

N Korea calls for peace treaty with US to ease tension

AFP, Seoul

North Korea said yesterday a peace treaty formally ending the Korean war should be signed as soon as possible to ease military tensions with the United States.

"It is urgent to replace the armistice agreement with a peace accord because the armistice agreement exists in name only due to the US," said Rodong Simmun, newspaper of the ruling communist party.

The 1950-1953 conflict ended in an armistice with no subsequent peace treaty, leaving the peninsula still technically at war.

The paper's commentary, carried by the official Korean Central News Agency, said the armistice had become "a dead document" because of what it called "perfidious" acts by Washington.

It did not elaborate but frequently complains of joint US-South Korean military exercises, spy flights and what it sees as a US military buildup in the region.

"The earlier conclusion of the peace accord would help convert the acute belligerent relations between the DPRK (North Korea) and the US to those of peace and confidence and ensure lasting peace and stability on the peninsula," the commentary said.

A six-nation agreement on scrapping the North's nuclear programmes envisages a peace treaty, along with normalised US relations.

4 city corporation

FROM PAGE 16
The parliamentary polls could be held on time according to the roadmap the commission announced last year.

Sohul was speaking at a meeting with government officials in Sylhet Friday night.

He urged the officials, who are involved in preparing the voter list, to discharge their duties sincerely so that the nation may get the much-desired free and fair polls through a clean electoral roll.

The general elections would bring the much-looked-for leadership in the future, he hoped.

Sohul said the photograph-attached voter list has got some people into trouble as this will rob them of vote-rigging in the future, adding that delimiting the constituencies will be done very soon.

Stressing that cooperation from all quarters is a must to make the voter-registration work a success, the election commissioner said people should be made to understand the importance of the electoral roll so that nobody is left out.

He expressed satisfaction at the progress of voter-listing work in Sylhet region. The work is almost complete in city corporation area.

Hold credible polls

FROM PAGE 16
people's lives, they said at a roundtable discussion urging the authorities to withdraw the state of emergency and hold dialogues to create an atmosphere for a credible election.

Peshajibi Somonnoy Parishad organised the discussion at the Jatya Press Club and accorded a floral reception to four recently released Dhaka University (DU) teachers.

Political leaders also said in order to make the proposed political dialogues effective and fruitful, issues concerning people's lives have to be included in the agenda along with election related issues.

Awami League (AL) Presidium Member Abdur Razzak said, "We the politicians have patience but there are doubts whether the people will keep theirs."

There is also a feeling of distrust among people whether the elections would be held and if it is held then how free and fair would it be, he added.

"If the present government continues until December then people might say that they were better off before 1/11," Tofail Ahmed, AL presidium member said adding that they want to participate in the dialogues unconditionally to help the government hold elections.

He said there is no need for dialogues if the government puts conditions for it.

He hoped elections would be held soon as promised by the chief adviser, the army chief and the chief election commissioner.

Expressing apprehension that real corrupt people would be turned into kings of the political arena due to the incorrect policies of the government, Rashed Khan Menon, president of Workers Party Bangladesh, said they have to discuss the sufferings of the people during the dialogues.

AL Presidium Member Suranjit Sengupta said, "The president should be tried for flouting the constitution."

He said the immediate past prime minister and her cohorts should be tried for their wrongdoings in connection with the grenade attack on the Awami

North Korean relations, but only when the North surrenders all its nuclear material.

At an October summit the North and South Korean leaders called for a summit of three or four parties to discuss declaring an end to the war. They did not name the parties but apparently meant the two Koreas, the US which fought for the South, and possibly China, which backed the North.

The summit call sparked debate in Seoul. Opponents said such a move should await full denuclearisation by the North which staged a nuclear weapons test in October 2006.

Under the current phase of the deal negotiated by the two Koreas, China, the US, Russia and Japan, the North was supposed by December 31 to disable its main atomic plants and give a full declaration of all nuclear programmes.

