

# Indian PM signs 12 deals with Myanmar

AGENCIES, Nay Pyi Taw

India yesterday announced it will provide a 500 million-dollar line of credit to Myanmar as the two countries signed 12 agreements on a range of sectors, including air services, beginning a "new journey" of bilateral cooperation.

On the first visit by an Indian prime minister to Myanmar in quarter of a century, Manmohan Singh held "broad-ranging" discussions with Myanmar President Thein Sein on a road map for bilateral cooperation and said New Delhi was committed to Myanmar's economic development.

A Memorandum of Understanding for India's 500 million dollar credit line was signed between Export-Import Bank of India and Myanmar Foreign Trade Bank.

The line of credit was agreed upon in October last year when the Myanmar president had visited New Delhi. The two countries also signed an air services agreement and an MoU on establishment of a joint trade and investment forum and setting up of border trade centres across the border of India and Myanmar.

The premier told Thein Sein that connectivity remains a major thrust area in India-

Myanmar relations while capacity-building in Myanmar was a major priority for India's development assistance to this country, reports PTI.

India pledged to double the training slots of Myanmarese personnel in India. "We have embarked on a new journey of bilateral cooperation", Singh told Thein Sein, adding, "we are committed to strengthening our economic and development partnership."

Singh told Sein that India was ready to share with Myanmar its experience of parliamentary democracy and "we wish you all success in your nation-building efforts and changes you are bringing about," according to MEA spokesman Syed Akbaruddin.

Singh is travelling with a top-level business delegation and a joint statement said Indian firms would be "specifically encouraged" to invest in oil and gas, infrastructure, tourism, and information and communication technology, reports AFP.

Indian-backed infrastructure projects in the country include a port at Sittwe on the Bay of Bengal, but New Delhi's presence lags well behind that of Beijing, which is behind a host of major energy developments.



PHOTO: AFP  
Visiting Indian Prime Minister Manmohan Singh shakes hands with Myanmar President Thein Sein during their meeting at the president's house in Naypyidaw yesterday.

# Nepal president concerned over power vacuum

AFP, Kathmandu

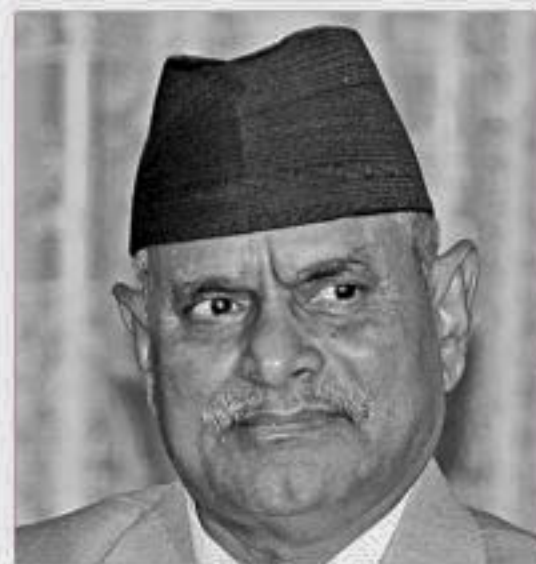
Nepal's president voiced concern yesterday as the country faced a six-month power vacuum and fresh elections after parliament missed a midnight deadline to agree a new constitution.

Prime Minister Baburam Bhattarai announced late Sunday that the country's parliament, elected in 2008 to write the constitution after a decade of civil war, would be disbanded ahead of November elections.

Lawmakers failed again to break years of deadlock on the nation's new federal structure which is intended to bring stability to the impoverished Himalayan country and unite its more than 100 ethnic minorities.

"The unexpected dissolution of the Constituent Assembly constituted after a big struggle and sacrifice is a matter of serious concern and regret for all of us," President Ram Baran Yadav said in a public address yesterday.

The constitution was intended to create a new secular, democratic republic following the abolition of Nepal's centuries-old Hindu



Ram Baran Yadav

monarchy after Maoist rebels gave up arms and won the 2008 elections.

An estimated 16,000 people died in the 1996-2006 civil war.

The move to dissolve parliament leaves the nation with a deeply-divided caretaker government which has no mandate and no chamber in place to pass laws and rubber-stamp decisions.

Bhattarai formed a national unity government two weeks ago, but his decision to call elections led to resignations yesterday from the Unified Marxist Leninist (UML) members over claims the early polls would be unconstitutional.

