



PHOTO: AFP

Pakistani women hold placards as they march during International Women's Day rally in Karachi yesterday. Nearly 100 years old, International Women's Day marks an ongoing worldwide battle to ensure equal rights for half the globe's population on issues such as work, voting and abortion.

INTERNATIONAL WOMEN'S DAY

Poverty, violence haunt women

AFP, New Delhi

Indian activists marked International Women's Day yesterday by protesting over a spate of violent attacks launched on women by religious extremists in the name of "moral policing".

A collective formed by residents in Bangalore, in India's south, met in parks and open areas where young Hindu extremists have targeted women for wearing jeans, or being seen in public with men.

While women from Australia to Liberia gathered to hail achievements and to campaign on issues such as work equality, voting rights and abortion access, there was little to celebrate for the female population in many parts of the world.

Women are still forced into marriages or subjected to domestic violence in countries like Afghanistan, Pakistan and Bangladesh, activists say.

In Iraq, according to aid agency Oxfam, they are trapped in a "silent emergency" of poverty.

Despite the billions of dollars poured into Iraq's reconstruction, many women -- especially those widowed -- are too poor to provide families with basic nourishment, health and education, according to a report by the agency, published to mark International Women's Day.

Another female politician who has risen to the top in a male-dominated society, Shukria Barakzai, an Afghan member of parliament, also lamented her gender's plight.

She is campaigning against forced and child marriages -- practices still common in Afghanistan -- after her husband took a second spouse.

Under Afghanistan's Sharia law, men are allowed up to four wives.

The strict Islamic law also curtails the rights of women in Pakistan's Swat valley, where the government last month signed an agreement with Taliban rebels who promised peace in exchange for the law.

Militants have destroyed 191 schools in the valley, 122 of them for girls, local officials say, and women are only allowed out if heavily veiled and accompanied by a male relative.

Muslim women around the world are facing a "growing crisis" as Islamic governments fail to honour commitments to end inequality and violence against them, a senior UN official warned.

Yakin Erturk, the UN's rapporteur on violence against women, told a weekend conference in Malaysia that women must demand their governments carry out pledges to grant them equal rights and ensure their safety.

Taliban attacks spreading into Pakistani heartland

Say experts

ANI, Lahore/New Delhi

Last Tuesday's attack on Sri Lankan cricket players heralds the spread of Taliban-trained groups into Pakistani heartlands, feel experts.

The commando-style strike in Lahore left eight people dead and eight members of the Sri Lankan cricket squad injured, raising serious doubts over whether Pakistan will host international sporting fixtures again.

Britain and American diplomats believe the militants' task was made easier by the actions of President Asif Ali Zardari, whose long-standing feud with political rival Nawaz Sharif led to the sacking of Sharif's brother Shahbaz as

chief minister of Punjab last month.

"It is well-documented that recruits from southern Punjab are fighting in the North-West Frontier Province and tribal areas," one senior Western diplomat told the Sunday Telegraph.

"Extremist groups are exploiting the under-developed areas of the southern Punjab, particularly through their charity groups to recruit people. Shahbaz Sharif was moving to tackle the problem, but with the political upheaval it means that everything has to be studied over anew. Both sides are focusing on their political positions. It has distracted from the major issues," he added.

The United States and Britain remain alarmed by Pakistan's attempts to blame

India for the Lahore attack.

Foreign diplomats believe this to be little more than a conspiracy designed to detract the blame from the Pakistani government's own doorstep.

American and British diplomats do not believe the militants are yet poised to take over Pakistan's major metros, but they do believe the Lahore attack highlights the need to tackle terrorism beyond their dusty havens along the Afghan borders.

Ali Hasan Dayan, Human Rights Watch and political analyst, said Lahore had never witnessed a terrorist attack on such a scale and that its people, who regard themselves as the country's liberal, metropolitan elite, were embarrassed.

More Kargils if Kashmir remains unresolved Says Musharraf

PTI, New Delhi

Former Pakistan President Pervez Musharraf, considered the architect of the 1999 Kargil war, has warned that there could be more such conflicts if the "key dispute" and "sore point" Kashmir remains unresolved for long.

The retired Army General, who ruled Pakistan for nine years till last August after seizing power in a bloodless coup, acknowledged that there are a "lots of 'Mujahideen' in Pakistani society" and "freelance Jihadis" who have "emotional involvement" with the cause of Kashmiris.