In response the other parties were to supply one million tons of fuel oil or equivalent energy aid.

VIP inmates

FROM PAGE 1
minister Tariqul Islam, BNP leaders Hannan Shah, MA Hashem, Nasiruddin Ahmed Pintu and Amzad Hossain Sarkar, Awami League (AL) leaders Sheikh Fazlul Karim Selim, Mohiuddin Khan Alamgir, Prof Rafiqul Islam and Lotas Kamal, Advocate Sigma Huda, Janakantha Editor Atikullah Khan Masud, ntv Managing Director Eneyatur Rahman Bappi, and former Jamaat lawmaker Mizanur Rahman are among those undergoing treatment in different hospitals.

Sources said former BNP lawmaker from Noakhali-1 Joyal Abedin Faruq have visited BSMMU 67 times in last eight months after his arrest. Besides, ex-Jamaat lawmaker Syed Abdullah Mohammad Taher visited hospital 44 times while Khushnud Lobi, wife of former BNP lawmaker Ali Asgar Lobi, has been in hospital since she was arrested.

The DIG prisons said during a visit to the prisons cell at BSMMU he has ordered for the wooden frames to be rearranged so that inmates could be seen from outside.

He said they have also decided to keep one and a half feet space on top of the toilet doors. It would be done so that jail guards can enter the bathroom through there in case of any inmate attempting to commit suicide.

Major Siddiqui said such arrangements are already there in prison toilets.

League rally and corruption.

Jatiya Samajtantrik Dal President Hasanul Haque Inu said President Iajuddin Ahmed, former prime minister Khaleda Zia and her son Tarique, former ministers Nizami and Babar are responsible for 1/11. We want an effective dialogue that would be able to remove obstacles for the elections, he said.

Mujahidul Islam Selim, general secretary of Communist Party of Bangladesh, said people have doubts growing in their minds since the "anti-corruption drives are going on with political intentions".

Stressing the need for a free and fair election, he said, "A bad election is better than no election and no election is better than a farce one."

Bikalpa Dhara Secretary General Maj (ret) Abdul Mannan said it would be better for the nation if the elections are held as soon as possible.

Protesting the recent restriction placed on the media, Prof Arefin Siddique, former president of Dhaka University Teachers Association (Duta), urged the authorities to announce a date for elections.

Among others recently released DU teachers Prof Anwar Hossain, President of Duta Prof Sadru Amin, Prof Harun-or-Rashid and Prof Neem Chandra Bhownik, Jatiya Party Presidium Member GM Quader, Liberal Democratic Party Presidium Member Ziaur Rahman Khan, AL acting Secretary General Syed Ashrafur Islam, Gonotntri Party Presidium Nurul Islam, former lawmaker Dr Abdur Razzak, Barrister Amir-ul-Islam also took part in the discussion meeting with Iqbal Sobhan Chowdhury, convenor of the parishad, in the chair.

Ijtema

FROM PAGE 1
A total of four devotees died of shivering cold and old age complications while attending Ijtema this year. Twenty-six others fell sick and were admitted to Tongi Government Hospital. Later, nine of them were shifted to Dhaka.

CA firm says

FROM PAGE 1
being a pass over item, annual escalation factor of 1% quoted by NEPC is redundant," the accounting firm said in its report.

"It is a universally accepted fact that while comparing two or more financial numbers, the competing parties must be...allowed identical parameters. In other words, base fuel price of Tk 4.51...ought to have been applied for bids of both Wartsila as well as of NEPC. Therefore, it is our unreserved opinion that the lowest bid is US cents 0.040888 kWh which was offered by Wartsila. It may not be out of place to mention that the offer of NEPC, which was wrongly rated as lowest bidder, was also non-responsive as their financial offer was conditional vis-à-vis the tariff for fuel."

The firm did not find any foul play regarding import of fuel exclusively for the plant. "For uninterrupted operation of the power plant, it is quite natural that all avenues for timely availability of the most essential ingredient, i.e., fuel must be ensured," it said.