The Nepali Congress representatives in the coalition had already resigned last week and the United Democratic Madhesi Front joined growing calls on yesterday for the prime minister to step down.

The widespread hope in Nepal that followed the end of the civil war and the abolition of the unpopular monarchy has been replaced by a growing sense of anger which analysts warned could lead to violence.

# Blair admits being too close to Murdoch

AFP, London

Former British prime minister Tony Blair told a press ethics inquiry yesterday that he got too close to Rupert Murdoch's media empire, in evidence disrupted by a protester calling him a "war criminal".

A middle-aged man burst into the courtroom where the Leveson Inquiry is held and shouted "this man should be arrested for war crimes" while Blair was speaking, before being hustled out.

The reference was to Blair's decision to take Britain to war in Iraq and Afghanistan during his time in office from 1997 until 2007.

Judge Brian Leveson, who is heading the inquiry, apologised to Blair and immediately ordered an investigation into how the man had gained access to a "secure corridor" into the courtroom.

In his evidence, Blair, who is godfather to one of Rupert Murdoch's children, was asked about his close relationship with the media baron whose tabloid The Sun -- Britain's top-selling newspaper -- gave Blair its backing.

Blair said he had made a strategic decision not to take on the power of the press during his time in office, despite calls for tougher media regulation following the death of Diana, princess of Wales in 1997.

He said he had taken care to court the press because if media groups had turned against him, it would have been a "huge and sustained attack".



# Annan horrified by Syria massacre

AP, Beirut

UN envoy Kofi Annan called yesterday on "every individual with a gun" in Syria to lay down arms, saying he was horrified by a weekend massacre that killed more than 100 people, including women and small children.

Even Syria's staunchest ally Russia joined sweeping international criticism of the mass killings on Friday in the Houla area, saying the government was at least partly to blame for one of the deadliest single events in the 15-month-old uprising against President Bashar Assad's rule.

"I am personally shocked and horrified by the tragic incident in Houla two days ago, which took so many innocent lives, children, women and men," Annan said as he arrived in the Syrian capital Damascus for talks with Assad and other senior officials.

He called on all sides of the conflict to end the bloodshed, saying "this message of peace is not only for the government, but for everyone with a gun."

The killings in Houla, a collection of villages in the central province of Homs, was condemned internationally although world

powers differed over whether Assad's forces were exclusively to blame.

Activists from the Houla area said the army pounded the villages with artillery and clashed with local rebels after protests Friday. Some activists said pro-regime thugs later stormed the area, doing the bulk of the killing by gunning down men in the streets and stabbing women and children in their homes.

The Syrian government rejected that narrative and claimed soldiers were attacked in their bases and fought back in self-defense.

Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov contended in Moscow both the government and the rebels were to blame. Russia has shielded Syria from UN resolutions condemning the regime in the past, but has grown increasingly critical of Assad's government in recent months.

"Both sides have obviously had a hand in the deaths of innocent people, including several dozen women and children," Lavrov said, adding, "This area is controlled by the rebels, but it is also surrounded by the government troops."

# Massive cyber-attack uncovered

BBC ONLINE

A complex targeted cyber-attack that collected private data from countries such as Israel and Iran has been uncovered, researchers have said.

Russian security firm Kaspersky Labs told the BBC they believed the malware, known as Flame, had been operating since August 2010.

The company said it believed the attack was state-sponsored, but could not be sure of its exact origins.

They described Flame as "one of the most complex threats ever discovered".

In the past, targeted malware - such as Stuxnet - has targeted nuclear infrastructure in Iran.

Others like Duqu have sought to infiltrate networks in order to steal data.

# Ahmadinejad critic re-elected as Speaker

AFP, Tehran

One of the fiercest critics of Iranian President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad was voted back in by lawmakers yesterday as speaker of Iran's new parliament formed from elections held in March and May.

Ali Larijani, a loquacious 55-year-old regime insider whose brothers also hold key posts, fought off a challenge from Gholam Ali Hadad Adel, a 67-year-old former speaker who advocated a more moderate approach to Ahmadinejad's government.

Both Larijani and Hadad Adel are seen as close to Iran's supreme leader, Ali Khamenei, who has in recent years curbed Ahmadinejad's authority.

