

Bangladesh plays role of major peacekeeper

Iftekhar tells top UN officials

UNB, New York

Foreign Adviser Iftekhar Ahmed Chowdhury said Bangladesh is consistently playing the role of a major global peacekeeper on behalf of the United Nations, which is a source of pride for the nation.

He made the comment on Thursday after a series of meetings with top UN officials, including Under Secretary General for the Department of Peacekeeping Operations Alain Le Roy, Under Secretary General for the Department of Field Support

Susana Malcorra and Under Secretary General for Management Angela Kane.

"Apart from the presence of troops and formed Police Units in every major operation, we also now have two command positions in Liberia and Georgia. Our contribution has been appreciated by every senior official at the UN I have spoken to, and I have spoken it to many," Iftekhar said.

Besides peacekeeping, there are three other important current issues Bangladesh is providing leadership in. These are climate change adaptation, food security,

and problems of least developed countries, he added.

"The international community sees such a role as extremely positive and constructive, and such perceptions heighten the nation's global profile and image," he said.

"Multilateral diplomacy is an important component of our foreign policy, and the goodwill that we create thereby increases international support and understanding for Bangladesh which is helpful domestically for our progress and development," he said.

UN peacekeepers laid to rest with military honour

METRO DESK

The three UN peacekeepers -- Lance Corporal Md Jahangir Alam, Sainik Md Abdul Khalek and Sainik Md Nurmin Nurulla -- were laid to rest at their respective village homes with full military honour, says an ISPR release.

Chief of Army Staff Gen Moeen U Ahmed and army officials participated in the namaz-e-janaza held at Chopper's Den at Dhaka Cantonment on October 30.

Later, the army chief placed wreaths at the coffins of the peacekeepers as a symbol of respect to them.

Khalek, Jahangir and Nurmin died at a hospital at Abidjan on September 19, September 22 and September 23 respectively after receiving injuries in a road accident on September 19.

The peacekeepers were on duty at UN Peacekeeping Mission in Ivory Coast. They joined the mission in July this year.



Namaz-e-janaza of three UN peacekeepers -- Lance Corporal Md Jahangir Alam, Sainik Md Abdul Khalek and Sainik Md Nurmin Nurulla -- was held at Chopper's Den at Dhaka Cantonment on September 30.



Bangladesh Navy ship Khalid Bin Walid leaves Chittagong Port on October 2 for Qatar to join an international sea exercise titled 'Exercise Ferocious Falcon'.

EXERCISE FEROCIOUS FALCON

Naval ship Khalid Bin Walid leaves for Qatar

METRO DESK

Bangladesh Navy ship Khalid Bin Walid left Chittagong Port on October 2 for Qatar to join an international sea exercise 'Exercise Ferocious Falcon' scheduled to be held on October 11, says an ISPR release.

A total of 49 countries, including the US, the UK, Saudi Arabia, Canada, Poland and Nato, are participating in the 12-day exercises.

56 officers and 197 sailors of the ship will take part in this sea exercise under the command of Capt M Khaled Iqbal.

Earlier, Chief of Naval Staff Vice Admiral Sarwar Jahan Nizam inspected the total preparedness of the ship for the exercise.

Speaking on the occasion, the naval chief hoped that the ship would uphold the image of Bangladesh Navy in international arena by participating in this exercise.

BNS Khalid Bin Walid left for long cruise for the first time after its commissioning in the navy. This is also the first occasion for any naval ships to take part in an exercise with so many countries in the Persian Gulf, the release added.

It is expected that bilateral friendship and diplomatic ties will be enhanced between Bangladesh and Qatar by joining the exercise.

The war ship was seen off by commodore commanding BN Flotilla, local navy officials and family members of seagoing officers and sailors at Chittagong Naval Jetty.

Eid days of hapless people go untouched in Rajshahi

ANWAR ALI, Rajshahi

"I couldn't even try to realise how and when the Eid days had passed," said rickshaw puller Ariful Islam as he was sitting idle on his rickshaw near a tea stall at Kumarpura in the city with a shadow of gloom on his face yesterday afternoon.

