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Delhi delegates doubt Dhaka's water flow figures

Accord appears remote

By Toufique Imrose Khalidi

With the flow at Hardinge Bridge going further down yesterday, prospects of a positive outcome were bleak as discords dominated the deliberations of the first day of the two-day second meeting of the Indo-Bangladesh joint body of water experts.

The four-hour talks, split in two sessions, failed to make headway although the Indian delegation leader Irrigation Secretary CD Thattie claimed that "things are progressing."

His Bangladesh counterpart, Asifuddin, bluntly refused to endorse the statement saying that he was "not happy."

"There is nothing that I can tell you as we could make no substantial progress," a senior member of Bangladesh delegation said of yesterday's meeting, expressing customary hope that "we will try to do something today."

Asked what the Bangladesh side proposed, he said in no mood of optimism, "All we have told them is we need water."

Another two formal sessions of the so-called Joint Committee of Experts (JCE) are scheduled today.

The first meeting, held in mid-November in New Delhi, yielded nothing except the decision to hold the second in Dhaka soon. That too was delayed by months owing to the acrimony that followed the Ayodhya developments.

Much to the dismay of the Dhaka delegates, the New Delhi men brushed aside the complaints that too much water was being diverted through Farakka and that the extremely low discharge was causing undue hardship to a vast population in south-western Bangladesh.

The Indians refused to believe the figures of the declining flow and the water level at the Hardinge Bridge which prompted the Bangladesh delegates to insist that they see for themselves the big shoals in the once mighty Padma.

Meeting sources said that the Indian team initially nodded to the proposal but later backed out saying that a visit to the area today, as proposed by Bangladesh team, would eat up much of time for scheduled deliberations across the table.

The Indian refusal to the helicopter ride to Bheramara, where the country's largest irrigation project solely dependent on Padma water is located, annoyed the Bangladesh team members.

Meanwhile, hydrologists at Bheramara yesterday found the flow at the Hardinge Bridge point further low, beating previous day's record.

According to figures made available to The Daily Star, discharge at Hardinge at noon yesterday was 9,218 cusec—down from Monday's 9,247—and water level 13.91 feet—down from the previous day's 13.97.

Later, replying to reporters after the meeting, CD Thattie, a former chairman of India's Central Water Commission, claimed, "We are half way

Reformers ask Yeltsin not to hold his own referendum

MOSCOW, Mar 30: The Russian parliament voted a 30 million dollar budget today for next month's referendum and vote of confidence in President Boris Yeltsin, report AFP, AP.

The conservative-dominated assembly displeased Yeltsin by altering the poll regulations so that he will need at least 50 percent yes votes of the whole registered electorate and not just of those actually voting.

Reformist lawmakers meanwhile advised President Yeltsin against holding his own referendum on his fight with parliament and warned him of the dangers of discontent in the military.

Yeltsin met with about 100 supporters from the Congress of People's Deputies after a raucous emergency parliament session that ended Monday without resolving the power struggle.

The four-day session produced no winners in the standoff that has paralyzed government for a year. Yeltsin's opponents failed to vote him out of office, and the president's main political rival, parliament speaker Ruslan Khasbulatov, retained his position.

The Congress did take another bite from Yeltsin's powers. It also set an April 25 referendum that Yeltsin had sought to resolve the fight, but lawmakers added a question on whether Russians support the painful economic reforms he began 15 months ago.

Presidential aides said Monday the president might hold a parallel vote to ask questions of his own choosing. But the reformist lawmakers urged Yeltsin to challenge the Congress' decision in the

Shantibahini agrees to extend truce upto Apr 30

From Nurul Alam

CHITTAGONG, Mar 30: The leaders of Parbatiya Chaitagram Janasanghati Samity (PCJSS), the parent organisation of Shantibahini, reportedly agreed to extend the truce period upto April 30, sources in CHT said.

The extension period of ceasefire agreed earlier between the Shantibahini leaders and the government during the second round of peace talks ends tomorrow.

The PCJSS leaders also called upon the government-formed Parliamentary Committee to hold the third round of peace talks in the month of April before the fresh extension period of truce ends, sources added.

The message from the Shantibahini leaders came to



Prime Minister Begum Khaleda Zia addressing a public meeting at Kishoreganj Stadium in Nilphamari yesterday.—PID photo

Hafizuddin MP joins BNP

Face opponents politically, Khaleda asks partymen

SAIDPUR, Mar 30: Prime Minister Begum Khaleda Zia today asked her party leaders and workers to politically face those trying to create indiscipline in national life, reports UNB.

"We will face them organisationally and politically," she said addressing a rally of workers of Saidpur District BNP at the local Town Hall here this afternoon.

Begum Zia warned that indiscipline in national life will bring destruction for the country and called upon all individuals to take responsibility of building the nation.

"We have to be open-hearted and broad-minded. We have to build the country involving all," she said referring to joining of leaders and workers of National Awami Party (NAP Malek-Hafiz).

