

Dhaka, Delhi

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These are the first steps towards removing the non-tariff barriers long demanded by Bangladesh to expand its market in India and especially stressed by Foreign Adviser Iftekhar Chowdhury during informal bilateral talks in April.

"The two sides emphasised the need for enhanced security cooperation, particularly information sharing between the authorities concerned," reads the joint statement.

Asked about the nature of information to be shared, Menon said, "It's the sort of cooperation that is not done well in the glare of light." The details of expanding security cooperation will be discussed in the upcoming meeting of the home secretaries of the two countries.

On the mud-slinging tradition over cross-border crimes, Menon said, "I think our securities are linked. We have a common security interest. Criminals, insurgents, terrorists—if any of these elements seek sanctuary, then it doesn't help either India or Bangladesh. We are both determined to work against this."

India will also provide Bangladeshi goods with duty-free access to its market "in phases" by December 31, with next month's meeting of the Joint Working Group on Trade to sort out how to reduce the number of goods on India's "sensitive lists" protected from the duty-free arrangement.

Asked if Dhaka has pressed for measures to reduce the cumulative trade gap of \$7-8 billion with New Delhi, Touhid said, "It will not happen overnight...I am sure we will reach a point where Bangladesh exports to India will increase."

Both the foreign secretaries also identified completion of boundary demarcation, exchange of enclaves and adverse possessions as priorities that require "early resolution".

But, implementation of the 1974 Land Boundary Agreement will be considered practically on the basis of

"ground realities", the joint statement read.

India and Bangladesh share the longest land-boundary with each other.

"We would like to solve these problems as quickly as possible," said Menon, adding, "Nothing holds us apart [on the issue]...If it suits us both, if it suits the situation on the ground, we will implement it soon."

The two sides also stressed the need for greater land and train links, with India to send a team in the first week of July to coordinate outstanding logistical issues to start the long-awaited Dhaka-Kolkata rail-link.

They also discussed greater tariff cuts, coordinated development of land customs stations, establishing "border haats" and greater Indian investment into Bangladesh.

Foreign ministry sources, however, said Dhaka's vacillation over the multi-billion dollar investment proposals from Indian business giants Tata and Mittal has annoyed New Delhi. These proposals will be considered by elected governments, said the sources.

Regarding water resources, the two sides decided to leave it up to the upcoming meeting of the water-resources secretaries at the Joint Committee of Experts (JCE) to sort out details on common river water sharing, minor irrigation and drinking water schemes, flood-mitigation cooperation, and dredging and river bank protection work.

The two foreign secretaries hoped to hold a Joint Rivers Commission meeting at the earliest after the JCE meeting.

During his stay, Menon also met with Chief Adviser Fakhruddin Ahmed, Foreign Adviser Iftekhar Chowdhury, and Army Chief General Moeen U Ahmed.

Dhaka expects

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the victims of landslides in Chittagong.

Ahmed felt that foreign secretary-level meeting should be held on a regular basis for the stocktaking of bilateral relations, according to Chief Adviser's Press Secretary Syed Fahim Munaim who was present at the meeting.

The head of the caretaker government said, "Bangladesh, as a matter of principle, does not allow its territory to be used by any force inimical to the interest of India."

About trade and economy, the CA recalled and welcomed the announcement of the Indian premier during the 14th Saarc Summit that India would accommodate duty-free access of products of the LDCs in the Saarc region, including Bangladesh, by December 2007.

On the point of duty-free access of goods, the Indian foreign secretary said, "We are on track."

On the water issue, Menon said the Joint Rivers Commission will meet soon to discuss the matter. Also, India, Bangladesh and Nepal will sit soon on flood control. He said they have already discussed the matter with Nepal.

About adversely possessed land, border demarcation and enclave issues, the Indian FS said they have submitted a proposal to the government.

The CA said spirit of cooperation can help resolve many issues strengthen bilateral relations

He said economic development and prosperity of this region are common interest of the two countries and the next-door neighbours should work together to the mutual benefit of the peoples of both the countries.

"Minor irritants should not create hindrance to our friendly relations," the CA said, indicating some prickly issues.

