

# Beijing-Dhaka axis

51-8 20/11  
Delhi must monitor overall strategic pattern

That Bangladesh prime minister, Begum Khaleda Zia, has signed an umbrella defence cooperation agreement with President Jiang Zemin in Beijing should not be tied too closely with the recent downturn in relations between India and Bangladesh. Beijing has been for quite some time the largest supplier of weapons and training to the Bangladeshi military, a relationship sought to be institutionalised by the current agreement. To a certain extent it is understandable that Dhaka should seek to balance Indian economic and military dominance over the region by dealing with Beijing. But Dhaka has been unnecessarily peevish about entering into mutually beneficial trade and transit agreements with New Delhi, whether with regard to selling gas to India or allowing road and rail connections to the Northeast, all of which, together with Islamabad's proxy war in Kashmir and stonewalling of any economic cooperation with India, has been a ticklish issue for some time and made SAARC something of a non-starter.

What is worrying is the pattern revealed here, whereby India's neighbours such as Pakistan, Bangladesh and Myanmar are keener to enter into economic and strategic cooperation pacts with Beijing than with Delhi, especially when put together with official Chinese doctrine that India is the hegemon in South Asia and needs to be countered by propping up its neighbours. Beijing is willing to expend a lot of treasure in doing so — for example, it has just announced a \$58.21 million loan on soft terms besides spending another \$198 million on the first phase of building a multipurpose deep-water port in Gwadar, Baluchistan, which will enable Beijing to keep an eye on Indian and US ships in the Arabian Sea. Beijing is also helping Myanmar expand its naval facilities on the Great Coco Island, the quid pro quo being, apart from a berthing place for the Chinese navy just off the Andamans, a major signals intelligence facility in the Bay of Bengal.

Beijing, unlike Delhi, thinks long-term, and China's faster economic growth enables Beijing to project military power at a quicker pace. Delhi will be slowly hemmed in from all sides in its own neighbourhood. The best way to cut the Gordian knot may be to arrive at an understanding with Beijing itself, whereby Delhi gives up on some non-essential interests in order to secure essential ones. A non-essential interest would be its territorial claims in the Aksai Chin region, a barren area where India never had much of a toehold but which Beijing considers essential for securing Tibet. Essential interests would be terminating Beijing's nuclear cooperation with Islamabad, and accepting Sikkim and Arunachal Pradesh as Indian territory. With some astute diplomacy Delhi ought to be able to convince Beijing that greater advantages will accrue to it from, for example, access to Indian markets, rather than dubious nuclear deals with Islamabad bound to receive greater scrutiny in a post 9/11 atmosphere.

30 DEC 2002

# Journalists freed in Bangladesh

12/12  
**Statesman News Service**

DHAKA, Dec. 11. — Bangladesh today released two journalists of Channel-4, Italian-born Leopoldo Bruno Sorrentino and Ms Zaiba Naz Malik, a British national of Pakistani origin. They were arrested on 25 November on charges of sedition.

A foreign office spokesperson said the journalists were not released following international pressure, but in an “extraordinary gesture” of the government. He said the scribes had admitted to entering the country using false professional identities and that they had apologised for their deception.

“They (the scribes) said they were probing charges of Al-Qaida/Taliban activities in Bangladesh, but found no evidence to support the allegations. They said they saw clear evidence of religious tolerance and communal harmony in Bangladesh,” a foreign office press release said.

Both the journalists along with Channel-4 and Mentor Production Company, UK, have given an undertaking not to malign Bangladesh on “false grounds”, the press release said.

To a question on the fate of a local journalist detained for helping the foreigners, the spokesperson said their cases would be dealt with by the court in accordance with existing laws.

# Al-Qaida not linked to Bangla blasts

Dhaka, December 9

GRIEVING FAMILIES flew black flags and offered prayers for the dead on Monday after Prime Minister Khaleda Zia vowed to hunt down the bombers of four crowded cinemas.

No suspects have been identified and no one claimed responsibility for Saturday night's blasts, which killed 20 people and injured several hundreds.

Authorities said an unidentified "organised group" set off the bombs in Mymensingh, a small town 70 miles north of the capital, Dhaka. But they denied speculation that Osama bin Laden's terror network might be involved.

"I ... would like to categorically state here that there is no al-Qaida network on the soil of Bangladesh," Home Minister Altaf Hossain Chowdhury told a news conference.

Zia ordered heightened security at mosques, temples, churches, shopping malls and theatres across Bangladesh.

The Government appointed Sultan Hossain, a retired High Court judge, to investigate the attacks. Hossain has three weeks to investigate and make a report.

Police have detained 30 people since the explosions on suspicion of trying to destabilise the state. However, their cases were not linked to the blasts, police said. Police were also question-

ing 21 theater employees.

Twenty-six of those detained are members of the nation's main Opposition party, the Awami League. The party called for a nationwide general strike on Thursday to protest what it said were "repressive actions" by the Government.

Visiting the bombing sites on Sunday, the Prime Minister said police had uncovered many clues and "those who are responsible will be tracked down and put on trial".

Police said the bombs had been planted in the theatres' projection rooms and went off while the cinemas were packed with early evening moviegoers, many of them celebrating the Id.

The army defused a fifth bomb on Saturday night in a theatre in the nearby town Gaibandha. The device was wrapped in a plastic bag tied to the back of a seat, police said.

Police chief Modabbir Hossain Chowdhury said the blasts were "the work of an organised group", but he stopped short of labeling it an act of terror.

Muslim Bangladesh has denied accusations by neighbouring India that it has become a safe haven for terrorists and rejected media claims that it has been used as a base for al-Qaida.

The explosions killed 15 people Saturday, and five others died of injuries Sunday.

AP

INDIAN TIMES

10 DEC 2002

INDIAN TIMES

# Opp leaders held, gloom descends on Bangla town

REUTERS  
MYMENSINGH, DECEMBER 9

Police have detained up to 50 Opposition activists, including prominent leaders and newspaper columnists, on charges of suspected anti-state activities. "They have been arrested under Section 54 of the Criminal Procedure Code for suspected involvement in anti-state activities," a police officer said on Monday.

Those detained include former commerce minister Tofael Ahmed, who is also a key leader of the main Opposition Awami

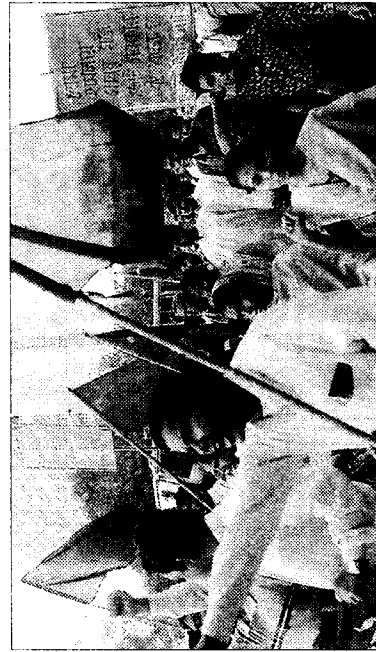
League, as well as the party's social welfare secretary Mukul Bose and its Dhaka organising secretary Sheikh Bazlur Rahman, along with columnist and human rights activist Shahriar Kabir, police said. The Awami League said the arrests of party leaders and workers were designed to destroy the Opposition in the country.

Monday was observed as a day of mourning while black flags fluttered a top buildings in the shocked, silent town of Mymensingh. Police said nearly 60 people were being treated in hospital with some in critical condition.

"Most of the bodies have been received by their families for burial after autopsy at hospitals," a police officer said. Residents of Mymensingh, 150 km north of Dhaka, plan to hold a joint rally and prayer session on Monday.

