

Demands for resignation, fresh polls ruled out

I will come out clean from the acid test, says Rao

NEW DELHI, June 21: Indian Prime Minister P V Narasimha Rao said today that charges he received a payoff from a stockbroker will not stick, and described the allegations as an opposition plot to dislodge him, reports AFP.

The 71-year-old Prime Minister, speaking on his second anniversary in office, told supporters at his residence here that the allegations by Bombay broker Harshad Mehta were "meaningless."

"I will come out clean from the acid test," Rao said at his first public meeting since Wednesday, when Mehta claimed he had paid nearly 350,000 dollars to the premier to earn his political patronage.

Mehta's allegations plunged the ruling Congress (I) party into turmoil and overshadowed its plans to celebrate Rao's second year in office.

"The allegations against me are nothing but a political ploy to mislead the people," Rao

said, accusing the opposition of using Mehta to slander him and the Congress (I).

"The charges are meaningless and will not stick on me and I will stand vindicated ultimately," Rao said.

The opposition has stepped up demands for Rao's resignation and fresh elections following Mehta's allegation that he gave the Prime Minister a suitcase stuffed with cash 18 months ago at his official residence.

Ruling out elections, the Prime Minister said his Congress (I) government will complete its remaining three years in power. Rao took office in June 1991 following elections which ushered the party back into power.

"Since the opposition parties had no arguments against the government, they are making wild allegations to keep their political shops running," he said, as party activists held a protest rally near

the house of Mehta's advocate here.

Mehta, a 40-year-old millionaire stockbroker, has been accused of masterminding a 1.3 billion dollar swindle by jacking up share of price with funds skimmed from banks. The scam was exposed in April last year.

The Prime Minister's office has said Rao was in a meeting with a Pakistani delegate on November 4, 1991 when Mehta purportedly turned over the cash.

Buoyed by Rao's alibi, the Congress (I) leadership has backed the Prime Minister, describing Mehta's allegations as an opposition-led conspiracy to destabilise the government.

Mehta, who has spent three months in jail since detectives launched a probe into the market scam has said he can provide proof of the payoff, but so far has not made the evidence public.

Opposition seeks adjournment

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cause of the floods.

He alleged that the helicopters, instead of being used by the Prime Minister for the ruling party's public meetings, should have been used for providing relief in the flood-affected areas. He also said that the PM should have visited the area.

Samad Azad said that the opposition members should avail the helicopter facilities since those were purchased with public money.

He informed the Jatiya Sangsad that the Balaganj Thana Nirbahi Officer (TNO) and the police Officer-in-Charge (OIC) had taken shelter elsewhere because the situation had aggravated. He also described the conditions as severe and lamented the lack of relief operations and government help for the distressed people.

Samad Azad urged the ruling party not to politicise the flood issue. The opposition leader demanded adjournment of the session for at least a day and declaration of the areas as a "distressed area".

State Minister for Relief Lutfar Rahman Khan, however, dismissed the issue saying that the flood was not serious enough to justify an adjournment of the House.

He said that there was nothing so alarming that the PM had to rush to the area.

"This is a flash flood, which occurs almost every year," the Minister said.

The Relief Minister said only Habiganj and Moulvibazar districts were seriously affected but the situation in other areas was not alarming.

He contradicted press reports and said it did not reflect the facts.

He informed the house that relief worth Tk 4.5 crore had

already been allocated for the affected areas and the government was considering other measures for post-flood rehabilitation.

The Relief Minister's speech was in stark contradiction to the speech of 18 other opposition and ruling party members who described the current floods as very serious.

Finance Minister Saifur Rahman, who visited the flood-hit areas recently, said that the floods were not a party problem, rather a national problem.

He said that 92 per cent of water causing floods came from outside the country. "Neither the opposition nor the ruling party create floods, and the government had no intention to politicise the matter," he added.

The Finance Minister said that the Prime Minister was very much concerned about the situation and she inquires about the situation from time to time.

He informed the house that all kinds of administrative measures were taken immediately after the flood.

The Finance Minister said that short-term and long-term programmes had been taken to rehabilitate the flood-affected people. The Krishi bank branches in the areas were ordered not to issue any notice to the defaulting borrowers and to disburse fresh loans among the farmers for post-flood farming.

Responding to the demands for dredging of the Monu, the Khowai, the Surma and other rivers in the region, he said that "This is humanly impossible". But he suggested a FAP like protective measure after thorough dialogue with all groups concerned.

He, however, pointed out two positive sides of the floods:

huge boulders were sliding down from across the border with gushing hilly waters and the supply of fish in the area had also increased.

