

China mobilizes 500,000 people to fight floods

BEIJING, July 12: China's devastating annual floods have already reached record proportions, with worse destruction feared ahead as authorities mobilized 500,000 people in Wuhan to battle the overflowing Yangtze river, reports AFP.

China's worst flooding since 1975 began in mid-May and has been particularly bad in the six densely populated, rural eastern and central provinces through which the Yangtze flows. In the eastern Anhui and Jiangsu provinces alone 500 people have been killed and 3,000 seriously injured.

One relief work official warned Thursday, "this is only the start of the rainy season", as the national meteorological office forecast even heavier rain later this month and in August, which is considered the peak flood period.

Experts here warned that the middle and lower reaches of the Yangtze would be hit hard by a new flood peak Saturday. The area, China's grain belt, is almost entirely under water and most of its summer crops have been wiped out.

Torrential rain continued

today and both the Yangtze and the Hwai rivers reached record heights. The rivers have already burst their banks in many central and eastern regions, causing the worst flooding this century in some places.

The biggest threat now hangs over the towns of Nanjing, Suzhou and Wuxi, in Jiangsu province near Shanghai, as well as Wuhan, in central Hubei province where the Yangtze is reported to be 0.5 metres (1-1/2 feet) over its danger mark and steadily rising.

Half a million people are on hand in Wuhan to cope with the deluge expected Saturday.

The floods have affected 18 of China's 30 provinces, leaving two-thirds of the country under water, and claiming 1,270 lives and an estimated 5.7 billion dollars worth of damage.

In Anhui province the floods have already destroyed 60 per cent of the harvest, stranded five million people and affected a total of 48 million.

National television is devoting half its evening news broadcast to the floods.



AL chief Sheikh Hasina addressing a group of Barisal lawyers in Dhaka yesterday.

—Star photo

Voting on Rao's motion of confidence Monday

NEW DELHI, July 12: The voting on the motion of confidence moved by the Narsimha Rao government will take place on Monday. This was announced by Speaker Shivraj Patil in the Lok Sabha today, reports agencies.

The House took up for discussion the motion which read "that this House expresses its confidence in the council of Ministers."

The one-line motion was moved by Prime Minister P.V. Narsimha Rao. Unlike his predecessors V.P. Singh and Chandra Shekhar, Rao did not preface his motion with a speech but only read the motion.

The debate on the motion, initiated by Leader of the Opposition L.K. Advani was inconclusive as the House took up private members' business.

Winning confidence vote seemed the least of Rao's worries. Ahead lie myriad problems, including rejuvenating a near-Bankrupt economy and controlling long-festering separatist movements in three states.

The three-week-old minority government is expected to win the vote, since all parties agree the country cannot go through another gruelling and costly election.

Rao's Congress Party and its allies control 245 votes, nine short of majority of the 507 occupied seats in the Lok Sabha. Thirty-six seats are vacant in the 545-member Lower House. Two members are nominated and have no voting rights.

The opposition Bharatiya Janata Party, controlling 121 seats, said it will vote against the one-line confidence motion that Rao submitted Friday.

But the National Front, a centre-left alliance led by former Prime Minister V.P. Singh, said it will abstain, allowing the motion to carry.

"I know my party is going to vote against you but I am sure your government is not going to fall," said Lal Krishna Advani, the leader of the Bharatiya Janata Party, or Indian People's Party.

Opening the debate on the motion, Advani attacked the government's approach to the separatist revolts in Kashmir, Punjab and Assam.

He said the government sent "the wrong signal" to the secessionist forces by granting amnesty on Monday to suspected militants jailed in Assam.

About 300 people were released in a bid to win freedom for 14 government officials being held hostage by the rebels since July 1. Two hostages were freed, and a Soviet technician who also was seized was killed while attempting to escape, the rebels said.

At the same time, Advani criticized the government's inability to secure the freedom of a senior oil company executive being held by rebels in Kashmir since June 28.

"What has happened until now doesn't instill great confidence in the government," Advani said.

Rao became the Congress leader after the May 21 assassina-

tion of former Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi. He took office June 21.

He inherited foreign exchange reserves hardly sufficient to cover one month's imports, and a foreign debt of nearly 80 billion dollars.

In his first two weeks, Rao devalued the Indian Rupee by almost 20 per cent, apparently to induce the International Monetary Fund to grant loans of up to 7 billion dollars.

He also sold stocks of central bank gold in the international market to earn about 200 million dollars.

