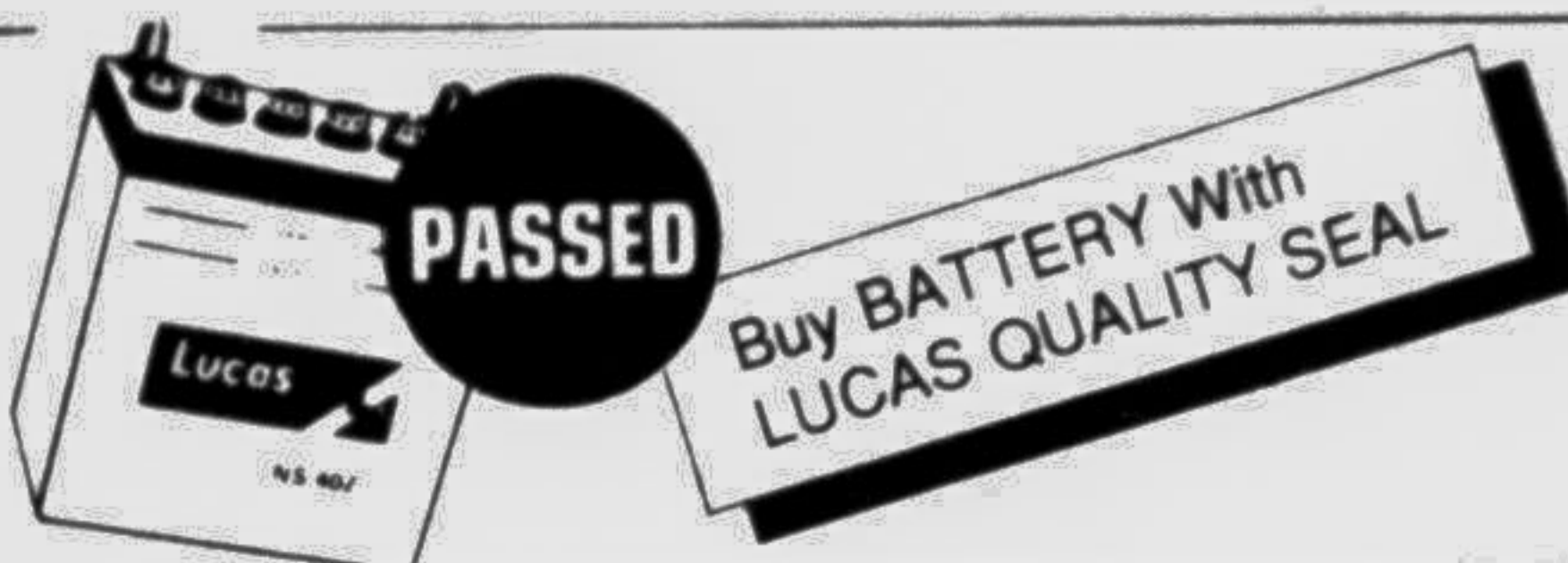


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CHT talks : Govt may seek fresh truce

From Staff Correspondent

CHITTAGONG, May 20 : The government is likely to propose to the Shantibahini an extension of the ceasefire in a bid to continue the dialogue for resolving the insurgency issue politically, a highly placed source said.

The fresh proposal for a fifth extension of the ceasefire that ends on May 31, is expected to be placed by the Parliamentary Committee in the third round of peace talks scheduled with the Shantibahini leaders on May 22 at the Khagrachhari Circuit House, the source added.

The ceasefire was unilaterally declared by the Shantibahini for the first time from August 10 to November 10, 1992 apparently in response to the government's call for finding a political solution to the 18-year-old CHT problem across the negotiating table.

The government, welcoming that move, agreed with the Shantibahini leaders in the first round dialogue held on November 5 last year to extend the ceasefire for the second time upto December 31. But in the second round of peace talks held on December 26, 1992, the Parliamentary Committee again agreed to extend the ceasefire for a third time upto March 31, immediately before expiry of the third term of the ceasefire the government proposed, through the Liaison Committee, a fourth extension to which the Shantibahini leaders agreed, extending the truce to May 31.

However, a lull has been prevailing for over nine months in the insurgency-torn Chittagong Hill Tracts though armed Shantibahini men have reportedly indulged in acts of violence in violation of the ceasefire. The Shantibahini men were also allegedly involved in toll collection and abduction of people from the CHT area.

Meanwhile, all preparations are afoot to hold the third round of peace talks between the Parliamentary Committee headed by the Communications Minister Col. (Retd) Oli Ahmed and a team of the Parbatya Chattagram Jana Sanghati Samity (PCJSS), the parent organisation of the Shantibahini, led by its president J B Larma alias Shanto Larma.