He usually rushes to the city from Malanchi in Natore by train at dawn for earning his livelihood by pulling a rickshaw on rent and he could hardly manage a square meal for his family on the day by Tk 175 he earned on the day before.

"I couldn't go to work in the city as all transports were off the road on the Eid day. I went to my home with Tk 150 on the second day. But today, I counted so far only Tk 40, Tk 5 more than the rent of the rickshaw."

The 28-year-old unmarried Arif, who has to look after his parents, broke down in tears when asked about his Eid. He said he could not manage new dresses for none of his family members, as he could not

work for some 15 days before the holy festival due to his illness.

The situation was different even two or three years ago when he used to pull a rickshaw van at Natore alongside tilling a small piece of their land. He was forced to rush to the city for earning extra money following price hike of essentials.

Arif was not the lone hero of this harrowing tale. Roaming around the city, this correspondent found a plenty of examples of poverty-stricken food-insecure people like Soleman, Shahid, Kamal and Babul who were out of the charm of Eid festivity.

They were from in and around the city and from distant northern districts. The spectre of their poverty was stemmed from the rise of cost of living and fresh spike in essential prices.

Crises of job and food have overshadowed Eid celebration of the underprivileged hundreds, many of whom are still flocking to the city for either doing jobs or begging alms.

During this period, the poor people of the northern region usually suffer from munga, a near-famine situation, following lack of agricultural work and food sufficiency.

The situation is likely to persist till the harvest in December, said the government officials, adding that the situation has, however, improved a bit following various government measures.

Day labourer Kamruzzaman of Baya managed to buy new clothing for his one son among the two during the festival.

"I bought him a shirt with Tk 220 and a sandal at Tk 130 and sent the other son to his grandmother's house for his clothing... We (the

couple) did not buy anything for ourselves... I hope we would do it in the next Eid when there will be enough work at croplands."

"Eid was great even three years before when I was able to afford new clothing for all of my five-member family... But I could not even manage a dainty dish, let alone clothing this year. I have never passed any Eid like this time without having meat," 55-year-old day labourer Moser Mondol described his plight in the way.

"I bought some sugar and milk for cooking semai (vermicelli) borrowing money from a neighbour... My neighbour also gave me his old punjabi and lungi to say Eid prayers," said Moser of Panchabati area.

Soleman, an octogenarian, came to visit his eldest son's house at Puthia upazila in the morning and was returning home in the noon.

"There is none but Allah to look after us. I came to visit my son and I am returning now as he is not able to give me anything."

This correspondent met Shiplu, a firewood trader on the Padma river dam at Sashanghat point. He was passing idly sitting on a bamboo-mancha. He was careless about sharing his Eid experience.

"I bought new clothing for my two minor sisters, but could not buy for myself or my parents. I went to markets thrice for buying clothing for us, but returned witnessing the exorbitant prices."

Halima, wife of a rickshaw puller, was lamenting on the Padma dam as the rickshaw of her husband, who was suffering from fever for last 20 days, was stolen on the Eid day, saying, "We starved on the day as my husband was unable to earn."

2 robbers killed in mass beating

UNB, Narsingdi

Two suspected robbers were killed in a mass beating at Noakandi village in Monohardi upazila early yesterday.

The deceased were identified as Amir Hossain, 35, and Tamim Hossain, 32, sons of Kalu Miah of the village.

Locals said they caught the two brothers with lethal weapons at about 3:00am while they were preparing with others to commit a robbery in the village.

The villagers then gave Amir and Tamim a good beating, killing them on the spot. A Chinese axe and two swords were also recovered from them.

On information, Monohardi police recovered the bodies in the morning and sent those to Sadar Hospital morgue for autopsy.

According to the police, Tamiz was wanted in 22 cases for robberies while Amir 19.

Lightning kills two

UNB, Kishoreganj

Two people were killed and two others injured in lightning at Gouripur Baro Haor in Nikli upazila yesterday.

The deceased were identified as Manik, 27, and Fajul Islam, 32, of Jalalpur village in the upazila.

