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USAID evaluation on Bangladesh democracy

Political parties, govt, bureaucracy unable to work together

The political parties, the government and the bureaucracy in Bangladesh are unable to work together effectively to address common problems, says a report of the US Agency for International Development (USAID), reports UNB.

The report on the "The Bangladesh Democracy Programme (BDP) Assessment" states that the democratic institutions of 1992 are a fragile growth that will need to be nurtured if they are to survive.

A four-member assessment team led by Dr. Raymond D. Gastil attributed the situation to the past record of political instability and the still incomplete acceptance of democracy as the only solution to the country's problems.

The team visited Bangladesh early this year and met leaders of various sections of people. Its report published in June was available in Dhaka yesterday.

The report identified the major addressable problem as the inexperience of people within the government, legislature and bureaucracy as they try to operate within the new environment.

The report suggests that efforts should be made to provide training and orientation to legislators and members of government and to improve the policy-making capability of both government and opposition.

The second priority actions include maintaining the integrity of elections, strengthening accountability mechanisms, protecting human rights and developing a more informed and active citizenry.

According to the report, the primary contenders for political power are the triad of government, bureaucracy and the military whose upper levels are all recruited from the middle class.

"When the democratic system is operating, the elected government is theoretically dominant", it says adding the government depends in turn on the operation of the cabinet, the parliament and parliament.

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Govt decisions on withdrawal of Jamuna levy

The government has taken some decisions in view of the withdrawal from July 1 of Jamuna Surcharge and Development Levy from the profit of national savings projects, an official handout said in Dhaka yesterday, reports BSS.

It said Jamuna Surcharge at a rate of 4 per cent would be applicable to the profit of those defence savings certificates, five-year and three-year term Bangladesh savings certificates, bonus savings certificates and wage earners development bonds whose terms were matured on or before June 30 whenever those would be encashed.

Jamuna Surcharge and Development Levy at a rate of 4 per cent and 6 per cent respectively would be applicable on the profit of those postal savings bank time accounts and bonus accounts whose terms completed on or before June 30.

It said 4 per cent Jamuna Surcharge and 6 per cent Development Levy would be applicable on the profit of

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Resource flow thru' IDA inadequate, says Saifur

WASHINGTON, Sept 24: Finance Minister M Saifur Rahman has called upon the rich donor countries to generously respond to the appeal for replenishment of IDA-10, the World Bank fund available for lending to the least developed countries, reports BSS.

Addressing the annual meeting of the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund (IMF) here yesterday, the Finance Minister expressed concern over the inadequate flow of resources through the bank group.

While the International Development Association (IDA) gross disbursement registered an increase of roughly two per cent from 1991 to 1992, Rahman said adding the joint IBRD/IDA net disbursement actually declined during the same period.

He also pointed out the decline shown in the recent OECD report in the quality of portfolio suggesting that the Bank's investment had not been as effective for growth as proposed in project documents.

The minister said that these deserved attention for not only maintaining but improving the quality of Bank's lending.

Rahman also urged the Bank and the Fund to be sensitive to the plight of the disadvantaged segment of societies of the Third World countries while designing their projects and programmes.

Adjustment pain and sufferings to the poor could be reduced substantially if such projects and programmes be made country specific instead of universal in character, he said.

Turning to the economic priorities and reform programmes undertaken in Bangladesh, the Finance Minister referred to the initiative taken on structural changes in

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Rohingyas resent repatriation

By Farid Hossain

About 10,000 placard-waving, slogan-chanting Rohingya refugees poured out of their camps Thursday to protest their repatriation to Myanmar, where they feared ill-treatment by the military government.

The demonstrations on the Cox's Bazar-Teknaf highway came two days after Bangladesh repatriated 47 refugees in what officials called a voluntary move. According to Bangladesh the returnees were received well and treated properly by the Myanmar authorities.

There was no official word on when the second batch of the 265,000 refugees would return home. But dependable sources in Dhaka and Cox's Bazar said that the next group was expected to be sent back home Sept 29, coinciding with the 9th Bangladesh-Myanmar repatriation talks scheduled in Akyab.

Reports from the refugee

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Five party staged a sit-in in front of Bangladesh Secretariat yesterday. —Star photo

Jute buying Banks yet to fund despite PM's order

Star Report

Banks remained undecided on their releasing funds to the jute mills despite recent government directives resulting in a 'serious liquidity' crisis in the sector, industry sources said Thursday.

"Shortage of funds has resulted in a serious liquidity crisis in the jute sector and both the Bangladesh Jute Mills Corporation and the Bangladesh Jute Mills Association are complaining," said an authoritative source at the Jute Ministry.

