

Discuss MOU with WB on jute in JS: Menon

Workers' Party General Secretary Rashed Khan Menon MP yesterday demanded full discussion in the Jatiya Sangsad on the memorandum of understanding signed recently by the government with the World Bank to let the people know its possible impact on the total jute sector, reports BSS.

Addressing a press conference at his party office, Menon termed the jute sector as major foothold of the country's economy and said, "if necessary we will demand a referendum on the understanding reached between the government and the World Bank."

Menon said, as per the latest understanding reached between the government and the World Bank, it appears that at least nine jute mills in the public sector would be closed down, two biggest jute mills including Adamjee would be drastically reduced and 17 to 18 mills would be handed over to private owners.

Menon said that it was clearly stated in the memorandum that "the workers of the mills, to be closed, will be retrained, the machinery will be sold out in auction and the unsold machinery will be disposed off as scrap."

He said that under the understanding 20,000 jute mills workers would have to be retrained by December next year. Besides the government shares in private mill would be withdrawn, he added.

Bitterly disapproving the memorandum, Menon termed it "a clear conspiracy to hand over the Bangladesh jute market to India at the directives of the World Bank."

Menon said that if the memorandum was implemented the existing 850 staff of the head office of the Bangladesh Jute Mills Corporation (BJMC) would be reduced to 100 only in the month of June 1996 and the number of looms in the public sector would be reduced from 15,713 to 3,965. Under the memorandum the workers of jute mills would be kept outside the minimum wages declared by the government for industrial workers in this year. The

Owada will also lose civil rights

TOKYO, June 8: Ex-diplomat Masako Owada will not only lose her family name and personal freedom but also her basic civic rights when she weds crown Prince Naruhito on Wednesday, reports Reuter.

According to the Imperial Household Law, Masako's name will be struck from the Owada family registry and entered instead in Naruhito's Imperial registry as "Crown Princess Masako."

Without the family registry, or "Koseki", she cannot vote or enjoy other civic rights. She can bring defamation suits to the court only through the Prime Minister.

But Masako will no longer pay taxes other than those she owes on her income as a junior diplomat at the foreign ministry, a job she gave up in January to marry Naruhito.

Her new passport will describe her occupation as "H.I.H (Her Imperial Highness) Crown Princess".

Newspapers said she would retain her driver's licence and the white Toyota she used for commuting. However, she would be allowed to drive only within the grounds of the Akasaka Palace, the residence of the newly weds.

Japan's Crown Prince

The rites at the sanctuary will include apprising the Imperial ancestors of the intention to marry, the Rite of the Wedding in which Naruhito and Owada exchange marriage vows, apprising the Imperial ancestors of the wedding and the Rite of Audience in which the newlyweds report their marriage to Emperor Akihito and Empress Michiko.

The couple will then proceed to share their first meal together as part of the ceremony and finally celebrating rice cakes will be offered to the Crown Prince and Princess.

The invited guests at the wedding will be seated in a makeshift canvas-covered quarters in the garden of Kashi-kodokoro Palace, from where they will only get a glimpse of the Crown Prince and Owada as they enter and leave the sanctuary.

The Crown Prince and the Princess-to-be will arrive at the sanctuary at 10am and once inside the inner sanctum, they will proceed to the later on their knees.

The 15-minute ceremony is shrouded in mystery. It is not revealed in order to preserve its

dignity, according to the Imperial Household Agency.

The Crown Prince will be dressed in the style of eighth century rulers while Owada will don a 13kg multilayered kimono. The Emperor and the Empress will not be present at the wedding but will receive the newlyweds after the wedding rites are completed.

The couple will then leave the Palace in a ceremonial motorcade along a 4.5 km route through the city for their residence, the Akasaka Palace.

Meanwhile, Tokyo police launched one of the biggest security operations in the city, assigning some 30,000 men to security duties related to the Imperial wedding.

The public ceremonies, which will include six banquets spread over three days starting on June 15 and in which 2,700 guests will be invited, will be paid out of the national treasury, with 286 million yen having been set aside for the various expenses.

Hojo Nakajima said the marriage vow ceremony is based on the tradition of the Imperial Household, which is based on the 1910 law, which in turn is based on ancient Japanese practices.

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Prime Minister Begum Khaleida Zia addressing the inaugural function of the newly-built police headquarters near Osmani Uddyan in the city yesterday. Sitting on the dais (from left) Home Secretary Azimuddin Ahmed, Home Minister Abdul Matin Chowdhury and Inspector General of Police ASM Sahjahan. — PID photo

Flood situation worsens in Sylhet, Moulvibazar

From Our Correspondent

SYLHET, June 8: With the rise of water in all the local rivers and onrush of water from the hilly areas across the border the flood situation has deteriorated further in the Sylhet district, during the last 24 hours.

