

Iran backs Iraqi PM for restoring security

Tehran wants US troops out

AFP, Tehran

The United States however accuses Iran backing Shia militias and supplies weapons capable of penetrating the armour of US military vehicles. The charges are vehemently denied by Iran.

In a highly symbolic move, Maliki met the families of seven Iranian officials arrested in Iraq by US forces on accusations of being members of an elite Revolutionary Guards force on a mission to stir trouble.

Iran insists the men were diplomats and is livid that the United States has shown no sign of releasing them.

"The Iraqi government will do all it can to release these people," Maliki said, expressing optimism that the officials would be released, state broadcasting said.

Iraqi Foreign Minister Hoshyar Zebari and his Iranian counterpart Manouchehr Mottaki also held talks that reviewed the progress of landmark talks between Iran and its arch foe the United States on Iraq's security in Baghdad.

Maliki has been a vocal supporter of the talks, although the two rounds of discussions between the two countries' envoys to Iraq had been marked by acrimonious disagreements over who was to blame for the bloodshed.

Like many other Iraqi Shia leaders, Maliki lived in Iran during the 1980s when Baghdad was at war with Tehran to escape persecution of his Dawa party by Saddam's regime.

Maliki made his first official trip to Iran in September 2006, while the first visit by an Iraqi premier since the fall of Saddam was made by Maliki's predecessor, Ibrahim al-Jaafari, in July 2005.

Iran and Iraq waged a war between 1980 and 1988 in which around one million people died but ties have warmed considerably since the fall of Saddam.

Maliki's warm welcome in Tehran contrasted with the political crisis he faces at home which has seen six Sunni members of his cabinet resign and the prime minister in turn accuse them of lacking responsibility.

According to the state-run IRNA news agency, Maliki thanked Iran for its "positive and constructive" work in "providing security and fighting terrorism in Iraq."

State television said Maliki left Tehran on Thursday but it was not clear where he was headed. There was no indication he had held a meeting with supreme leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei.

Maliki's talks appeared to confirm the increasingly warm relations that have emerged between majority Shia Iraq and overwhelmingly Shia Iran following the fall of Saddam's Sunni-dominated regime.

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Floodwaters recede

FROM PAGE 1 The government, however, is claiming that it has adequate stock of saline and necessary medicines.

"The stock of saline and medicines is good everywhere in the country, there is no crisis," said Prof Moazzem Hossain, director of disease control, yesterday.

Health Adviser Matuur Rahman at a meeting with the medicine businessmen in the city said the government should set up at least one diarrhoea section at every hospital until the threat of flood-related diseases is gone.

"The joint forces will take actions against businesses guilty of increasing the price of medicines or saline," he told the journalists.

He warned that the floodwater should not be used for any purposes. "Prevention is more important. The elderly should be very careful about it," the adviser said.

Meanwhile, Dhaka City Corporation (DCC) yesterday launched flood shelters at the city's Rajarbagh area. DCC Mayor Sadeque Hossain Khoka yesterday distributed relief among the flood-hit people.

Our correspondent in Gaibandha reports: A total of 445 were diagnosed with diarrhoea yesterday and the disease is spreading fast in the four flood-affected upazilas of the district.

At least 2,835 people have been infected with water-borne diseases in the district, according to the civil surgeon's office.

Most patients are being treated in makeshift medical centres in different flood-hit areas, said Shamsul Huq, civil surgeon of Gaibandha.

Meanwhile, erosion by the Teesta and Brahmaputra intensified at different areas of the district. One Quddus Ali, 6, of Burali Korban in Kapasia union drowned.

Our staff correspondent in Bogra reports: Many flood-affected people in Sariakandi and Dhunat upazilas are now short of drinking water, food, and especially baby food.

Finance Adviser ABM Mirza Azizul Islam visited flood-affected areas of Dhunat and Sariakandi upazilas and distributed relief materials among the flood victims yesterday.

At a meeting in Dhunat Municipality Auditorium, he said the government would start rehabilitation programmes after the

CA's relief fund

FROM PAGE 1 The fresh government announcement of the SRO (no-125-act/91) published on May 5 in 1991 to the effect of donation being tax-free.