Witnesses said a streak of thunderbolt struck a fishing boat at about 3:00pm, killing Manik on the spot and injuring three others -- Yusuf, 25, Humayun Kabir, 19, and Fajul Islam, 32.

Fajul died on the way to hospital.

Yusuf and Kabir were rushed to Nikli Upazila Health Complex and then shifted to Bhagolpur Zahurul Islam Medical College Hospital in critical condition.

Unelected govt should not stay in power for long: Ershad

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Bogra

Jatiya Party Chairman HM Ershad yesterday underscored the need to hold general election within the scheduled timeframe, saying that an unelected government should not stay in power for long.

He, however, said the success of this government is better than that of any other previous governments.

Ershad made the remarks while talking to reporters in Bogra yesterday on his way to Rangpur from Dhaka.

Party leader GM Kader and local leaders and activists were present at that time.

BSA launches website

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Bangladeshi Students' Association (BSA) in London launched a website recently to build a network among the students studying in the UK.

Deputy High Commissioner of Bangladesh in London Allama Siddiki launched the website 'www.bangladeshistudents.org' at Devenant Youth Centre.

Commercial Counsellor AHM Ahsan, Director of University of East London Adrian Clarke, Director of Metropolitan University Mark Bickerton and Chief Executive Officer of Channel 1 in the UK Reza Ahmed Faisal Chowdhury were present at the ceremony as special guests.

Presided over by BSA President Sharif Haider, the programme was moderated by Masudur Rahman, Assistant General Secretary of BSA Shubhra Ranjan Biswas, leaders of the Society of Bangladeshi Solicitors and ICSL Alumni Association of UK and the representatives of different colleges in London spoke on the occasion.

Lauding the initiative of BSA, the speakers called on the Bangladeshi students in the UK to register for free membership through the Internet.

A cultural programme was also held at the programme. Channel 1 UK was the media partner of the programme.

Nuclear deal a surrender to US

Say Indian opposition parties

PALLAB BHATTACHARYA, New Delhi

India's Congress-led UPA government has welcomed the US Congressional nod to a landmark civilian nuclear deal between the two countries terming it a "monumental achievement" while the opposition parties dismissed the pact as a "surrender" to Washington.

The US Senate on Wednesday voted overwhelmingly in favour of reversing a 34-year-old ban on nuclear trade with India, allowing American companies to sell atomic reactors, fuel and technology in return for safeguards and IAEA inspections of India's civil nuclear plants.

Congress President Sonia Gandhi led her party in greeting Prime Minister Manmohan Singh when she said "the passage of the Indo-US nuclear bill by the US Congress is a landmark development. I specially congratulate the prime minister who has demonstrated a firm resolve in taking forward this bold initiative".

The agreement marks the successful culmination of a process initiated by the prime minister in July, 2005 being guided by India's "supreme national interests, which the Congress party has throughout endorsed," she said.

Congress party's spokesman M

Veerappan Moily told reporters in New Delhi that the nuclear deal is a "monumental achievement. It's a victory of Prime Minister Manmohan Singh's government."

Science and Technology Minister Kapil Sibal said the passage of the bill by the US Congress was a "historic" moment for India because it has joined the world nuclear club without signing restrictive treaties like Non-Proliferation Treaty and Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty.

Opposition and left parties, however, slammed the deal alleging India has forfeited its right to hold future nuclear tests and voted to continue to oppose it.

The BJP accused the government of "compromising the nation's sovereignty and said the deal "might be a victory for the UPA but a colossal loss for India."

"The deal is tantamount to acceding to the NPT regime. It appears as if all obligations are squarely placed on India...the sovereignty of the nation has been mortgaged in perpetuity and the prime minister has led the nation into a blind trap," said BJP spokesman Rajiv Pratap Rudy.

CPI (M) General Secretary Prakash Karat dubbed the Indo-US civil nuclear pact as a "bad" deal, "unequal treaty and a complete surrender to the US."