Not in next 150 yrs

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land of Maui was like a bright moonlight night.

Birds returned to their nests and dogs settled down to sleep fooled by the phenomenon, which scientists do not expect to see repeated at such length for another 150 years.

The eclipse seized the attention of scientists manning the world's most powerful telescopes atop the extinct Mauna Kea volcano and sent confused birds flying back to their nests, thinking that the day was done before the light reappeared.

Perhaps the most incredible sight during the eclipse came as the moon began to slip beneath the sun, creating a huge, diamond ring effect.

As the moon covered 95 per cent, the sun appeared as a thin ring of orange fire with a huge black center.

Hasina

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Criticising the national budget for 1991-92, she said it had failed to provide any sense of direction to build a self-reliant economy. Introduction of the Value Added Tax (VAT) system has started to affect the people and is crippling them financially, she added.

Several Awami League leaders, including Begum Sajeda Chowdhury, also spoke on the occasion.

Daily Inqilab's apology for news item

By Staff Correspondent

The Daily Inqilab has apologised for publishing a news item titled 'Singapore sharanjitra' (Singapore conspiracy) on June 10, says a press release issued from Awami League central office.

The press release said that the Chief Editor of The Daily Inqilab A K M Mohiuddin and News Editor Sultanuddin Ahmed called on Awami League chief and Leader of the Opposition Sheikh Hasina Friday evening at Bangabandhu Bhaban and regretted the publication of the report.

The press release mentioned the report was on Sheikh Hasina and it was 'baseless and fabricated'. Advocate Zillur Rahman issued a legal notice on behalf of Sheikh Hasina to the management of The Daily Inqilab. In the notice, the newspaper was asked to apologise unconditionally for publishing the report.

Hasina demands release of Pabna BCL workers

By Staff Correspondent

Awami League Chief and Leader of the Opposition in Parliament Sheikh Hasina Friday demanded release of Sohail Hassan Shahun and Ashrafal Islam Vice-President and General Secretary respectively of Pabna Edward Government College Students Union.

In a statement she said their arrests were acts of harassment by the law enforcing agencies, pressured by the ruling party's student front following its defeat in the Edward College student union elections.

Flood

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muna erosion which has already devoured 50 shops in the ghat in last two days.

Onrush of waters from the upper catchments breached six hundred feet of the Brahmaputra Flood Control Embankment and affected Gaibandha Sadar, Fulchari and Shaghata upazilas.

UNO of Fulchari said about forty-five thousand people in different char areas have been marooned by the flood waters that also threatened Fulchari thana with erosion.

Moazzem

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prime minister was being treated exposed a different face of the government. He demanded of the government to allow Mizan to go abroad for treatment.

He said the government would be responsible for any consequences if the health condition of Mizan further deteriorated due to imprisonment.

In another statement, Shah Moazzem condemned the attack on a meeting of Jatiya Party in Feni and demanded arrest of the criminals. He said the ruling party is terrorising the JP workers with the help of administration.

The Midnight File

France to press for Third World debt relief

PARIS, July 12: France will press for Third World debt relief at next week's summit of industrial powers, a senior French official said Friday. The summit will also be a chance for a "seven-plus-one" discussion with Soviet President Mikhail Gorbachev "to see where the USSR is and where it is going," said Anne Lauvergeon, adviser to President Francois Mitterrand, reports AP.

Bush okays list of Iraqi targets

WASHINGTON, July 12: US President George Bush has approved a target list of Iraqi military command and control centres that would be bombed if Baghdad ignored UN orders to destroy its nuclear technology, administration officials said today, reports Reuter.

22 more killed in Punjab

NEW DELHI, July 12: Twenty-two people died in violence linked to a bloody Sikh militant campaign in the northern state of Punjab late Thursday and today, PTI said, reports AFP.

Campus problems

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Dhaka University Central Students Union (DUCSU) in a free, fair and peaceful atmosphere.

The meeting, presided over by Begum Khaleida Zia, was held in a very cordial atmosphere. Leaders of political parties of almost all shades of opinion attended the meeting, Jatiya Party, Freedom Party and Jatiya Samajtantrik Dal (JSD) however remained unrepresented.

In her opening address the Prime Minister told the political leaders that the campus violence had become an obstacle to the flourishing of democracy and called for concerted efforts of all to end it.

She said she had already held meeting with students and teachers with a view to solving the problems of the educational arena. The meeting was intended for an open heart exchange of ideas of political leaders.