Different organisations and institutions have started coming up with donation to Chief Adviser's Relief Fund for flood victims in response to a government appeal.

AL allowed

FROM PAGE 20

letter signed by assistant police commissioner Sahabuddin on behalf of the Dhaka Metropolitan police commissioner yesterday.

Dhaka Metropolitan Police issued the letter to AL acting General Secretary Mukul Bose.

Acting AL President Zillur Rahman told the journalists that they were permitted to observe August 15 with limitations. He mentioned that the government has not given them permission to hold any discussion marking Bangabandhu's death anniversary.

He was talking to journalists at his Gulshan residence after holding a meeting with party leaders.

Twenty leaders of Awami League and its front organisations at a time will be allowed to place wreaths at the Banani graveyard and portrait of Bangabandhu at the Bangabandhu Memorial Museum. Milad mahfil can also be arranged in both the places.

The party will be allowed to distribute foods among the destitute and flood victims. Anyone can place wreaths at the Banani Graveyard and portrait of Bangabandhu in a disciplined way.

The party activists will not be allowed to carry any banners or placards, use loudspeakers, paste posters and hold any discussions.

They are also not permitted to go to the Banani Graveyard or the Bangabandhu museum in procession.

AL activists are not allowed to make any provocative speeches against the government or its activities, set fire to effigies of anyone or hold programmes blocking roads.

The organisers will be held responsible if the law and order situation of a particular area deteriorates due to the programme.

COMMITTEE FOR RELIEF OPERATIONS

Awami League yesterday formed six committees to carry out relief operations to help the flood-affected people across the country.

The decision came at an informal meeting of AL leaders at the Gulshan residence of acting AL chief Zillur Rahman.

At the meeting the AL leaders demanded release of the detained party chief Sheikh Hasina before the 32nd death anniversary of her father Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman.

"Since indoor politics is banned under emergency rule, we informally discussed different issues including the observance of August 15 and flood situation in the country," Zillur Rahman told the journalists.

Emerging out of the meeting, AL Organising Secretary Mahmudur Rahman Manna told The Daily Star that party leaders have been making donations to help the flood-affected people. The relief operations would start tomorrow, he added.

Zillur said since the High Court granted bail to Sheikh Hasina in both the cases, she should be released before August 15.

He also demanded that the caretaker government must declare Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman as the father of the nation and observe August 15 as the national mourning day and a public holiday.

Tofail Ahmed said the government should distribute VGF cards among the flood victims and also provide agricultural loans and seeds to farmers.

Motia Chowdhury alleged that the flooding across the country intensified due to poor condition of the embankments, which were not properly maintained during the rule of BNP-Jamaat coalition government. She also said that the flood victims are suffering at different shelter homes due to paucity of medicine.

AL leaders Syeda Sajeda Chowdhury, Abdur Razzak, Latif Siddique, Akhtaruzzaman, Dr Abdur Razzak, KM Jahangir, Dr Mostafa Jalal Mohiuddin, Sultan Mohammad Mansur Ahmed, Habibur Rahman Khan, Nazma Rahman, Rahmat Ali, Sahara Khatun, Abdul Mannan, BM Mozammel Haque, Habibur Rahman Siraj and Advocate Abdul Matin attended the meeting.

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Saudi airlines **FROM PAGE 20** Biman. Otherwise, it will be difficult to manage carrying the big number of hajis to and from Saudi Arabia," he said.

Civil aviation sources said about 50,000 Bangladeshi are expected to perform the hajj this year.

The five-member committee headed by Fakhru Islam, joint secretary to the civil aviation ministry, will submit their draft agreement by August 30.

After vetting from the law ministry, Bangladesh and Saudi Arabian authorities will sign the agreement.

Tender will be opened on August 16

Tender to operate hajj flight will be opened on August 16, a Biman high official said yesterday.

After cancellation of the agreement with the Phuket Air to operate hajj flight, Biman Bangladesh Airlines Ltd floated fresh tender.

Expressing concern over termination of the agreement, the civil aviation secretary said, "We have asked the Biman authorities to see that no unwanted situation is created to carry hajj pilgrims."

EC to go for reform

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waiting for a new law for voter listing.