Playing a peacenik as he faced a barrage of uncomfortable questions from a combative audience at a media event in New Delhi last night, he said the leaderships of the two countries need to take "bold" and "affirmative" decisions to address the core dispute of Kashmir.

He said India and Pakistan have caused "immense" damage to each other over the past six decades and they needed to "overcome the burden of history" and move towards peaceful relations by adopting realistic approach to addressing disputes.

During the marathon three-hour long interaction, he appeared agitated at times by the questions which touched issues like why terrorism continues to emanate from Pakistan, why Kargil happened, why Dawood Ibrahim is not being handed over and whether India can trust Pakistani army and ISI.



PHOTO: AFP

Former president of Pakistan General Pervez Musharraf (L) salutes to delegation members as editor in chief of India Today magazine Arun Poorie (R) looks on during the India Today Conclave conference in New Delhi on Saturday. Musharraf called for peaceful relations between nuclear-armed India and Pakistan to allow them to fight terrorism more effectively.

Top intelligence men partners in crime

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During that time, he rented seven trucks and a truck crane at Greenways Transportation Limited in Kadamtali in the port city.

He told Greenways the trucks would be used to carry fertilisers from CUFL and were taken to the CUFL jetty in the dark night of April 1, 2004.

Greenways Transport owner Mohammad Habibur Rahman said, "NSI officer Akbar and another person rented trucks from my company."

He added, "Many people rent trucks from us. The NSI man also did the same." He gave his written statements to the investigation officials, Habibur Rahman added.

During his stay in Patuakhali, Akbar denied his involvement with the arms smuggling. When Greenways Transport owners' statement

was referred, he said, "What is the benefit of dragging the past? Can a tiny official like me do something of his own?"

Akbar is now stationed at the NSI Headquarters.

Asked about taking actions regarding renting trucks by Akbar, the then director general of NSI Brig Gen (ret'd) M Abdur Rahim said, "Why should I take actions...? The director who transferred him to the special wing is supposed to take actions."

He referred to the then NSI director (security) Wing Commander Shahab Uddin.

Contacted, Shahab said, "Why should I take punitive actions? The DG transferred Akbar to the special wing bypassing my opinions. He could say better why he did that."

Statements of these two former NSI officials indicate that transferring Akbar to the

special wing in Dhaka and renting trucks have a connection, reported the Bangla daily.

Sources say the previous Awami League government sent M Abdur Rahim to forced retirement. Following that he started real estate business and later the BNP-Jamaat alliance government appointed him as the director general of NSI on contract basis.

Rahim said, "We learned of the matter only after seizing the ten trucks with arms, not before that."

Suspension of five top officials, including three directors of NSI, in one and a half years into the arms seizure is something mysterious. Some NSI officials said they were suspended in fear that they might have leaked out the information regarding the arms smuggling.

Shahab Uddin said, "I myself also don't know why I

was suspended. I was staying abroad for training during the seizure of the ammunition. On my returning home, I knew that I have no job. It was injustice to me."

On suspension of most of the NSI officials, he said, "It was the decision from the government high-ups. I had nothing to do. I know nothing about the link between suspension and the arms smuggling."

On the night when the seizure was made, Ulfa leader Paresh Barua was supposed to talk with the main accused of the case Hafizur Rahman over phone, but Rahman did not clearly tell the court if Barua talked to him.

Asked about it, the then chief of DGFI Major Gen Sadek Hasan Rumi said the statement of Hafiz was not right. He also said the government did not assign DGFI to investigate

the case.

CID Senior Assistant Super Mohammad Ismail Hossain, one of the investigation officers of the case, recorded in December last the statement of Rezzakul Haider, director of GDFI counter intelligence bureau.

Rezzakul Haider said, "I was included in the government committee after the arms seizure. That is the reason why the investigation officer recorded my statement. I told him everything I knew. Besides, we submitted a written report to the government. Due to short time, it was not possible for us to identify the sources of arms, who were involved behind the smuggling, and what was their purpose."

[Judging importance of the Prothom Alo news, we decided to re-run the report for our readers in English]

Ensure smooth power supply

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Talking to reporters after the meeting at the Jatiya Sangsad Bhaban, the state minister said they are trying to ensure uninterrupted supply of power for irrigation.

