

High level body to investigate

Order to nab ship that caused spill

By Inam Ahmed

The government has decided to send a high level team to Chittagong to investigate the oil spill in the Bay of Bengal. Top sources in the environment ministry said Thursday.

Meanwhile, Shipping Ministry sources said that the DO of Shipping has been ordered to capture the ship TT Energy that caused the oil spill. However, if the ship was beyond the Bangladesh territory at present, the order would not be executed, sources said.

Meanwhile, reports from the Khulna office of the Environment Department that reached here three days ago said the spill was of furnace oil and burnt mobil. The report said that the oil was dumped in the deep sea and was washed ashore by the waves.

Reports from the coastal belt said that the oil has already left a thick coating on the roots of trees in the mangroves of the Sundarbans. Thousands of trees are on the verge of dying from the lack of oxygen.

However, as it is not crude oil, it cannot have any serious

effect on birds, concerned sources said. The same sources said that the oil spill may have an adverse effect on the fish resources and the country may suffer heavy economic losses.

Environment Ministry sources said that dumping of burnt oil in the sea territory of Bangladesh has now become a regular event as the country lacks strong anti-pollution laws.

The Marine Pollution Control Ordinance promulgated in 1974 and updated till 1977 has the provision of fitting the vessels polluting the sea a sum of only Taka 1000.

They said that the country lacks any national oil spill contingency plan and surveillance programme to curb such misdoings. The International Maritime Consultative Organisation (IMCO) drafted a modality for such a contingency plan, but this was not implemented.

Sources said that the lack of any national programme has made it difficult to seek help from regional and international organisations to tackle any oil spills in the sea.

Buses, trucks reappear

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The Communications Minister Col (ret'd) Oli Ahmed in the Jatiya Sangsad on February 10.

Some 45,000 private transports went off the roads on February 8 to press for a 19-point charter of demands put forward by the association.

According to the agreement, signed after an extensive negotiation between the two parties, the prices of fuel would be reduced "as low as possible" from July 1. The owners' earlier demanded an immediate reduction in the prices to the pre-Gulf war level (Taka 6.90 per litre). The present price of fuel is Taka 14 per litre.

For pest of the demands in the charter, a committee would be formed headed by the State Minister for Communications to suggest recommendations to the government by June 30.

The other demands for which the owners went on strike were: 25 per cent reduction of duty on the import of spare parts, stoppage to illegal toll collection, increase in the time frame for payment of presumptive tax, and decentralisation of the route permit issuance system from the capital to the headquarters of the greater district.

The Executive President of the Association Alhaj A K Joyul Abedin, Secretary General Muhammad Ashraf Khan and Additional Secretary General M A Kader signed the accord on behalf of the owners while the State Minister for Communications Fazlur Rahman Patal, the Communications Secretary and the Chairman of the Bangladesh Road Transport Authority did the same on behalf of the government.

Also present on the occa-

sion were Shahrzaman Mur-taza, General Secretary from Khulna, Taurik Ahmed Kennedy, President, Nilphamari Zila Auto Malik Samity, Abul Kalam, General Secretary, Noakhali Motor Malik Samity, Rustam Ali Khan, General Secretary, Bangladesh Truck Malik Samity, Saleh Ahmed President Dhaka Zila Truck Malik Samity and other leaders.

Talking to The Daily Star Thursday, the Executive President of the association regretted the inconvenience caused to the people because of the strike and said that they had to resort to such a programme to remove "the outstanding and identified problems in the transport sector."

The agreement would also facilitate the members of the association with bank loans giving tax and tariff rebate in the import of vehicles.

According to the agreement, those arrested during the strike would immediately be released and the cases against them would be withdrawn.

UNB adds: According to business circles, five days of the strike had totally disrupted exports and internal movement of goods and commodities.

Official figure of losses from the strike is not yet available but various business sources estimated them at Tk 15 crore per day.

Mustafiz leaves for London

Foreign Minister A S M Mustafizur Rahman left Thursday night for London to begin a fortnight-long tour of Europe and Middle East, reports UNB.

ing food production for reducing dependency on import of foodgrain.

"Success of our development programmes largely depends on attaining food autarky," she said, adding the valuable foreign exchange spent for grain imports can be diverted to fund development activity if the country attains sufficiency in food.

The Prime Minister urged the womenfolk to actively participate in government's development programmes aimed at achieving self-reliance.

The Prime Minister later flew to Sherpur to inaugurate excavation of the Karnajhara-Mrigandhi Canal at Kasba Molla in the Sadar upazila of that district.

A rally was arranged near the site. It was presided over by Sherpur BNP Convenor Alhaj Mohammad Habibur Rahman and also addressed by LGRD Minister, Deputy Minister for Health Serajul Islam, Begum Rahima Khandaker, MP, and other local leaders.