The ACC in its case said the PDB invited international tender on October 24 of the same year to commission three large-mouth power plants at Hanipur, Shikabaha and Khulna within eight to 10 months.

A total of 15 firms submitted 25 tenders, 18 of which were qualified primarily.

NEPC consortium proposed the lowest tariffs but no deal was made with the company, the case statement said.

Besides, initiatives were taken for negotiation with the first, second and third lowest bidders following illegal interference by the then prime minister Sheikh Hasina and then power secretary Dr Tofiq-e-Elahi Chowdhury.

Ignoring the lowest bidder's tariff rate -- 4.59 cents per kilowatt hour -- power tariff has been fixed at 5.10 cents per kilowatt hour for three months and 5.82 cents per kilowatt hour for the rest of the contract period.

Hasina approved the deal in connivance with other accused to serve the interest of a special quarter in pre-planned way through deception.

Arrangement to smuggle foreign currencies was also made by allowing Wartsila to import oil that causes a huge loss to the country, the case statement added.

Two more die

FROM PAGE 1
centres from the rain. Reports say that the continuous rain has drenched clothes, blankets and other relief items belonging to the residents of the shelters leaving them to untold sufferings in the severe conditions.

Our Chittagong correspondent reports: Continuous drizzle and cold winds disrupted normal life and business in the port city of Chittagong for the third straight day yesterday.

Patenga Met office recorded 26.8 mm rain in 24 hours till 3pm yesterday.

Commuters, including office goers, garment workers and school-going children suffered the most as the number of CNG-run auto-rickshaw and rickshaw on the roads were thin.

Small wayside vendors suffered heavy losses as sales were low. Most were seen sitting beside their goods covered with polythene sheets.

Activities at Chittagong Port including container handling were normal. Sources said only loading and unloading of bulk cargoes were however disrupted.

BSS adds: The situation in Barisal region worsened further yesterday as the rainfall continued. Met office recorded at least 19-mm rainfall in this region till 3 pm yesterday. Government and semi-government agencies are continuing distribution of warm clothes among the poor and distressed.

The continuous rain and cold spell has also hampered life in Bandarban, Chuadanga and other districts of the country as well.

CA tells reporters

FROM PAGE 1
important. "I've told them [global leaders] Bangladesh is different from other countries. Every country has to decide on its position. No two countries can be compared," he said.

When asked to comment on Pakistani president's remark that 'matters of human rights, democracy and other issues should not always be looked at through a western lens', Fakhruddin said, "If there are human rights violations in our country according to our definitions then that has to be remedied in our own way."

He also hoped economic activities will pick up pace after the annual development plan is implemented, and there are already signs of exports rising.

"Remittances have gone up and after an initial slowdown, exports are again on the rise which means manufacturing is increasing and jobs are being created," Fakhruddin said.

"Looking at the overall progress, we are hoping that economic activities will accelerate this winter," he added.

Chief Adviser Fakhruddin Ahmed returned to the capital last evening.

ZIA misses Tk 400cr

FROM PAGE 1
Requesting anonymity, a CAAB official said, "Biman's capacity has decreased because of the management's inefficiency although increase of passengers has been significant. Foreign airlines have increased their fares taking this advantage."

Allowing more airlines could bring all of them to a competition, which could ultimately result in the decrease in airfare and improvement of service standards.

"Biman cannot carry even 20 percent of Bangladesh passengers going to different Middle Eastern countries," he said, adding, "We cannot ignore the interests of our workers for the interest of Biman since expatriate workers contribute to the national economy much more."

Criticising the government's protective policy for Biman, aviation expert Kazi Wahidul Alam said the number of Biman's carriers has come down to 11 from 17 at the time when the number of passengers is increasing around 2-2.5 lakh every year. Interestingly, only six or seven of Biman's carriers operate at a time.

"The ground handling equipment should also be modernised and if needed, private handling agencies should be appointed at ZIA," said Wahidul, editor of The Bangladesh Monitor, an aviation and tourism magazine.

