

2 treaties penned

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in the morning.

With Bipa signed, Bangladesh and India will from now on consider each other the most favoured nation (MFN).

Under the renewed bilateral trade agreement signed between Bangladesh Commerce Minister Faruk Khan and Mukherjee for three more years, both countries will now be able to use each other's waterways, roadways, and railways for transportation of goods between two places in one country through the territory of the other.

Bangladesh government officials said if the treaty originally signed in 1980 is implemented, not only India will be benefited in transporting goods to its north-eastern states, but Bangladesh will also have a huge economic boost by being able to use the territory of India to reach Nepal and Bhutan with its goods.

The signing ceremony took place in Hotel Sheraton of the capital after Mukherjee had formal talks with his counterpart Dipu Moni, and Bangladesh Home Minister Sahara Khatun.

Dipu Moni said during the talks they had a comprehensive discussion on how Bangladesh and India can move forward.

She said they discussed practical ways for promoting economic relations, two-way trade, reduction of trade gap, and increasing investment.

The Indian foreign minister said they talked about security, border management, strengthening of connectivity, promoting trade and investment, and people-to-people contact.

"Our discussions on connectivity related issues were constructive where we shared our views on the matter with specific focus on our national interests," Dipu Moni told a joint media conference.

She also said, "We shared our ideas of a South Asian task force that can be useful in promoting cooperation to complement independent national actions of all willing countries joining the task force."

She said she also categorically assured her counterpart that Bangladesh will not countenance any anti-Indian activity by elements inimical to the interests of India using Bangladesh territory.

The Bangladesh foreign minister also sought India's cooperation against elements who are trying to harm her country.

Dipu Moni hoped Mukherjee's visit will open a new phase of coordination and cooperation between the two countries on a whole range of bilateral, regional and international issues.

"He has come here not only to congratulate the people of Bangladesh, but also carrying a message from the Indian Prime Minister Manmohan Singh for our prime minister," she said.

Terming the talks with Dipu Moni and Sahara Khatun very fruitful, the Indian minister said they discussed the entire gamut of bilateral relations.

"Our relations have witnessed an upwards showing in the recent past," he told the briefing, adding India as a friendly neighbour remains committed to supporting the people of Bangladesh, and to strengthening its relationship with the country.

"Today we signed two agreements, one on bilateral trade and the other on bilateral trade promotion and protection. These will further strengthen the framework for trade and investment between the two countries."

On connectivity, Mukherjee said both countries are undertaking several initiatives to improve infrastructure including customs stations, roads, railways and river routes to facilitate water economic engagement. He urged the private sector of both countries to seize the opportunities.

He said an area of concern for both countries is to combat growing extremism and terrorism in the region.

"Closer cooperation on security issue is the need of the hour. We should move to address the issue with an understanding, so both the countries are benefited in the long run," he observed.

Asked about India's response to Bangladesh Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina's initiative for a South Asian anti-terrorism taskforce, Mukherjee said as far as the concept of the taskforce is concerned, there are already certain regional and international mechanisms in place.

He said he discussed the architecture of the proposed regional joint anti-terror taskforce with the Bangladesh

foreign minister, adding, "What is more important is the sincerity to fight against terrorism. It can be achieved if we have bilateral, regional and global mechanisms."

Mukherjee also said if there is inability, incapability and unwillingness to tackle terrorism, then the problem arises, and architectural framework does not stand in the way of fighting terrorism, whether it is bilateral, multi-lateral or global.

About the modalities of the proposed taskforce, Dipu Moni said Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina will discuss her proposal with other countries in the region as well, to figure those out.

Replying to a question of an Indian journalist, she reiterated her government's firm stand against terrorism.

"We will not allow anyone to use our territory to harm anyone in the region. If we have concrete information we will definitely act on it," asserted Dipu Moni.

Regarding border firings and killings of Bangladeshis by Indian Border Security Force (BSF), Mukherjee said the issue was a major ingredient in the 'plan of action' of Bangladesh Rifles (BDR) and BSF during a talk between their chiefs, and they were expected to find a way to evade deaths at the border.

Replying to question by a Bangladeshi journalist on trade gap between the two countries, he said he is aware of the imbalance, and every time the two sides discussed the issue they tried to explore ways for reducing the gap.

