

Flood plan: Plea for making experts accountable

By Staff Correspondent

Experts from home and abroad, paid for their opinions and plans to control floods in Bangladesh, should be made accountable to the government.

Nurul Islam of the Bangladesh Jubo Otkya (BJO) made this observation while presenting the keynote paper yesterday evening at a seminar on 'Flood Action Plan — for the interest of whom?'

The BJO leader, in a bid to back his observations, said that many plans implemented in the country according to the suggestions of foreign experts in the past produced rather adverse consequences.

The concept of the Flood Action Plan (FAP) emerged at the meeting of the leaders of G-7, the seven-nation group, held in Paris in 1989 following six separate plans prescribing ways and means to control floods presented by experts from the USA, France, China, Japan, UNDP and USAID at the meeting. All the six reports were made following the devastating floods in the country in 1988.

The G-7 leaders resolved that a single plan should be chalked out for flood control in Bangladesh incorporating suggestions from all six prescriptions.

The London meeting of the World Bank (WB) in December the same year resolved taking responsibility of coordinating the FAP.

According to the WB decision, it would conduct a total of 26 studies before making the final plan for flood control in the country and it had estimated a total of Taka 520 crore as expenditure to conduct the studies.

A total of 25 experts from home and abroad were working on the plan and expected to submit the final report by 1997.

The governments of Britain, France, Japan, Sweden, China and the USAID were providing the funds to conduct the studies.

Dr Syed Mesbauddin Hashemi of the Jahangirnagar University addressing the seminar said that foreign aid, used in the so-called development sector, had never come to help the masses of the country. The foreign aid, extracted from the working class of the developed countries in the form of taxes virtually benefits only the rich of the Third World countries, Hashemi also said.

Although the WB funds and policies had an influential role in the country's economy,

Bangladesh had failed to achieve even the capitalistic development in the true sense of the term.

Mainuddin Naser, general secretary of the Paribesh Sangbadik Forum, said that the problem of flood control in Bangladesh was virtually a regional one and that the issue should be unitedly addressed by the regional countries including China, India, Nepal, Bhutan and Bangladesh. He however identified India as an obstacle to any joint move to solve the problem.

Prof Ainun Nishat, member of the Joint Rivers Commission and one of the experts involved in the FAP, told the seminar that 80 per cent of the foreign experts coming to the country had virtually no expertise in the field while 90 per cent of the total foreign aid went to them as consultancy fees. Defending a part of the FAP, Prof Nishat said that six separate regional plans for flood control of the country would be designed under the project on the basis of the diversity of problems in different areas of Bangladesh.

Presided over by Prof Sayed-ur-Rahman of the Dhaka University the seminar was addressed by Jaheda Ahmed.



Prime Minister Begum Khaleda Zia addressing a group of students of Badrunessa College at Sugandha last night. — Star photo

Khaleda

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In an oblique reference to Awami League and its allies, Begum Zia said that "they have joined hands with the autocratic forces to foil the development efforts of the government."

The Prime Minister asked the students to unitedly resist the forces who are out to create anarchy and terrorism in the educational arena.

She pointed out that the past autocratic regime in its nine years of rule introduced terrorism on the campus to destroy the future of the country.

Reminding the ideology of Bangladesh Nationalist Party, she said it believed in the politics of production and it was pledge-bound to ensure five basic needs of the people — food, health, education, clothing and shelter.

Begum Zia assured the students of Badrunessa College of providing a minibus, appointment of teachers, solving classroom problems and a television set for entertainment.

BSRS men may be transferred to DBL

By Sohail Manzur

All officers and employees of Bangladesh Shilpa Rin Sangstha (BSRS) are likely to be transferred to its successor Development Bank Limited (DBL) with guarantees of five years, according to a Finance Ministry source.

The five year terms will, however, come into effect after 180 days of formation of the first elected Board of Directors of the DBL, the source added.

A draft agreement between the government and the DBL has also provided the staff of BSRS the right either to serve in the DBL or be absorbed into government service, semi-government and autonomous organisations within 180 days of the formation of the first elected Board of Directors of the company.

The proposed draft agreement was submitted to the Ministry of Finance November 4 by the BSRS authorities. According to the proposed agreement, the BSRS staff will be transferred on certain terms and conditions and with certain rights and privileges.

Except on disciplinary grounds, employment of any staff of the BSRS shall not be terminated by the DBL by giving three months' notice enforcing regulation 52(2) of BSRS Employees' Service Regulation 1988, the source mentioned.