Many among the panic-stricken population of about half a million wore black badges as a pall of gloom hung over the town. "We are closed as people have lost their mood for celebration," said Abdul Latif, manager of a restaurant near one of the bombed cinema halls.

Most shops and businesses as



Bangladeshis protesting against Saturday's blasts. Reuters

well as educational institutions were closed even though the three-day public holiday for the *Id al-Fitr* festival ended on Saturday.

Prime Minister Begum Khaleda Zia and other leaders of the ruling Bangladesh Nationalist Party and the main Opposition Awami League visited Mymensingh on Sunday and vowed resistance against all forms of terrorism.

Khaleda ordered an investigation into what she called a conspiracy against Bangladesh.

Mymensingh police said they had yet to determine who was behind the carnage, but were investigating aggressively. About 300 people were wounded when bombs went off in four cinemas packed with nearly 2,000 people.

10 DEC 2002

# Dhaka denies Al-Qaida hand

SNS & AP

DHAKA, Dec. 8. — The Bangladeshi home minister, Air Vice-Marshal (ret'd), Altaf Hossain Chowdhury, today denied that he had told an international news agency that the Al-Qaida network might be involved in yesterday's bomb explosions in Mymensingh cinemas which claimed 20 lives.

Police today detained 21 witnesses for questioning. Officers said those held were theatre employees, including some security guards. No suspects have been identified.

Speaking at a hurriedly called press conference the home minister said: "I would like to assert that never ever have I spoken to any Reuters correspondent on any issue in recent days. There is therefore no question of my speaking to anybody on the Mymensingh incident."

Earlier, Reuters quoted the home minister as saying the bombing could be the work of Osama bin Laden's outfit or some other terrorist group.

The minister said there were no Al-Qaida activists in Bangladesh. "There is, however, a group of people which is in league with some external forces, trying to play a false Al-Qaida card. It passionately believes that this is the best ploy to harm a government that came to power a year ago through a massive mandate of the people. It is



HORROR SHOW: A Bangladeshi armyman inspects the site of an explosion at a movie theatre in Mymensingh on Sunday. — AFP

determined to malign a country for its narrow political ends."

The Prime Minister, Ms Khaleda Zia, visited the site of yesterday's bomb explosions in Mymensingh district town. She said the persons responsible for the inhuman act would be punished.

More than 200 people were in-

jured in last night's explosions that tore through the movie houses during a 30-minute period across Mymensingh, a small town about 110 km north of Dhaka.

The poorly equipped hospitals in the town appealed for medicines and blood donations. Doctors are struggling to treat more than 200 people injured in the explosions. Doctors feared that the number of dead would rise further because 12 of the injured were in critical condition.

Police chief Mr Modabbir Hossain Chowdhury said the blast were "the work of an organised group", but he stopped short of labelling it an act of terror.

# Chittagong tribals threaten to revive insurgency

*Handwritten:*  
19-15  
2/12

By Haroon Habib

**DHAKA, DEC. 8.** Tension mounted throughout the Chittagong Hill Tracts after the former tribal guerillas expressed serious dissatisfaction over the "non-implementation" of the peace accord by the present Government and the regional leaders of the four-party ruling alliance threatened to counter the tribals "even with arms" if the "illegal pact" was implemented.

The fifth anniversary of the landmark 1997 peace accord was observed in the hill districts as well as in the capital last week with three opposing parties expressing their determination to advance their conflicting programmes, signalling fresh trouble ahead.

The Parbatta Chattagram Jana Sanghati Samity (PCJSS), the main tribal body that signed the accord with the Sheikh Hasina government, said it might even "go back to insurgency", charging the Khaleda Zia Government with not showing any interest in implementing the accord. "We had an armed struggle for 24 years. If necessary, we

are ready to return to the bush war for securing total implementation of the accord", said Jyotirindra Bodhipriya Larma alias Santu Larma, chief of the PCJSS and the Shanti Bahini rebels, at a tribal rally in Khagrachari.

The anti-accord United Peoples Democratic Party (UPDF), led by Proshit Khisa, demanded that the Government should prosecute Santu Larma for "killing thousands" of its supporters during the past several years.

The Awami League, which signed the agreement, said the Khaleda regime, by stopping the implementation of the treaty, was "trying to return the region to turmoil" once again.

Meanwhile, left-leaning political leaders blamed the Government for continuing the army's "Operation Uttaran" in the Chittagong region. They said that by not implementing the treaty, including the provision for withdrawal of the army from the region, the Government was trying to invite "fresh trouble".

At a seminar in Dhaka marking the sign-

ing anniversary of the accord, Santu Larma, who held the Awami League government equally responsible for "not being sincere" in the implementation of the accord, said, "Now, an undeclared martial law is in force in the Chittagong region" which was contrary to the peace accord.

Significantly, the former guerilla leader, who is also the Chairman of the CHT Regional Council, with the rank and status of a State Minister, alleged that the Government was patronising "religious fundamentalists and reactionary groups" in the hill districts "with an ulterior motive".

The internationally acclaimed legal expert, Kamal Hossain, has remarked that the 1997 peace accord was "complementary" to the country's Constitution. He also said "vested quarters" were creating obstacles in the way of its implementation.

In a related development, at a counter rally in Bandarban, local leaders of the ruling alliance termed the accord as "anti-state" and "unconstitutional" and threatened that the Bengalis would take up arms if the tribals returned to bush war.

# Blasts backlash on Hasina

party  
4/12 ✓  
FARID HOSSAIN ✓

**Dhaka, Dec. 8:** Khaleda Zia's government launched a crackdown on the Opposition Awami League after bombs ripped through cinemas in northern Mymensingh town yesterday, killing 18 people, as families celebrated Id.

In raids on their houses early today, police detained two senior leaders of Sheikh Hasina's party and two writers on charges of anti-state activities, sabotage and conspiracy to destabilise the government.

Saber Hossain Chowdhury, Hasina's political secretary, Shafi Ahmed, a leader of the student chapter of Hasina's party, Muntasir Mamum, a Dhaka University teacher and writer, and Shahriar Kabir, a writer and human rights activist, were kept in the headquarters of the detective police.

The houses of several other Opposition leaders and critics of the government were also raided. The police said 21 people, including some students, had been arrested in Mymensingh. In Dhaka, 39 members of the Awami League were taken into custody.

Chowdhury — who was freed only last month after being arrested in October — Ahmed and Mamum were produced in court, which sent them to three days' police remand. Not produced before a court yet, Kabir had earlier been arrested in November 2001 after his arrival in Dhaka from a visit to India and charged with sedition. He was released on bail in January.

Home minister Altaf Hossain Chowdhury said the arrests of the four were not related to the bombings of the four movie halls. He also denied having said yesterday that al Qaida could be behind the serial bombings.

"How can I say that al Qaida operatives were responsible? There is no presence of the terrorists on the soil of Bangladesh," Chowdhury said.

A news agency had quoted him as saying that the bombings could be the work of the supporters of Osama bin Laden or any other terrorist group.

Prime Minister Khaleda Zia today visited the bombing sites and comforted several injured people. "Those who are trying to tarnish Bangladesh's image at home and abroad are supporting such acts of violence," she said.

9 DEC 2002

# 15 killed in serial blasts in Bangladesh cinema halls

By Haroon Habib

**DHAKA, DEC. 7.** Fifteen persons were killed and over 200 film-goers injured in serial bomb blasts in four cinema halls in My-mensingh district town, 100 km from here, today.

All the 'powerful' bombs blew up in the jam-packed cinema halls one after another and within a few minutes after the first one was thrown in 'Ajanta' cinema, which had started screening a film shortly after 6 p.m., the State-run BTV said.

The BTV reported 11 deaths while other media, including the UNB news agency, put the casualties at 15. Local journalists and district officials said the toll might go up as the condition of many of the injured was critical.