The meeting began right at 4-15 pm and continued till 10-30 pm with breaks for tea and the Magreb prayer. Begum Zia threw a dinner for the political leaders at the end of the meeting.

Talking to The Daily Star during the Magreb break the Prime Minister termed the atmosphere of the meeting as 'very cordial' and said that the political leaders were discussing the campus problems with an open mind.

She said the political leaders put suggestions for solving the problems and appeared optimistic about the outcome of the meeting. She said she would call more such meetings to help work out solutions.

Education Minister Prof. Badruddoza Chowdhury told the Daily Star that the Government did not put forward its own suggestions for consideration by the political leaders. Instead, it preferred suggestions from the political leaders.

Friday's meeting of political leaders to unitedly find solutions to the campus problems was the first one of its kind in the country. Earlier in January, the political leaders had created history by unanimously agreeing to a code of political conduct before the February 27 parliament elections. That meeting was held at the initiative of the Election Commission.

Political leaders attending the meeting welcomed Begum Khaleida Zia for convening the meeting. Political leaders at the meeting were found to speak with the spirit of self-criticism, and it was clear that everybody was eager to see the campus peaceful and the academic atmosphere congenial, said one source.

Leaders of the smaller parties attending the meeting exerted pressure on the bigger political parties to help end the campus problems. Some leaders said the ruling BNP, Awami League, Jatiya Samajtantrik Dal and Jamaat-e-Islami could come to an agreement and let others know about the agreed terms.

The Five-party Alliance leaders were very specific about short-term and long-term solutions. They emphasised that the law should be applied equally to all.

Elderly politician Mohiuddin Ahmed of BKSAL told The Daily Star that the Prime Minister had identified terrorism as a major problem in one area. Terrorism is there in other areas, too, he said adding, given the sincerity of the government and cooperation of other political parties, the problem could definitely be solved.

He said musclemen used sophisticated weapons which old people like him could not even think about. Quoting K M Obaidur Rahman he said only hockey sticks were used in campus violence in the early Sixties. If government agencies remained vigilant there was no way for musclemen to procure sophisticated weapons, he observed.

Rashed Khan Menon of Workers Party told newsmen that they had also discussed possibilities of rehabilitation of

students who had become 'musclemen' as victims of the situation.

Bimal Biswas of the Five Party Alliance in his address asked why the government could control Jatiyatabadi Chhatra Dal and put an end to excesses of Chhatra Shibir in Chittagong University and why certain elements accused of murdering Dr Milan were sheltered by a certain party.

Begum Sajeda Chowdhury, MP, and Tofael Ahmed, MP, of Awami League, Matur Rahman Nizami, MP, of Jamaat-e-Islami, Mohiuddin Ahmed, MP, of BKSAL, Rashed Khan Menon, MP, of Workers Party, Shahjahan Straj, MP, of JSD (S), Saifuddin Ahmed Manik of CPB, Obaidur Rahman of Jansad, Abdul Matin of Muslim League, Nirmal Sen of Samik Krishak Samajbadi Dal, Dilip Barua of Samyabadi Dal, A S M Solaiman of Krishak Samik Party, A F M Mahbubul Haque of BSD, Khalequzzaman Bhuiyan of BSD, Hasanul Haq Inu of JSD, Shaikat Hossain Nilu of PNP, Shaful Alam Prodhon of JAGPA, Manindra Nath Sarkar of Hindu Oikya, Motiuddin Khan Badal of BSD, Mirza Sultan Raza of JSD and Maulana Obaidullah bin Jalalabadi of Biplabi Islamic Oikya Parishad, took part in the discussion.

Education Minister Prof. Badruddoza Chowdhury, Irrigation, Flood Control and Water Resources Minister Majidul Haq, Communications Minister Oli Ahmed, Industries Minister Shamsul Islam Khan, Shipping Minister M K Anwar, Health and Family Welfare Minister Chowdhury Kamal Ibne Yusuf, State Minister for T and T Shamsul Islam, Social Welfare and Women Affairs Minister Tariqul Islam, State Minister for Education Principal Yunus Khan, State Minister for Youth and Sports Sadek Hossain Khoka, Mayor of Dhaka City Corporation, Mirza Abbas, Abul Bashar of Workers Party, Shamsuzzoha, MP, of CPB were present on the occasion.

Commission

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steps to reduce their dependence on the central administration. The commission will recommend necessary changes in the relevant laws.