Earlier, on September 13, Prime Minister Khakda Zia issued a directive to the concerned authorities to fund purchase of raw jute by the mills.

But the banks were seeking further clarifications on the modalities to release the funds.

"The banks are not listening, they are waiting for certain norms and guidelines from the Finance Ministry," the Jute Ministry source pointed out.

The Finance Minister along with the Governor of the Bangladesh Bank is currently in Washington to attend the IMF board meeting.

The PM's directive came as an approval of an earlier decision of the Cabinet Council Committee on Economic Affairs, headed by the Finance Minister, to set a new credit limit for the jute mills based on 30 per cent of the export performance for 1989-90, the source said.

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Hasina names SAMS Kibria, two others to advisory body

By Staff Correspondent

The Awami League chief Sheikh Hasina Thursday filled up three more posts of the 15-member Advisory Council, a party press release said.

The three members are Dr Durgadas Bhattacharya, Dr AK Azad Chowdhury and Shah AMS Kibria.

Kibria, a career diplomat and former foreign secretary, the highest ranking Bangladeshi UN official served as Executive Secretary of ESCAP for more than 11 years.

Dr Chowdhury and Dr Bhattacharya are Dhaka University teachers.

Only one post in the Council remained vacant with the names of 11 advisers announced earlier.

Meanwhile three more posts in the AL National Committee were filled with Barrister KS Nabi as legal adviser.

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FM addresses OIC meet in NY

Dhaka's call for end to Bosnian bloodshed

NEW YORK, Sept 24: Bangladesh has called for effective additional measures for an immediate end to bloodshed in Bosnia-Herzegovina and restoration of its sovereignty and territorial integrity, reports BSS.

Foreign Minister A S M Mostafizur Rahman, addressing the coordination meeting of the OIC Foreign Ministers here yesterday, strongly condemned the systematic persecution and annihilation of Muslims in Bosnia-Herzegovina and the abhorrent policy of 'ethnic cleansing' pursued by the Serbian forces there.

Rahman stressed the need for resolute and decisive action by the world body to reverse the aggression and stop the massacre of innocent people and reiterated his government's belief in peaceful settlement of all disputes.

He also referred to the clan fighting and famine in Somalia and factional fighting in Afghanistan and said OIC had taken very pragmatic stand of all these issues of concern. In his speech Rahman noted some signs of progress towards the resolution of the problems of Middle East and Cyprus and emphasised that without the realisation of the right to self-determination of the Palestinian people, there could not be any lasting peace in the area.

The Foreign Minister said we should marshal our efforts not only in the field of peace and security but also in the area of economic and social development and called for concerted efforts for eradication of poverty, protection of environment and sustainable development, promotion of human rights and democratic values, fighting the drug menace and containing and preventing natural and man made disasters.

He stressed that we need to make OIC strong and consolidate our position by taking common stand in all these fields.

Foreign Secretary Reaz Rahman and Ambassador Humayun Kabir, Permanent Representative of Bangladesh to the UN, were also present in the meeting.

Later, the Foreign Minister had a meeting with Guido Di Tella, the Foreign Minister of Argentina.

During the meeting, they

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Five-party rally demands ouster of Home Minister

By Staff Correspondent

Several hundred activists of the Five-party alliance took to the street Thursday demanding the Home Minister's resignation and punishment to the assailants of Rashed Khan Menon.

The activists, many of them wearing red head bands and carrying placards, squatted in front of the Press Club blocking the main approach to the Secretariat complex at around 11 am.

Rains delayed the programme by an hour.

The alliance's other demands include trial of Ratan Sen's killers and ban on Jamaat, Shibir, Jubo Command and Freedom Party.

The three-hour road-blockade began with Gana Sanget (revolutionary songs) and ended with a rally chaired by Alliance Convenor Khalequzaman Bhuiya.

Ganatantrik Biplobi Jote held a separate meeting to

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BSF attempts thrice to push 73 more

JESSORE, Sept 24: Bangladesh Rifles today (Thursday) thwarted at least three attempts by the Indian Border Security Force (BSF) to push 73 people into Bangladesh, reports UNB.

BDR men foiled the BSF effort to push 22 people, who they claimed were Bangladesh nationals, through the border at Sadipur in Sharsha thana at around 12:00 noon.

Members of the BDR chased them and then forced them back into the Indian territory, informed sources said.

Later at 3:30 pm, the BSF people took another attempt to push some 51 people, but the attempt was again foiled by BDR men.

At around 5 pm, the BSF made another futile attempt to push those 51 people into Bangladesh. But BDR drove them back into Indian territory, the source said.