8/12  
The Army rushed in to provide emergency medical facilities for the critically injured as all the hospitals and private clinics in the town were overflowing with the wounded.

This is the first major serial bomb attack on cinema halls since the one in western Satkhira district town, bordering West Ber-gal, a few months ago when unidentified attackers hurled bombs at a cinema hall and a circus show, killing and injuring a few dozens.

Officials did not want to blame any particular group for the blasts but said it was "a planned attack."

The attacks come in the midst of "Operation Clean Heart", a countrywide Army crackdown on criminals mounted on November 17.

8 DEC 2002

THE HINDI



## HISTORY WORKSHOP

**P**oliticians write and rewrite history to score partisan points. The ruling coalition in Bangladesh seems to be scripting its own history of the new nation. It is hard to explain otherwise why it enacted a piece of legislation to drop the honorific "Bangabandhu" that long preceded the name of the country's liberation war-hero and first president, Sheikh Mujibur Rahman. This attempt to dislodge him from the nation's historical memory would be a culmination of the demolition process that began with the assassination of the leader in his own house 27 years ago. This is bad politics and worse history-writing. The entire exercise is yet another manifestation of the personal animosity between the two leading women of the country's politics. For the prime minister, Ms Khaleda Zia, anything to diminish the memory of Mujibur Rahman is a weapon against his daughter and opposition leader, Sheikh Hasina Wajed. The prime minister would do anything to enhance the historical status of her husband and another assassinated president, Ziaur Rahman. Ironically, Ms Wajed had done much the same thing, while she was prime minister, to rehabilitate her father's name and legacy in official history and administration, denying other national leaders their rightful place.

Bangladeshis must be utterly disappointed with this battle between their leading political families. It has nothing to do with the people's concern over the two major problems facing the country — lawlessness and rising unemployment. Yet another controversy over Mujibur Rahman has come at a time when the opposition, the Bangladesh Awami League, is crying foul over the government's decision to use the army to round up criminals. Ms Wajed's complaint that the supposed anti-criminal drive is aimed at her party-workers has already raised the political temperature. She could now accuse Ms Zia of going back on her post-election promise of ushering in the "politics of reconciliation". This is not a good signal for a country where indefinite strikes and parliament boycotts had crippled economic activity until recently. By unnecessarily meddling with history, Ms Zia may have provoked another spell of confrontational politics.

4 DEC 2002

THE TELEGRAPH

# Terror charges baseless: Dhaka

By Aunohita Mojumdar  
TIMES NEWS NETWORK

**New Delhi:** Bangladesh has reacted sharply to Indian charges that it was harbouring Al Qaida and ISI, with its High Commissioner in New Delhi, Tufail K. Haider, terming the allegations a "rather unfortunate and avoidable development".

Speaking to The Times of India, Mr Haider said the charges being levelled both by the government and through the media had not been communicated to Bangladesh officially. "All issues between the two countries can be resolved through discussion and mutual accommodation. India's allegations must be verified through official channels and discussions and not through a war of words by media," he said.

While Mr Haider did not name external affairs minister Yashwant Sinha, he re-

sponded to charges made by Mr Sinha in Parliament on Wednesday, saying it was "baseless and untrue to state that Bangladesh had become a base for the Al Qaida and the ISI". Bangladesh was party to UN and Saarc resolutions against terrorism and would never allow its territory to be used for any activities against its neighbour consciously and deliberately, he said.

While Mr Haider felt bilateral relations had not soured to the extent where they could not be pulled back, he said what was required for this now was political direction at the highest level.

While Mr Haider stopped short of blaming the government or attributing motives, Bangladeshi diplomatic sources said it was insulting to suggest that Bangladesh was becoming a new depot for Al Qaida activities.

29 NOV 2002

THE TIMES OF INDIA

# Hasina dodges

## ISI 'trap'

PRANAY SHARMA

*1-8  
28/11*

**New Delhi, Nov. 27:** In an intelligent blend of political acumen and suave diplomacy, Awami League leader Sheikh Hasina today made a clear distinction between Bangladesh and the ruling Bangladesh Nationalist Party government, led by her arch rival, Begum Khaleda Zia.

Criticising the BNP government's political vendetta against Awami supporters, who included a large number of religious minorities, Hasina stayed clear of charges that her country has become a safe haven for Pakistan's Inter-Services Intelligence and militants of the al Qaida.

"We have seen such reports in newspapers. But independently, we don't have any information about them. Maybe the question should be directed to the Bangladesh government," the former Bangladesh Prime Minister said. Hasina was replying to questions at a meet-the-press programme, organised by the Foreign Correspondents Club of India this afternoon.

Though Hasina remained silent on the subject, Indian foreign minister Yashwant Sinha told Parliament today that the Pak-

istan high commission in Dhaka had become the "nerve-centre of ISI activities".

It may be more than just a coincidence that a private dinner was hosted by Sinha for the Awami leader last night at Hyderabad House. Hasina, with a few select aides, also had a closed-door meeting with Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee yesterday afternoon. Today, she called on President A.P.J. Abdul Kalam at Rashtrapati Bhavan.

"It was just a courtesy call," Hasina said, when asked about her meetings with the Indian leaders. "I am a leader of the Opposition in Bangladesh and we discussed many bilateral issues."

The former Prime Minister however, chose to publicise only the huge trade deficit between the two sides and Dhaka's demand for freer access to the Indian market, to the media.

Hasina's cautious approach is a clear indication that she would not like to say anything controversial here — specially about the growth of the al Qaida and ISI activities in Bangladesh, which have received wide coverage in the western media — for which she might be hauled up by the BNP.

28 NOV 2002

THE TELEGRAPH

PRANAY SHARMA

New Delhi, Nov. 26: Former Bangladesh Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina today alleged that "religious intolerance and repression of minorities" had increased in her country since the Bangladesh Nationalist Party government came to power in Dhaka nearly a year ago.

"Religious intolerance, repression of minorities and excesses by law enforcement agencies marked the one-year rule of the BNP headed by Prime Minister Khaleda Zia," she said, adding, "the government seems to have blatant disregard for human rights and in the name of purging the society of criminals, they are targeting political opponents."

Hasina made these allegations while delivering a lecture on cooperation in south Asia here this evening.

If her attack on the BNP was somewhat predictable, her argument that strains in India-Pakistan relations were holding

# Hasina tips for Pak peace

back progress in south Asia came as a surprise to her hosts in Delhi.

"We have to understand that the resolution of common problems seems to be hostage to disputes between India and Pakistan, which have to be solved bilaterally," she said, adding that a third country should take the initiative only if the two countries failed to resolve their disputes bilaterally.

To support her argument, Hasina referred to her 1998 initiative when she travelled to Delhi and Islamabad to break the "deadlock" between the two countries and said that her efforts had been widely acclaimed.

But irrespective of the reac-

tion in India and Pakistan, Hasina seems to have overlooked the fact that Delhi is not at all keen that a third country plays any role in its dispute with Islamabad.

In the afternoon, she met Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee at his 7, Race Course Road residence and discussed some recent developments in the region as well as in Bangladesh. South Block, not too keen on publicising the contents of her talks, described it as "a courtesy call."

A dinner was hosted in her honour by foreign minister Yashwant Sinha tonight at Hyderabad House.

Hasina is scheduled to meet President A.P.J. Abdul Kalam to-

morrow and other senior Indian leaders, including deputy Prime Minister L.K. Advani, over the next few days.

She criticised the law and order deterioration in Bangladesh under the Khaleda Zia regime and said the international community should not turn a blind eye to these "dark developments" and strongly condemn it. She also claimed that her Awami League government had upheld democratic principles, maintained religious harmony and ushered in all-round development.