The Liaison Committee which is brokering the peace negotiation, today held a preparatory meeting at the Khagrachhari Circuit House ahead of the May 22 talks.

Earlier, the authorities relaxed the security at the frontier villages of Panchhari thana under Khagrachhari district by withdrawing eight camps of the security forces and turning five others inoperative five days ahead of Saturday's talks in accordance with a precondition set by the Shantibahini.

According to sources, the third round of dialogue is expected to centre mainly on detailed discussions on the Shantibahini's demands and repatriation process for the tribal refugees now living in camps in India's Tripura state.

Oli denies reports

From Page 1 Col 7

ter appealed "We must not do anything to destroy the image of the nation and that of the freedom fighters."

Providing an elaborate resume of his week-long visit to India, Ahmed said, he had met Indian Prime Minister PV Narasimha Rao and other cabinet ministers and discussed with them bilateral issues relating to the repatriation of Chakma refugees, sharing of waters of the common rivers including the Ganges, joint co-operation between the railways of the two nations and purchasing boulders for the proposed Jamuna Bridge.

The minister said that the next official-level meeting between the two countries would be held in Agartala on May 26 to work out the modalities of the repatriation of the Chakma refugees.

It would take at least another 15 days after the next meeting is held to begin the process of repatriation, he added.

Responding to a question, the minister acknowledged that the list of refugees eligible for repatriation, placed by the two countries, may differ.

However, he added that this would not be a point of contention as the tribal headmen would identify the returnees and the government also has a list of its own while noting that many children must have been born since the refugees left Bangladesh in the early '80s.

The minister disclosed that the parliamentary committee set up to solve the Chittagong Hill Tracts problem would hold the next round of talks with the Parbatya Chattagram Jana Sanghati Samity (PCJSS), parent organisation of the outlawed Shantibahini, on May 22 in Khagrachhari.

Replying to another question, Ahmed expressed his ignorance about press reports in India that the Chakma refugees had placed conditions for holding talks with the committee before the repatriation process is initiated.

On the water sharing issue, the minister said: "During my meeting with Indian Water Resources Minister VC Shukla, I said that the link canal proposal is not acceptable to the people of Bangladesh," considering the circumstances.

He added that he had reiterated late President Ziaur Rahman's proposal for sharing the water of common rivers and also emphasised the need to construct reservoirs in

Nepal to hold water for the dry season.

Wide-ranging discussions were held on cooperation between the railways of the two countries during his talks with his Indian counterpart CK Jafar, the Communications Minister noted.

Bangladesh requested India to construct a double-line 132 km railway track between the Chinki-Astana and Akhaura in the Dhaka-Chittagong section at a cost of Taka 2279.30 million, he said. The Indian government agreed to examine the proposal favourably, he said.

The Indian side, Ahmed added, also agreed to train 10 officials of Bangladesh Railway in setting up container services while the Bangladesh side said that it would soon place a Taka 87.20 million proposal to upgrade the signalling system in six railway stations on the Mymensingh-Jamajpur line.

Referring to the proposal to purchase boulders from India for the construction of the Jamuna Bridge, the minister said that India agreed in principle to supply the estimated requirement of 100 million US dollar worth of boulders subject to the fulfillment of requisite conditions and terms of tender.

Procuring the boulders from India would bring about a savings of about Taka 136 crore compared to those from Malaysia and Indonesia, he said. However, he made it clear that only the lowest bidder would get the contract to supply the boulders.

On allowing transit facilities to SAARC members Bhutan and Nepal to supply part of the boulders, the minister said that the Indian government position would be intimated at a later date.

Sarbahara men kill two in Khulna

From Page 1 Col 3

KHULNA, May 20: Two people were shot dead by outlawed Sarbahara Party activists at village Magurkhal in Dumuria thana of the district Wednesday. Police said a gang of 10 to 12 armed Sarbahara men raided the house of Bhaktia Das Ray (50), a village leader and shot him dead. Hearing the hue and cry village choudkdar Panchanan Mandal (50) came forward to help him. On seeing the miscreants he ran for his life and jumped into the nearby river but the hoodlums caught and hacked him to death, reports UNB.

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Awami League chief Sheikh Hasina presiding over the extended meeting of the party Central Working Committee at its central office in the city yesterday. Party general secretary Zillur Rahman, Abdus Samad Azad (left) and Sajeda Chowdhury (right) are also seen. — Star photo

Donor-prescribed reforms increasing poverty : BEA

By Staff Correspondent

The Bangladesh Economic Association (BEA), at a press conference Thursday, slated the government's reform measures saying that these were prescribed by the foreign 'Mahajans' (money lenders) for their own interests.