At least 80,000 people have become marooned in the district. Twenty-nine unions in five thanas of the district been badly affected. All the roads in Sultanpur, Zakiganj, Kholachhara and Borosri in Zakiganj have been submerged. Water is rushing into the villages through at least 10 breaches at 9 points of the Kushtiyara dyke in Zakiganj. People have started moving to safer places.

District officials today visited some affected areas in Zakiganj. No flood shelter has yet been opened. Seven metric tonnes of wheat have been sanctioned for the affected areas in Zakiganj.

The low-lying areas of Jaintia and Mijpat unions under Jaintapur thana have been inundated by the hilly waters. At least 75 per cent of the standing Aush and Aman paddy in eight unions of Gowainghat thana have been inundated.

Meanwhile, our Moulvibazar Correspondent reports: Fresh breaches in the Manu river embankment on Monday night

have worsened the flood situation in the district. The Moulvibazar town protection embankment is still under serious threat as the river Manu was flowing 1.41 metre above the danger level. Cracks have appeared in the town protection wall and the water of the river has started entering the town.

The flash flood in the district took a critical turn engulfing fresh areas of five more unions under two thanas. The Manu embankment was washed away at Dhew Passa village near the district town this morning. With these, 27 out of 67 unions of all the six thanas have now gone under water. Water is rushing in through 12 breaches of the Manu embankment at Sadar, Rajangar and Kulaura thanas.

Thousands of people with their belongings have taken shelter on flood protection dams under the open sky and are waiting for relief and rescue.

Road communications of the district town with all the thanas except Srimongal remained disrupted. The Kewla bridge and the Longpur bridge on the Kulaura-Moulvibazar road are under 8 to 10 feet water while different portion of roads on the Moulvibazar-Kulaura, Kulaura-Juri and Moulvibazar-Shamshernagar are inundated.

Officials of India and Bangladesh held a closed-door meeting at Ramgarh yesterday after the expected first batch of Chakma refugees refused to return home (top) and a security guard at the Ramgarh refugees' reception camp. — Star photos by AKM Mohsin



Khasbulatov threatens to quash Yeltsin's move

MOSCOW, June 8: Parliamentary Speaker Ruslan Khasbulatov threatened today to call an emergency session of parliament to quash attempts by President Boris Yeltsin to draft a new fundamental law at a constitutional conference, reports AFP.

"We won't sit just here with our arms crossed," Khasbulatov said in an interview with the pro-communist newspaper Pravda as the conference entered its second day of work in commissions.

"We have ways of neutralising many 'shakhraits', the Speaker said, referring to Deputy Prime Minister Sergei Shakhrai, author of the draft constitution proposed by Yeltsin

and serving as the basis of the conference. Khasbulatov on Saturday stormed out of the Kremlin hall in protest over Yeltsin's tight control of the agenda set for the conference called to draft a new post-Soviet constitution for Russia.

The Speaker walked up to the podium following Yeltsin's opening address and demanded to address delegates but he was shouted down by participants who disapproved of his behaviour.

Forty-five delegates however followed Khasbulatov's lead in boycotting the conference while one senior deputy, Oleg Rumyantsev, said 100 delegates had signed a petition demanding

PM: Police hq

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declined the need for reformation and recasting of professional training of the police to make them fit for successful discharging of duties.

The Prime Minister said the government was putting in its efforts to make the police force well organised and equipped. The expansion and recasting of police force was under the active consideration of the government, she said.

Begum Zia said the government had taken up construction work of residential buildings for the police officials and employees. Besides establishing the headquarters, initiatives had also been taken up to set up police lines in the new districts she said and hoped that the members of the police would be more active in maintaining law and order by utilising all the opportunities available to them and would be able to make the life of the citizens more safe by suppressing crimes with iron hand remaining above all fears.

The Prime Minister said as a law enforcing agency, the police had to maintain neutrality while enforcing laws for the greater interest of maintaining social discipline. "There is no scope for indifference and negligence," she said, and added it should be always looked into that the innocents must not be harassed.

Begum Zia also unveiled the plaque of the building.

Electricity supply was disrupted in several parts of the city and in some areas, including parts of Dhanmondi, it wasn't restored until well after midnight.