Referring to a spurt in crime — such as terrorism, drug trafficking and smuggling — faced by Saarc countries, Hasina said these could be addressed only by an agreed programme of action and time-bound implementation.

"So far, the role of Saarc has not been encouraging in this regard," she said, adding, "terrorist groups find safe recruits in poverty. If you find food, jobs and decent living for them, the youth will not fancy terrorism."

# Hasina demands mid-term polls

Statesman News Service



Sheikh Hasina

DHAKA, Nov. 6. — Within one year of the last general elections, Bangladesh's Opposition leader and Awami League chief Sheikh Hasina has demanded mid-term polls saying the government of Prime Minister Ms Khaleda Zia "is now clinically dead".

"The army being deployed to curb crimes has proved that the BNP-Jamaat government is now clinically dead. It seems that the government has imposed martial law in the name of parliamentary democracy," she told correspondents representing foreign media here on Tues-

day. "The army is virtually running the country and we are witnessing a kind of covert martial law."

She said the government's resignation "it is now a public demand" and that her party is ready for elections anytime. She criticised the custody-deaths during the on going anti-crime drive by the army and other law enforcing agencies. "We must remember that no one has been given the license to kill anyone in the name of curbing crime." Hasina demanded that these deaths inquired into.

She alleged that the government had completely "ignored the parliament and the opposition while she called the army. It did not even explain under what legal arrangement the army has been deployed".

"We believe the constitution is supreme and its provisions must be maintained during the army operation. No one is above the constitution and the law. The army too have to go by the law," Hasina said.

# Charges fly in zenana republic

Statesman News Service

DHAKA, Nov. 4. — Bangladesh's main Opposition leader Sheikh Hasina has asked Prime Minister Mrs Khaleda Zia to resign from the helm of affairs for her "failure to run the country."

"You (Prime Minister) should resign with honour as you have failed to run the country even after



LOGGERHEADS: Hasina (left) & Khaleda

winning a two-thirds' majority. An anti-Constitution and anti-human government has no right to remain in power. People know how to dislodge a government which violates human rights," Sheikh Hasina told a gathering here on Sunday. The meeting was to commemorate the martyrdom of national leaders in 1975.

Hasina's demand for resignation of the government came in less than a month after the ruling coalition celebrated its one year in

office and 11 days ahead of the next Parliament session and in the third week of the ongoing army crackdown on criminals.

Hasina alleged that a kind of parliamentary martial law is prevailing in the country and cautioned the government against

harassing innocent people in the name of catching criminals.

The Opposition leader cast doubt over the the call that Prime

Minister Mrs Khaleda Zia had made to the army formation commanders to conduct anti-crime drive neutrally. Ms Hasina urged the army to go by press reports to catch the criminals instead of following the list provided by the government. "You know the names of those who killed people, raped women and minors, forcibly occupied university halls since the 4-party alliance came to power," the Opposition leader said.

5 NOV 2002

## DEPLOYING MILITARY

51 Khaleda's bid to stem anarchy

IT is too early to tell whether Begum Khaleda Zia's desperate bid to control the anarchic situation she helped to create by deploying 60,000 army men across the country will have the desired result. At least she now acknowledges her government's failure to deal with the rapidly deteriorating law and order situation. One year in office has exposed her helplessness and lack of faith in the civil administration and confirms the popular perception, shared by many foreign donors, that she is unable to govern despite her two-thirds majority in parliament. She should know by experience that the situation will not improve by exercising the military option alone. Already the anarchy has badly affected the country's thriving garment industry and discouraged domestic and foreign investors. The current anarchy is the result of the politics of hate and revenge. Teaching Awami League and its voters including its traditional "vote bank" — the Hindu minorities — a lesson has obsessed her so much that she forgot all about the solemn pledges of good governance. For this she compromised with the country's "top terrors" whom her party "got elected" in last April's Dhaka, Khulna and Rajshahi civic elections. But her strategy has proved counter-productive as four of these elected "terrors" have been gunned down by their own rivals in the party in Dhaka creating panic within her government.

By passing the buck to security forces to restore law and order Begum Zia has dragged the armed forces into the controversy. Even the Left Opposition has accused the military of rigging elections to ensure victory of the BNP-Jamat e Islami candidates in the last parliamentary and civic elections. In the past week seven people have died in military custody causing public outrage. Even senior BNP leaders are unhappy about the excesses committed by the military for restoring normalcy. Failure will cost her dearly.

# Hasina blasts secy's arrest

Statesman News Service

DHAKA, Oct. 22. — Bangladesh's Opposition leader Sheikh Hasina today angrily reacted to the arrest of her political secretary Mr Saber Hossain Chowdhury and another party leader and former minister Sheikh Selim and warned the army, now engaged in anti-crime drive, not to be used by the ruling coalition headed by Ms Khaleda Zia.

Speaking at a press conference at the National Press Club here, Ms Hasina criticised the government for the arrest of Mr Chowdhury and Mr Selim by the Army and said it was now clear that the deployment of troops in the name of curbing crimes was aimed at harassing the Opposition leaders and workers.

Mr Chowdhury was picked up by army men from the airport on Sunday night on his way to London while Mr Selim was arrested from his residence next day. Former President Gen. Ershad was also not

allowed to go abroad when he was sent back from the airport before boarding a Singapore-bound aircraft.

The Awami League has called a half-day general strike in Dhaka on Thursday to protest against the arrest of its leaders. Ms Hasina

## Khaleda stand

DHAKA, Oct. 22. — Criminals would be punished irrespective of their position or opinion, the Prime Minister Begum Khaleda Zia said at a luncheon meeting with editors and senior journalists here yesterday. She said the army has been deployed to nab criminals and recover illegal arms and she has no report of accesses committed by the army during the drive. — SNS

earlier gave support to the army drive to nab criminals but cautioned them against violation of human rights in the process.

She criticised the government for its failure to maintain law and order by the law enforcing agencies.

She alleged the Prime Minister was ordering the army to arrest Opposition leaders to suit her political end. "We can feel the pulse and mentality of the officers and soldiers of the army who will never want to be utilised for narrow party interest which may make them controversial," Ms Hasina said.

Hasina said three persons have already died during interrogation by the army and this raised the question of human rights violation.

STATESMAN



# Dhaka cracks down on 'terrorists'

Bangla  
HP-15

19/10

By Haroon Habib

**DHAKA, OCT. 18.** As the Bangladesh army continued its hunt for "terrorists" and "recovery of arms" all over the country, the Prime Minister, Begum Khaleda Zia, has issued directions to the defence personnel to work firmly in nabbing "criminals" to ensure peace and security of the people.

However, as the unprecedented swoop on "criminals" began at mid-night on Wednesday, the large-scale deployment of the army, more than 40,000 personnel unofficially, has drawn cautious reactions from the Opposition parties as well as the people. A similar army deployment took place in 1974 against the backdrop of worsening law and order. That move did not prove politically correct. What awaits the present action remains to be seen.

The Home Ministry issued a statement saying the "joint operation" had achieved "a notable success".

The Opposition parties charged that by calling out the army, the Government had acknowledged failure of the civil administration in tackling the deteriorating law and order. But the Government, already facing violent protests and demonstrations in some parts of the country due to what is described as the army's "unjustified actions", said the defence personnel would not be used against political opponents.

The army personnel began their raids on "crime zones" in all parts of the country including Dhaka.

The crackdown was launched under "a highly secret plan" with the police and other law-enforcing agencies being kept in the dark about the move. There was no official briefing for media-persons about the operation in which "nearly 2,000 suspected criminals" have been reportedly picked up. Although it was unofficially learnt that the army had been given "magisterial powers" of arrest, the Prime Minister's Political Secretary, Haris Chowdhury, said the personnel were operating "along with the police and BDR" and the arrested people would be prosecuted under civil law.

