

Disaster preparedness

SAARC body readies recommendations

By Staff Correspondent

Health experts of the SAARC countries have formulated modalities to manage post-disaster situation with co-ordinated efforts by the member countries.

The recommendations are likely to be placed at the "political session" during the summit in Dhaka in December for approval, experts at a press briefing at Hotel Abakash in the city said Thursday.

The experts from Bhutan, India, Nepal, Pakistan, Sri Lanka and Bangladesh, after extensive deliberation at a three-day workshop in Dhaka on Disaster Preparedness and Response by the Health Sector, prepared the recommendations.

Issues related to information, sharing of experience, training, communication, funds, coordination were discussed in the workshop to work in adjoining or affected member countries about impending disaster and response to it.

If the adopted recommendations are approved by the members of the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC), the medical groups would be able to respond promptly after any disaster anywhere in the SAARC countries.

The SAARC Secretariat requested the government of Bangladesh to organise the workshop as the frequency of natural disasters, environmen-

tal degradation and man-made disasters increased in the region in the recent years.

ABM Siddique, additional secretary, Health and Family Planning, led the Bangladesh delegation while Karma Tshering of Bhutan, Dr VN Sardana of India, Dr B D Chataut of Nepal, Dr Kazi Abdus Saboor Khan of Pakistan and Dr C Lalith Mendis of Sri Lanka attended the workshop. There was no delegation from Maldives which is also a member of seven-nation forum.

The recommendations urged the member countries to identify a focal point on disaster preparedness and response within the health sector, to formulate national plans for health sector emergency preparedness as an integral part of the overall national disaster management and to create mechanism for establishment of national and regional networks.

It also suggested that the governments measure resources available from the non-government and other sources for effective utilisation in the event of disaster.

It urged the SAARC Secretariat to evolve a system of information sharing, organise meetings among the member countries at least once a year, mobilise resources and provided funds to have adequate buffer stock of medicare equipments.



Prime Minister Begum Khaleda Zia addressing a public meeting at AL Khan School ground in Chittagong yesterday. —PID photo

PM: Opposition

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shelter to the terrorists. Hitting at the opposition who are threatening of going into movement, Begum Zia said, "Today there should be only one movement — and that is the movement against the 'biggest killer — poverty'".

The Prime Minister stressed the need for peace and discipline in national life for ensuring overall development and progress of the country.

She mentioned the government's programmes for national uplift and hoped the face of the nation will be changed in the five-year term of the BNP government.

The opposition has lost its senses, realising the improvement BNP has been bringing about through the party's development programmes, she said.

Addressing the rally, Communication Minister Col (Retd) Oli Ahmed assured that the reconstruction of the Karnaphuli Bridge, damaged by the cyclone, will be completed by next March.

Planning Minister Zahiruddin Khan, Environment Minister Abdullah Al Noman, State Minister for Textile Maj (Retd) M A Mannan, Chittagong City Mayor Mir Mohammad Nasiruddin and Serajul Islam MP also addressed the rally. Begum Shamsunnahar Ahsanullah MP was present.

Hartal observed at Natore for TV station

From Our Correspondent

NATORE, Oct 29: Normal life in the town was paralysed Thursday following a dawn-to-dusk hartal called by Natore TV Studio Punoruddhar Sangram Parishad here.

The Parishad called the hartal in demand for setting up a full-fledged TV station in Natore.

All educational institutions, government and non-government offices, financial institutions and different political and socio-cultural organisations extended their support to hartal.

Shops, bazars, hotels except drug stores in the town remained closed. All types of transport including rickshaws, and bicycles were off the road. Several processions were brought out in the town.

Hundreds of people surrounded the Divisional Commissioner's car in front of Natore Press Club while he was going to Rajshahi.

Some untoward incidents took place as police obstructed the processionists at several points that left seven injured.

Ctg-Bangkok Biman flight begins

Biman's first international flight from Chittagong to Bangkok via Rangon took off on schedule yesterday afternoon, reports UNB.

State Minister for Civil Aviation and Tourism Abdul Mannan and Secretary of the Ministry Habibur Rahman were present at the Chittagong Airport on the occasion.

Biman's Managing Director Abdul Mueyed Chowdhury, Director, Marketing and Sales AH Salahuddin and other government officials were also present there.

Biman will start operating its regular weekly flight to Delhi from today.

The inaugural flight of DC-10 to the Indian capital—Biman's 28th international destination will depart Zia International Airport at 9am.

The State Minister for Civil Aviation and Tourism Abdul Mannan will be at the airport to see the flight off.

Biman will expand its routes to a number of destinations like Hongkong, Seoul, Jakarta, Ho-Chi-Minh City and New York.