"Being a former trade minister I can respectfully tell you there is no mechanism through which bilateral trade between two countries, in respect of each and every country, could be balanced. It is not possible," the Indian senior minister said adding, "But surely it is possible to reduce the gap and to keep it within a manageable limit."

Bangladesh and India have a trade gap of about \$2 billion a year.

Pranab Mukherjee, who is acting as the prime minister of India now, during Manmohan Singh's recovery from a surgery, also called on Bangladesh Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina yesterday before departing at night.

Polytech

FROM PAGE 16
tion of their studentship.

Our Mymensingh Correspondent reports: Students of Mymensingh Polytechnic Institute vandalised windowpanes of several rooms of the college protesting the change in the examination rules.

The agitating students also put up a barricade on the Dhaka-Mymensingh highway disrupting vehicular movement for about two hours from 10:30am to 12:30pm. On information, a team of Kotwali police rushed to the spot and brought the situation under control.

While collected, principal of the college Md Abdur Razzak told this correspondent that the students became agitated as they misunderstood the decision taken by the BTEB.

Police were deployed on the campus to avert any untoward incident.

Our Chittagong University Correspondent adds: Students of Chittagong Polytechnic Institute put up a barricade on the city's Bayezid Bostami Road for an hour demanding cancellation of the new examination rule.

The barricade resulted in a serious traffic jam on both sides of the road for an hour much to the sufferings of the city commuters.

Sources said around two hundred students of the Institute set a fire on the road at around 1.00 pm to register their protest against the BTEB decision.

Later, police brought the situation under control at around 2.00pm and eased the traffic movement on the road.

Staff Correspondent of Khulna reports: As many as 100 students of Khulna Polytechnic Institute (KPI) submitted a memorandum to its acting principal Kumaresh Chandra Palat at 10:30am yesterday in his office.

Students demanded immediate scrapping of the new provision that had cancelled the referred examination system.

The acting principal while receiving the memo told students that he would bring the matter to the notice of the Chairman of the BTEB.

Earlier on Sunday, at least 30 students and police were injured at KPI as students went on a rampage in demand of scrapping the new provision.

Sangsad stuck

FROM PAGE 1

"If that is their demand now, the motive is pretty obvious," he said adding that earlier BNP had demanded three more seats in the front row on the left of the House chair's podium.

Asked if he would come up with any 'specific announcement', he said, "I've repeatedly requested them to join parliament. I've assured them I'll consider their demand for more front-row seats. What else do I need to do to be specific?"

The immediate past speaker, Jamiruddin Sircar, gave the opposition MPs all 10 front-row seats. All 12 seats in the next row too were allocated to the lawmakers from BNP, Jamaat-e-Islami and Jatiya Party of Bangladesh (BJP).

In response to calls from the treasury bench, Hamid made some changes to the seat plans drawn up without taking into account the ruling alliance's proposals.

He set aside four seats in the first row for the opposition lawmakers including Oli Ahmed, the lone MP from Liberal Democratic Party (LDP). He gave them as many seats in the second row.

In protest at the rearrangement, the lawmakers belonging to BNP and allies came out of the legislature.

"The speaker assured us Sunday that he would consider increasing the number of front-row seats for us, but he did not specifically say whether the seat map would be reverted," Faruq said at the press briefing.

The opposition chief whip said they had discussed the speaker's assurance with Chairperson Khaleda Zia and other senior leaders including Khandaker Delwar Hossain and Moudud Ahmed.

"We are not convinced by his assurance," Faruq said adding that they never said three more seats in the front row would do.

Speaker Abdul Hamid however maintains that the opposition demanded three more front-row seats, and in reply he assured them of one or two more seats in the leading row.

"I told them categorically I'll do something for them in the next session. If possible, I'll do it in the current session," he said yesterday.

Meanwhile, Faruq said he talked to Chief Whip of Parliament Abdus Shahid yesterday morning, but could not get any satisfactory response to their demand.

"He [Shahid] only echoed the speaker's views," he observed.

Boy killed

FROM PAGE 1
Akhtarul Islam, 6, son of Alamgir Hossain, Azir Rahman, 10, son of Felanur, and Rozina Khatun, were admitted to the upazila health complex with bullet wounds.

Police arrested hunter Saidur, gun owner Shawkat Osman and co-hunter Abdur Rahman along with the .22 bore rifle.

While contacted, Police Super Abu Kalam Siddique confirmed the incident.

