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Bangladesh seeks \$ 100m aid from Saudi Arabia

Riyadh, July 19: Bangladesh has sought larger financial assistance from Saudi Arabia for its development projects, Finance Minister M Saifur Rahman said here today, reports BSS.

Rahman, now on a visit to Saudi Arabia, told a press conference at the Bangladesh embassy here that the proposed projects included purchase of new locomotive engines and carriages, building of bridges and rural electrification.

He said Bangladesh was seeking 100 million US dollar financial assistance from Saudi Arabia, of which 20 million dollar would be utilised for bridge construction, 30 million dollar for procurement of locomotive engines and carriages, 20 million dollar for rural electrification, and the rest 30 million dollars for completion of the Teesta Barrage Project which is already being funded by the Saudi Fund for Development (SFD).

The minister said he had submitted the proposals to his Saudi counterpart Mohammed Aba Al-Khaal during a meeting with him. He said the Saudi minister assured him that the proposals would be considered in due course.

Saifur Rahman recalled that Saudi Arabia had always been in the forefront to help Bangladesh in times of natural calamities. Following the cyclone devastation in 1991, Saudi Arabia made a substantial donation of Saudi riyal 400 million, which he said helped greatly in the implementation of rehabilitation projects undertaken for the cyclone victims.

These included construction of the multipurpose cyclone shelters, building of houses and roads, provision for drinking water, reconstruction of food storage godowns, telecommunication tower and coastal embankments and import of fertilizer.

The Finance Minister said enough cooperation existed in agro-based industries especially in fisheries, shrimp culture and dairies, adding that the Saudi Bangladesh Industrial and Agricultural Investment Company (SABINCO) was doing well. It had so far provided financial assistance amounting to Taka 878 million in local currency and 15 million US dollar in foreign currency to 35 projects.

He said the projects taken up for implementation were in the shrimp and fish culture, dairy, leather, textile engineering, chemical, glass, ceramic, cement, paper and edible oil sub-sectors. Twelve projects had already gone into operation, he added.

Clinton threatens to fire FBI Director

WASHINGTON, July 19: President Clinton will fire FBI Director William Sessions Monday if Sessions does not resign, administration officials said, reports AP.

Clinton summoned Attorney General Janet Reno for an afternoon session, said the officials, who spoke on the condition of anonymity.

Benazir: Drug money

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She said she met Sajjad today to discuss her demands for electoral reforms to prevent horse trading and to ensure free and fair polls, and requested a meeting with Quereshi to raise similar issues.

"We need confidence-building steps to develop a process not tainted with drugs money," Bhutto said. The amount used in 1990 was used in a manner to undermine the holding of elections.

In 1990, Quereshi visited Pakistan in his capacity as World Bank Vice-President and issued a scathing attack on the nation's economic problems.

He voiced dismay at the prevalence of drugs, bribery and corruption and described Pakistan as deeply divided and violent where 'organised thugery can go virtually unnoticed'.

Drugs are believed to be a billion-dollar industry in Pakistan. It is, after Southeast Asia's Golden Triangle, the world's biggest source of heroin, much of it imported as opium for processing from Afghanistan.

Bhutto demanded an electoral code of conduct and an end to what she called the slander and character assassination

that have marred previous campaigns, and warned that the elections could be meaningless without reforms.

She said her campaign would focus on economic issues.

"This country needs good economic management, to reduce inflation, reduce the widening budget deficit and to reduce borrowing," Bhutto said.

Sharif has said he would base his manifesto on his drive to modify a martial-law era constitutional amendment that empowers the President to dissolve Parliament and sack the Prime Minister.

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Sylhet threatened with fresh floods

From Our Correspondent

SYLHET, July 19: With torrential rains continuing for the last two days and onrush of water from hilly regions across the border, the greater Sylhet region is threatened with fresh floods.

Low-lying areas in five thanas — Kanaighat, Gowainghat, Jaintapur, Companyganj and parts of the Sadar thana — have already been inundated.

The local Met office recorded 390 mm of rainfall during 36 hours ending at 6 pm today.

Hartals can't stop

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of yesterday's hartal the Prime Minister said it was called for the sake of opposition only.

She said, with a note of sarcasm, that the hartal-callers were now busy counting the number of hartals they had observed during the BNP rule. The opposition, Begum Zia said, did not count the number of bridges, culverts and roads constructed during the last two years.

The Prime Minister was critical of the opposition's negative approach towards the country's development programmes, saying they were more interested to talk about the activities of the 'Nirmul Committee' and to raise new issues instead of addressing the serious national issues like poverty alleviation, employment generation and other welfare-oriented programmes.