Reciprocating the sentiment of the Indian prime minister about continuing effort to strengthen the bilateral relations, the CA said Bangladesh would like to carry out sincere effort for further deepening the friendly ties.

He mentioned that he had a fruitful discussion with the prime minister of India during 14th Saarc summit in New Delhi.

Terming the foreign secretary-level discussion fruitful, Shivshankar said connectivity issues like railway connection between Bangladesh and India were highlighted during the talks. He observed that "there is a tremendous positive response" from the two countries towards the restoration of missing links.

The CA said passenger and goods train service between the two countries will help peoples of both the countries.

The Chief Adviser conveyed his best and warm wishes to Indian Prime Minister Manmohan Singh through the envoy and looked forward to meeting him in the future.

Foreign Secretary Touhid Hossain, Indian High Commissioner in Dhaka Pinak Ranjan Chakravarty and Bangladesh High Commissioner to India Liakat Ali Chowdhury were also present.

ADB okays

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of the project administration unit of ADB's South Asia Department, said.

He also said that some 820,000 existing consumers in Dhaka will be directly benefited by this reliable power supply. It will also help manufacturing and service industries including the garment sector that employs several million poor people, he added.

The programme loans of \$60 million will be released in two stages. The loan carries a 24-year term including an eight-year grace period and will come from ADB's special funds resources.

The loan will also help reform the power sector through financial and organisational restructuring, improved governance and promotion of private sector partnerships, the press release said.

"At about 158 kilowatt-hours annually, per capita generation is among the lowest in the world," Song said. "The current dependable power generating capacity of Bangladesh is about 4,120 megawatts, while the country's peak demand is about 4,700 megawatts," the ADB official added.

Song said, "The programme supports the government's goal of providing reliable electricity to the entire country by 2020, and will result into better and more affordable services to the public."

"Only one third of the households have access to electricity and those who have, receive poor and unreliable service due to insufficient power generation capacity, poor transmission and distribution systems," he added.

Hasina

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also present their reform proposals after lifting the ban on indoor politics.

Tofail said AL's reform proposals "are not targeted at any individual" while Suranjit said their reforms are designed to implement "democratic process" in the party.

Motia viewed that the proposed reforms could only be placed at party central committee, otherwise, she said, "any reform proposal would only raise the question of its legitimacy."

Tigers drown in runs

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Bangladesh are going to face another embarrassing innings defeat as they will be 485 runs behind just to make the hosts bat again.

After toiling the whole day out on the ground, there was a small consolation for the visitors as Javed Omar and Shahriar Nafees successfully negotiated three overs to see the day off at 3-0 although Lankan skipper used three bowlers including Muralidaran. Bangladesh lost their way in the match after some shocking batting in the first innings to be bundled out for 89 runs.

With the huge total, Sri Lanka eclipsed their previous best of 555-5 declared in 2001 at the same venue against the Tigers.

Resuming the day on 227-3, Sri Lanka lost two wickets in the first session, but before that opener Vandort completed his second hundred against Bangladesh by making 117 runs off 155 balls that contained nine fours and three sixes. He was caught at short-leg off left-arm spinner Mohammad Rafique.

Another overnight batsman Tillakaratne Dilshan fell victim of a run out after scoring a 101-ball 79 that featured eight sweetly-timed boundaries and a six as the home side ate a happy lunch with their score on 352-5.

But there was no relief for the visiting bowlers in a very humid condition because the dismissal of Vandort brought his captain Jayawardene to the middle again who made his seventh hundred at his favourite venue. The right-hander went off on Monday evening having retired hurt on 93 runs, played an elegant straight drive against Rafique to reach the three-digit mark off only 127 balls.

Bangladesh pace spearhead Mashrafe Bin Mortaza gave a much-needed breakthrough by removing Jayawardene, who was caught at point by Shabbir Al Hasan after hitting 18 boundaries and one six to score 127 off 159 balls.

Jayawardene's dismissal cre-

ated a chance for Mohammad Ashraful when the scoreboard was reading at 354-6, but the day finally belonged to wicketkeeper Jayawardene and Vaas as they joined together to add 223 runs for the seventh wicket to break the previous Sri Lankan record of 194 made by Hashan Tillakaratne and Thilan Samaraweera, who made it against India at this very ground.

