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Govt ready to hold talks any time

Political solution to CHT problems possible: PM

KHAGRACHHARI, May 12: Prime Minister Begum Khaleda Zia today emphasised the need for finding a political solution to the problems of the Chittagong Hill Tracts through peaceful discussions and dialogues, reports BSS.

She said "I think, it is possible to find a political solution only through the constitution and constitutional framework of the country."

Addressing a function on the occasion of the opening of Khagrachhari Local Government Parishad Bhavan here, the Prime Minister said the present democratic government is prepared to discuss the existing situation at any time with an open mind. Solution can be reached only through peaceful means, she said.

The Prime Minister, however, said that the government shall not bow down to terrorism and terrorist activists.

She said the present elected government believes in the balanced development of

the entire country and so has adopted specific policies towards that end. She said, the government has, from this point of view, given priority to the development of Chittagong hill districts which certainly constitute geographically an integral part of the Bangladesh.

Begum Khaleda Zia said the people of this area are in no way isolated from the people of the whole country, even from the point of view of nationalist consciousness.

She said, "We are all Bangladeshis and Bangladesh consists of all regions."

Begum Zia said the present democratic government has given priority to the integrated development of the Chittagong Hill Tracts. She said while during the autocratic regime, the local government was entrusted with the responsibilities for three subjects — education, health and agriculture, the present government has, during the last seven months, allocated seven more subjects to it. These are industry and



Prime Minister Begum Khaleda Zia distributing relief among the affected people of Lagang, Khagrachhari yesterday. —PID photo

PM takes memo from protesters

By Mahfuz Ullah

For about 300 tribal youths including some school girls who came to join a protest demonstration it was a big surprise.

Braving scorching heat and demanding dissolution of the local government councils they came to the Khagrachhari High School maidan where the Prime Minister Begum Khaleda Zia was scheduled to address a public meeting during her first-ever visit to the area yesterday.

Banners waving slogans chanting protesters were allowed to come quite close to the data.

The tribal youths were not stopped, nor chased by the members of law enforcing agencies in an area known as high risk zone. Even in early hours of Tuesday the insurgents killed three innocent Bengalees including a pregnant woman at Uttar Kabakhali at Dighinala.

The Prime Minister and other members of her entourage who were sitting on the dais were however unharmed. —See Page 12 Col 6

UNHCR won't take part in repatriation process

As the physical preparations for the repatriation of the Rohingya refugees continue, the UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) has said that it will not participate in the process scheduled to start tomorrow.

"We will continue emergency operations in camps, but we will not be involved in supervision of refugee repatriation on Friday under the current situation", a UNHCR spokeswoman said in Dhaka yesterday.

A senior Foreign Ministry official said that Bangladesh au-

thorities were in touch with the UNHCR office in Dhaka and the Foreign Secretary had had talks with the mission chief, Dariosuh Bayandar, yesterday.

According to an agreement on the modalities signed May 7 by the ambassadors, the process was to start in presence of UNHCR.

During the Myanmar Foreign Minister's visit late last month, Dhaka officials insisted that the UNHCR be made party to the whole process—from the start of repatriation to the resettlement in

their own households and original places of residence—but Yangon remained non-committal over the UN body's involvement, leading to an accord whose effectiveness came into question immediately after it had been signed.

According to the joint statement signed by the Foreign Ministers, Bangladesh agreed to "fully associate the representatives of UNHCR" in the process while "Myanmar agreed that the services of the UNHCR could be drawn upon as needed at an appropriate time".

By Nadeem Qadir and Toufique Imrose Khalidi

The latest UNHCR decision apparently makes the start of the repatriation process uncertain, but the two countries continue to work on the physical arrangements as the senior officials sit today in a border town of Bangladesh.

Director General of Myanmar Immigration Ministry Maung Aung and Chittagong Divisional Commissioner Omar Farooq will lead the respective sides at the meeting at Teknaf.

The chief of the Myanmar Lanthin forces (border guards) will be among others in the

US human rights group's call to stop 'forced' repatriation

UNITED NATIONS, May 13: A US human rights group has appealed to Bangladesh, Myanmar, and UN officials to suspend planned repatriation on Myanmar refugees, saying they face possible massacre, murder and rape if they are forced to return, reports AP.