Begum Zia said, the parties which had brought false allegations of corruption against the government would also fail in their attempts to tarnish the image of the BNP because the people were well aware of their large-scale corruption in the past.

Begum Zia welcomed the newcomers to the BNP and urged all members to work unitedly for strengthening the

organisation and implementing the development activities of the government.

"There must be an end to hartals, strikes, barricades and sieges", the Prime Minister said, adding there should now be more work and less talk.

"We have no time to waste", she reminded.

Begum Zia also reminded the people's representatives of their roles in the development of the country and urged the UP chairmen, members and municipal commissioners to be more active to help attain national progress.

She urged them to make the 'Food-for-Education' and other programmes aimed at increasing the rate of literacy successful.

The Prime Minister sounded a note of warning against those found negligent of their duties, and said accountability and rule of law must be established at all tiers of the society. Not only the ministers and MPs, but also the bureaucrats, teachers and the members of other professional groups would have to be accountable, she said.

About the local problems of Begumganj, the Prime Minister promised to look into them. She also said a telephone exchange would soon be installed there.

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A picketeer hurling stones at a truck during yesterday's hartal in the city. —Star photo

Hartal observed peacefully

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hartal Monday.

Besides the Awami League and the Jatiya Party, an assortment of smaller opposition political groups and the Ekatturer Ghatok Nirmul Committee supported the country-wide hartal.

In Dhaka, all educational institutions including the Dhaka University and the Engineering University remained closed.

Barring some rickshaws, autorickshaws and 'tempes,' most vehicles remained off the streets.

Clinton summoned Attorney General Janet Reno for an afternoon session, said the officials, who spoke on the condition of anonymity.

The pro-hartal activists chased and stoned the defiant rickshaws which tried to ply on the streets, particularly at Shabbagh, Farm Gate, Maghbazar, Gulistan, near the Secretariat, the Dainik Bangla crossing and at Motijheel.

Attendance in the government offices was thin while banks and other financial institutions operated behind shutters. Private trading houses were seen shut.

Some domestic and international flights from the Zia International Airport were delayed but no flight was cancelled, airport officials said.

Railway officials said all trains left and arrived at the Kamalapur Station on schedule.

Inter-district passenger buses left from the Sayedabad, Gabtali and Mohakhali bus

terminals but were halted outside the city by pickets. Sporadic clashes between police and hartal supporters took place at Maghbazar, Gulistan, Azimpur, and at the Dainik Bangla crossing while crude bombs and crackers were set off at places of the city.

Police used batons to disperse an opposition rally near the Maghbazar crossing at about 11:30 am, leaving at least a dozen activists and pedestrians wounded.

Picketeers set fire to a 'tempo' near the Mouchak market and damaged two private cars at about 8:30 in the morning.

Riot police broke up a Jatiya Party rally near the Dainik Bangla and chased another procession brought out by the organisation.

Witnesses said that armed youths, allegedly backed by police, attacked the 381, Bara Maghbazar residence of Awami League leader Akhter Sarder at about 11 am. Some 20 youths carrying pistols and sawed-off rifles swooped on the residence and tried to break the collapsible gate, they said.

The attackers also stormed some nearby shops and looted goods before leaving in the face of resistance from local people.

Awami League and the other opposition political organisations brought out processions

during the hartal hours at different parts of the city.

Near the Jatiya Press Club, the windscreen of a truck (Jessor Ta 892) carrying goods was broken by stone-throwing picketeers.

Witnesses said that pickets stoned a car carrying the Dhaka City Mayor Mirza Abbas MP when he came out from the Secretariat at about 11 in the morning.

Residents said several cocktails were lobbed near a procession of the pro-AL Chhatra League when it crossed the Alia Madrassah premises at Bakhshi Bazar. None was, however, injured, they said.

One person was admitted at the Dhaka Medical College Hospital with wounds after being hit by shrapnel at the Plassey area in the morning. The victim was identified as Abdul Aziz.

Meanwhile, a group of hartal enforcers attempted to assault journalist Gias Kamal Chowdhury, president of the BFUJ, in front of the Nirmul Committee office on Tophkhana Road at around 12:05 pm but some opposition leaders present restrained the attackers.

Our correspondents, in their despatches, reported peaceful observance of the half-day hartal all over the country.



The head of the UN special commission Rolf Ekeus (C) talks to journalists after ending negotiations with Iraqi officials yesterday in Baghdad. —AFP photo

Demand day

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CPB criticised the government for not acting in accordance with the Nov, 1990 joint declaration of the three alliances, of which the ruling BNP was a partner. "No elected government can ignore popular demand in such a manner," he remarked.