Vaas is playing his 97th Test match and during his 169-ball 100 runs essay he hit seven boundaries. Sri Lanka declared their innings only after the veteran left-hander reached his hundred as the other Jayawardene was unbeaten on 120 off 191 balls with the help of ten fours.

Taskforce raids

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Investigators have found that his wealth does not correspond with his income.

Police have already submitted charge sheets implicating him in an extortion case.

Lobi's wife

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Station filed the case against Babar on June 3 under the Arms Act.

KHUSHNUD CASE
Gulshan police arrested Khushnud Asgar who was suffering from heart disease and under treatment at Labaid Cardiac Hospital in the city.

Following her arrest, Gulshan police submitted a petition to a Dhaka court for showing her arrested in the case.

In his forwarding report, Sub-Inspector (SI) Afzal Hossain said she should be shown arrested in the graft case pending with the Metropolitan Sessions Judge's Court, Dhaka.

After hearing, Judge Azizul Haq granted the petition and directed jail authorities to produce her before the court tomorrow if she recovers.

On June 17, the ACC pressed charges against detained Lobi and his wife Khushnud for submitting false statement about their wealth.

Manju jailed for 5yrs

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was no scope for filing of a petition on behalf of an absconding accused at this stage and delivered the judgement.

In his judgement, the judge said the prosecution had proved the charges brought against Manju beyond any doubt and he was convicted for committing such offences.

The judge said the accused being an ex-lawmaker violated the law by keeping unlicensed foreign liquid and wine in his possession and deserves maximum punishment provided under section 22(Ga) of the Narcotics Control Act.

So, the sentence of five years' is lawful for ends of justice, the judge added.

The joint forces arrested Manju from his Dhanmondi residence on March 12 midnight and seized 21 bottles of contraband liquor and Tk 9.10 lakh from there in presence of his wife.

But his wife could not show any document in support of possessing liquid and wine at their residence.

Following the seizure, Sub-Inspector (SI) SM Mostaque Hossain filed a case against Manju on March 12. On May 14, SI Amirul Islam, who is also the investigation officer (IO) of the case, submitted the charge sheet to the court of Chief Metropolitan Magistrate (CMM), Dhaka showing nine people as prosecution witnesses.

The CMM Court had accepted the charge sheet and did not issue

arrest warrant against Manju, even though his bail was valid till filing of the charge sheet.

The CMM Court had transferred the case to the Metropolitan Sessions Judge's Court for trial.

Earlier, the court had recorded statements of seven prosecution witnesses including the complainant and the IO.

On June 3, the same court framed charges against Manju in his absence and issued arrest warrant against him.

Before the order, the court had asked Manju to appear before the court to defend himself but he failed to oblige the court order. So, the court had cancelled his bail.

Metropolitan Public Prosecutor Ehsanul Haq Samaji appeared for the state.

MANJU'S GRAFT CASE

There is a graft case against Manju pending with the Special Court for Dhaka Division.

The case was filed for illegally awarding a contract to Scimitar Oils for drilling and exploring at Haripur oil field in 1987. Ershad was discharged of the same case on August 24 last year.

According to the case filed with Tejaqon Police Station Manju and the then president Ershad awarded a contract to Scimitar Oils for drilling and exploring 1,650 square kilometres of area in Haripur oil field in 1987, causing a huge loss of \$79,000 to the public exchequer.

Dr Kamal

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Islam read out Dr Kamal's written statement at the press conference on "Landslides in Chittagong and recent human disaster: State action is important" held at the Jatiya Press Club.

Dr Kamal expressed deepest sympathies to those who lost their near and dear ones and suffered from this terrible natural disaster.

"Wetlands, open spaces and hills within the cities have become the targets of land grabbers resulting in serious damage to the environment," he said expressing grave concern over this.

He emphasised an effective urban planning and effective regulation in relation to land use to avert disasters in future.

The legal expert demanded immediate implementation of the decision on separation of the judiciary from the executive. Terming it a major challenge before the caretaker government (CG) at this stage, he said, "Rules at long last have been made, but implementation measurers still remain to be taken along with provisions of necessary resources for the Supreme Court."