Repatriation of refugees —See Page 12 Col 1

Khaleda to take up Shantibahini issue with Rao

By Staff Correspondent

Prime Minister Begum Khaleda Zia has said that she will raise all bilateral issues including the Shantibahini and water sharing with her Indian counterpart Narasimha Rao during her visit to India later this month.

Begum Zia said this yesterday evening to a group of journalists in Dhaka upon her return from a visit to Khagrachhari and other hill areas.

The Prime Minister is expected to visit India from May 26. Referring to the Lounging incident Khaleda Zia said that some quarters were spreading the rumour that hundreds of people had been killed, but the exact of people killed including one Bengali and one Tripura was 13.

Begum Zia regretted that a section of the press was distorting rumours and exaggerated reports about the prevailing situations in the hill districts.

She categorically said that the environment was congenial for the return of those who left their country and everybody was enjoying security.

The Prime Minister also assured that the returnees would be given proper shelter and assistance for rehabilitation.

Pointing to the probable solution she said that her government was ready to discuss and work out a solution but added 'let them say what they mean by settlement.'

The Prime Minister also informed that since BNP's coming to power there had been no negotiations with the armed insurgents of the hill districts.

Asked if the settlers and others were feeling insecure, she said that the members of the law enforcing agencies were working for maintaining security of all.

Barrister Abdus Salam Talukder, LGRD Minister, Abdul Matin Chowdhury, Home Minister, Chief of Army Staff Lt Gen, M Nuruddin Khan and other senior army officers who accompanied the Prime Minister during her visit were present during the news briefing.



The accused in Dr Milon murder case after the court acquitted them yesterday. — Star photo

Milon murder: All but one acquitted

All but one of the 14 people accused of killing Dr Shamsul Alam Khan Milon were acquitted Wednesday, reports UNB.

Additional Sessions Judge of Dhaka Haji Mohammad Ismail Miah handed down the verdict Wednesday afternoon.

The accused stand released as allegations under CRPC sections 302/109 and 148 could not be proved, the learned judge said in his judgement.

Alauddin was sentenced to two years rigorous imprisonment and also fined to pay Tk 2 thousand or serve another six months in jail in default.

Dr Milon, a teacher of Dhaka Medical College and Joint Secretary of Bangladesh Medical Association (BMA), was shot dead on the Dhaka University campus at the fag-end of the anti-autocracy movement on November 27 in 1990.

Among some 31 witnesses, 14 were declared "hostile" during the hearing of the sensational murder case.

Of the total accused, four are absconding. They are Golam Faruq Ovee, Gazi Kamrul Islam Sajal, Mirza Masud Jewel and Ashfaq.

Public Prosecutor Abdur Razzak and APP Mahmud Ali appeared for the state, while Serajul Huq, Amjad Ali (now dead), Ramzan Ali Khan, Abu Sayeed, Nazrul Islam, Altaf Hossain, Mohsin Mia, Mo-sharraf Hossain and Ali Asgar defended the accused.

Finance Ministry asks BB to probe further into NCL affairs

By Inam Ahmed and Sohel Manzur

The Finance Ministry has instructed the Bangladesh Bank to investigate further into the activities of the National Credit Limited (NCL) according to a Finance Ministry source.

The decision was taken as the Ministry felt that the earlier report sent by the central bank was not enough to consider the application of the company for turning it into a bank.

The Finance Ministry has also asked the Bangladesh Bank to investigate if any

Transport workers still block highway: Talks continue

By Staff Correspondent

Direct road communication between the capital and northern and northwestern districts remained disrupted for the third consecutive day on Wednesday as barricades set up by transport workers remained on the Dhaka-Aricha Highway.

A group of unruly workers attacked and damaged at least 12 buses which tried to ply on the highway in the morning. More than 40 passengers were injured in the incidents, witnesses said.

However, communication was partially restored from the

afternoon through the Nabnagar-Kalkakoti route after the workers removed barricades at Nayarhat for 72 hours to facilitate negotiations.

The will set up barricades at Nayarhat again if the authorities failed to resolve the matter by that time, a workers' union source said.