Begum Zia also laid foundation of Muktiyodha Girls' Hostel at Kasba Gauripur also in the Sadar upazila.

PM warns teachers

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cratic government by pressing illogical demands, she said.

Those resorting to strike do not want welfare of the country, Begum Zia said, urging the people to identify them and stand guard against their "vicious designs."

Presided over by District BNP Convehor Shah Mohammad Khairul Bashar Chisty, the rally was also addressed by LGRD Minister and BNP Secretary General Barrister Abdus Salam Talukder, Deputy Health Minister Mohammad Serajul Huq, Rahima Khandaker, MP, and local leaders.

Referring to re-excavation of the 3-mile-long canal for the benefit of nearly 2,150 families of Sharifpur and Shahbazpur unions, Begum Zia sought cooperation of the people in implementation of government's different development programmes.

"We want to transform idle hands into working hands," the Prime Minister told the large gathering.

She called upon "all irrespective of party affiliations to join the politics of production initiated by Shaheed President Zia.

Begum Zia stressed increas-



A group of primary school teachers demonstrating outside the official residence of the Education Minister yesterday in demand for trial of the president of the Primary School Teachers Association, Abul Kalam Azad, already in jail.

—Star photo

Sangsad briefs

15 lakh reside in slums

There are 1200 slums in Dhaka city in which about 15 lakh people reside, reports BSS.

This was disclosed by Deputy Minister for LGRD and Cooperatives Abdul Hat in the Jatiya Sangsad Thursday in reply to a question from Begum Farida Rahman (BNP).

Hat said all the slums had not come up illegally. About 500 slums sprang up illegally while the rest had been set up on private owned lands.

He said steps would be taken for evicting those slums which had been set up on important places including main roads and were creating obstruction to public life.

2,50,000 unemployed receive training

State Minister for Youth and Sports Sadek Hossain Thursday said, 2,50,000 unemployed youths had received training until 1991 under the "unemployed youths rehabilitation and vocational training" programme of the government, reports BSS.

Replying to a supplementary question from Noor-e-Alam Chowdhury (AL-Madarpur) in the Jatiya Sangsad, the state minister said out of the trained youths, one lakh had been rehabilitated through self-employment.

6,21,94,932 voters in country

The total number of voters in the country is 6,21,94,932, Deputy Minister for LGRD Abdul Hat informed the Jatiya Sangsad Thursday, reports BSS.

In reply to a question from Sardar Sakawat Hossain Bakul (BNP-Narsingdi), the Deputy Minister said out of the total voters, 3,30,48,672 were males and 2,91,46,260 females.

Tk 227.45 crore projects to solve city waterlogging

The government has taken up two projects at a cost of Taka 227.45 crore for solving the waterlogging problem of Dhaka city, reports BSS.

This was stated by Deputy Minister for LGRD and Cooperatives Abdul Hat in the Jatiya Sangsad Thursday while replying to a question from Abdul Matin Khasru (AL-Comilla).

He said work on the "Storm water drainage system improvement project in Dhaka city" is in progress with Taka 50 crore financial grant of the Japanese government.

The total cost of the project is Taka 68.45 crore, which includes expenditure on requisition of land and duties.

Abdul Hat said implementation work of the other project, "Dhaka integrated flood protection project" will begin during the current financial year with financial assistance from Asian Development Bank.

The Deputy Minister said the total cost of the project is Taka 159 crore and 95 per cent of the expenditure would be received by the implementation organisation, Dhaka WASA, as grant.

WASA system loss 53 pc

The percentage of system loss of Dhaka WASA is 53, reports BSS.

This was stated by LORD Minister Abdus Salam Talukder while replying to Rahmat Ali (Awami League-Gazipur) during the question hour in the Jatiya Sangsad Thursday.

Milon murder case Another witness declared hostile

By Staff Correspondent

The prosecution side in Dr Shamsul Alam Khan Milon murder case declared another witness hostile. Two witnesses were examined in the court of the second Additional Sessions Judge, Dhaka yesterday.

Badal, a cigarette vendor at the Teachers Students Centre (TSC) of Dhaka University was declared hostile while the deposition by the other witness, Dr Akhterruzaman was accepted by the prosecution side.

Out of the 30 witnesses, 14 were examined and cross examined and so far nine of them were declared hostile till yesterday.

Striking teachers hold rally Feb 24

By DU Correspondent

A grand rally of the teachers and employees will now be held on February 24 in front of the National Press Club at 10 am.

This was announced at a meeting of the Central Liaison Committee in the Teachers Movement (CLCTM) Thursday.

The rally was scheduled to be held on February 15 but the date was shifted Wednesday due to the indefinite transport strike.

Meanwhile, the Bangladesh Federation of Teachers Association (BFTA) Chairman Sheikh Amanullah said that the non-government teachers were still continuing their strike across the country.