He urged the CG to form a human rights commission so that corrective actions are taken, rights are protected and awareness is developed. When formed, the commission could take initiatives to mobilise public support for overall economic and social changes in the

Two SUVs

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The conglomerate bought the Hummer from Auto Museum two years back while Talukder, a former BNP lawmaker from Jamalpur-4, sold his SUV before using it for at least three years.

As per the law, it was illegal to sell a vehicle imported under lawmakers' quota before three years. In April, the present caretaker government cancelled the privilege of duty-free car import as most of the lawmakers had misused it in the past.

Assistant Police Superintendent of R a b - 2 M o h a m m a d Kamruzzaman said manager (transport) and deputy general manager (transport) of Bashundhara City told them that the business group had bought the Lexus from Anwarul Kabir Talukder.

Rab said they have handed over the luxury jeeps to customs officials who are supposed to file cases in this connection.

The Daily Star tried to reach Talukder for comment last evening, but his cellphone was switched off.

Tarique's wife

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wife's property in the wealth statement submitted to the commission.

On Monday, ACC Deputy Director Zahurul Huda issued a letter asking Tarique's wife Dr Zubaida Rahman and mother-in-law Iqbal Mand Banu to come to the office of an ACC director yesterday, where they were to be questioned about the wealth Zubaida inherited from her parents.

On June 10, detained BNP Senior Joint Secretary General Tarique Rahman submitted his wealth statement to the ACC, where he mentioned that his wife inherited huge wealth from her parents.

The five-member team before which they were told to appear consists of two ACC officials, one army major working with the taskforce, one National Board of Revenue official and an official from Criminal Investigation Department (CID).

According to the ACC sources, instead of coming to the commission, Zubaida and her mother communicated with the ACC yesterday seeking another 2-4 days. But, it could not be confirmed if they were given the time.

The ACC team has already got permission from the court to interrogate Tarique at the gate of Dhaka Central Jail, the source added.

Blair

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government to the tune of £200,000 to the WTO to establish capacity-building effort in LDCs, including implementation of the Doha text on Trade Facilitation. Bangladesh has already sought support from the programme.

"I remain open to exploring alternative avenues by which the needs of the LDCs may be met through special and differential treatment to ensure a genuinely ambitious, pro-development outcome to the Doha negotiating round," he said.

Earlier, Fakhruddin Ahmed had written to all the leaders of the G-8 countries prior to their summit in Germany to draw attention to the challenges faced by the LDCs.

Advisory body

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was proposed to be hiked to Tk 7,000, with an increase of 45.83 percent. At the buffer end a ton of urea is now being sold for Tk 5,300, which was proposed to be hiked to Tk 8,000, with an increase of 50.94 percent.

The proposal said annual demand for urea in Bangladesh is 28 to 29 lakh metric tons while the six government run fertiliser factories' present combined production capacity is 17 to 18 lakh metric tons at the most. The rest of the demand is met by import and purchase from Kafco. The cost of importing a ton of urea is about Tk 25,000.

Due to the current subsidised price of urea, the factories have to bear a loss of Tk 2,200 a ton as the current production cost of a ton of the fertilizer stands at Tk 7,000. The current factory end price of urea was fixed in 1997.

The industry ministry proposal also cited the prices of urea in India ranging from Tk 7,000 to Tk 7,600, and in Myanmar from Tk 15,000 to Tk 19,000. Due to the high prices in those countries, about 2 to 3 lakh metric tons of urea is smuggled out each year, the ministry estimated.

The proposal observed that the government incurs a total loss of Tk 2,900 crore a year due to low prices of urea.

The urea factories are also suffering from an acute cash flow crisis, which might compel the authorities to close those down.

NORTH-WEST POWER

The advisory committee also in principle approved yesterday the formation of North-West Power Generation Company Ltd to ensure uninterrupted electricity supply to the country's northern and western regions.

All power plants which are currently in those regions and all which are to be established there in future will be operated by the new company, sources said.

Construction of two 150MW power plant in Sirajganj and Khulna will also come under the new company's supervision.

Besides, two thermal power units of 250MW at Barapukuria will also come under the new company.

Forest plunderers start

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He owns a five-storied building at Nikunja in Khilkhet and three plots in Mirpur, Purbachal and Nandipara.