Dhaka, Delhi

FROM PAGE 1
"Peace will have to be established to alleviate poverty and for this, terrorism, militancy and smuggling must have to be curbed," Azad quoted her as saying.

The PM also sought cooperation of other South Asian nations for commissioning the taskforce.

United efforts are necessary to tackle the problems in the region, the Indian minister said.

The meeting discussed bilateral issues of the two countries and emphasised strengthening relations between them.

Hasina told Pranab that Bangladesh always remembers India's contribution to its Liberation War in 1971. She also paid rich tributes to those Indian soldiers who made supreme sacrifice for the independence of Bangladesh.

The prime minister thanked the Indian acting premier for signing two trade and investment agreements with Bangladesh.

Pranab congratulated Hasina for securing landslide victory in the December 29 parliamentary election, sources present at the meeting told The Daily Star.

He also exchanged greetings with Hasina's sister Sheikh Rehana, daughter Saima Wazed Putul and other family members.

Earlier, the PM received the Indian minister on his arrival at Jamuna at 5:00PM after official talks with his Bangladesh counterpart Dr Dipu Moni.

Pranab was accompanied by Indian Foreign Secretary Shiv Shankar Menon and Indian High Commissioner in Dhaka Pinak Ranjan Chakrabarty.

The meeting was also attended by State Minister for Foreign Affairs Hasan Mahmud, State Minister for Home Tanjim Ahmed Sohel Taj, Foreign Secretary M Touhid Hossain and Secretary of PM's Office Kazi Aminul Islam.

MEETING WITH KHALEDA NOT HELD
Pranab Mukherjee said he could not meet the leader of the opposition and BNP Chairperson Khaleda Zia for lack of time.

He made the remarks at a joint press conference yesterday with Foreign Minister Dipu Moni.

6,000 cases

FROM PAGE 1

filed with political motive during the BNP-led government.

The home minister however did not respond to the allegations against the members of Rapid Action Battalion (Rab) of torturing people and interfering in matters related to land.

During the question answer-session, AL lawmaker Golam Faruk Prince alleged that Rab set up a torture cell at Pabna stadium and demanded removal of the Rab camp from there so that locals can use the swimming pool.

Another AL lawmaker Ekabbar Hossain alleged that Rab members in his constituency are interfering in disputes related to land. He questioned whether Rab has jurisdiction to do so.

In response to Ekabbar, the home minister said she needs a notice to reply the question.

Taking floor to raise a supplementary question, another AL lawmaker asked the home minister whether her ministry will investigate the allegation of corruption in purchasing vehicles for Rab. The lawmaker alleged that the BNP-led government purchased vehicles worth Tk 450 crore for Rab. The price of each vehicle was shown Tk 18 lakh against the actual price of Tk 10 lakh, he alleged.

On review of the cases, the home minister said due to principle of estoppel it is difficult for the government to revive a case withdrawn by the government and it is accepted by the court.

"However, any aggrieved person can seek remedy from the court," the minister asserted, adding, "Appropriate actions will also be taken if any person aggrieved by the withdrawal of the cases files complaints."

Replying to queries, the minister assured the House of taking stern action to curb terrorism and militancy as the government is giving top priority on the issues.

"Formulating a strategy paper on curbing terrorism is underway," she added.

The minister said the government has planned to appoint an additional superintendent of police (ASP) in each upazila and police station. At the initial stage, the officers-in-charge of the police stations under all metropolitan cities, district headquarters and some upazilas adjacent to Dhaka city will be promoted to the post of ASP.

New posts of ASP in the rest of the upazilas will be created and the government will implement the plan by 2011 by creating 358 posts, the minister said.

Textbook

FROM PAGE 16
"We had asked all publishers to sell all their books by 7:00pm. After the deadline, if any book is found in any warehouse, we would go for tough action against the people responsible."

On selling books at higher prices, Flight Lieutenant Rezarul Rahman of Rab-10 said, "We conducted raids in at least 50 book stores, found irregularities and detained the store employees."

"We forced reluctant book sellers to sell books and return the extra money they had taken from customers," he said.

NCTB officer Ziaul Hasan said they would go for punitive actions against publishers and book sellers who are involved in the irregularities.

Most publishers failed to complete their printing jobs. For this they could not get the 78 lakh textbooks on the market by February 7, a deadline set by the NCTB.