He also criticised the government for not having any marketing initiative for ZIA or other airports of the country. "All airlines, whether low cost or legacy, must be allowed to operate for the sake of competition," he added.

The government, however, has not been interested in allowing the airlines that charge low fare to operate from ZIA. "Each passenger could save over Tk 6,000 if they flew by these low-cost carriers, which are widely used in many countries," said an official of such an airline.

According to a CAAB official, Air Asia, Air India Express, Air Arabia, and Jazeera Airways of Kuwait applied to the govern-

Sector commanders

FROM PAGE 16
AK Khandakar attended the meeting as the chief guest while it was chaired by eminent litterateur Hasan Azizul Haque.

Commander of Sector-4 Maj Gen (ret) CR Dutta Bir Uttam, Sector Commanders' Forum Coordinator Maj Gen (ret) Jamil D Ahsan Bir Pratik, Sector-7 commander Lt Col Quazi Nuruzzaman, Sector-8 commander Lt Col (ret) Abu Osman Chowdhury attended the meeting as special guests.

Sayed Shafikul Alam, a valiant freedom fighter and general secretary of Rajshahi Liberation War Library, presided over the programme.

They said the government must take steps to keep away the perpetrators of the biggest crimes committed during the 1971 war from the upcoming elections.

Sector Commanders' Forum leaders said, if the war criminals are not tried, independence and sovereignty of the country would be jeopardised as war criminals would get the scope to assume power as they did in the past.

They said the war criminals have been taking the opportunity of the lack of justice for a long time

Kibria murder

FROM PAGE 1
other for explosion--has remained pending before the Sylhet Divisional Speedy Trial Tribunal since the High Court stayed proceedings on May 14, 2006.

Asma Kibria said masterminds behind her husband's killing could be unmasked if Harris Chowdhury, ex-political secretary to former prime minister Khaleda Zia, and the then deputy commissioner of Habiganj are quizzed properly.

She alleged that remnants of the BNP-Jamaat alliance are still in the administration trying to impede fair investigation.

However, CID chief Phani Bhoushan Chowdhury yesterday said they have been making headway in the probe.

He said the investigators have already gathered that Mufi Abdul Hannan, the detained operations commander of Harkatul Jihad al Islami (Huji), had supplied the grenades used in the January 27 blast that left Kibria and four other Awami League (AL) leaders and workers dead.

Talking to The Daily Star, he also said three low-profile Huji activists carried out the grenade attack in 2005.

"We are now trying to hunt down those three. Once at least one of them is arrested, we would be able to know about the brains behind the killings," observed the CID boss.

The then investigation Officer (IO) and former ASP of CID Munshi

ment for operating from ZIA.

When contacted, the CAAB chairman said they have now become "quite liberal" in allowing more airlines to operate from Bangladesh.

He said they are trying to sign the Bilateral Air Service Agreements with more countries and review the existing ones to increase flights of both sides. "We are also trying so that the local private airlines are allowed to operate from other countries," he added.

Sakeb Khan said CAAB asked Biman to improve ZIA's ground handling quality. "We may also allow private agents to work at ZIA or it may be a joint venture of Biman and private agents for better services."

Asked about allowing the low-cost airlines, he said, "We prefer that these airlines operate from the Chittagong Airport, considering the traffic congestion in Dhaka."

He said, "We shall take concrete decisions on the basis of the recommendations of the inter-ministerial committee conducting the feasibility study n allowing low-cost airlines."

Law adviser

FROM PAGE 16
Election Commission, the law adviser said there has been much progress in both the matters.

He said the draft laws would be placed before the council of advisers for scrutiny and approval after preparing them. "But it'll be done much quickly. Setting up the secretariats is a must before the elections."

Garment factory

FROM PAGE 16
at about 7:30am and soon engulfed the entire floor.