Barricades at Gabtali remained on Wednesday, witness said.

The crisis originated Monday after an accident between a Jahangirnagar University bus and a truck near Savar, and subsequent clashed

between the university students and transport workers that left 20 people injured.

The second round of talks started this evening (Wednesday) at the residence of the Home Minister to resolve the crisis as a marathon meeting was adjourned Tuesday without breaking the impasse.

Home Minister Abdul Matin Chowdhury, JU Vice Chancellor Kazi Saleh Ahmed, central students' union leaders and transport workers' leaders were at a meeting till the writ.

—See Page 12 Col 2

Ram Temple plan opposed

Indian students to stage hunger strike

By Sabir Mustafa

Several hundred students belonging to the All-India Students Federation (AISF) will stage a 48-hour hunger strike in the Uttar Pradesh city of Lucknow on May 19 to protest against plans by Hindu fundamentalists to build a temple in the place of the Babri mosque in Ayodhya.

Subhrangsu Bhattacharya, a secretary of the All-India (national) Council of the AISF, told The Daily Star Tuesday that the hunger strike would be followed-up with more programmes of action against the on-going movement to build a temple dedicated to Lord Ram on the site of the 400-year old Babri mosque.

"The students and people of India will never allow the mosque to be touched," Bhattacharya, who led a two-member AISF guest delegation to the Bangladesh Chhatra League (BCL) national council, held Monday last, said.

The AISF is one of India's largest student organisation with over two million members, 35,000 of whom are from the state of West Bengal. Although the AISF claims not

Benazir's terms for talks with Sharif

From MJ Zahedi, Special correspondent

KARACHI, May 13: Political developments are taking place in the capital, Islamabad, at a fast pace. Opposition leader Benazir Bhutto has replied to Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif's recent letter, requesting talks with her.

Benazir's husband, Asif Ali Zardari, attended the National Assembly session yesterday after the Federal and Sindh governments both responded positively to Speaker Gohar Ayub's request to let Zardari attend the session.

Zardari has been under detention in Karachi for the last two years, facing several charges related to corruption, fraud, kidnapping, etc.

Earlier, one of the courts trying one of the cases had refused an application by Zardari, pleading for permission to attend the NA session, but the Sindh High Court had earlier said that the court would have no objection if the government allowed Zardari to attend the current session at which the 1993-94 budget will be presented tomorrow.

He was taken to Islamabad yesterday under police escort and his wife's official residence, where he will be staying, has been declared a sub-jail.

Bhutto did not reveal the contents of her letter to the Prime Minister. But she had held intensive discussions with Peoples Party executives and other opposition leaders before formulating a reply.

Opinions differed on whether she should accept the Prime Minister's offer. Finally, it seems, her view has prevailed.

An Islamabad newspaper has said that Benazir's letter contains a set of pre-conditions. These, according to the paper, are: the PM should obtain a fresh mandate from the people; he should give a firm assurance that the next elections would be free and fair; the references against the opposition leader and others should be withdrawn; all political prisoners, including Asif Zardari, should be freed; political victimisation should end and a new social contract

Filipino polls: Ramos overtakes Santiago

MANILA, May 13: Former Defence Chief Fidel Ramos seized the lead today from arch-rival Miriam Santiago in the drawn-out counting of votes in Philippine presidential elections, an unofficial tally showed, reports Reuter.

With 4.2 million of the estimated 25 million votes counted, the tally by the Roman Catholic church-backed Radio Veritas showed Ramos moving ahead of long-time front-runner Santiago, a popular and pugnacious anti-graft

Annual dist confce

Dhaka AL groups announce separate dates

Two factions of Dhaka district committee of Awami League have announced separate dates for the annual council conference — one on May 21 and the other on May 22, reports UNB.

A meeting of the district committee, chaired by its president Shamsuddoha Khan Majlish, on Monday decided to hold the council on May 22. The meeting was held at the Savar residence of Khan Majlish.

The other faction, led by district committee General Secretary Mostafa Mohsin Montu (Wednesday), announced that the council will be held on May 21.

Montu was earlier suspended by the Awami League central working committee for his alleged involvement in anti-organisational activities.