Publishers yesterday said they printed only 48 lakh textbooks and five to seven more days are required for the rest to be printed.

The military has said the flow of civilians out of the war zone has increased in recent days, with 4,700 fleeing Sunday, bringing the total number of non-combatants to escape the war zone to 20,000 this year, Nanayakkara said.

With most communication to the north severed, the rebels could not be reached for comment.

The rebels have been accused of more than 200 suicide attacks and are listed as a terror group by the United States and the European Union.

The Tamil Tigers have been fighting since 1983 for a separate state for the nation's ethnic Tamil minority after decades of marginalisation at the hands of governments controlled by the Sinhalese majority. More than 70,000 people have been killed in the fighting.

Nobel peace laureate Jose Ramos Horta, the president of East Timor, called on both sides to agree to an immediate cease-fire, to allow aid groups and independent journalists full access to the conflict zone and to begin immediate talks for a political resolution to the conflict. He also offered himself as a potential mediator if needed.

Also Monday, the air force hit a camouflaged building inland where the rebels' sea wing hid its craft, Nanayakkara said. "The place was destroyed," he said.

The rebels also reported killing 34 military who tried to break through the front lines Saturday in an armoured truck.

ter added.

On the much-talked-about case of 10 truckloads of arms recovered in Chittagong, Sahara said the case is under the stage of further investigation on directive of the court.

"The case will be sent to the speedy trial tribunal on completion of the investigation," she added.

In response to another query, the home minister said a process is underway to legally recognise finger prints, leg prints, spit, DNA, etc as objective evidence to track criminals before the court.

FOREIGN MINISTER
Foreign Minister Dipu Moni yesterday told the House the government has taken steps to bring back the convicted and fugitive killers of Bangabandhu from abroad.

"Information received earlier on their whereabouts is being examined. Besides, initiative has been taken to collect information about their whereabouts through intelligence agencies," the foreign minister said in her written response.

But the question was not discussed in the House due to her absence during the time when the specific question was scheduled to be raised.

Asked whether extradition treaty will be signed to bring back the killers, the minister said it is a lengthy and complicated process.

"We'll open negotiations with the governments of the respective countries after being confirmed of the killers' whereabouts," she added.

75pc complaints

FROM PAGE 16
The survey revealed that 47 percent of the clients do not get their bills from Wasa on time and many of them complained that Wasa gives three or four months' bill at one go which often puts them in difficulty.

Around 60 percent said they now use more water while 30 percent said their use of water has not increased.

Meanwhile, some residents of Dhaka, like those of other cities, have been getting dirty and smelly water for the last two weeks, sources said.

Officials at Dhaka Wasa (Water Supply and Sewerage Authority) are blaming pollution in the river Balu and Shitalkhya for this. They say that they have to use more chemicals in the Syedabad water treatment plant due to the severity of water pollution.

Dhaka Wasa also fails to meet the water demand in the city as it still has a supply-demand deficit of around 40 crore litres a day.

26 Rohingyas

FROM PAGE 16
Amin, Khalilur Rahman, Badiul Alam, Md Alamgir, Nabi Hossain, Helal Uddin and Md Abdullah.

BDR Operation Officer of Teknaf 24 Rifles Battalion Major Helal Mohammad Khan said, the arrested Myanmar citizens were pushed back through the Naf river from Shah Parir Dvip at 3:00 am yesterday.

Confirming the incident, Sirajul Islam said all the arrested male Rohingyas were entering Bangladesh illegally to earn money.

28 die

FROM PAGE 16
military's weak points, the processing of the masses of civilians trying to flee the area. It also highlighted concerns that the rebels were trying to blend in with the civilian population, so they can fight on using insurgent tactics.

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The rebels also reported killing 34 military who tried to break through the front lines Saturday in an armoured truck.

BNP activist killed by extortionists

A CORRESPONDENT, Jessore

A BNP activist was beaten to death by extortionists at Jhinaikundu village in Chowgacha upazila in the district yesterday.

The deceased was identified as Iman Ali, 45, a resident of the Jhinaikundu village.

Family members and local BNP leaders however alleged that the Awami League (AL) cadres beat him to death in broad daylight for a failing to pay Tk 50,000 as toll.

