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Joint expert body to find water sharing formula

By Toufique Imrose Khalidi

Bangladesh and India yesterday decided to entrust the task to invent a "comprehensive" water sharing formula to a joint committee of experts (JCE) that would start functioning by September 15.

The accord on the formation of the joint body headed by the Irrigation Secretaries came at the two-day ministerial level talks that ended in Dhaka yesterday.

The deferred second-round of the formal session yesterday morning yielded the decision to form the JCE "to work for an equitable, long-term and comprehensive arrangement for sharing the flows of the Ganges, Teesta and other major rivers to serve the best interests of the people of the two countries," a joint communique issued after the talks said.

"The JCE shall endeavour to achieve an acceptable settlement, including the interim arrangements for sharing the dry season flows of the Ganges in the meanwhile," Bangladesh Agriculture and Irrigation Minister Majid-ul-Huq and Indian Irrigation Minister Vidya Charan Shukla led their respective teams at the meeting that began Monday morning.

Shukla arrived Sunday noon to take part in the 83rd bilateral talks on the sharing of the waters of the common rivers, an issue considered the core point in the so-called Indo-Bangladesh cold war. The Indian minister left for home yesterday.

Prime ministers, ministers, top bureaucrats and water experts of the two countries held 82 meetings since 1972 to deal with the sore point.

Official sources said that both countries would name four to five members to the joint body whose job would be monitored by the ministers formally "once in every six months," underlining the political overtones of the "very big problem."

Majid-ul-Huq had told newsmen Monday that in case of a failure at the ministerial level the issue would be "referred back to the higher political authorities," a veiled threat to Indians to act in line with the commitment pronounced by the prime ministers at their May 26-28 meeting.

Prime Minister Narasimha Rao had assured his Bangladesh counterpart that "every possible effort will be made to avoid undue hardships to Bangladesh by sharing the flows in the Ganges at Farakka on an equitable basis."

The date of the first meeting of the JCE at New Delhi would be decided through mutual consultations, the sources said.

They said that the JCE members would visit the diversion point at Hooghly and the Farakka Barrage to conduct an on-the-spot assessment.

The two sides also agreed to revive the joint monitoring of releases at Farakka and the Teesta Barrage, and observations on the major rivers into Bangladesh. The Ganges and Teesta apart, there are 52 other common rivers.

The sources said that both sides agreed to the necessity of reaching an accord on interim arrangement before the

Baghdad rejects ban US warplanes start patrolling 'no-fly zone'

BAGHDAD, Aug 27: A Western ban on Iraqi aircraft flying in southern Iraq went into effect Thursday, and Iraq vowed to continue its air campaign against Shiite Muslim rebels in the south, reports AP.

The "no-fly zone" below the 32nd parallel — announced Wednesday by President Bush — took effect at 1415 GMT. The US, British and French governments have said they would enforce the prohibition.

At least 20 US aircraft took off from the aircraft carrier USS Independence to start the monitoring operations, according to an Associated Press reporter aboard the ship. US military officials confirmed that US fighter jets were patrolling southern Iraq.

Two British Tornado reconnaissance fighter jets also were reported to have taken off from Dhahran, in eastern Saudi Arabia, presumably to help the surveillance effort.

France also is expected to send a fighter squadron.

Two hours after the deadline, US Defence Department spokesman Bob Hall told reporters: "Coalition aircraft are flying in the zone."

Hall refused to give the number of US sorties but said F-15, F-18 and refuelling planes were involved. He said that information about sorties

EC-Govt discord over RRDP

By Inam Ahmed

The European Community (EC) has proposed that the government implement the Rangpur Region Rural Development Programme (RRDP) through Non-Government Organisations (NGOs) instead of the earlier decided Bangladesh Rural Development Board (BRDB).

On the other hand, the government has shown strong reservations on the proposal, according to concerned sources.

The 32.5 million European Currency Unit (ECU) (1 ECU equals 1.21 US dollar) RRDP project, 25.5 million ECU from the EC and 7 million ECU from the Netherlands, was signed in 1987. This project contained two components — RD-8 and RD-9.

The RD-8 component was for infrastructure development

50 hurt in student-police clash



Smoke of teargas in front of Dhaka College (top) and students damaged a parked car inside the Science Laboratory (below) yesterday. —Star photo

Grape-shots, baton charges as mourners turn violent

By Staff Correspondent

At least 50 students of the Dhaka College in the capital were injured when police fired grape-shot and used batons to break up a mourning procession Thursday, witnesses said.

The agitated students of the college fought a pitched battle with police for nearly five hours near the New Market area following the incident, they said.