Those who took part in the one-and-half hour discussion included Fatema Chowdhury Paru (BNP), Khalilur Rahman Chowdhury (JP), Mosharrif Hossain (AL), Khaleda Rabbani (BNP), Mattiya Chowdhury (AL), Khandaker Abdul Malek (BNP), Mohammad Nasim (AL), Maulana Obaidul Huq (IOJ), Maksud Ibne Aziz Lama (JP), Mosharrif Hossain Shahjahan, the State Minister for Irrigation, Tofael Ahmed (AL), Sharfuddin Khasru (JP), Suranjit Sengupta (Ganariti Party), Matlur Rahman Nizami (Jamaat), Enamul Huq (Jamaat) and Salauddin Yousuf (AL).

AL's demand

Meanwhile, the Awami League (AL) has called for declaring flood-hit greater Sylhet district a calamity zone and rushing relief to the affected areas, reports UNB.

An emergency meeting of the AL Central Working Committee in the city Sunday reviewed the flood situation and criticised the government for its failure to send adequate relief for the distressed people.

The meeting, chaired by acting President of the AL, Abdus Samad Azad at the party central office, described the flood situation in greater Sylhet as 'alarming' and said thousands of people were passing their days without any food and medicine.

It also expressed concern at the flood situation in Chittagong, Comilla, Strajganj, Pabna and Bogra.

The party decided to send medical teams to the flood-affected districts.



The traditional Rathajatra procession of the Hindu community was held at Tanti Bazar in the city yesterday. — Star photo

Rathajatra begins

The week-long colourful Rathajatra (chariot trip), a Hindu religious festival, began in the capital and elsewhere in the country, reports BSS.

Hundreds of devotees pulled the chariot carrying idols of Lord Jagannath, Subhadra and Balaram. According to Hindu belief, Lord Jagannath paid a chariot trip to his aunt's home on the second day of waning moon in the Bengali month of Ashar.

Hundreds of Hindu devotees thronged the Jashodhab temple in Dhamrai, 40 kilometres from Dhaka to celebrate the occasion. A traditional rathamela was held there on the occasion.

In the capital traditional Rathajatra began from Rathkhola, the old part of the city.

A report from Gazipur said a week-long traditional Rathamela was inaugurated there by State Minister for Religious Affairs Prof M A Mannan.

Handicrafts of different varieties, toys made of canes and bamboo, pottery items, dolls and other attractive traditional goods were on sale at the mela (fair).

Speaking on the occasion the State Minister said that all religious communities in Bangladesh have been enjoying full religious rights and privileges in celebrating and performing their religious rites in peace.

In Kushtia, Rathajatra began yesterday and a traditional rathamela marked the occasion.

The Midnight File

EC summit on Bosnia begins

COPENHAGEN, June 21: European Community leaders began two days of summit talks today with peace efforts in Bosnia-Herzegovina and economic recession at the top of their agenda. As they arrived at the conference centre on the outskirts of Copenhagen, the leaders were greeted by a small group of Muslim demonstrators with a banner declaring "the blood of Bosnia is on your hands". The meeting began with a speech by the president of the European Parliament, Egon Klepsch, followed by a presentation by European Commission President Jacques Delors on the state of the EC economy, reports Reuters.

Azerbaijani parliament session opens without president

MOSCOW, June 21: An emergency session of the Azerbaijani parliament opened here today without President Alibufaz Elchibey, whose resignation armed rebels have demanded. Interfax news agency said. The meeting opened amid reports that troops supporting rebel leader Surat Guseinov had already entered the capital. The parliament will attempt to set up a 'state council' which will strip Elchibey of his main powers, the agency said, reports AFP.

G-7 will set up \$500m fund to privatise Russian industry

TOKYO, June 21: The world's seven leading industrial countries (G-7) have agreed to set up a 500 million dollar fund to help privatise Russian industry, the Kyodo News Agency said today. The agreement was reached last week in New York at a meeting of deputy finance ministers of the Seven — the United States, Japan, Germany, France, Great Britain, Italy and Canada. It will be announced at the annual G-7 heads of state summit in Tokyo July 7-9. Kyodo said citing Japanese government sources, reports AFP.

Dr Mohib made VC of Shahjalal University

President and chancellor of the universities Abdur Rahman Biswas yesterday appointed Dr Syed Mohib Uddin Ahmed Vice-Chancellor of Shahjalal Science and Technology University for four years, reports BSS.

Dr Mohib will enjoy the existing financial and other facilities under the University Act of 1987.

MV Tony Best salvaged

From Staff Correspondent

KIULNA, June 21: After 72 days of rigorous attempts MV Tony Best was salvaged this morning and was being towed towards the Mongla Port.