Nahid demanded that a 'pro-independence' and 'pro-people' government be installed in power.

Mohammad Afzal of the Ganatantri Party felt that the country was being pushed backward under the leadership of Prime Minister Begum Khaleda Zia.

Besides, AFM Mahbubul Haq, Sharif Nurul Ambia of the 5 party alliance, Nurul Islam of the CPB, Alhajj Abdul Samad, Maulana Ahmedur Rahman Azmi and Dilip Barua of the PDF, Sheikh Asad of the Janata Party and Mofazzal Hossain Choudhury Maya of the AL also addressed the rally.

AL central leaders including Abdul Mannan, Tofael Ahmed, MP, Sajeda Choudhury, MP, Matia Choudhury, MP, Mohammad Nasim, MP, K M Jahangir, MP were also present.

Iraqi N-programme

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when Washington launched a cruise missile attack on intelligence headquarters here in a revenge strike for an alleged plot to assassinate former US President George Bush. Baghdad had argued that the UN embargo imposed after the invasion of Kuwait three years ago should be lifted before long term monitoring of its weapons programme began.

It says it has complied with a gulf war ceasefire resolution ordering the elimination of its weapons of mass destruction.

Ekeus said however that now the Iraqis "have stated they are ready to comply with the plans for future monitoring and verification".

The UN Security Council had warned Iraq of "serious" consequences if it persisted in its refusal to allow UN weapons inspectors either to install surveillance cameras or seal equipment at the Yawm Al-Azim and Rafah test sites, 60 kilometers south of Baghdad.

positive elements," including possible implementation of Security Council resolution 715 on monitoring of its weapons.

Ekeus said there was an "indirect link" between the talks on weapons monitoring and negotiations for the resumption of Iraqi oil sales, which have been halted under the embargo.

Sylhet viewers go without BTV programmes

From Our Correspondent.

SYLHET, July 19: Television viewers were deprived of the pleasure of watching BTV programmes in the Sylhet region today due to a sudden break in transmission.

The TV transmission went off the air at 8:18 am today and remained snapped till filing of this report late last night.

An official of the BTV here informed this correspondent that lightning struck three transformers this morning, during down the automatic voltage regulators.

He added that steps have been taken to bring new transformers from Dhaka.

JP: Huda

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cratic" decisions of the present JP leadership.

The central leadership itself had filed cases against the current leaders for making the party a 'coterie organisation," Chowdhury's statement added and said that "A number of leaders, including the Secretary General, have been removed from the party to make it a B-team of another party."

The split in the students' wing was the outcome of the long-standing anomalous policies of the present leadership, he asserted.

The dissident student leaders Sunday announced a 71-member committee of a new organisation styled the Jatiya Chhatra Samaj.

Troubles in the JP started brewing several months ago when Secretary General Shah Moazzem Hossain was removed from his position, allegedly for not doing enough to secure the release of jailed party supremo former president H M Ershad and also for misusing party funds.

Several former ministers and mid-ranking members are said to be backing Chowdhury's move.

Party insiders stated that former Deputy Prime Minister Dr M A Matin, who resigned from the Jatiya Party ahead of Ershad's ouster, may also take a leading position in the new grouping.

Students call strike today

By DU Correspondent

Different student organisations have called a countrywide strike today in the educational institutions to protest a proposed increase of tuition and other fees.

The student bodies also demanded implementation of their 10-point charter of demands.

The organisations include the Ganatantrik Chhatra Oikya, a left-leaning Eight-party alliance, the pro-Awami League Chhatra League (M-I) and Chhatra Oikya Forum.

The ongoing examinations in all the schools, colleges and universities have, however, been exempted from the strike, organisers said.

Nepal

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launched the two-day strike to press for the resignation of Prime Minister Girija Prasad Koirala, charged police with making "indiscriminate arrests" to create tension and "panic the general public."

Nepal also said that at Gulmi, 190 kilometres west of Kathmandu, the Chief District Officer (CDO) had ordered police to open fire at the protest marchers. But when the police refused, the CDO fired into the crowd.

Miyazawa

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The SDP suffered a stunning defeat, garnering only 70 seats compared with its pre-election strength of 134 and paving the way for a new era of multi-party conservatism.

"The traditional political framework with the LDP and SDP acting as the major political players has collapsed," the Yomiuri Shimbun said in an editorial today.

"The first step has now been made toward a far-reaching political realignment in an era of post-leftist ideology which is seeing the pluralisation of conservative parties," the mass circulation daily said.

How that realignment translates into government was still unclear Monday.