The procession of the Dhaka College teachers and students was brought out to mourn the death of Farhad Hossain.

Hossain, a second year science student of the Dhaka College, was beaten to death Tuesday allegedly by a section of shop-keepers at the nearby Baku Shah Market.

Our Dhaka Medical College Hospital correspondent reported that five people, including four students and one shop-keeper, were admitted to the hospital with stab wound and injuries from grape-shot.

Another nine students were



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Menon's jaundice remains static

By Staff Correspondent

The condition of Rashed Khan Menon, MP, remained unchanged yesterday. According to close family sources his bilirubin count (indicator of jaundice) remained static at 12 while temperature fluctuated between 99 and 100.

However, a Combined Military Hospital (CMH) special medical bulletin issued yesterday said his condition was stable overnight and he had been mobilised and allowed appropriate diet.

It further said Menon's progress to recovery had been according to expectation and natural course consequent upon gunshot wounds to multiple organs.

Adjustments in management are being made according to symptoms and signs, it said.

His family sources said Menon had been given soft-boiled rice (jaw bhat) for the first time Wednesday night.

Menon, General Secretary of Bangladesh Workers Party, was fatally wounded by gunmen's shot in front of his party office at Tophkhana Road on August 17.

BMA observes token strike Aug 30

Bangladesh Medical Association (BMA) will observe a country-wide token work stoppage from 10 am to 1 pm on August 30 in protest against the recent attacks on the doctors on duty in different medical institutions, reports BSS.

Announcing this at a press conference held at BMA office in Dhaka Secretary General of BMA Dr Gazi Abdul Huq said the work stoppage would be observed in all the medical institutions in the country to build resistance against terrorism.

He, however, said the emergency departments in the hospitals would remain open during the work stoppage period.

Dr Huq said since April this year about a dozen attacks were made on the doctors and medical staff on duty at IPOMR, Lalmonirhat, Gazipur, Tongi, Narayanganj, Dhaka National Hospital, Pabna, Sitakunda, Jessore and Feni.

He observed that this was a conspiracy to destroy all welfare and professional organisations.

He called upon people of all strata, the professional bodies and political parties to unitedly

Check terrorism for better future: PM

Prime Minister Begum Khaleda Zia yesterday stressed the need for education in achieving self-reliance, reports UNB.

"Educated nation means developed nation, developed country," she said at a reception accorded to the merit students who secured high places in the merit list of this year's SSC examination under the country's four education boards.

Begum Zia called upon all to check terrorism on the campuses and restore congenial academic atmosphere for the sake of a better future for the posterity.

"The main objectives of education will remain unfulfilled if discipline is not maintained in the educational institutions," she said.

The Prime Minister asked the students to integrate themselves and their talent and labour with the efforts to bring welfare to the teeming millions.

"The people of our country are poor. They silently work in the fields and factories. The country is being built by their toil. You have to think about them," she told the students.

Begum Zia reminded them that the nation had a rich heritage and many celebrities of the country held the nation in high esteem in the world community.

"You have to take the responsibility of reviving the lost glory," she said adding that the nation was looking at them with great expectation.

The Prime Minister distributed awards among those who secured first 20 positions in the General Science and Social Science groups under the four boards.

Terming them as the pride of the nation, she said: "We expect more achievements and greater success from you in future."

The strength of a nation depends on its educated manpower, the Prime Minister said stressing the need for education.

Nation held hostage by terrorists, says Hasina

GOPALGANJ, Aug 27: Awami League leader Sheikh Hasina said today the nation was being kept hostage in the hands of terrorists as a result of government's "terrible failure" in administering the country, reports UNB.

"The people are passing days in a suffocating situation because of breakdown of law and order," she told a function here this afternoon.

The leader of the Opposition, now on a week-long visit to her hometown and constituency, was speaking at a reception accorded to her at Gopalganj Mahila College.

Hasina made a scathing attack on the BNP government which, she said, had failed to take effective steps to curb terrorism. "Even some people in the administration are worried at the deteriorating law and order."

Criticising the ruling party policy of "politicisation" of the administration, educational institutions, trade unions as well as backing terrorists, Hasina said democracy cannot function until the rulers shun their petty partisan outlook.

"For establishing a genuine democracy, the first precondition is democratic attitude. Then comes the question of

A new home for hapless 25

Star Report

The government has decided to award the custody of 25 Bangladeshi stranded children, rescued by police in Bombay, India earlier this year, to an American Non-Government Organisation (NGO) operating an orphanage in Khulna.

The children, all under the age of five, were reportedly kidnapped and were being smuggled to some Middle Eastern countries when Bombay police rescued them on March 26.