Meanwhile, the Met Office Tuesday night forecast light to moderate rain or thunder-shower accompanied by temporary gusty winds at a few places over the divisions of Chittagong, Barisal and Dhaka and at one or two places over the divisions of Rajshahi and Khulna for the next 24 hours.

50 injured as buses collide

By Staff Correspondent

At least 50 people were injured when a Dhaka bound bus collided with another bus at Aduria, Rupganj on the Dhaka-Narshingdi highway Tuesday noon.

Both the buses skidded off the highway and fell into the adjoining ditches injuring 50 passengers.

Tariff anomalies

From Page 1 Col 8

Businessmen feel it should not be more than Tk 1200 per ton. Similarly, tariff value on soda ash is 350 US dollars which the businessmen recommend should be 230 dollars; on zinc oxide it is 1500 dollars while the recommended rate is 900 dollars.

The business community also feels that the corporate tax should be 35 per cent at the highest and not 50 per cent as it is today. They noted that corporate taxes in all the countries with booming economies are lower than that of Bangladesh. In the UK, Thailand, China, Malaysia, Singapore and the Philippines, corporate taxes are between 30 and 35 per cent.

They also pointed out that some of the policy decisions concerning taxes are not being implemented. They said export earnings on some items were supposed to be completely income tax free.

But such earnings are being subjected to income tax, they alleged.

The president of the Dhaka Chamber of Commerce and Industries (DCCI), ATM Wazizullah, while talking to The Daily Star, said unless the government streamlines its taxation system, the country's industrialisation will continue to suffer.

He said instead of aiming for a short-term tax collection target, the government should seek long-term strategies by helping the local industries.

He also pointed out that the local industries should be given incentives as a large section of these have become sick due to reasons beyond the control of the entrepreneurs.

Transport strike postponed till Aug 7

Bangladesh Sarak Paribahan Sramik Federation has deferred till August 7 the token transport strike scheduled for June 16 after meeting with State Minister for Communications Fazlur Rahman, reports UNB.

The transport workers federation had earlier called the strike to press its five-point demand.

A BRTA press release said here yesterday the meeting, held at the Minto Road official residence of the State Minister Monday evening, discussed the demands of the federation and unimplemented aspects of the last accord.

The government assured immediate steps to resolve the federation demands and identified the demands which take more time to implement. The government sought two months time to settle the demands.

The meeting also discussed the issues of establishing legal workers' unions and federations at different terminals in Dhaka, problems of illegally captured 'base' unions, withdrawal of cases and warrants against the leaders of workers' unions and occupied union offices at different places of the country, including Aricha Ghat.

Secretary of the Roads and Road Transport Division, Chairman of Bangladesh Road Transport Authority and other high officials were present in the meeting.

The federation side was represented by its president Wazuddin Khan, Vice President Habibur Rahman Khan, Shahjahan Khan, MP M Ismail, Shawkat Ali Anu, Yar Ahmed and Shimul Biswas.

Heavy downpour disrupts city life

By Staff Correspondent

The first heavy monsoon downpour yesterday evening submerged many places of the capital city under knee deep water and paralysed life for more than three hours.

The rainfall began at 4.10 pm after a hot humid day and went on incessantly till 7.20 pm, bringing city life to a halt. A drizzle, however, continued over the city till late last night.

The Met Office, till 6 pm had recorded a 47mm rainfall in the city — the highest recorded since June 1, the month of the onset of the monsoon.

Electricity supply was disrupted in several parts of the city and in some areas, including parts of Dhanmondi, it wasn't restored until well after midnight.

Meanwhile, the Met Office Tuesday night forecast light to moderate rain or thunder-shower accompanied by temporary gusty winds at a few places over the divisions of Chittagong, Barisal and Dhaka and at one or two places over the divisions of Rajshahi and Khulna for the next 24 hours.

Kurds announce all-out war against Turkey

BAR ELIAS (Lebanon), June 8: The head of Turkey's Kurdish guerrillas announced today all-out war against Turkey after a bloody upsurge in their separatist insurgency in the last two weeks, reports Reuter.

Abdullah Ocalan, head of the Kurdistan Workers Party (PKK), told a news conference in eastern Lebanon's Bekaa valley the guerrillas considered a unilateral ceasefire they declared in March had failed.

"There is a lot of tension now and the situation in Turkey is heading for a comprehensive war," Ocalan said.

"We will escalate resistance operations. We have huge preparations and our efforts are great. We have mobilised more than 10,000 of our followers and we are going to escalate the armed struggle."

More than 300 deaths have been reported since a PKK ambush killed 33 soldiers and two civilians in Bingol province on May 24 and broke a one-sided truce declared by the PKK two months earlier.