"The commission will issue orders for starting the field level task in Rajshahi City Corporation (RCC) area from the next day once the new law is made," Sakawat said.

The EC however cancelled its earlier decision to formally inaugurate the task in the RCC area on August 5 as the chief adviser (CA), who was scheduled to do the job, is busy tackling the flood situation.

"The chief adviser will see the voter listing activities at a convenient time," the election commissioner said.

On holding talks with political parties, the EC had earlier said they would have to complete intra-party reforms before sitting for dialogue with it.

Asked whether political parties can complete intra-party reforms soon as they have suspended the process due to the flood, Sakawat said the EC is not concerned about their reforms. "We are concerned about our own proposals for electoral reforms," he added.

When pointed out that offices of the political parties have been locked because of the state of emergency, the election commissioner said in that case the proposals would be sent to their presidents and general secretaries.

The EC on April 5 announced a set of draft proposals for electoral reforms and said those would be finalised after consulting the political parties. Chief Election Commissioner ATM Shamsul Huda at a meeting with the law adviser on April 4 asked the government to lift the ban on indoor politics allowing the EC to hold talks with the parties on electoral reforms.

Since the reconstitution of the EC on February 4, headed by Huda, it started preparing proposals for electoral reforms.

VOTER LISTING The EC's earlier plan to start field level task in RCC area on August 5 did not materialise due to the CA's preoccupation with handling the flood situation.

The two election commissioners—Muhammed Sohul Hussain and Sakawat—last week said the task would begin before August 10. But the EC again failed to keep this timeframe.

Sakawat said yesterday the task in RCC area will be delayed by six to seven days. Field level election officials have completed preparations for this and they will start the job once the law is made.

On press reports about Islami

Chhatra Shibir activists' move to fill up voter registration forms at Rajshahi University, he said the local administration is probing this, and action will be taken following the investigation.

Field level task for voter listing will begin in Khulna City Corporation and eight municipalities in between August 20 to 21, he said.

Replying to a query, the election commissioner said field level task for voter listing in Dhaka City Corporation will start at the end of this year.

Asked about the time limit for purchase of equipment for voter listing to start field level task on a large scale, he said he cannot specify this now.

"The technical evaluation committee is yet to submit its report on awarding contract for supplying all sorts of equipment for voter listing...We hope we will be able to start field level task on a large scale after the monsoon."

The EC is going to start shortly field level task in some areas using the equipment including laptops donated by different organisations.

Water sharing

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agreed that further details would be worked out at technical level in the next JRC meeting.

India and Bangladesh are seeking to firm up an interim deal on sharing waters of Teesta and seven other common rivers.

The two delegations said exchange of construction details for riverbank works would bring transparency and remove apprehensions on both sides, the statement said.

The meeting of the Joint Committee of Experts (JCE) also discussed other issues relating to river-protection work at 40 points in India and 29 points in Bangladesh, India's proposal to dredge the Ichhamati in common reach, and drinking water supply schemes on common rivers.

Both sides expressed satisfaction over the meeting during which unresolved issues relating to water resources were taken up, the statement said.

Water Resources Secretary Syed Moahmmad Zobaer led the Bangladesh delegation while his counterpart Gauri Chatterjee led the Indian delegation.

This was the first meeting of JCE in the last three years as the previous one was held in Dhaka in September 2004.

Case against ex-secy

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The three employees of the Prime Minister's Office (PMO) accused in the case are Dinarul Islam, private secretary to the PM's private secretary, Syed Nurul Islam, computer operator, and Mohammad Selim, data entry operator.

The case filed by the then Bac inspector Md Zulfikar Ali with Tejgaon Police Station was Bac's first case under the 80-year-old Act.

It accused Nurul of taking away 12 compact discs (CDs) containing two sets of notes and summaries of sensitive files and keeping in his custody more files and notes containing the PM's signature with the intention to leak out the information.

The Bac also alleged that Nurul asked the computer and data entry operators to prepare the CDs and used the scanner and CD writer in his personal secretary's room.

A 12-member Bac investigation team had earlier seized 12 CDs from Nurul's desk at the PMO and recovered photocopies of 654 pages of summary of information signed by Khaleda kept in three files.