On information, fire fighters from Hajiganj and Mondolpara rushed to the spot and extinguished the blaze with the help of garment workers at around 9:30am.

The factory authorities claimed that valuables worth around Tk 1 crore were damaged in the fire.

and have already divided the people, created a social degradation and spread corruption.

AK Khandakar said, "Very few countries paid a heavy price for liberation like us. We are still lagging behind, facing deprivation and social degradation since they were not tried."

"If we all can raise voice against war criminals, no government can avoid the trial," he said.

Maj Gen CR Dutta said, "The government will be forced to try war criminals as we (freedom fighters) forced Pakistani forces to surrender."

Lt Col (ret) Quazi Nuruzzaman identified two problems--leadership and the rule of law--for the country. He said, "We have to value patriotism, merit and dedication rather than partisanship."

The leaders reached Rajshahi Friday night and they held a series of meetings with journalists, teachers, politicians, professionals and different socio-cultural organisations yesterday morning.

They laid floral wreaths at the memorial of Babla Bon mass grave in the city before they attended the meeting.

3 'criminals'

FROM PAGE 16
the home ministry.

West Bengal CID invited their counterpart to take back three Bangladeshi criminals Sanzidul Islam Imon, Tanvirul Islam Joy and Haris.

The Bangladesh CID is also trying to bring back recently arrested Dakat Sahid and other criminals allegedly involved in the August 21 grenade attack on an Awami League rally.

The West Bengal CID has so far deported five Bangladeshi criminals. Of them, Rafiq and Babul alias Jewel, a close aide of Joy, were deported in the first week of December and Habibur Rahman Taj, Ibrahim and Lamba Selim in October last year.

Sources said West Bengal CID has demanded that Indian criminal Jiban Singh and one of his accomplices, who are reportedly hiding in Bangladesh, must be handed over to them in exchange of the arrested Bangladeshi criminals.

Jiban is wanted in India for his involvement in the theft of Rabindranath Tagore's Nobel Prize medal.

Sources said Jiban, a member of an artefact smuggling ring, has been hiding in Bangladesh. His accomplice Shiplu, who is an antique item trader at the DCC Market in Bangladesh, helped him hide here.

Law enforcers including Rab members conducted raids at the DCC market in search of Rabindranath's Nobel Prize medal.

CID officials said although no extradition treaty exists between Bangladesh and India, the West Bengal authorities deported five Bangladeshi criminals as a sign of goodwill.

23rd BCS Exam

FROM PAGE 16
except making some recommendations once it publishes the final results. The establishment ministry then normally takes three to four months for receiving medical reports from the Health Directorate and police verification reports from the home ministry," he added.

The PSC published the circular of the 23rd BCS in January 2001 seeking applications for 709 posts. Only 1,523 candidates from freedom fighters' families had responded.

Among them, 395 candidates passed the written examinations but only 103 were allowed to face the viva voce, as the PSC declared others disqualified on charge of submitting false freedom fighter certificates.

Twelve disqualified candidates filed a writ with the High Court against the PSC decision. The court on July 8, 2003 announced verdict that went in favour of the petitioners but the PSC did not act accordingly in the following four years.

The sources said the BNP-Jamaat government "politically" appointed Prof ZN Tahmid Begum as chairman of the commission after assuming power in 2001.

"Tahmid-led PSC body stopped the recruitment process even ignoring the High Court verdict. The PSC body acted like that because the circular was issued during the Awami League rule," said a PSC director.

Finally, the new PSC body took the viva voce of another five candidates following the HC verdict and announced the results.

The successful candidates have urged the caretaker government to take measures so that they can join the civil service as soon as possible.

Sharapova

FROM PAGE 16
An intensely focussed Sharapova unleashed the form of her life in her quest for the season-opening Grand Slam, not dropping a set as she downed the top three ranked women in world tennis to get her hands on the trophy.

She adds the Australian title to the Wimbledon crown she won in 2004 and her 2006 US Open.