The press conference, held at the National Press Club yesterday at noon, was addressed by its president Prof Anisur Rahman, general secretary Debaprio Bhattacharya and Prof Muzaffar Ahmed.

Terming the economy of the country as a "beggar's economy," Prof Anisur Rahman said the reforms were contributing to increasing poverty. The poverty alleviation programme initiated by the government was to remove that poverty, he said.

Criticising the policy of a free market economy, he said there was not a single country in the world which had adopted this wholly.

Stressing the need for a dialogue on various policy issues, he said, "We want growth with equity." The import liberalisation policy would benefit a certain group only, he added.

Prof Muzaffar said the 'informal' sectors of the country were contributing a lot to the economy. But these were being deprived of facilities for further development, he added.

Citing the example of the technological revolution of the country boat — where shallow tubewell pumps have been turned into outboard engines — Prof Ahmed said this happened without any government initiative or patronisation. Policy-makers would have to think ways to utilise the potentials of such informal sector.

Debaprio Bhattacharya, in his written speech, said the Structural Adjustment Programmes (SAP) adopted by

the government on the suggestion of the World Bank and IMF a decade ago, had failed to accommodate the interests of the vulnerable groups.

He also felt that the unorganised and weaker sections of the labour force might become victims of the current reform measures.

He, however, suggested that the adjustment policies should be integrated with overall policies for development. It should also take account of contextual factors like historical background and other factors that were unique to this country.

He, however, stressed the need for a consensus on development issues that should be reached through a participatory mode by accommodating different approaches.

"There should be continuity, transparency and consistency in formulating and applying any development package," he maintained.

Aphrodisiac kills two

PABNA, May 20 : Two men ended up dead and a young housewife was hospitalised in a critical condition here on Wednesday after taking Ayurvedic medicine to increase libido, hospital sources said today, reports UNB.

Siddik Pramanik, 32, Abdul Wahab, 27, and his wife Sajeda Khatun, 23, of village Manikdia in Sujanagar thana took the sex pill they had bought from a local doctor Wednesday morning.

They fell sick in the evening and were rushed to Pabna Sadar Hospital where Siddik and Wahab died. Sajeda was fighting for her life and remained unconscious till this afternoon.

A case was filed with Sujanagar police station in this connection. Ayurvedic doctor Habibur Rahman was reported absconding.

DU students

From Page 1 Col 3

The student leaders welcomed the Prime Minister's upcoming May 23 visit to the Dhaka University where she will present an honorary Doctor of Science (DSc) degree to Noble laureate Pakistani scientist Prof Abdus Salam in a special convocation. Prime Minister Begum Khaleda Zia is the Chancellor of the Dhaka University.

The leaders, who spoke on the occasion, included DUCSU VP Amanullah Aman, MP, DUCSU AGS Nazimuddin Alam, JCD leader Fazlul Huq Milon, DUCSU transport secretary Khandaker Jahangir Alam, Ashek Khan and Suranjana Ghosh, president and general secretary of Jatiya Chhatra League, Mizanur Rahman, president Chhatra League (M-L), Mohammad Abu Taher, general secretary of DU unit of Chhatra League (M-L), Ziaul Huq Zia, president Chhatra Miltree, Dhaka University unit, Mushtaque Ahmed Tulu, president of Chhatra League (B-K), DU unit, Shaful Islam, AGS Chhatra Union DU unit, Junayed Saki, general secretary Chhatra Federation DU unit, Mohiuddin Lablu, convenor Chhatra Oaikya Forum DU unit, Mustaque Alam, president Samajtantrik Chhatra Front DU unit and Aslam Khan.

Education Minister Barrister Jamiruddin Sircar and Vice Chancellor of the Dhaka University Prof Emazuddin Ahmed were also present.



Bangladeshi UN peacekeepers look through binoculars from atop a building at Cambodia's Siem Reap airport May 19, trying to pinpoint the origin of artillery shells coming at the airport. The airport has been shelled four times in five days. — AFP photo

Culture of censorship

From Page 1 Col 7

scribe TV news because it only covered Ershad, Roushan Ershad and the ministers (in that order). People exaggerate when they say nothing much has changed. But the ghost of an Ershadian TV is all too prominently present in what we see as TV news these days.

Opening seminars, uttering everyday platitudes, making statements like 'children are our future' or that 'people's participation must for uplift, endless footage of public meetings (of the ruling party, of course), visits of ministers to this or that project, unfortunately do not make news. They make propaganda. And people take very badly to propaganda.