The Bac alleged that Nurul in connivance with the three employees leaked information keeping the

PM in the dark, which hurt national interest and security.

Nurul Islam's counsel told reporters yesterday that the investigator had not yet submitted the investigation report.

Following yesterday's HC judgment, Nurul Islam told The Daily Star that filing of the case against him is an example of gross abuse of official power by former PM Khaleda Zia.

He said the case was filed only to harass him because he had initiated an inquiry against alleged corruption of Khaleda's eldest son Tarique Rahman.

"Doing this she has violated her constitutional oath of discharging duties as the prime minister without any fear or favour," Nurul said.

He demanded full-scale judicial inquiry into the circumstances that led to filing of this case and keeping it pending for more than three years. He also demanded punishment to anybody found guilty.

ACC seeks

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follow the law and the process of the ACC."

Justice TH Khan said the ACC chairman sought cooperation from the lawyers.

ACC chairman Lt Gen (ret'd) Mashhud said the commission and the lawyers will work together.

Khan Saifur Rahman, Dr Rafiqur Rahman and Habibur Islam Bhuiyan, were among others, present in the meeting.

Govt appeals

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The same bench on the same day declared illegal the confinement of former FCCI president Abdul Awal Mintoo under the Emergency Power Rules and granted him bail.

It also stayed the proceedings of another preemptive detention order given on Monday night against him under the Special Powers Act.

The HC rulings and show-case notices came following separate petitions filed by Hasina and Mintoo with the High Court challenging the government actions.

Following the HC decisions, the government now filed the three appeals to stay the HC rulings.

Young generation

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as they have the gift of capturing the gist of very difficult and varied messages in one single image.

Transparency International Bangladesh Executive Director Iftekharuzzaman also commended the initiative, and said he believes awareness among the younger generations in Bangladesh is imperative to sustaining a crackdown on corruption.

"The fight against corruption cannot be sustainable or acceptable if it is not supported by the people," he said, adding that the cartoon contest helps generate support for wider efforts to eliminate corruption.

The Daily Star Editor Mahfuz Anam said the ongoing crackdown on corruption, the first time at the forefront of government agenda since independence, is required to build a future. He said he believes that "there is no other alternative" but to leave no opportunity for corruption in future.

Corruption is the number one issue to solve as it pervades all sectors of governance and society, he said.

"The media should ensure that it is free from corruption before it can write against and criticise corrupt practices. It is very important for the media to be responsible and carry out its duties," said Mahfuz.

Rafiqunnabi presented the winner of the cartoon contest Md Arifur Rahman with a crest and Tk 10,000, Kalim Sharafi presented a crest and Tk 7,000 to second placed Sumon Wahed, while Shishir Bhattacharya presented third placed Sadatuddin Ahmed Emil with a crest and Tk 5,000.

Selina Hossain, noted actress Dilara Zaman, former Dhaka University professor Naushaba Sharafi and The Daily Star City Editor and cartoonist Sharier Khan presented seven other contestants Tk 3,000 for notable contributions.

Biman

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Biman official told The Daily Star last night wishing anonymity.

On June 5, Biman offered the VRS in order to trim its staff to 3,400 from 4,800. It finally accepted 1,877 applications for voluntary retirement. The scheme was part of the government's plan to turn the national flag carrier into a PLC and a healthy and profitable commercial venture.

Govt, non-govt

FROM PAGE 1

government made the call and remark while talking to reporters and at a meeting with the elite of Munshiganj district at Konokshar Union Parishad office at Louhajang after distributing relief materials in some flood-hit areas of the upazila in the afternoon.

He directed all concerned to take preparation for preventing flood-related diseases in the aftermath of the serious flooding.

He asked the government officials to implement the ministerial-level decisions in time for providing quick service to people.

"Instructions have already been given for developing seedbeds to supply seeds to farmers in advance to recoup the colossal losses in the floods," he informed his audience.

The CA also urged the local elite to stand by the flood-hit people with whatever they have at this hour of urgency.

He observed that it is not possible for the government alone, without support of the people, to tackle the flood that has engulfed most part of the country.

Regarding Padma Bridge, he said construction of the bridge is a priority project of the government and it is active in implementing the project.

