

Border relations with India 'worst' now

Roundtable told

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Speakers at a discussion in the capital yesterday expressed concern over the recent border killings and national security. The High Commission of Canada in Dhaka and Bangladesh Institute of Peace and Security Studies (BIPSS) jointly organised the roundtable discussion titled "South Asian Regional Security: Challenges and Opportunities" at Lakeshore Hotel.

Bangladesh is now living through the worst phase of border relations with India, said Prof Shahiduzzaman of the Department of International Relations of Dhaka University. Bangladesh will continue to have problems with security optimisation until India decides to restrain itself from border shootings, he said in his keynote paper.

Commerce Minister Ghulam Muhammed Quader said, "We cannot expect that India will always be good or bad to us. As two neighbours, we need to work through our differences to live peacefully."

Speakers said while both Pakistan and India are concentrating on the development of their respective nuclear weapons, it is not likely for either country to strike within South Asia.

The issue of nuclear war will be averted by the fact that India, Pakistan and Bangladesh share common borders, said Brig Gen (ret'd) Shahedul Anam Khan, editor of Op-ed and Strategic Issues of The Daily Star.

Heather Cruden, high commissioner of Canada to Bangladesh, and Maj Gen ANM Muniruzzaman, ndc, psc (ret'd), president of BIPSS, also addressed the programme.



Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina waves at a mammoth crowd at Maizdi Housing Balur Math in Noakhali yesterday afternoon.

PHOTO: BSS

Stay on DCC polls extended again

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The High Court yesterday once again extended its stay order on holding the elections to bifurcate Dhaka City Corporation (DCC) by three months, until April 8, as the authorities neither implemented nor replied to its directives.

The HC bench extended the stay order after holding hearing on a petition filed by Manzill Murshid, president of Human Rights and Peace for Bangladesh (HRPB).

In the petition, the HRPB chief sought extension of the previous stay order as the Election Commission had not fulfilled the legal procedures for holding the polls.

Earlier, on April 16, 2012, the HC directed the EC to update the city corporations' voter lists and determine the number of wards and councilors with assistance of government authorities three months before the polls and also stayed the election for three months.

The EC on April 9, 2012, scheduled the polls for both the north and south city corporations for May 24 in the same year.

The HC on July 23, 2012 for the first time extended its stay order for three months while on October 8 it again extended the previous stay order.

UN official hints at downsizing peacekeeping missions

DIPLOMATIC CORRESPONDENT

UN Under-Secretary General for the Department of Field Support Ameerah Haq yesterday hinted that the number of UN peacekeeping troops working across the world might be cut down considering various factors.

Asked whether the downsizing is because of global economic crisis, she said "It is a combination of many factors, not just economic situation."

Ameerah, the first Bangladeshi woman to assume the position in the UN, was addressing a press conference at the capital's IDB Bhaban, wrapping up her three-day visit.

She said a lot is now done better through new technology than the ground troops.

Citing examples of withdrawal of peacekeepers from different countries, Ameerah said the UN peacekeeping mission was shutdown in East Timor following the smooth transition of democracy there.

In Haiti, she said, the UN had expanded its peacekeeping mission after the devastating earthquake, but now they feel it is the time to pull out. Same situations are emerging in Liberia and Darfur, she added.

Replying to a question whether the number of Bangladeshi peacekeepers would be reduced, Ameerah declined to talk about it.

She said according to the UN mandate, the job of peacekeeping has changed a lot and it has become "complex".

She explained that the traditional peacekeeping like monitoring ceasefire is no longer there. Now the focus is on how to protect the civilians in the conflict-ridden country and building peace, she said.

At a briefing session at the foreign ministry, Ameerah underscored the need for strategic approaches to maintain Bangladesh's edge in troop contribution in the hybrid peacekeeping operations run jointly by the UN and

the regional organisations like the African Union.

She shared some practical advices on how Bangladesh could enhance its engagement with UN peacekeeping and peace building in the context of the increasingly complex and multi-dimensional peacekeeping operations.

She encouraged Bangladesh's businesses to explore the feasibility of doing business with the UN in terms of supplying logistics and services mobilised by the Department of Field Support (DFS) for UN peacekeeping operations.

Yesterday Ameerah also met Inspector General of Police (IGP) Hassan Mahmood Khandker at the Police Headquarters.

She told the IGP that the number of Bangladeshi policemen to be recruited to the UN peacekeeping missions will be increased soon. The missions will also recruit more female police members from Bangladesh, she said.

Animated movies wow children, adults alike

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The Dhaka Art Center yesterday illustrated that an animated movie is not only a children's delight, but can touch hearts of adults as well.

Celebrating its third founding anniversary, the institution has organised a weeklong festival from January 4 to January 11.

On the fifth day of the festival yesterday, the cultural centre showed three short movies of British figures -- Wallace and Gromit. The cinema hall in the centre was packed not only with children but also with teenagers, parents, grandparents and other adults.

Wallace is an absent-minded inventor who lives with his intelligent dog Gromit in a small town in England.

"I won't watch this, it's for children," said a 17-year-old Auyon to his friends and was about to leave the room. Only with a great effort, Auyon's companions managed to make him stay.

"In the beginning, it was a bit slow to me," said Auyon after the show. However, he said the last movie of Wallace and Gromit, "A Close Shave", made him laugh.

Viewers' reactions to the movies so far shown in the festival have pleased Shoumik Hassin, the festival programmer.

Due to the technique, an animator depicts the world as we sense, feel and believe it to be when it is stripped to its core, he said.

Movies are shown at 4:00pm and 6:00pm every day. The 4:00pm screenings are children-friendly.



Outgoing female students of Rahmatunnisa Hall of Rajshahi University, clad in colourful saris, bring out a procession on the campus yesterday marking their departure from the dormitory.

PHOTO: STAR

RISING Stars

Surfing. Like skateboarding and rollerblading, only wave taming and the risk of a watery death involved. This week, we catch up with the surfer movement in Cox's Bazaar, and celebrate Bangladesh's monumental win at WUDC, where two heroic debaters brought us glory on an international stage. We also explore the weird side of music with the band Gwar and their on-stage antics. There's a lot more.

SEE THIS WEEK'S RISING STARS.

NEWBORN DEATHS CUT Community women's groups vital: Experts

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Mobilising women's groups in rural communities to address problems in pregnancy, delivery and postnatal period can substantially reduce newborn and postnatal deaths, said health experts yesterday.

They told a seminar titled "Improving Maternal and Child Health in Bangladesh: A Perinatal Care Project Experience."

Perinatal Care Project (PCP), a project of Bangladesh Diabetic Samity, organised the seminar at a hotel in the capital where State Minister for Health and Family Welfare Captain (ret'd) Dr Mozibur Rahman Fakir was present as chief guest.

The project, which has been working since 2004 in the districts of Bogra, Faridpur, and Moulvibazar, found that community women's groups can play a major role in identifying and addressing problems facing mothers and newborns and thus bringing down respective mortality rates.

Lawmaker Prof Dr MS Akbar, chairman of Bangladesh Red Crescent Society, also spoke at the seminar.

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