The joke is that the TV news staff have become so used to covering only the ministers that they go into panic when our government leaders decide to take a break. Take the example of the day the Biman DC-10 accident took place. What did the TV news show? It was one minister after another opening, not a factory or a road, but seminars, where talk is cheap and action can be blissfully left for another day.

Just as there is overdose in medicine, there is also overexposure or overkill in the media. The most important element of professional media, and one that is most difficult to convince any Information

Minister about, is credibility. It is on this one, and only one, pillar upon which news media must stand, and one in reference to which the public will ultimately judge. Credibility is earned, and can never be given. If, in any instance, quality wins over quantity, it is in the case of mass media. If it were not so then Ershad, with round-the-clock TV coverage, would have been much more popular than Begum Zia. If Begum Zia or the BNP could win the confidence of the people without monopolising the TV before coming to power, then why do they need to do so now? Just as Ershad could not contain Begum Zia's popularity by blacking her out of TV and radio, so also Begum Zia's government cannot contain the popularity of anybody else just by keeping them away from the electronic media.

The lesson, and one that we repeatedly refuse to learn, is that what actually works is performance. If the BNP government sincerely serves the people, they will remain popular, BTV or no BTV.

So while the inquiry into the Biman incident story may reveal lapses here and there, and one or two cogs in the bureaucratic wheel may get shifted out, yet the deep malaise will remain, unless we do away with the culture of censorship. History beckons minister Huda. Will he respond?

Khaleda opens agro fair

Prime Minister Begum Khaleda Zia said in Dhaka yesterday that an integrated approach is needed for development of the agricultural sector including livestock and poultry farming, reports BSS.

Addressing the inaugural function of the "Cattle and Poultry Birds Show '93" arranged jointly by the Bangladesh Poultry Shilpa Shamannaya Committee, the Dhaka Dairy Owners' Association and the Directorate of Livestock Services, the Prime Minister said the small and medium-size livestock and poultry farms had been identified as profitable projects because these could increase the incomes of the rural population, create self-employment opportunities and alleviate poverty.

She said the national livestock development plan aimed at alleviating poverty by bringing the landless, small and marginal farmers, unemployed rural youth and women together in livestock and poultry projects.

Amid cheers and applause the Prime Minister told the gathering of livestock and poultry farmers from across the country that the government would stop the import of eggs to encourage the country's poultry sector. But she reminded it should be ensured that there was no smuggling of eggs and prices remained within the reach of the consumers.

NDA seeks UN intervention

Nationalist Democratic Alliance yesterday urged the United Nations' intervention for a solution to the staggering water sharing problem with India on humanitarian ground to save the people of Bangladesh from ruin, reports UNB.

NDA also urged the world community to come forward to investigating the causes of colossal losses inflicted on Bangladesh by unilateral withdrawal of the Ganges water and realise proper compensation from those responsible for it.

The Alliance's urge was conveyed to the UN Secretary General through a memorandum handed over to the Country Representative of the United Nations.

PM : BCL

From Page 1 Col 4

Oikya (GCO) said that the PM yesterday described the students' demands as legitimate but did not make any clear commitment to fulfil them.

The GCO reiterated that it would continue agitation until the demands were realised. The BCL (M-I) unit president and general secretary Pankaj Nath, while talking to this correspondent, said that the BCL would not meet the Prime Minister until their demands were met.

According to sources, the students in the meeting with the PM demanded immediate release of Sanchaya Chakma and the trial of Golam Azam in a special tribunal.

Other demands included immediate release of 35 students leaders in Patuakhali and a proper investigation into police harassment of students in the city on April 25.

The students also demanded construction of a commerce faculty building, two residential halls for male and female students and improvement of transport facilities of the Dhaka University.

A BCL (M-I) rally, held at the TSC yesterday, condemned the government for the non-implementation of the joint declaration of the Three Party Alliance.

ALWC: Hasina

From Page 1 Col 4

She recalled the large-scale termination of industrial workers and bank employees during the Zia-Sattar regime and said the present BNP was also sacking workers.

"A rampant plunder is going on in the industrial sector and a policy of politicisation is being pursued in state affairs," Hasina alleged.

"The administration is not being used in the interest of the Republic, it is used in party interest. It is clear to the people that the DC-SIPs are being made to work as President-Secretary of the BNP."

Turning to the political front, the Awami League leader said the present government sided with anti-liberation forces.