Ali Kabir arrested on Sunday was placed on a five-day remand on Monday. The law enforcers seized bonds worth Tk 50 lakh and deposit books of different banks where he kept around Tk 30 lakh and 12 tolas of gold ornaments.

Our staff correspondent in Sylhet reports:

Detained DFO Lashkar Maksudur Rahman's illegal wealth includes 14 shops, one flat, three plots in Dhaka, around Tk 60 lakh in cash or other forms, 10 acres of land in Narsingdi, a palatial house in Khulna and a Toyota car.

BNP ex-ministers

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the party to them, and sought their support for the proposal.

Among others former state ministers Rezaul Karim and Ebadur Rahman Chowdhury, former deputy minister Asadul Habib Dulu, former lawmakers Abul Kalam, Shahiduzzaman Beltu, Nazim Uddin Alam, Ziaul Haque Mollah, Zakaria Taher, Justice Mozammel Haque, Shahiduzzaman, Shah Shaheed Sarwar, Zoinal Abedin, Abdul Alim, Nazir Hossain, Kalim Uddin Milon, Rezaul Bari Dina, GM Siraj, Tasmin Rana, Shahria Akhtar Bulu, and Masud Arun met Bhuiyan and expressed their support for his reform proposal.

When the reporters asked about allegations of corruption and hooliganism against some of the new found pro-reform leaders of BNP, Ashraf said, "Prove those if you have specific allegations!"

Later Ashraf Hossain briefed the reporters and said, "Leaders from different areas thanked Bhuiyan for his proposal and they also supported it."

"He [Bhuiyan] announced the reform proposal to make the party democratic and for ensuring collective leadership in the party," he said adding that BNP will be turned into a democratic political party if the reform proposal is adopted and implemented.

Ashraf, who is known as a close aide to Bhuiyan, firmly said, "The party must be freed from those who did wrong by using the party for personal gains, they must be identified, and our secretary general said an inquiry committee will be formed to facilitate that goal."

When asked whether their reform proposal reached the BNP chairperson, he said, "Yes she got the proposal through a messenger."

Asked about a possible timeframe for the party council, Ashraf said, "Reforms are what is needed right now. Despite having the provision of holding councils regularly in the party constitution, we could not have it in the last 14 years, the person who was given the responsibility by the constitution did not obey the constitution."

Asked why there is no restriction on being the party's secretary general for more than two terms, the former whip said according to the reform proposal, the secretary general will also have to be elected instead of being nominated like before.

Asked why there are restrictions only on becoming the chairperson for more than two terms, he said the chairperson is elected while the rest are nominated.

Sources said Lashkar, who had close links with the former finance minister's son and former BNP lawmaker Naser Rahman, had misappropriated teak timber worth Tk 200 crore during the last two and half years of his tenure in Sylhet office.

He had also misappropriated Tk10 crore sanctioned for tree plantation, nursing and other purposes in the division.

Lashkar forcibly took signatures from many subordinate officers in applications for transfer and used to get his 'own and trusted' officers in those posts, sources alleged.

He also earned a lot by allowing organised gangs and BNP leaders to destroy forests in Habiganj, Moulvibazar and at Jaffiong for setting up stone crushers there. He also allowed illegally setting up about 100 sawmills in forest areas.

Besides, there are many more allegations of illegal auction of seized lots of timbers and plunder of reserved forests in Satchhari, Rajkandi, Chunarughat, Rema, Juri and Kulaura

Our staff correspondent in Khulna reports:

Shaikh Mizanur Rahman told investigators that his plan to leave the country turned futile as intelligence agencies came to know that in advance.

He admitted having huge lands and other property in Dhaka and bank accounts in foreign countries.

Investigation officer of the case filed with Khalishpur Police Station against him, Sub Inspector Jamaluddin said he is trying to conceal facts regarding his wealth.

Police quoting Mizanur said he got illegal money through DFO (west) Mozaharul Islam, deputy rangers Syed Mohammadullah, Abul Kalam Azad and Shahidullah and Ranger Yunus Ali and shared it with them.