Five per cent of 'A' class shares of the DBL was also proposed to be kept reserved for purchase by the staff of BSRS, the source said.

The rights and privileges of the staff of BSRS were also outlined in detail in the proposed draft.

Any breach of the provisions of the agreement by DBL would, however, enable the BSRS to abrogate the agreement and the undertaking transferred from the BSRS, the source mentioned.

Water sharing talks

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An eager ear at this moment with the dry season knocking at the door.

The four lean seasons since 1988 have been a period of hardship for Bangladesh due to the absence of an agreement. During these years, India has diverted waters unilaterally to keep the Calcutta port navigable. The 1974 joint declaration by the Prime Ministers said that any withdrawal of waters would be a subject to an agreement. Subsequent arrangements until 1988 had been consequences to that understanding.

In March 1989, the flow at the Hardinge Bridge was only 14,500 cusec. The flow came to an all-time low in late March this year — 13,512 cusec. At the last ministerial meeting, according to official sources, India denied having withdrawn at this level and claimed that it released at least 20,000 cusec.

According to the sources, at the JCE meeting, the Indians will keep insisting on the link canal concept, a plea Bangladesh has never nodded to.

Bangladesh's insistence that the whole issue be given a regional approach, for example bringing in Nepal and looking into all possible options to augment the flows, for a long-term and comprehensive solution is certain to fall into deaf ears. Indian Irrigation Minister Vidya Charan Shukla issued a

flat refusal to the Bangladesh suggestion during his visit to Dhaka.

The JCE, formed August 27 after a two-day ministerial level meeting in Dhaka, is co-chaired by the Irrigation Secretaries and composed of senior water resources experts of the two countries.

A joint communique issued after the late August deliberations mandated the bilateral committee 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."

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," the communique said.

Irrigation Secretary Asafud-dowla will lead a six-member Bangladesh team at the talks, the 84th since 1972. His delegation that leaves for the Indian capital November 18 includes High Commissioner Farooq Sobhan, JRC Member Altaf Ali, FPCO Chief Engineer M H Siddiqui, BUET Professor Dr Ainun Nishat.

Indian Irrigation Secretary C D Thattai, until recently the chairman of the Central Water Commission, who attended the August meeting in Dhaka will lead the New Delhi team of experts.

Bhashani

From Page 1 Col 8

The programmes of the day also include: visiting the major of the late leader at Santosh of Tangail district, holding milad mahfil and offering special prayer for the peace of the departed soul.

The Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP) will hold a public meeting at Santosh to mark the day. BNP leaders and workers under the leadership of the party Secretary General and LGRD Minister Abdus Salam Talukder will leave Dhaka this morning to attend the meeting at Santosh.

The BNP team will also offer munajat and visit the major of Bhashani there. The BNP Secretary General in a statement yesterday called upon all the units of the party across the country to observe the day.

A three-day programme, taken up by Bhashani Smriti Sangsad on this occasion, concludes today. On the concluding day, the sangsad leaders will lay wreaths at Bhashani's major in Santosh and offer munajat.

In the evening, the sangsad will arrange a session of folk-songs. Kabial Yaqub Ali and Kabial Syed Ahmed will participate in the session.

Bangladesh Garib Dal will hold a public rally at Gulistan Square in the city today at 3.30 pm.

Sunrise Pen-Pals Club will offer munajat at Bhashani's major and hold a discussion on his life and work and feed the destitutes.

Bangladesh Janata Dal will hold a discussion at its Asad Avenue central office in the city today at 6 pm. Party chief KM Obaidur Rahman will attend the meeting as chief guest.

BSS says: In his message President Abdur Rahman Biswas paid his deep respect to the Maulana Abdul Hamid Khan Bhashani.

President Biswas said that we would continue our united efforts to build a welfare oriented happy and prosperous country in the light of the philosophy of the great leader. Let this be a fresh vow while observing the death anniversary of Maulana Bhashani, President Biswas said.

In her message Prime Minister Begum Khaleda Zia urged all quarters to rise above party interests and dedicate themselves unitedly to the nation building activities for the greater interests of the country.

She said Maulana Bhashani had struggled throughout his life for the welfare of the common masses and establishment of their rights. Describing Maulana Bhashani as one of the pioneers of independence and nationalism, the Prime Minister said he had always played a significant role in protecting the national independence and upholding national interests.