Larijani faithfully echoed Khamenei's stances while heading up the last parliament over the past four years, and was a rival to Ahmadinejad for the presidency in 2005.

He was also Iran's top nuclear negotiator up to October 2007, when he resigned over differences with Ahmadinejad. That nuclear issue is currently the top foreign policy challenge facing the Islamic republic.

Hadad Adel, an advisor to the supreme leader, has a son married to Khamenei's daughter.

Lawmakers returned Larijani with 173 votes, against 100 for Hadad Adel. The new 290-seat assembly remains a staunchly conservative body ranged against Ahmadinejad.

Larijani's family is a pillar of the Islamic establishment. His younger brother, Ayatollah Sadegh Larijani, is the head of Islamic republic's judiciary. His elder brother, Mohammad Javad, is an advisor to Khamenei.

# 4 opposition MPs

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"We have already received an order from a Dhaka court which has asked us to produce him before it tomorrow (Tuesday)," he added.

Only the five were granted bail although 29 other opposition leaders submitted 16 bail prayers before the HC after their bail were rejected by the magistrate and sessions judge's courts.

On May 16 and 21, the leaders were sent to jail after a metropolitan magistrate rejected their bail petitions.

On May 10, detectives pressed charges against 45 leaders, including BNP's acting Secretary General Mirza Fakhrul Islam Alamgir, in the arson case, filed with Tejgaon Police Station in connection with bus torching.

Police earlier arrested BNP Joint Secretary General Ruhul Kabir Rizvi and seven others in the same case.

Jamaat-e-Islami acting ameer Maqbul Ahmed and two others went into hiding after the case was filed.

Meanwhile, our Chittagong Correspondent reports that Jamaat-e-Islami lawmaker ANM Shamsul Islam yesterday was granted an ad-interim bail until June 5 in a case filed for torching vehicles at WASA intersection in the port city on May 13.

Chittagong Metropolitan Magistrate Mahbubur Rahman passed the order when Shamsul Islam prayed for bail after he surrendered to the court.

Kotwali police in Chittagong submitted charge sheet to Chittagong Metropolitan Magistrate court on May 23 accusing the Jamaat MP along with twenty two others in the case.

Besides this, a Chittagong court yesterday granted bail to 12 BNP leaders and activists in three separate cases filed under Speedy Trial Act with two police stations on May 13.

Four BNP activists including Abul Hashem Bakkar, former president of Chittagong city unit of Jatiyatabadi Jubo Dal, was granted bail in two cases filed with Kotwali police.

Eight other BNP activists were granted bail in a case filed with Khulshi Police Station.

Abdus Sattar, an attorney of the defence, said the accused in the case with Kotwali Police Station were granted bail until today while the others, accused in the case with Khulshi Police Station, were granted bail until June 5.

# Indian road crash kills 27

AFP, Mumbai

At least 27 guests returning from a wedding died in India yesterday when a speeding van lost control and rammed into their stationary minibus on a highway outside Mumbai.

The bus was carrying guests home from a marriage in the suburbs of Mumbai when it was hit 50 miles from the city in the western state of Maharashtra, police said.

"The minibus had stopped for repairs along the Mumbai-Pune expressway when the van lost control, broke lanes and collided into the bus," a local police officer who declined to be named told AFP by telephone.

About 18 people were injured, with many taken to hospital for treatment, he said, adding that the van driver was held for interrogation.



PHOTO: AFP  
A handout image released by the Syrian opposition's Shaam News Network yesterday, shows an anti-regime demonstration in the town of Daraa.

# Non-party govt

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specific proposal for an interim government, not the caretaker one.

Khaleda in the meeting cleared her party's stance on the issue. She said the main opposition wanted a non-party neutral administration to oversee the next parliamentary elections and that what name the non-party government would be given was not an issue to the main opposition.

"The people want elections under a non-party government.... We want an election which would be acceptable to them," she said.

Apart from bilateral issues, Burt discussed a number of topics, including imprisonment of opposition leaders and disappearance of BNP leader M Ilias Ali, said BNP Vice-chairman Shamser Mobin Chowdhury while briefing journalists after the meeting.

Expressing deep concern over Ilias being missing, the British minister said action should be taken to stop such incidents.

When Burt wanted to know from Khaleda what should be done to hold free and fair elections, she said elections must be held under a neutral administration to make them credible to the people and it is BNP's stance in principle.

In response, Alistair Burt said a discussion could bring a solution.