# The Jamat way

1971 5.8 Bangladesh

## Khaleda terrorising the Press to fall in line

**P**hile Minister Begum Khaleda Zia is forcing Simon Dring, managing director of her country's most popular TV channel — Ekushey — to leave the country doing what the Pakistani military rulers could not do during their crackdown in Dhaka on 25 March 1971. On that dark night Simon gave the slip to the Pakistani army, which had herded all foreign journalists into a Karachi-bound plane. He was thus able to witness the massacre and devastation that General Yahya's "Operation Searchlight" had wreaked on defenceless civilians. His despatches made world headlines and gave a bird's eye view of the genocide planned and executed by the Pakistanis and their local collaborators — Jamat-i-Islam. When Jamat came to power last October riding on Begum Zia's coattails, Simon and his Ekushey TV were targeted. A complaint was filed that Ekushey, whose licence was granted during Sheikh Hasina's rule, didn't have a valid operational permit whereas the attorney general of the neutral caretaker government in a written submission had said that Ekushey's licence was "wholly valid". The government laid bare its mala fides when it gave Simon a week's time to quit Bangladesh and Ekushey was closed down.

The vindictive action has unleashed public outrage with newspapers carrying hundreds of letters demanding immediate resumption of Ekushey's service and revocation of Simon's expulsion order. Simon and his Ekushey had come to symbolise the ideals of Bangladesh's liberation war which are anathema not only to Jamat but also to a majority of Begum Zia's fundamentalist-minded BNP. It is part of Begum Zia and Jamat's policy to neutralise and destroy such forces and principles. Already it has systematically weeded out freedom fighters from the top echelons of the military, para-military, the police and the bureaucracy. Newspapers like Janakantha which uphold the ideals of liberation war are denied government advertisements. In the last one year three journalists were killed and 430 others injured in attacks for reporting atrocities committed by ruling party supporters. Does Begum Zia and the Jamat want Bangladesh branded as a terror state?

# Insecure minorities

*Ban* Khaleda must provide security *SR-6*

The recent attacks on Durga puja pandals and systematic breaking of idols by “unidentified” people in Bangladesh is a matter of concern not only for the country’s minority but also for its secular traditions. The attacks have unnerved the minority community so much that the office bearers of the National Durga Puja Celebrations Committee had to call on the country’s president seeking government protection and security during the puja festivities. What is alarming is that many attacks are carried out by newly founded terrorist outfits like Harkatul Jihad; letters have been sent to puja organisers warning them to desist from “idolatry and other unislamic activities.” The letters also warned that not even military would be able to protect temples and puja pandals as “trained jihadi commandos could level them in no time”. The victory of Begum Khaleda Zia’s four party coalition in last October’s parliamentary election unleashed unprecedented attacks on minorities. Hundreds of Hindu girls aged 2 to 65 were raped; incidents have been documented by Amnesty International. In most cases attackers are allowed to go free as police refuse to accept complaints from the minorities. Encouragement came from Begum Zia herself who when opposition leader made highly irresponsible speeches inciting violence against minorities. Her party leaders and those of the coalition partners have “advised” minorities to “flee to secular India for your own safety.”

Begum Zia is reaping the fruits of what she sowed while in the Opposition. Even now she makes no secret of where her sympathies lie. Only recently her government released from detention seven Dhaka-based foreign nationals of Islamic countries working for a rich and dubious Saudi-funded organization, which was accused of trafficking in women and children with connections to Al Qaida. Her government has been extremely secretive about the episode that has made some western donors unhappy. Somebody should tell Begum Zia that playing the communal or fundamentalist card doesn’t pay. It always proves counter productive.

# BNP rule: Minuses outweigh pluses

Insanul Karim in Dhaka

Oct. 10. — The 4-party coalition government led by Bangladesh nationalist Party completes its one year in office today. It is struggling hard to improve the law-and-order situation in the country.

It has not been a smooth ride as it witnessed large-scale violence on the minority community. Opposition activists made the matter tougher. In spite of the government having taken certain measures, the overall law-and-order situation has continued to deteriorate with sharp increase in murder, loot, rape and extortion.

The government was quick to pin the blame for this deterioration on the Op-

position who, the government said, was trying to create instability. The government took some drastic measures to curb crimes and arrested a number of ruling party activists earning praise. But that was short-lived. Extortion has become rampant in the country today.

The main Opposition Awami League accused the government of arresting and harassing its leaders and workers across the country and not allowing to hold meetings and rallies.

The Opposition boycotted Parliament for a long time but ultimately joined in June last during the budget session. According to data compiled by the Awami League, a total of 24,123 people including three journalists were killed, 89,752 injured, 5135 women repressed and

2577 women and 458 children raped during the first year of coalition rule.

The government was embarrassed following an allegation of corruption was made against a minister by a Danish government official. Denmark cut its aid following the allegation.

Import of rotten wheat from India created an uproar in the media to the embarrassment of the government.

The government has chalked out a three-day programme beginning today to project its achievements during the first year of rule.

On the other hand, the Opposition Awami League is out to project the government's failure in curbing crimes and in checking rise in the prices of essential commodities.

# Suicide attack in Tel-Aviv

JERUSALEM, Oct. 10. — Krause, deputy police chief of Tel-Aviv. The driver closed the back door and got off the bus, along with two soldiers, to question the suspect, police said. The driver asked passengers waiting at the bus stop to move back, and as he approached the suspect, the bomber blew himself up, police said.

Two of the soldiers were among the wounded. — AP

A suicide bomber blew himself up at a bus stop east of Tel-Aviv on a major highway near Bnei Brak today, killing himself and injuring five bystanders, police and paramedics said.

The bomber had tried to board the bus through the back door, but aroused the suspicion of passengers and the driver, said Mr David

## **Elected President unopposed**

By Haroon Habib

**DHAKA:** Prof. Iajuddin Ahmed (*in the picture*), a retired teacher of Dhaka University, has been elected the 18th President of Bangladesh. He replaced Prof. AQM Badrudouzza Chowdhury who was forced to resign by the ruling BNP led by the Prime Minister, Begum Khaleda Zia, last June. Prof. Ahmed, nominee of the ruling 4-party alliance, was elected unopposed as the main Opposition Awami League had been boycotting all elections after Ms. Khaleda Zia assumed office. The Election Commission announced that the ruling alliance's candidate was elected unopposed because the nomination papers of the two other persons were rejected on procedural grounds.



## Hasina convoy attacked

Dhaka, Aug. 30 (Reuters): Nearly 100 people armed with sticks and stones attacked a convoy of cars carrying Bangladesh Opposition leader Sheikh Hasina and some of her party leaders today but no one was hurt, party officials said.

"Hasina escaped unhurt but one car in the convoy was damaged in the attack," said Saber Hossain Chowdhury, Hasina's political secretary and a senior leader of her Awami League party.

"The attack was pre-planned," he said.

The attack took place on a highway linking the southwestern districts of Satkhira and Jessore. Former Prime Minister Hasina was in the area after visiting a young woman who was injured in a recent "terrorist" attack, he said.

Chowdhury said the attackers belonged to the ruling Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP) but the party rejected the accusation.

Speaking at a roadside meeting after the attack, Hasina accused her long-time rival and BNP leader, Prime Minister Begum Khaleda Zia, of harbouring "terrorists" in her party and demanded their immediate arrest, local reporters said.

Awami League supporters held a rally in Dhaka later today to protest against the attack.

About 5,000 party leaders, workers and supporters joined the rally, witnesses said.

# Khaleda for national consensus on gas export

Statesman News Service

DHAKA, Aug. 28. — Prime Minister Begum Khaleda Zia has said that her government would take a decision on the export of natural gas only through a “national consensus” and, if necessary, discuss the issue with the Opposition.