The LDP could attempt to lead a minority government, but most observers predicted the ruling party would seek a coalition with the LDP breakaway parties.

Shinseito (the Japan renewal party), formed last month by former Finance Minister Tsutomu Hata, won 55 seats Sunday, while the Japan New Party (JNP), founded last year by former LDP prefectural governor Morihiro Hosokawa, won 35. The third LDP splinter group-Sagigake (pioneer party) also formed last month-took 13 seats.

The JNP and Sagigake planned to hold talks today to discuss reactions to other parties plans for a coalition government, party officials said. Neither party has ruled out an alliance with the LDP.

Shinseito and four established opposition parties including the SDP said they would begin negotiations as early as Tuesday to coordinate policies on forming a coalition that would exclude the LDP.

The Midnight File

US, DPRK close to an accord

GENEVA, July 19: The United States and North Korea held new talks late today and diplomats said they appeared close to an accord that would defuse a potential crisis over Pyongyang's nuclear policies. Spokesmen for the US and North Korean missions in Geneva said Assistant Secretary of State Robert Gajucet and First Deputy Foreign Minister Kang Sok Ju were holding what should be their final session.

Rao blasts Russia for scrapping rocket deal

NEW DELHI, July 19: Prime Minister PV Narasimha Rao on Monday criticised Russia for reneging on its pledge to sell rocket technology to India due to pressure from the United States, the Press Trust of India (PTI) said. Rao's comments on the fopped rocket deal is his first statement since July 16 when Moscow scrapped the 350 million dollar contract to sell cryogenic engines and rocket technology for India's fledgling space programme, reports AFP.

Foreign banks Nirmul body to continue agitation

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cluding the Bangladesh Chemical Industries Corporation (BCIC), the Bangladesh Textile Mills Corporation (BTMC), Petrobangla and the Power Development Board.

The foreign banks have already notified the Finance Ministry about their inconvenience and are awaiting results.

Meanwhile, sources in the Finance Ministry said the new measure of listing banks with whom public sector corporations can maintain transactions has been taken following the crash of two investment companies — the Bangladesh Commerce and Investment (BCI) and National Credit Limited (NCL) — last year. Some public sector corporations had maintained accounts with these non-banking financial institutions and many of them lost huge sums, especially because of the collapse of the BCI.

The closure of the Bank of Commerce and Credit International (BCCI) also cost many government corporations a lot of money in lost deposits.

The rally, organised by the city unit of the Committee, was presided over by Sadek Ahmed Khan.

'Tokais'

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hold jobs but later on he saw his friends being whisked away on a police truck.

All the entrances to the railway station were blocked during the night raid, he said.

Sultan confirmed that his comrades were detained in the Motijheel police station overnight.

In the Motijheel police station more than a hundred tokais, aged between eight to 25, were seen squatting on the corridor yesterday morning.

Khalil, slightly older at 20, confessed that since the anti-Ershad days he has been taking active part — usually for a small fee — to enforce hartals and was arrested several times.

Unlike usual people, the group at the Motijheel thana yesterday maintained smiling faces apparently free from any anxiety and knowing full well that their immobilisation was only temporary and they would be released soon after the hartal hours.

Motijheel thana sources said that their guests had all left the police station at around 2 pm yesterday.

Funds for JPP

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anonymity. EFPC sources said that the final detail planning and design of the JPP was scheduled to be placed for approval at the EC's June 15 board meeting at Brussels, Belgium.

Now, with the indication of fund suspension, the JPP's future seemed uncertain, they added.

Organised by the Greens in the Euro-Parliament, the Strasbourg session is being considered as the official launching of the anti-FAP movement in Europe.

The resolution by the Euro-Parliament has put Bangladesh to plan a counter session at Strasbourg next year.

However, Alain Vanden Abeele, head of the Caisse Francaise de Development (CFD), the other partner in the JPP studies, said France was fully committed to the project and implementation of the JPP would be carried out taking into consideration the concerns expressed by the European Parliament.

The Jamalpur Priority Project, jointly financed by the EC and France, is an experimental flood control project covering an area of more than one lakh 79 hectares of land with an over 12.33 lakh population.

The study area includes Jamalpur, Dewanganj, Islampur, Melandaha, Madarganj and Sharishabari thanas of Jamalpur district. Phulchhari thana of Gaibandha district, Sariakandi of Bogra and Kazipur thana of Sirajganj district.

AL statement

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istrative executives are asked for. He said that it was not necessary for him to issue a statement in this connection. Since the prominent leaders like acting president and general secretary of the Awami League had given the statement, "I think I should give my reply to the nation for the sake of courtesy," he added.