Foreign investors

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hance, therefore, we seek co-operation of the developed countries as well as their investors."

The Prime Minister said the Government had adopted a pragmatic and liberal industrial policy which aimed at deregulating and decontrolling the economy.

The Prime Minister said ample incentives had been offered to foreign private investors. She said investment procedures had been simplified and development financial institutions and commercial banks had been allowed to sanction any amount of loan to industrial units.

Begum Zia said foreign investors were now able to plough back their entire capital and profit to their respective countries, adding nationalisation was now out of question. "On the contrary", she said, "we have taken steps to go for further denationalisation of state-owned enterprises. We have also guaranteed equal facilities to investors, whether local or foreigners."

The Prime Minister said in order to attract foreign investment the government had decided to set up export processing zones in other parts of the country. She said the second EPZ of Bangladesh would go into operation at Savar within the next month and the third EPZ, would start in Khulna soon.

The Prime Minister had a

lengthy discussion with the investors of CEPZ. The discussion was participated by CEPZ Executive Chairman Syed Shahabuddin Ahmed, FBCCI President Mahbubur Rahman, President of MCCI Morshed Khan, foreign investors Higuchi of Olympic MI Bangladesh, Kihak Sung of Young One Ltd and Danny Ho of Host Diskette Manufacturing Co Ltd.

After listening to the investors, the Prime Minister said the problems faced by the investors including telecommunication, provision of duty-free transport, execution of policy, bank finance, publicity would be discussed in the next board of governors meeting and measures would be taken to solve them sincerely.

Earlier, the Prime Minister visited different industrial units of the zone including Olympic MI, Youngone and Azmat Bangladesh Ltd.

Two terrorists arrested

A special squad of the Detective Branch arrested two notorious terrorists from the PG Hospital crossing on Wednesday night, police said. The arrested, identified as Khan A Mirza Masud alias Jewel (26) and his associate AKM Abdullah-Al-Mahmud (Masud) (25), were wanted by police, reports UNB.

Allahwala Bldg now Juba Bhaban

The government has decided to rename the "Allahwala Building" of Motijheel Commercial Area as "Juba Bhaban", an official sources here said yesterday, reports BSS.

The building will now house the office of the Directorate of Youth Development.

Works Minister Rafiqul Islam Mia will formally hand over the building to the Ministry of Youth and Sports on the eve of National Youth Day on October 31, the sources said.

Students set 6 CMC hostel rooms on fire

CHITTAGONG, Oct 29: Six rooms of Chittagong Medical College main hostel were burnt when some unruly students allegedly set them on fire today, reports BSS.

According to police some valuables were also looted from the rooms.

Local firemen, who struggled for about two hours to extinguish the fire, could not assess the damage caused by the fire immediately. Police have been deployed on the campus, authorities said.

When contacted, college authorities said they could not identify the group of students which was involved in the incident.



Dhaka city Awami League brought out a procession yesterday protesting introduction of Anti-Terrorism Bill in the Jatiya Sangsad. —Star photo

Talks on ME economic development begin

PARIS, Oct 29: Officials from 40 countries including Israel, Jordan, the United States, Russia and Japan plus the Palestinians, opened two days of negotiations Thursday on Middle East economic development, reports AP.

The talks, to cover tourism, communications and job training, come under the overall structures of the

Middle East peace talks launched a year ago in Madrid, Spain by Washington and Moscow.

Japan and the 12-nation European Community are the co-sponsors of the two days of closed-door discussions at the Kleber Center where the Vietnam peace accords were reached.

Britain, which holds the rotating EC presidency is presiding over the talks, which opened with declarations by the World Bank and the main Middle East countries engaged in the peace talks.

France is to put forth the idea of a Middle East reconstruction bank during the talks, which are the second convening of the economic development working group. It previously met in May in Brussels.

Delegations representing Israel, the Palestinians and all Arab countries are taking part, except for Syria and Lebanon.

They refuse to attend the multilateral talks, which are a sideline to the central bilateral peace talks adjourned until November 9 in Washington, until Israel withdraws from the occupied territories.

The World Bank's presentation on a regional bank of reconstruction and development is strongly supported by France, which has been raising its profile recently in the peace process.

Anti-terrorism Bill

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parliamentary standing committee.

The National Awami Party and the National Democratic Party were not present in the joint press briefing, while the Jamaat had decided to oppose the bill in the House.

According to a source, the CPB might join the Parliament session on Sunday. When contacted, the leader of the CPB parliamentary group Shamsuddoha said, "we have no decision for a continuous boycott of Parliament session".