The Prime Minister’s assurance came after the two government sponsored national committees on utilisation and assessment of gas reserve submitted their reports to her yesterday suggesting that there could be limited export of gas only after discoveries of new gas resources by the International Oil Companies (IOC).

The utilisation committee in its report said

in order to export under any formula the current production sharing contracts with foreign oil companies have to be renegotiated and new deals involving possible buyers signed. The committee observed that at a gas demand growth rate of seven per cent, the present gas reserve would be exhausted by 2014-2015. If this growth rate is held at six per cent, the reserve will run dry sometime before 2020. The gas reserve committee, in its report, said that Bangladesh has undiscovered reserve of around 32 trillion cubic feet. The net recoverable reserve as on May 2002 is between 12.04 TCF and 15.55 TCF.

It said that at three per cent GDP growth rate the country will need 40 to 44 TCF gas till 2050 and 141 to 154 TCF if the growth rate is on the higher side of seven per cent.

The committee, however, in its report said that “in the event of adoption of a policy of ‘limited export’ on the basis of new discoveries, there should not logically be any reservations about fundings by the donor agencies nor investments by the IOCs”.

Meanwhile, American giant oil company Unocal in an immediate reaction after the submission of the report to the prime minister said it was now looking forward to a timely policy decision by the government on the export of surplus gas.

“We believe that gas export will help Bangladesh achieve its economic, social and energy goals and promote countrywide exploration activities, a Unocal press release said. The Unocal has already proposed for pipeline gas export to India.

## MINORITY PERSECUTION

### Khaleda's vain bid to cover up dark deeds

BEGUM Khaleda Zia's coalition government has submitted before the Bangladesh High Court that systematic and large-scale atrocities on the country's minorities were "family or individual feuds." The world knows this to be downright lies. The Prime Minister has consistently denied that the minorities have been victims of systematic persecution on religious and political grounds. She has sought to deny as "baseless and concocted" even specific complaints lodged by the secretary general of Amnesty International, Irene Jobeida Khan, as also reports prepared by the UN Human Rights Commission and the US State Department. The reason for this denial syndrome is clear.

The fallout of owning up to the countless cases of rape, arson, looting and killing committed mostly by party cadres is not to be contemplated. Already foreign donors have refused to pledge aid until the government is able to improve the "country's worst ever law and order situation." Her party and coalition partners are not the only culprits. The country's former President Shahbuddin Ahmed and the head of the caretaker government retired chief justice Latifur Rahman allowed the attacks to intensify by remaining indifferent to repeated pleas for protection to the minorities before and after the parliamentary poll. In fact they and the chief election commissioner found "nothing unusual" in the attacks as this "usually happened" during election time.

Begum Zia is trying to gloss over the issue by saying that there is no majority or minority community as all her countrymen are Bangladeshis. She seeks to whitewash the atrocities by holding official investigations which resulted in "only two cases to be partially true". Even pro-government Dhaka dailies have asked whether atrocities reported in the national Press were sheer lies. They also ask why was the noted journalist cum human rights activist Shahriar Kabir been arrested and tortured in jail? "Wasn't it because he through his writings and pictorial presentation had exposed the ruling coalition's involvement in the crimes against minorities forcing many to flee to India?" asked one daily.

Another asked "If what Begum Zia says is right why did Amnesty say publicly that there were gross violations of human rights of the minorities?" Actually this worst ever minority persecution since 1971 would have gone unnoticed if Dhaka's leading dailies had not published bold reports which seriously embarrassed Begum Zia's government. Except the Press no other institution took up cudgles which explains why the government is punishing dailies like *Janakantha*. Unfortunately, Begum Zia has sought to portray this professional performance as an attempt to tarnish her and Bangladesh's image. She should introspect.

25 AUG 2002



# Hasina denies graft charges

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE

DHAKA, Aug. 10. — Bangladesh opposition leader and Awami League chief Sheikh Hasina Wajed today categorically refuted the charges of corruption that the government has brought against her and said the allegations were aimed at harassing her.

"I have done no wrong," she told reporters on her return home at the end of a four-week private visit to UK and USA.

Sheikh Hasina features in six corruption cases including one filed on 7 August on the procurement of a frigate for the Bangladesh navy from South Korea.

Earlier, she was charged with corruption for the purchase of eight MiG-29 for Bangladesh Air Force from Russia.

However, Prime Minister Begum Khaleda Zia has said that her government wants to sell the MiG-29 fighter aircraft as it is difficult for the country to bear the huge maintainance costs.

Sheikh Hasina asked whether the move was aimed at procuring a two-way commission selling MiG-29 and buying F-18 from the USA. The Opposition leader pointed out that during the purchase of the MiG-29, the government had saved US \$165 million. Eight MiG-29 plus spare parts were



**AT ARM'S LENGTH:** Awami League leader Ms Motia Chowdhury pushes back policeen during a rally in Dhaka on Saturday. — AFP

bought at \$124 milion as against its usual price of \$289million.

Hasina defended her party's decision not to meet Pakistan President Pervez Musharraf during his recent visit to

Bangladesh. On the Awami League's signing of an agreement with the National Democratic Institute of America, she said it was aimed at modernising the functioning of the party.

# Bangla forced to export gas

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**Dhaka, Aug. 3 (PTI):** Under pressure from international donors, Bangladesh has hinted that export of natural gas to India may start soon even as the country's Opposition parties protested the proposal.

Bangladesh minister for energy A.K.M Mosharraf Hossain yesterday said the country will be "economically benefited by exporting gas. We are going to take a decision regarding export of gas soon. We have already wasted enough time".

Hossain's observation came on a day when Bangladesh's major donor, Asian Development Bank, asked it to take a positive decision on gas export to India from its existing reserve to qualify for further investment and funding in the energy section.

The visiting ADB delegation told the government that future grants and loans depend on gas export, the private UNB news agency reported quoting reliable sources.

The ADB team categorically told the government that they would be compelled to cancel the \$250 million western zone gas pipeline project if the government was not keen on gas export, the *Daily Star* newspaper said today.

The World Bank representative here and several western envoys have also favoured gas export saying it was beneficial for Bangladesh's economy.

Referring to the controversy on gas reserve, Hossain said at least 11 countries have extracted two or three times higher than the estimates, the daily said.

"If we did not have enough gas, then oil companies would not sign so many production sharing contracts with us," he said.

The main Opposition Awami League, the Left parties and some experts are opposed to gas export saying the country's reserves were not enough and will not last beyond year 2020.

Unocal, a US energy giant last year proposed to build a pipeline about 1400 km from north eastern Sylhet to Delhi which would help Bangladesh bridge the widening trade gap and also encourage investors.

## Musharraf regrets 1971 Pak. excesses

By Haroon Habib

401  
3/17  
DHAKA, JULY 30. The Pakistan President, Pervez Musharraf, today regretted the "excesses" committed by his country's Army 31 years ago in the Bangladesh war of liberation, in which three million Bengalis were killed. On the orders of the then chief of the armed forces, Yahya Khan, the Pakistan Army had perpetrated the massacre to counter the liberation forces of East Pakistan, led by Sheikh Mujibur Rahman.

Arriving here on a three-day official visit, Gen. Musharraf flew directly to the National Memorial at Savar where, after placing wreaths at the pedestal of the martyrs' memorial, he recorded his comments in the visitors' book: "Your brothers and sisters in Pakistan share the pain of the events of 1971. The excesses committed during that unfortunate period are regrettable." Gen. Musharraf, dubbed "an associate" in the 1971 genocide by the freedom fighters and leaders of the Bangladesh civil society, wrote further: "Let us bury the past in a spirit of magnanimity. Let not the light of the future be dimmed. Let us move forward together." As the Opposition Awami League, led by the former Bangladesh Prime Minister, Sheikh Hasina, cancelled a scheduled meeting with Gen. Musharraf, freedom fighters and leaders condemned the Khaleda Zia Government for acceding a red carpet reception.