The Liberian registered vessel with 25 crew on board, ran aground with 11000 MT of cement for Mongla Port some 70 miles east of the Hiron Point lighthouse and 25 miles south of Kuakata of Patuakhali in the Bay of Bengal on April 10 last.

Khurshid Jahan

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criminally uses cars of the district administration, Manu, who represents another Dinaipur seat, alleged.

"Your time is over," said Deputy Speaker Humayun Khan Panni at this stage and asked the member to take his seat. Opposition members spoke out against what they called interference and requested the chair to allow Manu to speak.

Meanwhile, taking the floor, Khurshid Jahan shrugged off the charges and said all this is untrue.

Backed up by his opposition colleagues, Manu called upon the Speaker to form a parliamentary committee to probe his allegations.

Deputy Leader of the House Prof AQM Badruddozza Chowdhury rose to say "There's no need to form a parliamentary committee" and called upon the chair to look into the charges.

Awami League member Tofael Ahmed also took the floor to justify Manu's proposal for a parliamentary body. This was needed to look into the allegation, Tofael said.

High Court

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There should be a clear ruling from the chair in accordance with Article 78, he demanded.

"I would not like to invite any discussion since the court has recalled its rule," the Speaker concluded.

Tofael Ahmed and Moudud Ahmed supported his ruling.

The court order had been issued in respect of a contempt of court petition filed by one Cyril Sikder, a member of the Supreme Court Bar Association, and fixed July 11 for the next hearing. The date of hearing remains unchanged, court sources said.

The contempt case relates to the alleged murder charge against AL MP Akhtaruzzaman Chowdhury Babu, who was earlier on bail and the Information Minister, during his speech in Parliament May 11, had reportedly questioned the bonafide of Babu's bail order.

The Information Minister had reportedly remarked: "Money speaks; everything is possible with money."

LDP rebels

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other LDP rebel a year ago. But he said it would not support the dissident faction led by Hata who plans to announce the formation of another new party Wednesday, bringing together 35 LDP members of the lower house and nine from the upper house.

Hata is being groomed for the post of prime minister and his faction already seems to have the support of the biggest opposition group, the Social Democratic Party. Analysts are now seriously considering the increasing chance of the LDP losing its uninterrupted 38-year grip on power.

"We will support the candidate that reformists can back unanimously," party chairman Sadao Yamahana declared today.

Hirotaoka Akamatsu, the party's secretary general, had already mooted the idea of an opposition coalition on Sunday, saying that his party had no plans to try and grab "the most important posts" in such a government.

Vienna declaration

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against human rights abuses and have pressed for the appointment of a UN High Commissioner for Human Rights.

However, Third World countries in Asia and elsewhere have been less enthusiastic fearing meddling in their internal affairs.

Developing countries have also argued that rights concerns have to be weighed against the need for political stability and economic progress.

Conference sources said the working committee had agreed Friday on paragraph two of the final document which stipulated that "all human rights are universal, indivisible, and interdependent and inter-related."

On development rights, the group approved paragraph six in which the world conference reaffirms the right to development as established in the declaration on the right to development, as a universal and inalienable right.

However, the document adds that the lack of development may not be invoked to justify the abridgement of internationally recognised human rights, states should cooperate with each other in ensuring development and eliminating obstacles to development.

Malaysia's Foreign Minister today said the world human rights conference in Austria would be a failure if it ignored the aggression in Bosnia-Herzegovina.

The border of the country which is blatantly perpetrating the worst of acts against mankind is just about 200 kilometres from Vienna (the venue of the conference), Bernam news agency quoted Abdullah Badawi as saying in reference to Serbia.

RU Shamsuzzoha Hall's Provost office ransacked

RAJSHAHI, June 21: Residents of Shaheed Shamsuzzoha Hall of Rajshahi University today stormed and ransacked its Provost office and 20 other rooms hours after the deadline given by the students for completing reconstruction of the dormitory was over, reports UNB.

The rampaging students allegedly forced Provost Prof Habibur Rahman out of his office. However, he was unhurt.

Eliadah's trial ends: Judgement on July 5

A tribunal court yesterday concluded the trial of the American teenager, Eliadah McCord, charged with trafficking heroin, reports UNB.

The court fixed July 5 for delivery of judgement in the sensational drug case.

The 19-year-old American girl was arrested at the Zia International Airport allegedly with 3 kg heroin worth an estimated Tk 3 crore on February 25 last year before flying for London in a British Airways flight.

Two co-accused in the drug trafficking case are Robert Blackson and Gudi Oken Chokua. They are Nigerian nationals.