Political analysts said the Indo-

US nuclear deal is undoubtedly Prime Minister Manmohan Singh's highest foreign policy achievement for which he had virtually staked the survival of his government.

Earlier this year, Singh clearly signalled his determination that either he would go ahead with the deal in the face of strong resistance from left parties, which were his ally at that time, or to give up office.

His veiled threat came in a newspaper interview when the left parties made it clear that they would withdraw support to Singh's government if it went ahead with the deal.

The left did withdraw its crucial support in July but Singh, often considered nothing more than an economist, showed he had a political ace up his sleeve when he managed to secure the support of Samajwadi Party headed by Mulayam Singh Yadav to bail out the UPA government in a trust vote in parliament.

That was a political master stroke by the prime minister that would make even more seasoned politicians envy. It not only saved his government but also upset the calculations of the left parties.

Even within Congress, the prime minister had to push through the nuclear deal because there were Doubting Thomases within the party also.

However, the prime minister's

strong resolve and Sonia Gandhi's firm backing of him clinched the issue and the ruling alliance accepted the nuclear deal.

The pact has boosted Singh's image as someone who can take tough calls and set his own agenda, analysts said.

Congress has given enough indications that the party is set to use the nuclear deal as a major plank playing up the theme of energy security in the coming parliamentary elections due by May next year, they added.

Even before the US Senate approved the nuclear deal with India, Manmohan Singh flew to France where the two countries signed an accord for civil nuclear cooperation, marking the moment when New Delhi shed the tag of a nuclear pariah.

That India has entered the global nuclear commerce without signing the NPT and CTBT is in itself a major diplomatic victory, the analysts added.



Chief Adviser Fakhruddin Ahmed was received by the members of Council of Advisers, chiefs of three services, dean of diplomatic corps and US ambassador on his arrival at Zia International Airport on September 30 after attending the 63rd session of UN General Assembly.

Girl gangraped

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Khulna

A teenage girl was gangraped in Khulna on Thursday.

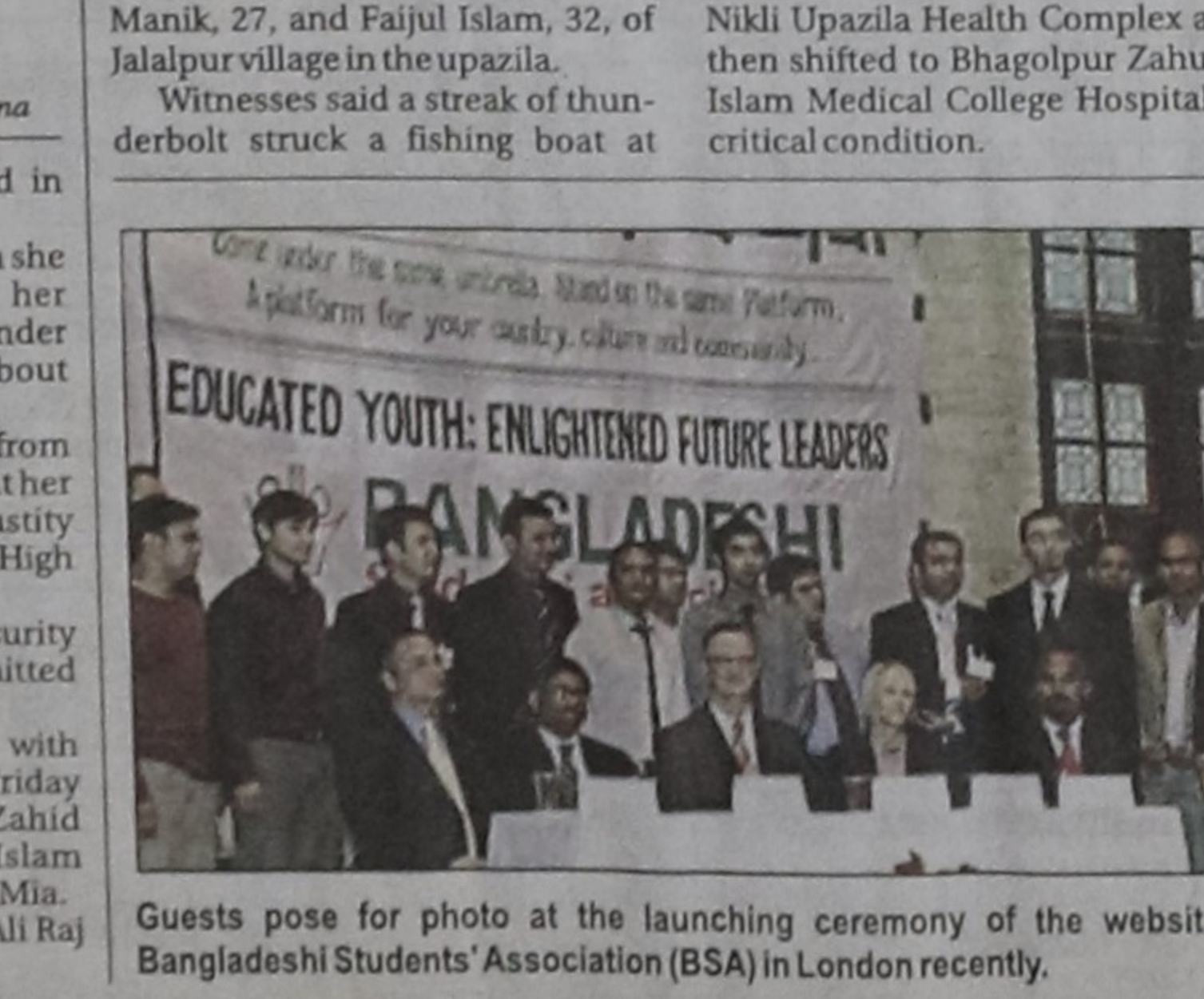
The incident occurred when she was returning home from her relative's house at Mujgunni under Khalishpur Police Station at about 9:00pm.