Begum Zia said Bhashani had a great respect to democracy and democratic rule and added the late leader was uncompromising and dedicated in the struggle for bringing the people's political and economic freedom.



Sheikh Hasina addressing members of Uttara Bank Employees Union who called on her at her Minto Road residence yesterday. — Star photo

Italy keen to buy rice

Italy has expressed its desire to import quality rice from Bangladesh, reports BSS.

This was communicated by Dr Giorgio Tommasini, the visiting trade commissioner of Italy for South East Asia, during discussion with Food Minister M Shamsul Islam at his office yesterday.

Italian ambassador in Bangladesh Dr Claudio Pacifico and Food Secretary Ershadul Haq participated in the discussion.

The Food Minister said the government was actively considering production of quality rice as it endeavours to attain food autarky. He informed him of the various steps taken by the present government to boost production particularly in the farm front.

Ambassador Dr Pacifico praised Bangladesh's success in food production

Economy on verge of ruination: Hasina

Leader of the Opposition in Parliament Sheikh Hasina yesterday (Monday) said the national economy is on the verge of ruination because of "inefficiency, inexperience and irresponsibility of the ruling BNP," reports UNB.

Addressing a group of leaders of the Uttara Bank Employees Union at 29 Minto Road, Hasina charged the government with breach of promise with the working class, including bank employees and industrial workers.

She said before the election, BNP had made a lot of lofty commitments to the workers and employees but forgot the pledges after assuming power.

The Awami League President alleged that the government had betrayed with the 5-point demand of Sramik Karmachari Oikya Parishad (SKOP) by not implementing the agreement it signed with SKOP.

She further alleged that the post-75 BNP government had also tried to snatch away the trade union rights of workers and employees but failed in the face of protest by Awami League.

Hasina accused the ruling party of resorting to organised terrorism in industrial sectors in its bid to control the trade unions.

Although the anti-terrorism law has been enacted but the government refrains from taking any action against the two groups of terrorists belonging to the Chhatra Dal creating a reign of terror in the Engineering University for last few days, she said.

Thousands of people had died from hunger in the northern districts where a famine-like situation still prevails, she alleged.

"Once a mock show was staged on Basanti to discredit the Awami League. But nobody has opened lips when the mother of Basanti died of starvation last year during the rule

of BNP," Hasina said.

The Awami League leader said her party had announced a new economic policy in the changed global scenario to bring about economic freedom of the people and build up national economy from stagnation.

A group of bank employees, led by Uttara Bank Employees Union President Abdul Kader Chowdhury and General Secretary Sirajul Islam Molla, joined the Jatiya Sramik League, labour front of the Awami League.

Awami League leader Amir Hossain Amu and Sramik League leaders Fazlul Haq Mantu and Abdul Matin Master were among those who spoke on the occasion.

Cabinet

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In view of a bumper Aman harvest this year, the cabinet constituted the high-power committee to review the existing foodgrain procurement procedures and recommend measures to ensure stability of market rate and fair price to the growers.

The cabinet decided the procurement price of paddy and rice per maund at Tk 210 and Tk 323.4 while per quintal at Tk 562.64 and 866.46 respectively.

Initially, 2 lakh metric tons of Aman will be procured — 1.25 lakh tons of paddy will be purchased direct from the growers at local CSDs, LSDs and purchase centres and the remaining 0.75 lakh metric tons of rice from mill owners.

In addition, procurement will also be made through tenders.

In case of the direct purchase, the highest ceiling has been fixed at 1 metric ton and the lowest 65 kg or one bag per seller.

SKOP: Employers

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Rejecting the demands of SKOP he said that these would only harm the economy further and scare away foreign investors.

The BEA termed the July 6 agreement between the SKOP and the government illegal as the 'umbrella' labour body did not have any registration and said that it was only an authorised combined bargaining agent (CBA) that could negotiate on behalf of the workers.

The meeting presided over by the president of BEA, M Anis-ud-Dowla, was attended by C K Haider, secretary general of BEA, Morshed Khan, president, MCCCI, Latifur Rahman, former BEA president, Rahmat Ullah of Bangladesh Finished Leather Exporters Association, A G Mahmood of Bangladesh Cargo Vessel Owners Association, Rokeya Rahman representing the cold storage sector and Dr Naimur Rahman representing private sector jute mills.

Explaining the legal aspects of SKOP, Anis-ud-Dowla said according to the Industrial Relations Ordinance, 1969, an unregistered body like SKOP could not function as a trade union and that the signing of wage agreements with such organisations was illegal and punishable under the law.