He informed that work of design of the bridge has started and financial support is also coming.

At Konokshar Union Parishad Office, 71 Infantry Brigade Commander Col Nasim Akhter briefed the chief adviser about the latest flood situation, relief operation and the damage caused by the flood in Munshiganj.

Primary teachers

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teach at the primary level.

To make this examination effective, there will be a training programme for the teachers. National Academy of Primary Education will inform all concerned regarding this programme.

This competency test will be held only once and the teachers will not get government part of their salary if they fail to pass this exam or do not participate in the same.

The Ministry of Primary and Mass Education has requested the teachers concerned to register their names and attend the training programme.

Child marriage

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Putul on Monday told her classmates that her father fixed the date of her marriage next Sunday, but she dared not protest it. Her classmates tried to persuade her father Ganesh to cancel the wedding in vain.

Later, over 200 students of the school took to the streets and submitted a memorandum to the UNO requesting him to intervene on Wednesday.

UNO Mohammad Waliullah Mia confirmed the incident.

Amin Jute Mills

FROM PAGE 1

staff colony adjoining the rail track on Chittagong-Hathazari route and soon started throwing stones at the cops.

In return, police fired tear gas canisters and moved into the agitators running helter-skelter to get away from tear gas. They worked up some 10 workers and gave them severe beatings on the spot. Later, one succumbed to his injury on way to the CMCH.

The hospital sources confirmed they had received body of an unidentified worker aged around 22.

As the news reached the premises of the country's largest jute mill after Adamjee, the fellow labourers flew into a fury. Over 50 workers and some 30 cops were injured in a series of clashes that ensued and continued till 3:00pm.

Four journalists including Mashhur Rahman Badal of the Bangla daily Jai Jai Din were among the wounded.

Alam, a worker's son who later wound up being held by the police, said that around 2,500 permanent and shift workers were not getting wages for the last 11 weeks.

"Most of them are from flood-hit northern districts where miseries of their families have multiplied in absence of regular wages," he added.

A hand in the swing section of the mill for the last 28 years said the factory authorities last week assured them of a week's pay Monday. Yesterday was the pay day but they did nothing, said the worker preferring anonymity.

"The authorities have turned a deaf ear to our sufferings and forced us to go into agitation," he added.

Contacted, Deputy General Manager (administration) Naimuddin Hossain said they were ready to pay wages for the current week and did not have money enough to cover the last week's pay as well.

He, however, admitted, "In last four to five months, the mill staff did not get wages regularly."

A huge contingent of police including two platoons of Armed Police Battalion were deployed in the area since early morning to defuse the tension but to no avail.

Members of the joint forces including paramilitary BDR and the Rapid Action Battalion (Rab) stood guard at different entry points in the tense hours that followed the clashes.

Meanwhile, a meeting between the mill authorities and the workers representatives was going on till filing of this report at 6:30pm.

Amin Jute Mills Ltd is no stranger to financial crisis. It has been considered a losing concern for the past seven to eight years.

The unpaid bank loans, and outstanding wages, electricity and gas bills, municipality tax and cost of jute procurement total more than Tk 150 crore, factory sources said.

Even a golden handshake for its 5,000 workers in 2004 and 2005 could

Musharraf

FROM PAGE 20

the current parliament for another 12 months, as well as curtailing judicial and civil freedoms.

Musharraf's aides had argued that Pakistan could not afford further instability, especially with the capital's security already breached since security forces raided a mosque last month that had been taken over by Islamic radicals.

By rejecting the advice of his aides, Musharraf had denied ammunition to his political rivals, among them exiled former prime ministers Nawaz Sharif and Benazir Bhutto who have signalled their intention to return home to contest the elections.

Pakistan's Supreme Court on Thursday began deliberating Sharif's application to have his exile overturned and be permitted to return to the country.

Sharif lodged his appeal earlier this month to end seven years of exile, which began when he was overthrown in a coup by military ruler President Pervez Musharraf in October 1999.

Sharif still officially heads his faction of the conservative Pakistan Muslim League party from exile, while Benazir Bhutto, who lives in self-imposed exile, is the leader of the centrist Pakistan People's Party.