Four youths abducted her from Joragata area pointing a knife at her throat before violating her chastity in a classroom of Shaheed Zia High School.

She was rescued by the security guards of the school and admitted to Khalishpur Clinic.

The girl lodged an FIR with Khalishpur Police Station on Friday as complainant naming Zahid Hasan Khokon, Monirul Islam Sagor, Ali Raj Sumon and Raja Mia.

Police yesterday arrested Ali Raj in this connection.



Guests pose for photo at the launching ceremony of the website of Bangladeshi Students' Association (BSA) in London recently.

India bans smoking in public

PALLAB BHATTACHARYA, New Delhi

Next time you light up the rolled tobacco in public places in India, be aware. A ban on smoking imposed by Indian government went into force from October 2 coinciding with the birth anniversary of the Father of the Nation Mahatma Gandhi.

The ban, opposed by tobacco firms and hotel industry, covers offices, hotels, restaurants, hospitals, college campuses, bars and discotheques.

The law provides for a fine of five US dollars for those violating the ban on smoking in public places.

Airports, hotels with 30 or more rooms or restaurants with a seating capacity of 30 or more will be allowed separate smoking areas.

People will, however, still be allowed to smoke in their homes, cars, while walking on the street and in open spaces like parks. But smoking in trains and buses has been barred.

Indian Health Minister Anbumani Ramadoss, who passionately championed the anti-tobacco drive, himself took the lead to enforce the ban on smoking in public places when he took to the streets in Chennai, the capital of his home state Tamil Nadu, on Thursday while distributing pamphlets against puffing.

Ramadoss' drive for a ban on smoking scenes in films had at one point of time saw him picking up a war of words with Bollywood's two superstars Shahrukh Khan and

Navy chief leaves for ROK, China

METRO DESK

Chief of Naval Staff Vice Admiral Sarwar Jahan Nizam left the city yesterday to attend the West Pacific Naval Symposium (WPNS) Seminar 2008 and Maritime Air Defence Exhibition 2008 (MADX '08) which started in South Korea on the same day, says an ISPR release.

Naval chiefs, representatives, analysts and naval observers from 29 countries are expected to participate in the seminar.

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