On the question of national minimum wages, the BEA president said that this would cut opportunities of new employment and halt industrial growth. He said that one per cent increase in wages would reduce jobs by 0.03 to 0.04 per cent.

The BEA representatives expressed the view that the existing sectoral approach should continue and be linked with productivity in determining wages.

The viability and profitability of individual units should determine the wages of labour, they stated.

BEA also said that the small industries would be affected the most if the national minimum wage was implemented. They pointed out that the sectoral approach was working well in the tea, leather and cold storage sectors, where wages were periodically revised through peaceful negotiations between employers and CBAs.

The BEA representatives were highly critical of the government policy of using the tax payers' money as subsidy to the tune of Taka 2000 crore each year for the public sector. Most of the money was spent on the surplus manpower and workers who did not exist.

The BEA also viewed that government intervention in fixing wages ignoring labour productivity and capacity to pay were not only detrimental to the country's economy, but also a major impediment to bringing in new investments.

The representatives said that by delinking wages from productivity, the public sector had removed the main incentive for improved performance on part of the workers. They said that the wages of public sector workers had been increased by more than 40 per cent in real terms in the last five years without commensurate increase in their output.

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Bail prayer of 3 JCD leaders rejected

Chief Metropolitan Magistrate Court yesterday rejected the bail prayer of three Jatiyatabadi Chhatra Dal leaders, reports UNB.

The court ordered the investigating officer to file report within November 26.

Earlier on Sunday, they were produced before the CMM court after a three-day police remand. A bail petition for them was filed on that day but that was not moved due to non-availability of case record and the court sent them to Dhaka Central Jail.

Detective branch of police arrested JCD's Dhaka University unit Secretary Ali Akkas Nadim, VP of Dhaka College Students Union Mir Nwaz Ali and former VP of the college Mir Sarafat Ali Swapan from Hare Road on Nov 11 in connection with the Mamun murder case.

JCD activist Ashraful Azam Mamun was shot dead on the DU campus September 4.

Contraband goods seized: 69 held

From Our Correspondent

JESSORE, Nov 16: BDR men seized contraband goods worth Taka 93 lakh 3 thousand and 640 and arrested 69 persons from various border areas of the district during the last eight days, said a BDR source.

The Midnight File

France sets condition for uranium supply to India

PARIS, Nov 16: France said today it would not renew a contract to supply uranium to India unless New Delhi agreed to keep the nuclear fuel under international control. France makes full scope safeguards a condition for supplying nuclear fuel under new contracts with any country. Foreign Ministry spokesman Daniel Bernard told journalists. He was speaking after Indian media quoted a French diplomat as saying France would continue to provide India with nuclear fuel in spite of its refusal to sign the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT), reports Reuter.

Meghna Express buffet with 600 catches fire

CHANDPUR, Nov 16: An express train carrying about 600 passengers narrowly escaped a disaster when its buffet car caught fire. Driver of the train Anu Mia managed to disconnect the buffet car and saved six other bogies from the blaze. At least 10 people were injured when they jumped from the buffet car. Railway sources said fire engulfed the buffet car of the Chittagong-bound Meghna Express when it reached near Meher station, 40 kilometre off the district town. A fire brigade unit from Hajiganj rushed to the spot and extinguished the fire, reports UNB.

Improved food for Rohingyas

COX'S BAZAR, Nov 16: Authorities have improved the food list for Rohingya refugees with the inclusion of sugar and dry fish with effect from Wednesday. Rohingya Refugee Control Room sources said today 20 gram dry fish and 10 gram sugar have been included in the daily per head allocation of food for the refugees. A total of 75.3 metric tons of dry fish and 17.56 metric tons of sugar have been allocated for the refugees. World Food Programme (WFP) will supply the new food items from the local markets, reports UNB.

IFRC chief in city

The President of the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC), Dr Mario Enrique Villarreal Lander, arrived in Dhaka yesterday afternoon on a three-day visit to Bangladesh, reports BSS.

He was received at the Zia International Airport by the Chairman of the Bangladesh Red Crescent Society (BDRCS), Syed Shahidul Haque Jamal, MP, members of the managing board, Head of Delegation (HOD) of IFRC in Dhaka and Secretary General of the BDRCS.

Dr Mario was accompanied by Vice President of the IFRC Judge Durrel Jones, and chief of the Asia Pacific department of the IFRC Jerry Talbot.