The teachers' indefinite strike began on January 18 demanding the implementation of a 15-point charter of demands.

Jessore-Benapole rail line issue sent to JS body

A private member's resolution seeking to reopen the Jessore-Benapole rail line was referred to a parliamentary committee in response to a suggestion from the opposition, reports UNB.

In a gesture of accommodation to opposition views, Communications Minister Oli Ahmed accepted the proposal for examining the matter by a parliamentary committee.

He said the 37 km rail line was closed during Awami League regime in 1974 because of financial loss and the problems of smuggling.

Reopening of the line will require a capital cost of Tk 9.59 crore. Operation of the line will be uneconomic that will incur an annual loss of Tk 61 lakh every year to the government, he added.

The Minister offered to give lease the Jessore-Benapole rail line at a notional price on one taka to the members who suggested it can be operated profitably.

While referring the resolution to the private members' bills and resolution committee, Speaker Shaikh Razzak Ali said findings of the committee should be submitted to the House within 70 days.

Earlier, Awami League member from Jessore Tabibur Rahman Sardar moving his resolution said people of the area vehemently opposed to the withdrawal of the railway tracks as communication and cargo movements by railway are easier and cheaper.

He was supported by about a dozen members including the Opposition Chief Whip Mohammad Nasim who suggested for re-examining the matter by a parliamentary committee.

Nepali Congress meets after three decades

CHANDRAGADIH, Feb 13: Nepal's governing Congress Party began a 3-day national convention Thursday. Its first since democracy replaced three decades of monarchical rule, reports AP.

About 1,450 Congress members unanimously elected former Prime Minister Krishna Prasad Bhattarai as party president in this southeastern town about 180 miles (290 kilometres) from Kathmandu.

Bhattarai, who hitherto was the party's acting president said in his address to the gathering that there was "complete unity within the Nepali Congress."

Speculation has been rife, however, about the wide differences among Bhattarai, Prime Minister Girtija Prasad Koirala and Ganesh Man Singh, who together control the Congress Party.

Since his election as Prime Minister last May, Koirala has not consulted Congress leaders in his government's policy decisions, reportedly antagonising his party colleagues.

In his speech at the convention, Koirala said his government was "not obliged to consult the party before taking decisions."

Water

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Prime Minister.

The main issues of the conference are to enhance rural employment and income through the development of agro-processing industries and to determine regional strategies over arresting land degradation.

Haq pointed out various constraints faced by the Bangladeshi farmers in agro-processing industries. He said that farmers' cooperative might play a significant role in accumulating capital for setting up such small-scale industries.

The Agriculture Minister emphasised "country code of conduct" in farming for using pesticides. He also said that training of farmers in modern technology and its application and marketing of the agro-products might help achieve mass-employment in agriculture sector.

Majid-ul Haq also had a meeting with the Indian Agriculture Minister Dr Balaraj Jakhari in New Delhi yesterday. The two leaders came to an agreement for taking political initiatives in resolving different bilateral issues including agriculture development of both the countries.

Tk 33,309 crore foreign aid spent in 9 yrs

The government had implemented 4,177 foreign-aided projects at the cost of Taka 33,309 crore from 1981-82 to 1989-90 financial years, Minister of State for Finance Mujibur Rahman informed the Jatiya Sangsad Wednesday, reports BSS.

Replying to a question from Enamul Huq (Jamaat Cox's Bazar), the State Minister said the donor countries and agencies that funded the projects were: Australia, Belgium, Canada, Denmark, West Germany, France, Finland, Italy, Japan, Netherlands, New Zealand, Norway, Sweden, Switzerland, the United Kingdom, the USA, Iran, Iraq, Kuwait, Libya, Saudi Arabia, UAE, Asian Development Bank, the EEC, Ford Foundation, International Development Agency (IDA), Islamic Development Bank, IFAD, IFC, OPEC, UNICEF, UNDP, Bulgaria, China, Czechoslovakia, East Germany, Hungary, Poland, Rumania, Russia, Yugoslavia, India, Pakistan, Turkey and other donor agencies.

The State Minister said of the total amount, Taka 17,387 crore was in foreign exchange and the rest Taka 16,222 crore in local currency. 75 per cent of the local currency were received in the form of food and commodity aid, he pointed out.

Shaheed Day

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honour.

Abdul Matin, who became the Jubo League's joint secretary in 1951, led the protests against Jinnah's comments by standing up and shouting "No! No!"

Later that evening, Jinnah met the SLAC delegation which included, according to Badruddin Umar's three-volume "East Bengal's Language Movement", future Jubo League leaders such as Mohammad Toaha, Oli Ahad, Tajuddin Ahmed, Syed Nazrul Islam, as well as others such as Shamsul Haque (later to become the first general secretary of the Awami Muslim League), Abul Kasem of the Tamuddun Majlis, Kamruddin Ahmed etc.