United Kingdom thinks a free, fair and credible election is necessary to bring political instability in Bangladesh to an end, he said, adding that it would also help Bangladesh regain its economic and social stability.

Earlier on May 20, addressing a mass hunger strike in the capital Khaleda said they were ready to join

talks with the government on caretaker government structure but there should be a precise agenda.

NON-PARTY GOVT IS A MUST

Echoing the party chairperson, senior BNP leader Moudud Ahmed yesterday said BNP would sit with the government if the prime minister declared restoration of non-party neutral government to oversee the general polls.

"The word 'interim' is not there in the constitution. But we have no objection to the name. The government must be non-party and neutral to hold the polls," he said while addressing a book exhibition programme at BNP's Nayapaltan office in Dhaka.

Referring to the news that Speaker can mediate the dialogue, the former minister said the PM must take measures in this regard, and

before going for the dialogue she must announce that the next general elections would be held under a non-party government.

BNP DEMANDS DIALOGUE SOON

Meanwhile, BNP standing committee member Rafiqul Islam Mia yesterday asked the government to hold a dialogue without any further delay to save the country.

Addressing a human chain programme, he said they would launch tougher agitation programmes if the government failed to take any steps regarding the caretaker government system within the 90-day ultimatum given by Khaleda at a rally on March 12.

Nagorik Sangsad, a pro-opposition body, organised the programme in front of the Jatiya Press Club, demanding release of the detained opposition leaders.

# Suranjit sees 'third force'

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committed skillfully leaving no clues behind.... I think conspiracy is going on in every corner," he told a commemorative meeting.

The event was organised to commemorate late Saiful Islam, a Language Movement veteran and Gonotantri Party leader.

The minister expressed fear about an impending "crisis of democracy" in the country and urged all political parties to face it in unison.

"If you include my incident [railwaygate scandal] with these occurrences, you will find that the questions which have been raised will not be answered or will not be allowed to resolve," he maintained.

Though there are many police stations and camps in the city, why the microbus went into the BGB headquarters, jointly secured by army and BGB members after 8:00pm, questioned Suranjit.

Earlier, speaking at another discussion he said there is no need for dialogue

with the main opposition BNP on the caretaker government issue as the country's constitution does not support holding elections under an unelected government.

He claimed there is a framework of an interim government in the constitution and the Election Commission will hold the elections accordingly.

"If BNP has any alternative proposal, they can come to parliament and discuss the matter," said Suranjit.

Bangabandhu Sangskritik Jote, a pro-AL organisation, organised the discussion titled "Parliament is the centre for all discussion in a democratic system" at Dhaka Reporters Unity.

He stepped down as minister of railway ministry last month after the microbus of his assistant personal secretary entered the Border Guard Bangladesh (BGB) headquarters in Pilkhana with Tk 70 lakh. Later he was retained in the cabinet as a minister without portfolio.

# Priscilla's transformation into wife of Zuckerberg

THE DAILY TELEGRAPH ONLINE

Priscilla Chan, whose transformation into the wife of the world's youngest billionaire Mark Zuckerberg, however, is more remarkable than it may seem.

For Priscilla is the child of a Chinese-Vietnamese father who arrived in America with his family in the 1970s after time in a refugee camp.

Dennis Chan, 47, raised enough money to open a restaurant, where he worked grueling 18-hour days as he dreamt of his first-born daughter living the American dream.

At the 1200-pupil state-run Quincy High School in the working-class town near Boston, it quickly became clear that Priscilla was bright - and determined to get on.

Her science teacher and tennis coach, Peter Swanson 66, said: "She came up to me during that first year, when she was 13, and said, 'What do I have to do to get into Harvard University?'"



"I was stunned. In all my years of teaching I have never had a 13-year-old ask a question like that. She knew what she wanted, even back then."

"Priscilla worked incredibly hard at her studies and graduated top of her class. 'It was clear the family came from humble beginnings but were prepared to work around the clock to make something of their new life in America.'"

Swanson visited Priscilla and her new husband at their \$3.5 million home in Palo Alto, California, last year.

"Mark was sitting at the kitchen table working on his computer," he said.

"Priscilla introduced us and he grinned and said, 'Behind every great man there is a great woman.' People are saying how lucky she is to marry him but he knows he's the lucky one. Priscilla is the ultimate story of the American dream made good."