The Midnight File

UNSC plans to set up war tribunal for ex-Yslavia

UNITED NATIONS, May 20 : A Security Council resolution has been drafted setting up an 11-member war crimes tribunal for the former Yugoslavia, but the site of the tribunal remains to be determined. Western diplomats involved in the project said the resolution could be up for a vote by late tomorrow and that panel could begin hearing cases as early as September, reports AFP.

Palestinian leader wants suspension of ME talks

GAZA CITY (Occupied Gaza Strip), May 20: Haidar Abdel Shafi, head of the Palestinian delegation to bilateral peace talks with Israel, called today for the negotiations to be broken off. "The negotiations should be suspended because I think that at the present stage they cannot progress," Abdel Shafi told a press conference in Israeli-occupied Gaza city, reports AFP.

Seven dacoits lynched

CHITTAGONG, May 20: Seven alleged dacoits were lynched in Senbagh thana in Noakhali district while they attempted dacoity in a house early today (Thursday), police said. Among the gangmen, two were identified as Sardar Abul Kashem (30) of village Mirbagh in Senbagh thana and Mohammad Yusuf (30) of village Hossainpur in Begumganj thana. Additional SP of Noakhali Faruq Ahmed told UNB that they recovered seven bodies and identified two of the dead.

Saifur tells ICAB convocation

Govt planning to trim size of administration

Finance Minister M Saifur Rahman yesterday indicated that the government was planning to trim the size of the administration as part of its reform programmes, reports UNB.

He said a high-level committee is being set up to look into the functions and structures of different ministries and corporations which are suffering from large overheads.

It was disclosed by the Finance Minister while he was addressing as chief guest the 11th convocation ceremony of the Institute of Chartered Accountants of Bangladesh (ICAB) in the city.

The initiative, according to Rahman, is aimed at "fine-tuning" the government activities. "Lesser the size, better the performance," he said referring to the huge overheads in different government agencies.

But the minister cautioned that reforms in the administration might prove "tough and unpleasant".

The Finance Minister dwelt on a wide range of issues including performance of the banking sector, loan defaults and government-regulations in free economy.

"Banks are most miserable institutions in Bangladesh... I am least satisfied with the banks' activities", the Minister lamented.

He refuted criticism from

Kashmir

From Page 1 Col 5

Some Congressmen were asking the government to stop aid to India and discontinue a programme of training Indian military officers in US military academies.

"It becomes very difficult for us then to go forward in our relationship," Malott added.

He said the time had come for India and the United States to move forward in bilateral issues.

Indian officials said Malott's visit had led to some plain talking, but no other significant benefit.

Chinese General leaves Dhaka

The Chinese PLA Air Force Commander Lieutenant General Cao Shuangming and members of his delegation left Dhaka yesterday after a four-day goodwill visit to Bangladesh, reports BSS.

Chief of the Air Staff Air Vice-Marshal Altaf Hossain Choudhury saw him off at the Zia International Airport, an ISPR press release said.

The Chinese ambassador to Bangladesh Zhang Xujiang, representatives of the armed forces division and other senior BAF officers were also present at the airport.

One Rohingya slaughtered

COX'S BAZAR, May 20 : A Rohingya refugee was brutally killed in Teknaf Wednesday night, police said today, reports UNB.

Jamiruddin (40), an inmate of Harikholia refugee camp in Teknaf, was dragged taken to a nearby hill where he was slaughtered.

Ctg SKOP calls off proposed strike

CHITTAGONG, May 20: Chittagong chapter of Sramik Karmachari Oikya Parishad (SKOP) called off their proposed eight-hour strike on May 22, reports BSS.

The decision came following an understanding reached in a meeting held between Commissioner of Chittagong Metropolitan Police and leaders of SKOP and different political parties here today.

Met forecasts

From Page 1 Col 7

"It is a radio station-cum-receiver," the official said explaining the system.

Out of 36 observatories around the country only the Dhaka, Chittagong and Bogra stations are equipped to dispatch Rawindsonde machines but currently the launching apparatus at the Bogra station was out of order.

He said that the total annual budget for purchasing equipment for all the country's 36 observatories was Tk 48 lakh.

The official said the machine can effectively monitor atmospheric conditions at heights between 20,000 ft and 55,000 ft despite cloudy and stormy weather. Currently the Met Department is using Japanese machines and balloons.

The aircraft usually fly at between 35,000 ft to 45,000 ft.

The Met Department's Zia Airport office regularly provides all the flights with Route Forecast (ROFAR), the Terminal Forecast (TAFOR), Special Weather Information (SPECI) and Meteorological Aerodrome Report (METAR).

All these bulletins are said to be prepared on the basis of the data received from the Rawindsonde machine used only once a day, at six in the morning. So much can happen to the weather since then, the official added.