Ocalan warned that his guerrillas would hit economic and tourist targets inside Turkey in what he said would be a bloody summer.

"We are for a union within the federal rule in Turkey. On that basis we are always ready for a political solution. Until this happens the armed struggle will be escalated and lots of blood could be spilled," he said.

The PKK chief said efforts to mediate a peace by their Kurdish leaders had ended and they supported the PKK in its decision for war.

More than 6,100 people have died in Turkey since the PKK launched its struggle for an independent state in 1984.

The Midnight File

Nusrat will lead Pak team to Vienna confce

ISLAMABAD, June 8: Opposition leader Benazir Bhutto's mother will lead the Pakistani delegation to next week's United Nations Human Rights conference in Vienna, a government-controlled news agency said today. The government had invited Benazir Bhutto to head the delegation but she nominated Nusrat Bhutto because of her pressing engagements at home, the Associated Press of Pakistan (APP) said, reports AFP.

11 killed as plane crashes in Sudan

KHARTOUM, June 8: Eleven people, including five foreigners, were killed when a plane on hire to a gold mining company crashed in eastern Sudan on Monday, the official news agency SUNA reported today. The foreigners were listed as two Frenchmen, a Canadian, a New Zealander and a Briton, reports Reuter.

Opposition may join

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Prof Badruddoza Chowdhury, Deputy Leader of the House, took the floor at this point to welcome the Speaker's decision. The deputy leader, however, said that difference of opinion were not unexpected in a parliamentary democracy and scope should be there to narrow down the differences.

"But at times, the behaviour of the opposition exceeds all limits, leaving the Treasury Bench in a difficult situation to make a compromise," Prof Chowdhury regretted. He, however, admitted that the Treasury Bench itself was not above mistakes.

The half-an-hour evening sitting of the House was adjourned at 4:45 pm to resume at 10 this morning.

The morning session witnessed introduction of two bills — the Protection and Conservation of Fish (Amendment) Bill, 1993, and the Narcotics Control (Amendment) Bill, 1993.

Besides, Matur Rahman Nizami of the Jamaat-e-Islami, Bangladesh urged the Treasury Bench to take an initiative for getting the boycotting opposition back in the House.

The opposition, on the other hand, told newsmen yesterday morning that "A congenial atmosphere for returning to the House is yet to be created."

Abdus Samad Azad, who became acting Leader of the Opposition in Parliament following Sheikh Hasina's departure for Austria Monday, said that the BTW script writer who distorted the proceedings of the House Sunday night was yet to be removed.

"And above all, the ruling party has so far not contacted us to resolve the problem," Samad Azad said, adding "It was the convention of parliamentary democracy that the treasury bench come forward to break any stalemate created in the House."

Referring to Monday's statements of the Information Minister in the House, Samad Azad said that if the government had decided to rule the country the way it wanted, the opposition could not remain a silent spectator.

When Azad's attention was drawn to the fact that the opposition demand for a suspension of the Parliament round-up on TV was virtually met — BTW did not air the programme Monday night — Tofael Ahmed of the Awami League said, "We

reacted to the statement and the opposition, barring the Jamaat and the Islami Oikkya Jote (IOJ), staged a noisy walk out. They later announced that they would not be back unless the issue was resolved.

Earlier, the Leader of the Opposition had made an aspersions regarding the speaker that vitiated the situation.

Meanwhile, the BTW abstained from airing the Parliament round-up since Monday.

The Speaker, meanwhile, called a meeting of the Business Advisory Committee of Parliament at 3 pm yesterday to review the agenda and orders of the issues to be discussed in the budget session, especially in the present situation.

Sources in the Parliament secretariat said that the meeting was abandoned as Abdus Samad Azad through a letter to the Speaker, refused to attend the meeting.

Committee members representing the ruling party and the Jamaat were present. Mohiuddin Ahmed of the Awami League also was present at the meeting venue.

OIC asks UN to punish killers of Pak peacekeepers

DUBAI, June 8: The organisation of the Islamic Conference (OIC) urged the United Nations today to punish the gunmen behind a weekend attack on Pakistani peacekeepers in Somalia, reports Reuter.

"This criminal, premeditated and unprovoked attack on UN peacekeeping forces in Mogadishu is a direct assault on the authority of the United Nations and an affront to the international community," said an OIC statement.

Pakistan today flew home the bodies of 23 soldiers killed in the shootout with Somali gunmen. UN officials in Somalia have accused warlord Mohamed Farah Aided of organising the attack.

The OIC groups 51 states and organisations from the Muslims world.