At the meeting, committee members also urged the ministry to take steps to ensure shutdown of the shopping malls in the cities by 8:00pm for the sake of irrigation.

Contacted by The Daily Star over telephone, committee member and AL lawmaker Abdul Matin Khasru said they urged the ministry to ensure uninterrupted supply of power for irrigation at any cost.

Meanwhile, a press release issued by parliament secretariat last night said committee chief Major General (ret'd) Subid Ali Bhuiyan directed the power

ministry officials to come up with proposals in the next meeting for increasing generation of power.

Another parliamentary body on finance ministry yesterday at its meeting also emphasised the need to take immediate measures to improve the power situation as it observed that farmers are facing difficulties to run pumps for irrigation.

The parliamentary standing committee on finance ministry also reviewed the country's macro economic scenario and discussed the way of reducing interest rate of bank loans.

Talking to reporters after the meeting, Committee Chairman AHM Mustafa Kamal said the committee asked Bangladesh Bank to work on how to reduce interest rate of bank loans.

Meanwhile, the parliamentary standing committee on education ministry yesterday at a meeting asked the officials concerned to look into the legal side whether the provision of the Bangladesh University of Professionals Bill contradicts the law of the land.

A section of the bill proposed that the language of education in the university would be English. The committee will scrutinise the bill at its coming meeting.

The committee, however, discussed different circulars issued by the immediate past caretaker government curtailing the power of people's representatives regarding supervising educational institutions. It observed that the circulars would be repealed.

Admin thrown in a spin

FROM PAGE 1

government give back the magistracy power which was stripped of them during the caretaker government. Sources said the senior bureaucrats are pushing the field-level officers in this to increase their authority.

"We expected this government to be a different one and handle the administration with professionalism. But what we see now is disappointing," said a senior bureaucrat, who does not support the government's hurried transfers and promotions.

Since assuming power on January 6, the Awami League-led grand alliance government promoted 10 officers to secretaries while placing a couple of officers on special duty (OSD). They also promoted 72 joint secretaries to posts of additional secretary and 86 deputy secretaries to the rank of joint

secretary. The government also changed seven secretaries and five additional secretaries yesterday.

In addition, a large number of officers got transferred and promoted during this period of administration shake-up.

"In this sort of situation, an officer usually remains idle and waits for his or her new responsibility," another bureaucrat told The Daily Star yesterday at the secretariat.

Many officers were ignored in the reshuffle process which caused commotion in the civil administration, the officer said, adding that the government should have given the officers time to show efficiency and professionalism.

"Actions could have been taken if they failed to perform as per the instructions of the government. The government should have adopted a go-slow policy."

Against this backdrop, the new faces in the Sheikh Hasina-led cabinet are finding it very difficult to perform their responsibilities. "Many of them require more time to understand how the administration functions," admitted a state minister, adding that time is also needed to get the administration up and run properly.

The government on February 22 changed the cabinet secretary and communication secretary, less than a month after their appointment. This had a negative impact on the administration. It proves that the government is not making decisions perfectly, believe some officials.

Meanwhile, the 86 officers, who were promoted to joint secretaries in the third week of February, have started to get their new posts. They had

remained attached to the establishment ministry when the administration desperately needed them to do the routine work at different ministries.

Leaders, activists and supporters of the ruling parties are crowding the ministries. This is also hampering activities of the ministers.

"We are really bogged down by the number of visitors after taking office," said a cabinet minister, who yesterday requested his party people to visit his home instead of the office.

The mutiny at the BDR headquarters and putting former information secretary Abu Karim into forced retirement, in connection with writing controversial poems, also made the administration more sluggish during the last few weeks.

Adviser to the Prime

Minister on Administrative Affairs HT Imam called for a news briefing at his Secretariat office on February 25 to describe the overall situation of the administration but the briefing was cancelled following the BDR mutiny.

A former cabinet secretary, who talked to The Daily Star on condition of anonymity, said the civil administration will continue to perform this way until it is reformed discarding its colonial shape.

"Now bureaucrats have no confidence. They are suffering from an uncertainty. It is because the civil administration still has the colonial structure," he said.

Asked about the inexperience of the ministers, the former top bureaucrat said, "It is not a bad idea to incorporate new faces in the cabinet but the question is whether they are capable or not."

ing it at Akyab port in Myanmar or on the coast of Cox's Bazar in Bangladesh. The arms were supposed to reach the secessionists of India's north-western state through Chin province of Myanmar or Mizoram state of India.