BUET campus tense

By BUET Correspondent

One round of gunshot and a bomb blast were heard yesterday on Bangladesh University of Engineering and Technology (BUET) campus at around 2:00 pm.

Tense situation prevailed on the campus since Thursday when a rival group of Jatiyatabadi Chhatra Dal (JCD) clashed over filing of nomination papers for the forthcoming Engineering University Central Students Union (EUCSU) polls.

According to a campus source, several rounds of gunshots were also fired late Sunday night at around 8:00 pm near Sher-e-Bangla Hall.

Meanwhile, first year students yesterday blocked the university main gate and demonstrated chanting slogans against the hooligans who fired a dozen of gunshots late Sunday night while they brought out a procession.

Attendance of the students in the classes were thin yesterday.

JCD in a statement accused some outsiders of the violence and said that it was an attempt to foil the November 26 EUCSU polls.

However, all student organisations submitted their nomination papers to the Directorate of Students Welfare (DSW) office.

All nominations were accepted, said an office source.

BUET authorities in an emergency meeting expressed grave concern at the continuous deterioration of congenial atmosphere and urged the students to obey rules and regulations of the University.

Preston-Hasina

From Page 1 Col 8

Shamsul Islam, Information Minister Nazmul Huda, Energy Minister Dr Khondker Mostafiz Hossain, Jute Minister Hannan Shah, State Minister for Civil Aviation Abdul Mannan and State Minister for Cultural Affairs Jahanara Begum attended the reception.

Awami League leaders Tofael Ahmed MP, Ataur Rahman Khan Kaiser, Shudangshu Shekhar Haldar MP, Abul Hasan Chowdhury MP, Jatiya Party leader Moudud Ahmed MP, Jamaat leaders Moulana Motiur Rahman Nizami MP, and Ansar Ali MP, CPB leaders Saifuddin Ahmed Manik and Nurul Islam and Ganotantri Party leader Ahmadul Kabir also attended.

Former Minister Syed-uzzaman, Metropolitan Chamber President Morshed Khan, BNP leaders Hamidullah Khan MP and Ziaur Rahman Khan MP, were also present.

The widely attended reception was marked by exchanges of greetings, understanding between the politically divergent groups, between former autocrats and democrats and rightists and the leftists, even those who are known as anti-World Bank people were also seen to have a chat with the bank chief.

UNB adds: A group of leading parliamentarians last night told the visiting WB President that politicians should have greater involvement in dealing with the bank and donors to avoid harsh conditionalities.

The suggestion came at a meeting between Preston and six MPs representing both treasury and opposition at Hotel Sonargon.

Coming out of the meeting Maudud Ahmed of Jatiya Party told UNB that strict conditionalities attached with external loans which raised widespread criticism in the country dominated their discussion.

But Preston explained that the conditionalities were not imposed unilaterally by the World Bank. These were negotiated and accepted by your officials, Preston was quoted to have told the MPs. Maudud reiterated "in loan negotiation process, politicians were never involved, bureaucrat who have no political commitment used to do it. But the burden ultimately falls on politicians who are to see implementation of the conditionalities."

Other MPs present and took part in the deliberations were LK Siddiqui, Wing Commander (ret) Hamidullah and Shakhawat Hossain Bakul of BNP, Tofael Ahmed and Abul Hasan Chowdhury of Awami League and Sheikh Anwar Ali of Jamaat-e-Islami.

Jamuna Bridge

From Page 1 Col 7

activities and development of Bangladesh.

Oli Ahmad said that during the dry and rainy seasons the precious produces in the west part of the river Jamuna and that of the east part could not be transported.

It causes colossal losses to the economy and inflicts serious sufferings on the people, he said.

The people of Bangladesh spontaneously have given Jamuna surcharge of about 100 million dollar for the construction of the bridge, Ahmad added.

He hoped that the construction of the bridge with the support of the World Bank and other funding agencies would usher in a new chapter of socio-economic development of the country.

Azmuddin Ahmad and the consultants briefed the World Bank chief about the rehabilitation and technical aspects of the bridge in detail.

After the briefing they visited the hamlets nearby and talked to the inmates who would be affected by the construction of the bridge.

Mr and Mrs Preston were greeted by the villagers and the inmates there warmly.

When the World Bank chief asked the villagers whether they were happy to see the bridge constructed despite their loss of land and property, the villagers responded in the affirmative and said they wanted to see the bridge completed at the soonest possible time.

The tender for the bridge has been floated on September 1 last and all the contracts will be received in between January and February 1993.