Abdul Mannan, organising secretary of upazila Jubo Dal, said Iman went out of his home for shopping in the morning. As he moved forward, AL cadres of the area swooped on him with iron rod and stick and injured him seriously, Mannan alleged.

After the incident, Iman told the reporters the local AL cadres demanded Tk 50,000 from him as toll a week ago, also adding that the goons beat him up in a planned way for his refusal.

Iman was rushed to upazila health complex. As his condition deteriorated, he was later shifted to Jessore General Hospital where he succumbed to his injury in the afternoon.

Meantime, SM Habib, general secretary of upazila AL, denied the allegation saying the murderers do not have any party identity.

He also asked the police to arrest the criminals.

Abdul Matin, officer in-charge of Chowgacha Police Station, said they are yet to ascertain the motive behind the killing, adding that the police continued their efforts to arrest the attackers.

Funds misused in CG's 100-day job scheme

Alleges food minister

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The government detected large-scale misuse of funds of the 100-day Employment Generation Programme launched in October last year, Food and Disaster Management Minister Abdur Razzak claimed yesterday.

The caretaker government launched the programme for the first time in the country allocating Tk 2,000 crore to create job opportunities during lean season.

Though the programme had very good aspects we found large-scale misuse of fund that broke all previous records," he told reporters during a views-exchange meeting at the ministry's conference room.

The government has already prepared an evaluation report on the programme but it did not reveal the findings.

A total of Tk 1,200 crore has been spent in the programme, Razzak said, adding that they are still in a dilemma on spending the rest of the fund as the experience so far was not good.

He said there is a group of corrupt people in the local government level and the administration is also involved with them.

He also said government would soon start Food for Work programme and if two programmes are executed simultaneously, it would create scopes for more misuse of funds.

"We speak of strengthening the local government but it does not mean they would not be held accountable," Razzak said.

5 killed

FROM PAGE 1
Ayub and Rashid died on the spot while Moslem succumbed to his injuries at Ishwardi hospital in the afternoon.

On information, police rushed to the spot and recovered the bodies. They also started raiding different areas of Char Kamalpur to nab the culprits.

Contacted, Assistant Superintendent of Police (ASP) of Ishwardi Anisuzzaman confirmed the death of five people in the clash. Some injured people fled to neighbouring Kushtia district to avoid arrest and two of them died there, he added.

But the ASP could not confirm the identity of the two deceased.

He said the raid was still going on in the late afternoon and the situation was now under control.

Both the groups have a long-standing dispute over shoal land and tension mounted in the remote area following the clash, said Laxmikunda UP chairman Torab Ali.

Police superintendent of Pabna Md Jamil Ahmed also visited the scene of the clash.

However, the number of arrests could not be known immediately. Additional police forces were deployed in the area to avert any untoward situation.

However, there are different versions about the identity of the rival groups. Local Laxmikunda union parishad (UP) chairman Torab Ali claimed that the rival groups are the two factions of local Awami League. Another source, however, said Samad group belongs to AL while Kashem group belongs to BNP.

DU student

FROM PAGE 1

The extortionists let Nazrul go home as he assured them of getting the money from his parents. Nazrul was too scared to inform the university authorities about the incident.

Nurul does not dare to send his precious son back to the university.

"I supported his studies amid hardship... just to see my son established. Now I would not let him study here. I have a piece of land and my son would work there," said Nurul Alam in his local dialect as tears rolled down his cheeks.

The Daily Star correspondent met Nurul in Madhur Canteen on campus. He came to Dhaka after one of Nazrul's friends requested him to make the journey and talk to journalists in Dhaka. Nurul left for Cox's Bazar last evening. He did not want to stay in Dhaka.

Talking over telephone, Nazrul told this correspondent the horrifying details.

He said he was sleeping that night but he woke up to his roommate Saiful's call. There was a group of people in the room he did not know. He could only identify Raj, a "student" staying in the same hall.

One of them introduced himself as a "crime reporter" and told him that they had come to conduct a search of the room as they received a tip off.

Nazrul allowed them to search the room. They went straight to his bed and brought out a bag from under his bed. Then they brought out a gun from the bag.

Nazrul started panicking. The whole thing was filmed by one of the unidentified people.

The "crime reporter" then made a cellphone call and he was heard saying, "Hello, OC [Officer-in-charge] speaking? We found an illegal firearm and I would tell you the details later."

They forced Nazrul to write on a piece of paper that the

gun was found