Minor children in some Middle Eastern countries are said to be used as 'camel jockeys' in races. Young kids are tied to a camel's back and when they scream out in fear, it induces the camels to run faster.

According to a Home Ministry letter issued on August 20, the government awarded the custody of the 25 'abandoned' Bangladeshi children, currently being looked after by the Juvenile Board of Bombay, to a US-based NGO, Friends of Bangladesh, which operates an orphanage, Home of Joy, in Khulna.

The government decision brings to an end the uncertainty about the future of the children due to legal tangles.

According to a message received from A K Abdul Momen, a Bangladeshi residing in the US State of Massachusetts, the government decision concerning the custody of the children came following interventions by Senator Edward Kennedy, US Congressmen Barney Frank and Joseph Kennedy, UNICEF Executive Director James P Grant, US Ambassador to Bangladesh William B Milam and others.

The Home Ministry letter, addressed to Faith Willard, an official of the NGO, added: "It is expected that you will be able to arrange transportation of these children to Bangladesh to ensure their return to the orphanage operated by Home of Joy at Tikok, Khulna."

The 25 stranded children are likely to reach Dhaka by next month and UNICEF has agreed to provide the cost of their air travel, Momen in-

Mostafiz off to Jakarta

Foreign Minister A S M Mostafizur Rahman left Dhaka yesterday afternoon for Jakarta to attend the Foreign Ministers meeting of the Non-Aligned countries ahead of the summit.

"The Non-Aligned Movement remains a strong force for the developing and Third World nations and Bangladesh views the NAM as an effective forum for maintaining world peace and stability" he told BSS before departure.

He said the movement grew in strength from time to time and its relevance remained as strong as before even though the cold war era had ended, he said.

Prime Minister Begum Khaleda Zia will lead the Bangladesh delegation to the summit.

She will leave Dhaka on August 31.

We can absorb more Bangladeshis: Badawi

By Staff Correspondent

Malaysian Foreign Minister Datuk Abdullah bin Haji Ahmed Badawi left Dhaka Thursday "extremely happy with the outcome" of his five-day official visit during which Bangladesh and Malaysia set up a Joint Commission to boost economic and technical cooperation.

"I'm extremely happy with the outcome of my visit. The Joint Commission will provide a framework for more active future of economic, technical, cultural and educational cooperation," Datuk Abdullah told a crowded news conference before departure for Kuala Lumpur.

In reply to a question the visiting Foreign Minister said that Malaysia was ready to import more manpower from Bangladesh, especially for its plantation sector.

"There are many Bangladeshis workers in Malaysia. But we can absorb many more," he said suggesting that Bangladesh workers seeking jobs in Malaysia carry valid travel documents to avoid being exploited by illegal recruiters.

Datuk Abdullah said he had proposed to Bangladesh to evolve a mechanism so that the manpower business was done through proper channels.

Asked about the future of illegal Bangladeshi workers in Malaysia he said that they had been asked to report to the authorities. He assured that the employers, and not the illegal immigrants would be penalised for violating his country's laws.

Datuk Abdullah was highly optimistic about Bangladesh's future economic growth.

"There is a great enthusi-

Saifur in a city seminar If you want lower tax rate, pay dues in time

By Staff Correspondent

Finance Minister M Saifur Rahman Thursday said if the tax payers paid their due regularly then the rate of both Value Added Tax (VAT) and income tax could be lowered.

The minister pointed out that the tax base must be widened to lower the rate.

"But if some one does not want to pay taxes, I will close down his business," Saifur announced while addressing the inaugural session of a workshop on VAT system at Sheraton Hotel organised by Rapport Bangladesh Ltd.

Saifur Rahman said the government would have to play a significant role in development and employment generation till the year 2000 as the private sector was yet to come

Tributes to Nazrul

By Staff Correspondent

The 16th death anniversary of National Poet Kazi Nazrul Islam was observed yesterday throughout the country with due homage.

Various socio-cultural and juvenile organisations paid tribute to the rebel poet by laying wreaths at his mazar in the morning.

They also organised mtlad mahfil, Quran-khwant, discussion on his life and works, recitation and musical sofree on the occasion.

Vice-Chancellor of Dhaka

Jhenidah traders observe strike

JHENIDAH, Aug 27: Shopkeepers and traders here observed a two-hour token strike Wednesday demanding the arrest of toll collectors and terrorists. All shops and business establishments remained closed between 10 am and 12 noon.

They said the mastans and hoodlums have been collecting tolls forcibly from them every now and then. But the law enforcing authorities inspite of repeated appeal failed to arrest the miscreants, reports UNB.