The CPB leader further said that the two-day central committee meeting of party beginning this morning would concretely decide on the strategy to protest against the black law.

Meanwhile, the Awami League and the Jatiya Party are preparing to hold separate public rallies on November 1 with a view to mobilising mass support against the controversial proposed law.

Pak Chief Justice in city

The Chief Justice of Pakistan, Justice Muhammad Afzal Zullah, accompanied by the Chief Justice of the Sindh High Court, Justice Aslam Zahid, arrived here yesterday to attend a seminar on public interest litigation organised jointly by Ato-o-Shahid Kendra and Madaripur Legal Aid Association from October 30 to 31 here, reports BSS.

The Midnight File

Yeltsin suspends withdrawal of troops from Baltics

MOSCOW, Oct 29: Russian President Boris Yeltsin today suspended the withdrawal of Russian troops from the Baltic states. The move came nine days after the Russian Defence Ministry complained that there was not sufficient housing inside Russia for many of the 40,000 troops stationed in Lithuania, Estonia and Latvia, reports AFP.

Emergency in Port Said

CAIRO, Oct 29: The Egyptian Suez Canal authority yesterday declared a state of emergency in Port Said in the wake of oil spill caused by a collision between a Norwegian cargo ship and an Egyptian oil tanker Tuesday. The Norwegian ship "Sitrara" Tuesday collided with "Soheir" an Egyptian oil tanker carrying 1,200 tons of oil, at the northern mouth of the canal, causing a leak of 350 tons of oil from the tankers into the Mediterranean Sea near Port Said harbour, reports Xinhua.

Absentee voting

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military and overseas citizens could continue to make up a greater percentage of votes cast."

Expatriate US registered voters can either directly send a request, in prescribed forms, to the voting officials in their respective constituencies, divided along county lines into separate precincts, to mail the absentee ballot papers directly to them.

Or, they can use Federal Write-In Absentee Ballots, available at the embassy, to cast their votes.

In either case, Wehrli noted, the completed ballot sheets would have to reach the voting officials of an individual voters respective precinct, and not to Washington unless he was registered as a voter in the capital, by election day. The deadline hour varies between different states according to the time zones.

In general, most of the states do not accept absentee ballots past the deadline but some states would do it after election day only under special circumstances.

Time is an important factor for casting absentee ballots specially if the voter is living in a country far away from the United States, he said.

"You have to do it way ahead of time and we encourage people to act early," Wehrli added "most people here have started".

To apply for registration or to request for an absentee ballot voters are required to fill out a Federal Post Card Application form, available at all US embassies and consulates, and mail it directly or through the embassy to their respective voting officials.

"In most places the voting official will not send the absentee ballots more than 45 days before the election day," Wehrli observed.

As of October 22, he said, a total of 138 US voters living in Bangladesh had sent their completed absentee ballots through the embassy while 279 collected the post card application forms. This year, Wehrli noted, DHL Express Service offered two dates, free of charge, to deliver the application forms and to take the ballots.

There are an estimated 1,000 Americans including children in Bangladesh, the US Counselor said. "It is not a firm figure as we do not maintain separate records."

Regular absentee ballots allows a voter to vote for US senatorial and congressional candidates in his constituency in addition to voting for the presidential and vice presidential candidates.

The ballot also enables a voter to cast his vote for state

and county elective offices and also to participate in state level referendums.

In the ballot form for Syracuse, New York there are nine candidates listed in the president and vice president column.

George Bush and Dan Quayle are listed separately as the Republican, Conservative and Right to Life party candidates while Bill Clinton and Al Gore are listed twice as Democratic and Liberal party candidates.

The other candidates listed in the ballots are Ross Perot and James B Stockdale as No Party candidates, Andre Marrou and Nancy Lord as Libertarian party candidates, James Mac Warren and Estelle Debates as Socialist Workers Party candidates and John Hagein and Mike Tompkins as Natural Law Party candidates.

The ballot also has voting slots for justice of the Supreme Court, member of state assembly and two positions for Family Court judges.

The Syracuse ballot, to be cross-marked with a pen or pencil, also includes a slot for a proposition.

The deadline for turning in the ballot is on or before 9 pm November 3 or it has to be postmarked no later than November 2 and received by the voting officials not later than November 10.

On the other hand, the Write-In Absentee Ballots allows a voter only to vote for the presidential and vice presidential candidates.

This system was introduced in 1988, Wehrli noted, after it was found that many expatriate voters were unable to vote "despite their best efforts and good faith".

The write-in ballots are available in all US embassies, consulates and military bases, the US Embassy official said, but as ballots vary tremendously from state to state it is not possible either to stock or print regular absentee ballots.