Meanwhile, an initiative has been taken by the ruling Bangladesh Nationalist Party to organise village-level party committees comprising members of erstwhile 'gram sarkar'.

'Gram sarkar' established by late President Ziaur Rahman in 1981 was later dissolved by the Ershad government.

BNP Secretary General Abdus Salam Talukdar told The Daily Star last night that these village-level committees would have nothing to do with the revival of 'gram sarkar'.

He said that former members of 'gram sarkar' had recently organised a conference in Dhaka. The constitution of village-level BNP committees is a follow-up of that conference. Another conference of former members of 'gram sarkar' is likely soon, he said.

Replying to a question he said that 'gram sarkar' will be organised through a due process of law by involving other local and rural government institutions.

He said that a proposal to enact a 'gram sarkar' law by changing the 'Palli Parishad Act of 1990' had not yet taken shape.

It may be noted here that the original provisions on local government made in the 1972 Constitution are expected to be revived through the proposed Constitution amendments now under consideration in the parliament.

CU teachers

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claimed representing the 'general teacher of the university expressed their reaction to the report at a press conference at the National Press Club.

They urged the government to restore academic atmosphere in educational institutions including the Chittagong University through "appropriate steps".

The one-man judicial probe body headed by Justice Mahmuda Amin Chowdhury suggested appointment of a neutral person as VC and repeal of the Chittagong University Act 1973 to restore normalcy on the campus.

Amongst the 25 teachers present there, Prof. Hasanuzzaman read out a detailed statement on the probe body report, the CU situation, and the alleged role of some pro-Jamaat teachers and students in instigating violence there.

Prof. Hasanuzzaman said they rejected the inquiry commission report since it was "biased, contrary to the university autonomy, and derogatory to the teachers' dignity."

Explaining, he said, the report was 'partial' in identifying the terrorists responsible for the December 22, 1991 violence on the campus, overlooked Islamic Chhatra Shibir activists' criminal activities and tried to identify that the teachers' grouping for and against the Vice-Chancellor was the fundamental reason for the unrest on the campus.

Prof. Zaman further said that the report proposed to snatch the teachers' recognised right to participate in national poli-

tics and attempted to make the Vice-Chancellor guilty without any specific proof based on investigation.

He said, it recommended introduction of a 'code of conduct' for the CU teachers like the government servants which was contrary to their right to free thinking.

The report also blamed the teachers for creating 'mastans', terrorists and criminals and made disgraceful remarks, Prof. Hasanuzzaman alleged.

The inquiry commission also revealed its partisan character terming the VC's speech on the December 22 incidents as 'unbearable' and 'controversial', he viewed. The VC's speech on that day was laudable, he said.

Prof. Zaman also painted a gloomy picture of the CU situation and alleged that it was due to terrorist acts by the Shibir workers and support of a section of the Jamaat-backed teachers.

Prof. Zaman said the report mentioned a 'reign of terror created by the Shibir activists' after the 1990 Chittagong University Central Students Union elections but did not recommend punishment for them.

Asked whether their demand for restoration of normalcy on the campus contradicted rejection of the judicial probe body report, one of them, Prof. Anupam Sen said the commission was not judicial but quasi-judicial.

Those present at the press conference included Prof. Abdul Mannan, Dr Faizul Alam, Prof. Hamida Banu, Dr Manjur Moshed Mahmud and Prof. Anwarul Azim.

Dhaka-Moscow

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broad range of issues of common interest.

The talks revealed the proximity of approaches to disarmament issues, the problems of establishing a just and equitable international economic order, greater cooperation amongst would community for environmental protection and environmental emergency situations.

The Soviet Union and Bangladesh advocated taking further steps to strengthen stability in Asia and the Pacific region through confidence building measures and dialogue in order to prevent confrontation.

The Soviet side welcomed the efforts designed to promote interaction to promote the South Asian states within the framework of the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC).

The Bangladesh Foreign Minister described the current state of the country's evolution towards democracy and the efforts taken by the government of the republic to overcome the existing economic difficulties.

In his turn, he was informed about the Perestroika trends underway in the Soviet Union and the basic parameters of the upcoming treaty on the union of the USSR as a new type of a federal democratic state.

Both the sides also discussed issues pertaining to bilateral relations and prospects for their further development. The need was noted to pursue the search for new areas and directions of mutually beneficial cooperation.

Bessmertnykh and Rahman signed the Consular Convention between the USSR and the Peoples Republic of Bangladesh.