Nearly 1,500 leaders and workers, led by Prof

UN staffer from Bangladesh killed in Phnom Penh shootings

PHNOM PENH, (Cambodia), Mar 30: Cambodian government soldiers fatally shot a UN staffer from Bangladesh in one of six overnight shootings and grenade attacks in the capital, a government spokesman said Tuesday, reports AP.

The Bangladesh was in one of two cars that drove without stopping through a government weapons checkpoint Monday night, said spokesman Khieu Kanharith. Occupants of the first car fired at govern-

Hearing on writ continues

Order disqualifying Azam should be declared void, Yusuf pleads

By Staff Correspondent

Barrister Yusuf argued that the impugned notification went far beyond the power vested on the government and that in exercise of that power the government took "irrelevant considerations" into account.

Through the notification, issued on April 18, 1973, the government, under Article 3 of the Bangladesh Citizenship Temporary Provisions Order (PO149 of 1972), declared 39 persons, including the petitioner, not to be qualified to be citizens of Bangladesh citing three specific grounds, he noted.

The grounds on which the notification was issued were: staying abroad since long before the Liberation of Bangladesh and by conduct cannot be deemed to be citizens of Bangladesh and continued to be citizens of Pakistan.

These grounds, the counsel

'Harkin bill not to punish developing states'

By Staff Correspondent

Amid Bangladesh's fears that a 'handshake' between its realities and western corporate idealism would be difficult, a US senator's aide Tuesday assured that the Harkin Bill was not aimed at punishing the developing countries.

"Nobody is going to punish anybody," said James Sweeney, legislative aide to Senator Tom Harkin, the author of the Child Labour Deterrence Act, 1993.

The bill aims at helping Third World governments eliminate a major form of child abuse, he said.

The law, known as the Harkin Bill, and seeking a ban on all imports produced with child labour will have a far-reaching impact on the garments industries of Bangladesh.

Tabled by Senator Harkin (Democrat-Iowa) and co-sponsored by nine other prominent Senators, the law proposes a

BEA for fresh five wage boards

By Staff Correspondent

President of Bangladesh Employers' Association Anis Ud Dowla Tuesday demanded formation of five wage boards to fix minimum wages of workers of different sectors.

He felt that sector-based review on the wage-issue would help finding out appropriate solutions to the problem.

Anis was addressing an emergency meeting of the Tripartite Consultative Committee held at the Labour and Manpower Training building Tuesday morning.

The Committee which was formed with the representatives from government, employers and workers held the meeting to discuss the Wage Commission Report.

Emphasizing on 'sectoral approach' in fixing up minimum wages for the workers,

Chemical factory, 10 houses gutted in city: 10 hurt

By Staff Correspondent

A chemical factory and about ten thatched houses near the Dhaka Central Jail were gutted in a big fire Tuesday afternoon.

At least 10 people including three fire service officers and five firemen sustained minor injuries while they were battling the fire.

Originating from a chemical factory at around 5:30 pm, the fire spread to the nearby area and continued burning for an hour, witnesses said.

Seven rooms of MS Arif Chemicals Limited containing burnish-chemical products and machine were gutted in the fire, the firemen said.

Cause of the fire and the loss in the incident could not be estimated immediately, sources said.

6 killed, 20 injured in road mishaps

By Staff Correspondent

Six persons were killed and 20 others injured in three separate road mishaps in Dhaka, Feni and Joypurhat in two days.

According to our DMCI Correspondent, two persons were killed in separate road accidents at Park Avenue and Jatrabari in the capital yesterday.

An unidentified rickshaw-puller died on the spot when a speeding truck ran over his rickshaw near the Ramna Park at around 7 pm yesterday.

In another incident, a 22-year-old man was killed in a road accident at Jatrabari at around 6 pm yesterday. His identity could not be known.

UNB adds: Head Master of a high school was killed when a speeding bus knocked him down at Fatepur on Feni bypass road yesterday.

Police said Mohammad Soliman Bhuiyan, Head Master of the Box Mahmud High School in Langalour thana of Comilla district died on the spot when a bus knocked his motorcycle from behind at about 5 am.

In Joypurhat, a bus carrying a bridal party overturned near Atipur rail crossing on Panchbibi-Hilli road Monday night, killing three people and injuring 20 others, including the bride and the groom.

Bus helpers Akbar (30) and Amjad (18), and a pedestrian Mizanur (20) died on the spot, police and witnesses said.

Jute, textile sugar workers to discuss strategies Apr 9

By Nurul Kabir

The workers of the country's jute, textile and sugar sectors will hold a joint convention in the city April 9 to chalk out strategies to implement demands separately signed with the government earlier.

Nirmul Samannaya Committee protest rally today

By Staff Correspondent

Nirmul Samannaya Committee has urged the people to make today's protest rally and demonstration a success.

A joint meeting of the Advisory Committee, Steering Committee and Public Enquiry Committee was held yesterday to review the situation, which accused the government of vio-



Fire servicemen extinguishing fire at Nazimuddin Road yesterday.—Star photo