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# Pervez says sorry to Bangla; attacks India for massing border

AFP&PTI

DHAKA, July 29. — General Pervez Musharraf today charged India with "vitiating" regional security by deploying troops along the Indo-Pak border. He said he would talk to his Bangladeshi hosts about "the tension caused by the massive build-up on the border and ways to defuse it."

The Pakistani President, on a three-day visit to Bangladesh, regretted the excesses committed by his country's army during the Liberation War three decades ago and called for burying the past.

Gen Musharraf, the first Pakistani military ruler to visit Bangladesh since 1971, chose ironically to record his expression of regret while paying homage at a memorial for those who laid their lives for independence. "Your brothers and sisters in Pakistan share the pains of the events of 1971. The excesses committed during the

unfortunate period are regrettable," he wrote in the visitors' book.

"Let us bury the past in the spirit of magnanimity. Let not the light of the future be dimmed. Let us move forward together... Courage to compromise is greater than to confront." About three million people were killed and nearly three lakh women were raped by Pakistani soldiers and their local henchmen, comprising mainly fundamentalist groups, during the nine-month Liberation War.

The President spoke of the sincere greetings and good wishes he carried from the people of Pakistan for "their Bangladeshi brothers and sisters." He expressed confidence that with "our joint resolve, the friendship between Pakistan and Bangladesh will flourish."

Gen Musharraf was given a red-carpet welcome and a 21-gun salute on his arrival here. He was received at the airport by the Prime Minister, Begum Khaleda Zia, and Acting President, Mr

Jamiruddin Sircar.

A number of Bangladeshi parties, particularly the Left, are opposing Gen Musharraf's visit. The student wing of the Opposition Awami League, headed by Sheikh Hasina, called a country-wide strike tomorrow to protest against the visit.

Two years ago, Gen Musharraf had called off a scheduled meeting with Sheikh Hasina, then Prime Minister, on the sidelines of the UN's Golden Jubilee celebrations in New York reportedly because of her veiled attack on him for overthrowing an elected government.

On his arrival at Zia International Airport, the President said the first objective of his visit was to hold talks with Bangladeshi leaders to boost bilateral relations. He said he would brief Mr Sircar and Begum Zia about the initiative he had taken to defuse the Indo-Pak tension.

**China visit:** The General will pay a two-day visit to China, beginning 1 August.

# Dhaka University closed indefinitely

**Statesman News Service**

DHAKA, July 28. – In the face of a massive student unrest following recent brutal atrocities on the female students of a residential hostel, the authorities here late last night announced indefinite closure of Dhaka University to quell the situation.

Barring the international hostel, inmates of all the residential halls have been asked to leave by this morning. "The campus situation has become volatile and the authorities have no alternative but to take the

decision in the greater academic interest," the vice-chancellor, Mr Anwarullah Chowdhury, was quoted as saying.

The authorities deployed a heavy contingent of police and paramilitary Bangladesh Rifles to check further violence after some 15,000 students defying threats from the student wing of the ruling Bangladesh

Nationalist Party staged violent demonstration on the campus yesterday demanding immediate removal of the vice-chancellor.

Yesterday's procession was considered by many as the biggest on the university campus since the mass upsurge of 1990 against the autocratic rule of the then president General Ershad.

The campus yesterday turned into a sea of hu-

manity as all the students, barring supporters of the ruling coalition, joined the agitation demanding removal of the vice-chancellor who, they said, was a government loyalist and trying to hide the truth.

However, the vice-chancellor, Mr Chowdhury, has said that he would not resign under any pressure or in the face of "any conspiracy."

General students blame the university authorities for police action on the female students. They claim that the action was taken to help Jatiyatabadi Chhatra Dal, the student outfit of the ruling BNP, to capture the Shamsunnahar hall.

Meanwhile, the issue has caused serious concern in the government as in the past it is the students of Dhaka University who pioneered all anti-government movements later joined by political parties.

According to political sources, the coalition government held a series of meetings yesterday to determine the way to resolve the crisis. Many of the senior leaders in the government felt that the removal of the vice-chancellor is the only way to defuse the student uproar.

Opposition parties, including the Awami League, have already expressed their solidarity with the student agitation while a section of the teachers have also extended their support to the current student agitation.

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## varsity shut indefinitely

Dhaka, July 28 (Reuters): Dhaka University has closed indefinitely, with Bangladesh authorities deploying more police and paramilitary troops today to combat student unrest that could turn into a national strike.

The chaos began on Wednesday when police stormed a women's dormitory and arrested several residents, prompting outrage from the main opposition party, the Awami League. It has called for a national strike on Tuesday.

Another student body, Chhatra Moitri representing left political parties, called a half-day countrywide strike for Monday to protest against the "undesirable and unacceptable incidents" at the university.

University officials today quoted an order by vice-chancellor Anwarullah Chowdhury as saying the institution "has been closed sine die in the face of growing indiscipline by the students and fears of violence which may also kill people".

About 500 women students have refused to obey Chowdhury's order, issued late yesterday, which asked students to leave all halls of residence by this morning.

They squatted on the street outside Rokeya Hall, the university's second women's dormitory, chanting slogans, singing and beating drums.

THE UNIVERSITY

23 JUL 1977

Banshi

# Protests against Musharraf visit

By Haroon Habib

HD-15 2219

**DHAKA, JULY 25.** The Bangladesh authorities have taken all steps to ensure security for the Pakistan President, Pervez Musharraf, who is due to arrive here on July 29 on an official three-day visit.

The Foreign Minister, Morshed Khan, referring to the impending visit, said Pakistan and Bangladesh had "historical ties" and Gen. Musharraf's visit would help deepen relations between the two countries, mainly in terms of trade and commerce. Gen. Musharraf is expected to lead a large entourage, including Cabinet Ministers and senior officials.

The visiting dignitary will be received by the acting President, Zamiruddin Sircar, and the Prime Minister, Begum Khaleda Zia, at the airport. Incidentally, for the first time since 1971 when Bangladesh was born, the Cabinet has included leaders of the fundamentalist Jamaat-e-Islami which opposed the country's independence from Pakistan.

While the main Opposition, the Awami League, has decided not to meet Gen.



**Policemen try to control students protesting against the Pakistani President, Pervez Musharraf's visit next week in Dhaka on Wednesday. — AP**

Musharraf, the smaller left parties and a combine of several students' organisations have protested against the visit. These organisations termed Gen. Musharraf a "military dictator" and "unconstitutional ruler" and demanded of Government that it should ask Pakistan to tender an apology for its army's genocide in 1971. These orga-

nisations and a few freedom fighters' associations have announced plans to stage demonstrations protesting against the visit.

Begum Khaleda Zia and Gen. Musharraf will have official talks on July 30 when the two leaders would discuss bilateral, regional and international issues, a Foreign Office source said. Three agreements on economic and cultural fronts are also likely to be signed.

The visit may also see significant improvement in relations between the two countries. The leaders may also re-open the stalled issue of the repatriation of Urdu-speaking "stranded Pakistanis", who have been waiting for their return to Pakistan ever since Bangladesh's emergence as an independent country. Of the half-a-million such people, who originally hailed from Bihar in India, some 1,50,000 have been repatriated during the last three decades.

However, the new generation "Beharis" whose number has increased significantly are unwilling to return to their parents' homeland, Pakistan.

Bangladesh is also likely to get duty-free access to the Pakistan market for some of its products, including tea and jute goods.