The ecstatic Russian said she was delighted to make amends for last year's "depressing" 6-2, 6-1 loss here and bounce back from injuries that derailed her 2007 season and cost her the world number one ranking.

"This is so much sweeter because when I was going through those setbacks I tried to remember what it was like to hold the Wimbledon trophy and the US Open trophy," she said.

"To know that I was capable of doing it before and believe in myself that I'd be capable of doing it again some day."

There were also tears from Ivanovic, who battled gamely but ultimately had no answer to Sharapova's powerful serve in the 35 Celsius (95 Fahrenheit) cauldron at the Rod Laver Arena.

The Serb, while disappointed with the loss, took heart from the fact that she showed no sign of the nerves that crippled her in the French Open final last year.

"I really felt comfortable out there, I wasn't too nervous at all," the 20-year-old said, expressing confidence that a breakthrough Grand Slam win was not far away.

Bush presses Congress on economy package

AP, Washington

President Bush said yesterday that Congress must give its immediate attention to an economic stimulus package and an extension of the law governing how U.S. intelligence agencies carry out electronic eavesdropping.

The White House and House leaders of both parties reached agreement on a simply drawn stimulus program, which would provide tax rebate checks to 117 million families and give businesses \$50 billion in incentives to invest in new plants and equipment. In his weekly radio address, Bush asked Congress to approve the agreement "as soon as possible."

Some in the Senate, which will take up the measure after it goes to the House floor next week, have signaled that they want to broaden the bill. Democrats there want such things as an unemployment benefits extension, an increase in home heating subsidies or higher food stamp benefits. Bush suggested they could derail the whole effort, and he warned against it.

"While I understand the desire to add provisions from both the left and the right, it would be a mistake to undermine this important bipartisan agreement," the president said. "By working together, we can provide our economy with a shot in the arm when we need it most."

Sen. Byron Dorgan, D-N.D., said Saturday: "The White House's cooperation with Congress in recent days is long, long overdue. And it's encouraging. But let's hope it is habit-forming."

But Dorgan, delivering the Democrats' weekly radio address, added: "We need to do so much, much more. We need to fix the bigger economic issues that threaten our country's future."

Among those issues, Dorgan said, are the cost of the ongoing war in Iraq, the subprime mortgage crisis and the U.S. trade deficit.

Justice KM Hasan

FROM PAGE 16
after opening of a workshop at a city convention centre.

According to the constitution, Justice Hasan was supposed to take the helm of the caretaker government after expiry of the BNP-Jamaat-led alliance tenure.

But most of the political parties including the then main opposition Awami League had been opposing his being the interim administration chief for what they said was his affiliation with BNP.

Later, at one stage of intense political bickering and street violence across the country, he declined to be the chief adviser.

Talking to the reporters yesterday, Hasan said the court would decide whether it was illegal not to have the national election held within 90 days of the dissolution of parliament.

About the state of emergency, he said the people would conclude if it all was needed or not. They would choose the right path at the right time.

"I'm not saying all that's happening now is not right. Maybe it was needed," he added.

Law ministry

FROM PAGE 1
On receiving the opinion of the law ministry, the housing ministry will issue a letter to the occupants asking them to vacate the house, said a source.

A case regarding the ownership of the house had been pending with the higher court for a long time. The court finally gave a verdict in favour of Monjur in 2004. The piece of land was registered then again.

Moudud had been given the power of attorney by that time, the source added.

Hillary, Obama

FROM PAGE 16
Hampshire political scientist Dante Scala, predicting the Illinois senator would not get appreciable momentum from an expected victory.

Even before the vote, Clinton was looking ahead to February 5, with trips this week to populous states like New York, New Jersey and California, leaving her husband behind to wage a daily back-and-forth with Obama.

Both top candidates, and third ranked John Edwards, who won the primary in 2004 but has failed to catch fire this time, sprinted to the finish line Friday with a string of statewide rallies and events.

"We are in a very close race here... I have no idea what is going to happen tomorrow," Hillary said.