib	6-36	6-40
Esha	8-00	8-30
Source: Islamic Foundation		

Musharraf rules out return of rivals Benazir, Sharif

AFP, Islamabad

Pakistan's military ruler Pervez Musharraf vowed yesterday not to allow exiled former premiers Benazir Bhutto and Nawaz Sharif to return ahead of upcoming general elections.

"About their return before elections, no, there is nobody returning before elections," Musharraf, who is both president and the chief of the army, said in an interview with private TV channel Aaj.

Musharraf's statement appeared designed to end speculation that he could strike a deal with Benazir Bhutto to broaden his fragile support base.

Benazir Bhutto, who leads the popular Pakistan People's Party (PPP), went into exile in 1998 over corruption cases pending against her and her husband.

Sharif was sent into exile in December 2000, a year after Musharraf toppled him in a bloodless coup.

The two mainstream politicians, who each ruled Pakistan twice between 1988 and 1999, have repeatedly said they would defy Musharraf and return home to run in elections due later this year or early 2008.

Their hopes have recently received a boost from an ongoing judicial and political crisis sparked by Musharraf's removal of the country's top judge and the resulting violent riots.

Critics say the action against Chief Justice Iftikhar Mohammad Chaudhry was aimed at intimidating the judiciary to aid Musharraf's

SEE PAGE 15 COL 2

7 killed in Indian mosque blast

AP, Hyderabad

A bomb ripped through a historic mosque as Juma prayers were ending in southern India, killing at least seven people and wounding nearly three dozen, officials said.

Two other unexploded bombs were found and defused by police.

Minutes after the blast at Hyderabad's 17th-century Mecca Masjid, Muslims angered by what they said was a lack of police protection began chanting slogans - a situation that quickly deteriorated as mobs threw stones at police, who dispersed them with baton charges and tear gas.

The bombing and ensuing clash between worshippers and the police raised fears of wider

Hindu-Muslim violence in the city, which has long been plagued by communal tensions - and occasional spasms of religious bloodletting.

Many of the 35 people injured in the explosion at the 17th-century Makkah Masjid were severely wounded, and the city's police chief, Balwinder Singh, warned the death toll could rise beyond the seven already dead.

Soon after the blast, YS Rajasekhara Reddy, the chief minister of Andhra Pradesh state, where Hyderabad is located, appealed for calm between Hindus and Muslims.

Reddy called the bombing an act of "intentional sabotage on the peace and tranquility in the country."