McCord was charged under Section 19 (1) of the Narcotics Control Act 1990 which provides death penalty as the maximum punishment. Prosecution examined 28 witnesses in the case.

Debate on budget

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majority of the population can effectively create a domestic market and help improve the economic situation of the country," Menon observed.

Rahmat Ali, MP of the Awami League (AL) criticised the budget for its disregard for the peasant community. He urged the government to save the country's economy by saving the peasants who provide 44 per cent of the nation's GDP.

The AL MP observed that the chambers of commerce and industries had praised the budget because it went in their favour. But the farmers, labourers and workers refused to laud it only because it did not protect their interests, Rahmat Ali felt.

Mizanur Rahman Manu of the same party criticised the government for its failure to utilise the funds for annual development programme in the current fiscal. He said, the government, in the name of good governance, had put hundreds of workers and employees out of jobs.

Khurshid Jahan Haque of the BNP appreciated the Finance Minister for increasing revenue earning without imposing fresh taxes.

Parliament session was spread over two sittings yesterday. The House was adjourned at 9-45 pm to resume at 10 this morning.

Beel Kuralia

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bought it from the owners.

In 1961, another 150 people turned up to claim the land and a bloody conflict ensued.

One peasant, Wadud, was killed and many were wounded, forcing the local administration to seize the land and turn it khas.

During 1962-63, 14 cases were filed by the local jotedars claiming the land, all dismissed by the Pabna Sub-Judge's Court.

After independence, the jotedars filed 17 fresh title suits which were again dismissed.

Meanwhile, the Pabna DC leased out the land to 408 people, known as the kabaliats (claimants).

The local people of Beel Kuralia said that only 350 of the kabaliats paid-off the lease money in the first year and cultivated the land for the next 36 years without paying taxes.

Now, different cases claiming 228 acres out of the total 1460 acres are still pending in the court.

Hasina

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Bangladesh markets, threatening the local industries.

Criticising the national budget for 1993-94, Hasina said the BNP government failed to come up with proper directives to remove poverty and solve unemployment problem by developing human resources and ensuring education. It also lacked steps to ensure medicare and shelter for the poor.

Hasina called on the expatriate Bangladeshis to raise their protest against the misrule of BNP government.

The Netherlands AL President Begum Shelly Zaman presided over the meeting which was addressed, among others, Anil Das Gupta, Anwarul Kabir, Rahman Kabir of Awami League and Dr Yusuf Ahmad of Coordination Council.

Petrobangla

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The contractors may stop their work and later claim compensation for idle time.

Petrobangla feels that this may lead to a situation similar to that of Saipem which raised a storm over its huge 14 million dollar additional bill on grounds of delay in completion of works.

On the other hand, if the works of the processing plants are completed without any consultant's involvement, there will be no warranty for performance of the plants.

The Petrobangla PIU's letter also observed that if Pencil is blacklisted from future pre-qualification yet its existing contracts are allowed to run till fulfillment, then the consultant would, in all likelihood, become disenchanted and this may result in unwelcome complications in the construction of the on-going plants.

Pencil Engineering was appointed consultants for infrastructural engineering of the Second Gas Development Project (SGDP) in 1986, a work funded by the UNDP. Although Pencil's consultancy contract was supposed to run till August, 1992, the necessary funds dried up the June the same year.

However, with the extension of the SGDP Project deadline until June, 1994, another five million dollar was granted from the World Bank's credit, Ta-5, providing for Pencil's continuation as a consultant for the project till June, 1994.

Flood situation static

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Jakigonj, Bianibazar and Balaganj were yet to be restored, the sources said.

Two more people died of diarrhoeal diseases today in the flood affected areas while many others were attacked, official sources said from the district control rooms.

Meanwhile, the flood situation in greater Chittagong has improved slightly with recession of water from the upper catchment and light rainfall in the district today, official sources said.

Local met office today recorded only 11 mm of rain in the city during the past 24 hours while the same was 71 mm yesterday during the same period.

However, district control room sources told BSS tonight that a total of 92 unions under the 14 thanas in the district were still under flood waters and about three lakh people were badly affected.

However, the road links between Chittagong and other parts of the region were restored today.

The telecommunications between Chittagong and different thanas were also restored today, T and T sources said.

Cox's Bazar district control room sources said tonight that the overall flood situation in the district further worsened due to torrential rain during the past seven days.

Local met office recorded 66 mm of rain fall during the

Heseltine suffers heart attack

ROME, June 21: British cabinet minister Michael Heseltine suffered a heart attack during a private visit to Venice, the Italian ANSA news agency reported today, reports Reuters.

The report, which did not name its sources, said T-ade and Industry Secretary Heseltine was currently in the cardiology unit of the city's main hospital.

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