The embassy also keeps a Voting Assistance Guide which lists addresses of voting officials for every county in all the states.

The expatriate voters can use the diplomatic pouch or the regular mailing service to send the absentee ballots. "We are allowed to send official election materials for all Americans through the diplomatic pouch but we cannot receive any of the materials for them," Wehrli said.

A few states require that the voting materials be notarised. "We also provide the notarisation service free of charge," he added.

Absentee ballots can also be used by voters in the United States if they are physically incapable or living outside the state they are registered as a voter.

Sylhet JCD leader held

From Our Correspondent

SYLHET, Oct 29: The Organising Secretary of Sylhet district unit of the Jatiyatabadi Chhatra Dal Ali Ahmed was arrested by the Kotwali police early today under the anti-terrorism ordinance.

When contacted, a police source informed that he was arrested for his alleged involvement in a clash between the JCD and Shibir activists on Oct 24.

Two cases, one under anti-terrorism ordinance and another under Explosive Act were filed against him, the source added.

The Sylhet district unit of JCD brought out a protest rally condemning the arrest in the town today demanding release of the arrested leader.

Boy killed in road mishap

A boy was run over by a speeding bus on the Dhaka-Archa Highway near the Monno Ceramic Factory yesterday morning, Jasimuddin (10) was crossing the road when he was hit by the bus. He was rushed to Dharmraj Health Complex in critical condition

US visa

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facilities on a reciprocal basis, according to a message received in Dhaka.

This arrangement has been made with effect from October 26 following an understanding between the two countries, Ahsan said.

He said the understanding would especially ease the problem being faced by Bangladeshi students who came to USA for higher studies.

The ambassador said the understanding was taken place following the Prime Minister Begum Khaleda Zia's discussions with the US leaders during her visit to the United States in March this year.

Earlier, the multiple entry visas were granted for a maximum period of one year only.

CBA leader

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with the vehicle.

Immediately after the death news spread over the mills area, hundreds of agitated workers moved to the police station and retook the body of the CBA leader from the police. They also brought back the bus from the police station.

Later the workers put barricade on the Dhaka-Mymensingh highway and, started attacking buses.

Ahmadiyya Masjid burnt

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The victims alleged that the attackers looted their valuables, snatched gold ornaments from the ladies and even kicked the children residing in the complex.

Police arrived half an hour after the incident started and struggled hard to restore control.

The police lobbed at least 25 tear gas canisters to drive the mob out of the complex.

An official of the Kotwali police station received head injuries while trying to quell the mob.

Fire service officials said five engines took 45 minutes to douse the fire.

Showing round the ravaged complex to the pressmen, a leader of the Ahmadiyya community said, "We know the country's people...this fire you see their work...it has been

imported from outside the country."

"We are peaceful people and we don't want to fight with anybody," he said.

The attack was made in a bid to divert people's attention from the Golam Azam Issue, said another senior leader. "If you could start a sectarian conflict, it would overwhelm the recent demand for punishment of Golam Azam," he explained.

Police said that they detained 10 people for questioning but later released them.

Mir Monser Ali, general secretary of the Ahmadiyya Muslim Jamaat, has filed a case with Lalbagh police, which has cordoned off the whole area and blocked the roads to traffic.

Tension gripped the Bakshi Bazar area following the incident.

2.75 lakh lepers in country

The number of leprosy patients in the country was recorded at 2.75 lakh, parliament was told yesterday, reports UNB.

Replying to a question stood in the name of Kazi Abdur Rashid (AL), Deputy Health Minister Serajul Huq said leprosy patients are treated by multi-drug therapy system recommended by the World Health Organisation (WHO).

Haq informed the House that Tk 11.55 crore was earmarked in the Fourth Five Year Plan for the treatment of leprosy patients.

Every lock

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lised in The Daily Star's October 28 issue.

Bashir Hossain, an Audit and Accounts Officer at the Chief Accountant's office of Land Law and Justice Ministry, alleged that BDR resorted to such action for putting pressure on him to vacate the flat.

According to Bashir, he has been residing at that flat since July 1986. It was allotted to him by the BDR authorities when he was on deputation to the BDR.

At the end of his tenure, he was sent back to his former office and was asked by the BDR authorities to vacate the flat. But, Bashir claimed, he was reallocated the same flat by the Directorate of Accommodation of the government in support of which he has the necessary documents. Even then the BDR authorities insisted on his vacating the flat and continued to put pressure on him, he alleged.

During the four-day confinement, the family members of Bashir including some children were getting food supply from the neighbours and relatives through the windows of the ground-floor flat.

The power supply at the flat has not set been restored.

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