The Bangladesh Foreign Minister met USSR minister of foreign economic relations Katushev. He also visited historic places in Moscow and made a tour of Leningrad.

The visit took place in an atmosphere of mutual understanding and goodwill which reflects the traditionally friendly nature of Soviet-Bangladesh relations, the joint statement said.

Rise in overdue loans of BKB

The overdue and outstanding loans of the Bangladesh Krishi Bank (BKB) have increased considerably despite fall in loan disbursement last fiscal year, reports UNB.

Bank sources said the overdue loan had increased by 39 per cent while the outstanding loan rose by 13.34 per cent during the year (1990-91).

Ordeal

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The woman, who was accompanied by her husband, was later released by the security and intelligence officials on the confirmation that she was not 'Subha', intelligence officials told newsmen.

Officials said that interrogation led them to believe that they were Mrs. Sheela Babu (20) and Mr. Panka Jakshar Babu (31), residents of Konnam in Kerala, who were on way to take up an assignment in Comilla in Bangladesh.

Siberian lava flow led to early extinction

WASHINGTON, July 12: A lava eruption that covered more than 100,000 square miles of Siberia could have caused climate changes that contributed to the near-total extinction of animal life on earth some 250 million years ago, researchers say, reports AP.

In a study to be published Friday, Apish R Basu of the University of Rochester and Paul R Renne of the Institute of Human Origins in Berkeley, California, said that laboratory dating of rock samples from the Siberian lava flow show the eruption was about the same time that fossil deposits record the extinction of up to 95 per cent of all animal species.

"We proved that the timing of the eruption was coincident with the extinction," said Basu in an interview. "Our work suggests a strong link between the two, but we can't step out and say the eruption caused the extinction."

Steven Stanley, a John Hopkins University paleobiologist, said the study adds strength to the idea that a volcanic eruption could have caused or contributed to the early extinction, but the exact mechanism of death for millions of animals over thousands of years is still unclear.

"I think their bringing to light this approximate coincidence is every important," said Stanley. "They pointed out that people need to look at this volcanic event as a candidate for causation."

Experts, such as Stanley, have shown that there have been a long series of major and minor extinctions in the earth's history. The most famous is

the event 65 million years ago that killed off the dinosaurs, but the extinction 250 million years ago was even more widespread.

"It probably was the most severe global extinction on record of the past 600 million years," said Stanley. Marine animals were the most severely affected, but the event also killed off most of the mammal-like reptile species that then walked the earth, he said.

Between 75 per cent and 95 per cent of all animal species died in the extinction, he said.

Basu and Renne determined when the Siberian eruption occurred by age-dating a number of rock samples taken from the site by Soviet scientists. The rocks all came from a major formation called the Siberian Lava Traps.

The specimens, said Basu, were in pristine condition with almost no alteration or weathering since they were laid down as molten lava.

To date the rocks, Basu and Renne used a technique called argon-argon aging. The technique is based on the fact that potassium decays at a known rate into argon. By measuring the ratio, the age of the rocks can be established.

Basu said the rocks consistently measured at ages of between 248.3 and 247.5 million years old which is within the margin of error for the estimated time of the major extinction.

Lava from the massive flow covered about 130,000 square miles (338,000 square kilometres) in successive waves that were up to a half mile (0.8 kilometres) thick, said Basu. The eruption continued in spurts over a period of

perhaps 200,000 years and produced about 1.5 million cubic kilometres of lava rock.

"If that volume of lava rock were to be spread uniformly on the surface of the earth, it would have created a 10-foot (3-metre) thick layer all over the globe," said Basu.

Eruptions of this size would have sent millions of tons of ash, dust and gas into the atmosphere, almost certainly affecting the weather, said Basu.

Stanley said chemical droplets from volcanic eruptions can stay aloft for long periods of time and if there are many such events close together "you probably are going to lower temperatures throughout the world."

Though it still is not certain what caused the extinction 250 million years ago, Stanley said that climate changes caused by volcanic eruptions is considered a likely candidate. Other causes could include a drop in sea level and the break up of the earth's land mass into separate continents, an event that could also affect the weather.

No evidence has been found, said Stanley, to suggest that an asteroid smashing into earth from outer space could have played a role. A climate-altering collision with an extraterrestrial boulder, however, is considered by many scientists to have been the most likely cause of the dinosaur extinction 65 million years ago.

The study by Basu and Renne was to be published Friday in Science, the journal of the American Association for the Advancement of Science.