BDR today (Thursday) also held seven Indian infiltrators from Sadipur Border and later handed them over to the BSF.

The so-called "Operation Push Back", resorted to by the Indian authorities to deport people into Bangladesh on the plea that they were Bangladeshis, has reportedly triggered criticism among political circle in West Bengal.

Some left-leaning political parties including CPI (M), the ruling party in West Bengal, have criticised the Indian central government for its "Operation Push Back" programme. They said BSF action has surpassed the record of the treatment meted out to the prisoners of war (POWs).

A Satkhira report adds: Twenty-eight people, including young women and children, were rescued by BDR while being trafficked into India today through Talugacha border.

Five of those taken into custody are Indian citizens illegally travelling Bangladesh.

BDR sources said among the

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Wasiuddin laid to rest

Lt General (Retd) Khwaja Wasiuddin was laid to rest at the family graveyard at Dilkusha here yesterday, reports BSS.

Among others, Chief of Army Staff Lt General Muhammad Noor Uddin Khan, Chief of Naval Staff Rear Admiral Mohammad Mohamminul Islam, Chief of Air Staff Air Vice-Marshal Ataf Hossain Chowdhury, senior armed forces

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Menon's treatment: Plea for people's contribution

By Staff Correspondent

The president of the Workers Party of Bangladesh Politburo, Amal Sen and Acting General Secretary Haider Akbar Khan Rono in a statement Thursday urged the people to contribute money for the treatment of Rashed Khan Menon.

They said that it had become difficult for the Party to bear the cost of treatment of the leader as the government did not take any initiative despite its promise to do so.

They said that Menon had to leave hospital hastily due to monetary shortages.

People ignore PNP's hartal

By Staff Correspondent

Life remained normal Thursday in Dhaka city despite a half-day hartal called by the Progressive Nationalist Party (PNP).

PNP, led by Shawkat Hossain Nilu, called the hartal demanding release of deposed President H M Ershad and Jamaat chief Golam Azam.

Earlier, PNP activists stuck posters and used loudspeakers to drum up support for the hartal.

However, no response was visible in the capital in favour of the hartal.

Chemical sale to Syria

Delhi revokes licence of firm

NEW DELHI, Sept 24: The Indian government has temporarily revoked the export licence of a company which sold Syria a chemical capable of making nerve gas, officials said today, reports Reuter.

They said the government was considering prosecuting United Phosphorous over the sale, which sparked protests from the United States, and would strictly enforce a ban on future trade in dual-use chemicals.

The New York Times on Monday said Washington had protested to India over the exports of Trimethy 1 Phosphite to Syria.

It said the sale of the chemical, which can be used to make nerve gas as well as pesticides, had undercut Washington's efforts to stem the spread of chemical weapons.

Acting Secretary of State Lawrence Engleburger has acknowledged that Washington was concerned about India's chemical sales and had discussed the matter.

The Indian officials said the government was now considering legal action against Bombay-based United Phosphorous for selling 45 tonnes of the chemical to Syria.

"We have put a six-month ban on their exports and we propose to take legal action," India's chief controller of Imports and Exports DR Mehta told Reuters.

"The company has to explain why it did not seek a clearance (for export) from the government as it was required to. We are looking at the possibility of a criminal prosecution," Mehta said.

But United Phosphorous said today it had acted with full knowledge of the Indian government.

"The company fulfilled all formalities required for the export of Trimethy 1 Phosphite and all concerned authorities knew about it," said a senior company official.

United Phosphorous had contracted to sell 90 tonnes of Trimethy 1 Phosphite to Syria in two consignments, but US intelligence discovered the second half of the cargo in August aboard a German ship.

Mannan optimistic of better ties with Malaysia

From S Bari

KUALA LUMPUR, Sept 24: The visiting Bangladesh Minister for Labour and Manpower Abdul Mannan Bhuiyan today expressed the hope that the process of issuing work passes to 20,000 Bangladeshi illegal workers, now accepted by this country for employment, will be expedited.

Bhuiyan told The Daily Star in an exclusive interview that he was fully satisfied with his three-day talks here which, he said, had laid the foundation of better relations between the two countries in economic co-operation.

He said, "Altogether, some 24,000 Bangladeshis are being held in Malaysia, of which 6000 are legal workers. For the illegals who have registered, the government is hopeful of their employment."

Experts here point out that while the work passes are issued by the Malaysian Ministry of Labour, it is largely the private sector which provides the jobs.

Bhuiyan's optimism was shared by Malaysia's Deputy Minister for Human Resources, Dato M Mahalingam.

He said, "After our satisfactory talks, we are in the process of issuing work passes for those who have employable skills."

Earlier this year, the

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