The delegation wasted no time in telling Jinnah that they wanted Bengali as a state language of Pakistan, to which the first Governor-General of the new state replied that he had not gone there to learn politics from them. He said that Pakistan's security would be threatened if there was more than one state language.

Toaha, according to Umar, reminded Jinnah that other countries in the world, such as Canada, Switzerland, the Soviet Union etc. had more than one state language without any problem. Jinnah denied point-blank that those countries had more than one

The Midnight File

Ghali to recommend peace force for Yugoslavia

UNITED NATIONS, Feb 13: Secretary-General Boutros Boutros-Ghali is recommending the dispatch of a UN peace-keeping force of more than 10,000 men to Yugoslavia, a UN spokesman announced today. The Security Council is expected to meet next week to approve the recommendation and advance elements of the force will probably arrive about two weeks later, the spokesman said, reports Reuter.

9 killed in Indian riots

LUCKNOW, Feb 13: At least nine people were killed in religious riots and police shooting in a northern Indian town after militant Hindus tried to erect a temple in a Muslim-dominated area police said today. At least 28 people - 27 Hindus and one Muslim - were arrested in the violence at Hapur town in Uttar Pradesh state, said MK Mitra, Deputy Inspector-General of the state police, reports Reuter.

Speaker: House leader

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Opposition criticism that the Leader of the House Begum Khaleeda Zia was absenting herself from the sessions of the House which was affecting the consolidation of democracy.

Citing examples of the Canadian, Indian and British parliaments the Speaker said that in the absence of the Leader of the House the Deputy Leader can represent the party. Moreover, the Leader of the House who becomes the Prime Minister has to attend to many official duties which curtail time.

Shaikh Razaque Ali said, there are countries where the Prime Minister has an office inside the parliament building for use during the sessions. But we are yet to provide such support inside the parliament building, added the Speaker.

When asked about the behaviour of the members inside the House the Speaker said that democracy was not practised in this country for a long time. Democracy is a matter of practice, "It has a different language, a different culture and a different state of mind," he added.

The Speaker further said, the House has 160 Opposition members and 170 Treasury benches and there is no reason to expect their behaving in the same way. Moreover, the House cannot be controlled mechanically, the members are all human beings.

Answering a question about the allegation by the BNP members that the Opposition members were given more time on the floor, Shaikh Razaque Ali said that this was a universal allegation. He said, the Constitution of the Republic and the Rules of Procedure provide more privileges to the members of the Opposition. Explaining, the Speaker said, when the government moves a bill the Treasury benches cannot speak against it. Only the Opposition can ask for an opinion poll or move amendments. Citing the example of the recent transport strike, the Speaker said that it was an action against the government. So, the Opposition could move adjournment motions on the subject and it was their constitutional privilege. The Treasury benches can participate in general discussions on any subject.

Pointing to the responsibilities as the elected representative of the constituency the Speaker said, "If we had followed the convention as in the United Kingdom where the Opposition does not put up any candidate against the Speaker I would not have gone to my constituency."

Concluding, the Speaker said: "Evaluate me from my performances in the House. If I compare the criticisms of both groups I can claim that I am performing my responsibilities impartially."

Mohiuddin Poursava polls soon

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his ruling notices on the privilege motions of the day.

Taking the floor, Barrister Moudud Ahmed of the Jatiya Party pointed out that the AL leader should have to go to the court to refute the matter and that the Parliament was not the proper place to do the same.

In view of a comment from the Chair, the JP leader agreed to provide legal support to Mohiuddin saying "I know him (Mohiuddin) since long."

Soon after, Tofael Ahmed stood up to support his party senior leader Ahmed. 'Golam Azam has now become a problem of the country,' he said and went on, "we find it very difficult to attend diplomatic functions because of the self-confessed killers of Bangabandhu and the anti-liberation forces like Golam Azam. We have given up attending such functions."

The Speaker did not allow Tofael to speak further after he questioned government steps on the illegal stay of Golam Azam in the country.

The House recently witnessed a heated debate on Golam Azam's staying here and his becoming the chief of the Jamaat.

Refugee issue: Ishaq lauds Dhaka's role

Pakistan President Gholam Ishaq Khan lauded Bangladesh's efforts to resolve the problems posed by influx of Myanmar refugees through negotiations, reports UNB.

Khan was talking to visiting Bangladesh Finance Minister M Saifur Rahman who called on the Pakistani President in Islamabad Thursday according to a message received in Dhaka.

The body on steel industries has received as many as 18 hundred applications from the entrepreneurs for rehabilitation and more than 150 entrepreneurs have been sued by the concerned banks and financial institutions for their failure to repay the overdue loans.