KMP sources said Mozaharul Islam, Yunus Ali and caretaker of CF's official bungalow Rafiqul Islam have been asked not to leave Khulna without prior permission from the Joint Forces.

Abducted Danida

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The kidnappers left a handwritten note but they did not identify themselves nor placed any demands for the release of the hostages.

Quoting the witnesses, Anupam Marma, a local journalist told The Daily Star that the Danida staff were kidnapped while they were returning after inspecting the development activities of four local NGOs.

The joint forces have arrested 11 people from the Kyaburi Para including a NGO official Kya Bu Ri Marma in connection with the kidnapping. The arrestees are being quizzed by the law enforcers.

Meanwhile, civil and army officers held a five hours long meeting at the Bandarban cantonment yesterday afternoon. At a briefing after the meeting, Bandarban Deputy Commissioner Abdul Mazid Shah told the journalists that they sat to develop a strategy for rescuing the kidnapped.

Palestinian prisoners

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Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

"Despite the bloody coup in Gaza, we are still determined to work relentlessly to achieve the independence and the freedom of our people," he said. "My hand is extended to work together with the Israelis on the basis of the Arab peace initiative, President Bush's vision of two states, international resolutions and the signed agreements."

Olmert did not promise an immediate resumption of peace negotiations, but said the steps he was announcing aimed to prepare the ground for them. "I don't intend to let this opportunity pass," the Israeli said, adding that he "told Abbas that we will work with the new government and maintain frequent meetings with it."

The prime minister announced the prisoner release and a series of steps aimed at easing the situation in the West Bank, where Abbas' Fatah faction and the new emergency government he set up hold sway. He promised to "substantially" improve freedom of movement in the West Bank by easing roadblocks and other security measures and reopening trade ties with the territory.

"The residents of the West Bank will feel that choosing the path of no terror or violence, the way of peace and dialogue will bring a better, more comfortable, more peaceful life," Olmert said.

He said the release of 250 Fatah prisoners "who do not have blood on their hands" was meant as "a gesture of goodwill toward the Palestinians." Olmert spokeswoman Miri Eisin said the prisoners would be freed within 48 hours of Cabinet approval Sunday.

The release would be the largest since February 2005, when Israel freed 500 after a summit in Sharm el-Sheikh also aimed at bolstering Abbas, who had just won election as Palestinian president.

Palestinian officials suggested the new release was not as much as they had hoped. "We have more than 10,000 prisoners in Israeli jails. So we want a real and practical release," said Abbas aide Saeb Erekat.

Erekat said that during private meetings at the summit, Olmert had

Birdem doctors

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The outdoor doctors are permanent and there are third and fourth class employees who are also permanent, but the indoor doctors, who joined after 1992, are working on contract basis, said a striking doctor.

Since 1992 the Birdem authorities have been recruiting the indoor doctors on contract basis and had been renewing the jobs time to time.

"In the history of Birdem hospital we did not find any doctor losing his or her job. But the latest notice issued by the Birdem authorities means we are going to lose our jobs," said one of the striking doctors seeking anonymity.

As soon as the authorities meet their demands, they would resume their work, the doctors said.

When contacted, one of the members of the Board of Management Maj Gen (retd) AR Khan said the letter has been with-drawn.

"There was a misunderstanding and the letter was issued without the approval of the Board of Management," he said hoping the strike would come to an end within a day or two.

Meanwhile, during a visit to the hospital yesterday it was found that some patients were desperately trying to get admission in the country's lone diabetic hospital and others were leaving leaving the hospital fearing lack of treatments.

Rustom Ali, a 62-year old diabetic patient from the city's Mirpur area, was found lying on a bed unconscious.

"We came on Monday morning and waited till the evening. But failed to admit him. Today we brought him again but the doctors said he could not be admitted as they are on strike," said one of the relatives of Rustom Ali.

Till the afternoon only a doctor visited the patients in the coronary care unit (CCU), where the patients are supposed to stay under direct observation 24 hours.

One Swapna Parvin, 29, was found groaning in labour pain. She was admitted on Sunday and since then was waiting for a caesarean operation.

No doctors were found at 4:00pm to provide Swapna a prescription or take her to the labour room.

As the doctors were abstaining from their routine duties, the indoor patients were left almost unc