# Bangla won't ask Pak to apologise for genocide

Statesman News Service

DHAKA, July 25. - In a departure from the policy of the immediate past, Bangladesh will not ask Pakistan to seek apology for the atrocities committed by its army during the country's liberation war in 1971 when Gen Pervez Musharraf pays a three-day visit to this country beginning 29 July.

"The government never made any official communication with Islamabad on this issue," foreign secretary Mr Shamsheer Mobin Chowdhury told reporters at a briefing on Gen Musharraf's visit here today. He said there might have been discussion on this issue within ourselves but no official communication with Pakistan was made in this regard. The Awami League government led by Sheikh Hasina had repeatedly asked Pakistan to seek apology for the genocide committed by its army during the nation's liberation war. She also demanded trial of the war criminals.

Gen Musharraf will be the first head of a government of Saarc countries to visit Bangladesh after Begum Khaleda Zia came to power. The Pakistani President had a programme to make a stopover in Dhaka on his way back from China in December last. But it was cancelled at the last moment without any explanation. The foreign secretary said the issues like repatriation of stranded Pakistanis from Bangladesh and the sharing of assets and liabilities

of undivided Pakistan will come up for discussion during the official talks between Begum Zia and President Musharraf scheduled on 30 July. Some 237,000 stranded Pakistanis are now living in 70 camps in various parts of Bangladesh. Dhaka earlier claimed \$4.5 billion as its share of assets immediately after Bangladesh became independent.

However, Mr Chowdhury said the main thrust of the discussion would be promotion of trade and commerce between the two countries. The trade between Dhaka and Islamabad stood at \$128 million in 2000-2001 whereas Bangladesh suffered a deficit of over \$63 million.

The foreign secretary said at least two memorandum of understanding on cultural cooperation and regular consultation between the two countries are likely to be signed during Gen Musharraf's visit. According to official itinerary, the Pakistani President will place wreaths at the National Martyrs Memorial at Savar, 25 km from the city. He will call on acting President Jamiruddin Sircar.

A meeting between Gen Musharraf and Sheikh Hasina Waged (now abroad) has been fixed. But Awami League has said its leaders would not meet Gen Musharraf although acting president of the party and former foreign minister Mr Abdus Samad Azad earlier hinted that they would meet Gen Musharraf as part of the state protocol.



# Musharraf for Dhaka

Significant for Khaleda Zia's government

The three-day visit of General Pervez Musharraf to Dhaka next week has ramifications. A Pakistani President, who is also a military dictator is visiting Bangladesh on a state visit for the first time since its birth. Begum Khaleda Zia's BNP-Jamat-e-Islami-led coalition government plans to receive him with a "special" 100-gun salute. Earlier Dhaka was visited by President Zia-ul-Haq; but only to attend Saarc deliberations. The last Pakistani dictator, who was also President, to visit Dhaka was General Yahya Khan. He had flown to the erstwhile East Pakistani capital on 15 March 1971 ostensibly to talk to Sheikh Mujib on convening Pakistan's national assembly and transferring power to the elected majority. But what he did in reality during his 10-day stay was to buy time for finalising plans for the most horrendous genocide. Not surprisingly a large section of Bangladesh's freedom fighters had given a call to "resist" General Musharraf's forthcoming visit. Secular parties have asked Begum Zia to withdraw the invitation for they fear it will give a boost to pro-Pakistani elements and provide a fillip to ISI operations in the country. Their antipathy for General Musharraf is not wholly unwarranted. Only last year he had told a Bangladeshi delegation that neither his Government nor the Pakistani military would say sorry for committing genocide in 1971 and urged Bangladeshis to forget the past.

Actually General Musharraf's visit is an expression of bonhomie that exists at the personal level between Begum Zia and the Pakistani ruling establishment. There are key leaders in her party and Government who still swear by Pakistan. The Pakistani daily *The Frontier Post* recently carried an article which said that the ISI had given Rs 10 crores to "ensure victory of Begum Zia's coalition in last October's parliamentary poll". The report has not been denied either by the Bangladeshi or Pakistani rulers. One of Begum Zia's main coalition partners — the Jamat-e-Islami — had collaborated with the Pakistanis in the genocide. There are two senior ministers in her government who led the much dreaded execution squad. Al Badr, during the liberation war. General Musharraf never forgave Sheikh Hasina for speaking in the UN in his presence about "generals capturing power by banishing democracy" and also for throwing out from Bangladesh Irfan Raza, his deputy high commissioner, for saying that the liberation war was the handiwork of few Awami League miscreants. It will be interesting to see how Begum Zia broaches the two most contentious bilateral issues — division of assets and liabilities of undivided Pakistan and repatriation of 250,000 stranded Pakistanis still in Bangladesh. Both the BNP and Jamat do not favour raising issues which will embarrass the General: cementing ties with Pakistan is more important.

THE STATESMAN

22 JUL 2002

# Hasina 'under house arrest'

Dhaka, February 28

BANGLADESH'S MAIN opposition Awami League has alleged that its president and former Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina is virtually under house arrest.

Expressing concern over the "infringed security" of Hasina amid escalated intelligence surveillance around her private residence — Sudha Sadan, former home minister and organising secretary of Awami League Mohammad Nasim (MP) alleged that the party president had been kept under strict surveillance, thus jeopardising her personal safety.

"The government after denying her all security, was now attempting to distance her from party leaders and workers for

which she has been cordoned by an intelligence net," he told reporters yesterday.

Former deputy minister and political secretary of Awami League president, Saber Hossain Chowdhury, also conveyed the party's concern to home minister Altaf Hossain Chowdhury, media reports said today. Plain cloth and uniformed policemen were posted at different points around Hasina's residence on Tuesday following the arrest of 10 leaders of Chhatra League, student front of Awami League, the previous night, party sources said.

Of the 10, eight were sent to jail with Awami League alleging that student leaders were detained without any specific charges against them. Party leaders and



**SHEIKH HASINA**

workers have drastically reduced visits to Hasina's residence as anyone coming out of the house is questioned by intelligence personnel, media reports said.

**PTI**

THE HINDUSTAN TIMES

1 MAR 2012

# Hasina under 'house arrest'

Agencies

DHAKA, Feb. 28. — Awami League has alleged that its president and former Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina is virtually under house-arrest.

Expressing concern over Mrs Hasina's "infringed security," former home minister and Awami League organising secretary, Mohammad Nasim, alleged that the party president had been kept under strict surveillance, thus jeopardising her personal safety.

"The government after denying her all security, is now attempting to distance her from party leaders and workers for which she has been cordoned by an Intelligence net," he told reporters yesterday, referring to the increased surveillance around Mrs Hasina's house — Sudha Sadan. Former deputy minister and political secretary of Mrs Hasina, Saber Hossain Chowdhury, also conveyed the party's concern to home minister Altaf Hossain Chowdhury, media reports said. Plainclothesmen and uniformed policemen were posted at different points around Mrs Hasina's residence on Tuesday following the arrest of ten leaders of Chhatra League, student front of Awami League, the previous night, party sources said.

Of the ten, eight were sent to jail. Awami League alleged the student-leaders were detained without any specific charges.

Party leaders and workers have drastically reduced visit to Mrs Hasina's residence as anyone coming out of the house is being questioned by Intelligence. Meanwhile, Mrs Hasina has condemned the arrest of the Chhatra League leaders and demanded their release.

**Actor shot dead:** An actor was shot dead while performing on stage near the industrial town of Savar, 35 km west of here, by suspected Muslim extremists, local police said. The extremists surrounded the open-air stage and fired at the performers yesterday, killing 28-year old amateur actor Harunur Rashid. The play was part of a musical show organised by local cultural activists in the Bagnibari village. Police said Islamists were opposed to the holding of the cultural show, which they termed "unIslamic".