Since the rugged route was not safe enough, the plan was abandoned at the last moment and the consignment of arms was sent to the coast of Chittagong. Security analysts say the last moment change of route could have been a strategic move.

[Judging importance of the Prothom Alo news, we decided to re-run the report for our readers in English]

It all started from Bangkok

FROM PAGE 16

In February last year, when a Prothom Alo correspondent talked to Davis in Bangkok, he had said that different sources confirmed that Bankapi Royal Rose Hotel is a den of the Ulfa (United Liberation Front of Assam) and arms smugglers. He said, "I have learnt that the issue of sending arms was finalised in a meeting at this hotel. I could not be sure about all who were present in the meeting. However, I am almost sure that Anthony Shimray was present. He was the main person behind the collection of the consignment of the arms."

Davis had doubts about the presence of any Bangladesh

nationals in the meeting. He, however, claimed that it was absurd that intelligence agencies of Bangladesh did not know about arms being smuggled using Bangladesh territory.

He claimed the arms and ammunition were bought from a Chinese factory.

Davis said his sources say that the two trawlers, from which the arms were offloaded in Chittagong, belonged to Ulfa. He claimed that Bangladesh security officials accidentally caught the consignment of arms and ammunition.

The huge cache of arms was brought for Ulfa, secessionist organisation of India's

north-western state Assam. Ulfa needed to collect arms for their existence. Bhutan government in collaboration with Indian army in December, 2003, and January, 2004, conducted a large-scale operation to destroy Ulfa in Bhutan's territory. The operation was dubbed "Operation All Clear". Many Ulfa members were killed and arrested.

According to the Jane's Intelligence Review report, Ulfa did not have a good relation with Naga secessionist group National Socialist Council of Nagaland (NSCN-IM). However, after suffering the huge loss in the operation the two secessionist groups came closer. The main arms

collector of Naga secessionist group Anthony Shimray had good connection with international arms smugglers.

The Prothom Alo report quoting Davis said he came to know during investigation, with information gleaned from different persons and from the report of Criminal Investigation Department (CID) of Bangladesh, that Pakistan army intelligence, ISI, had financed the consignment. However, Davis claimed that the agency does its work very discreetly leaving no trail.

He said he came to know that the meeting at the hotel decided to send the consignment of the arms after unload-


KATALYST
 Partners in Business Innovation

Request for Expression of Interest for Appointment of a Facilitator for Developing a Traceable and Contamination Free Fresh Water Shrimp Market

Katalyst is a project funded by a donor consortium comprising of DFID-Department for International Development, UK; CIDA-Canadian International Development Agency; Embassy of the Kingdom of the Netherlands; and SDC-Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation. The project aims to reduce poverty by improving the competitiveness of the private sector of Bangladesh.

Katalyst is working on the fresh water shrimp sector and would like to work on the quality and traceability issues. Katalyst invites Expression of Interest from organizations to work on activities related to the issues mentioned.

The organization must fulfill the following conditions:

- Experience in working with the private sector and government in the fresh water shrimp and fish sector
- Experience in handling fresh water shrimp-based industry issues, particularly, quality requirements for export, HACCP, SPS, Good Aquaculture Practices, bio-terrorism, traceability, international principles of responsible aquaculture, Good Hygiene Practices, fresh water shrimp development policy and policy advocacy, etc
- Practical experience in framing Code of Conduct for the fresh water shrimp industry
- Organizations having experts with long and extensive national and international level expertise covering both production as well as food safety related issues will be preferred

The Expression of Interest should clearly specify (in English):

- A proposal along with a budget on how the Interested Party intends to implement the contract, if awarded.
- A detailed Terms of Reference (ToR) will be available from Katalyst. (please write to fazle.razik@swisscontact-bd.org)
- The Interested Party's most recent and relevant services provided over the last 3 years
- The CVs of the key staff who will actually perform the tasks

The contract is expected to start no later than 15 April 2009 and last for 2 years and could be extended.

Katalyst invites the interested parties to submit their Expression of Interest along with a Proposal to the **Division Manager, Industry & Rural Sectors Division, Katalyst, House 20, Road 6, Baridhara, Dhaka- 1212**, mentioning "EOI for Developing a Traceable and Contamination free Fresh Water Shrimp Market" on top of the envelope by **March 22, 2009**.