

Delhi offers talks with Kashmiri militants

NEW DELHI, Aug 8: The government offered today to open talks with separatist groups in Kashmir in its attempt to hold elections there next year, reports AP.

The administration of Jammu-Kashmir state is controlled by the federal government in New Delhi since the elected government of India's only Muslim majority state was ousted in 1989, two years after it came to power.

Prime Minister P V Narasimha Rao today met with cabinet ministers and state administration officials. He asked them to meet with leaders of the pro-independence Jammu-Kashmir Liberation Front and the All-Party Hurriyat Conference, an umbrella organisation of 32 separatist groups, Press Trust of India news agency reported.

Rao's directive came two days after security forces dismantled bunkers around the Kashmir's holiest Hazratbal Mosque, a demand voiced by the separatists since October.

Meanwhile, AFP reports: At least 21 Muslim rebels, including an Afghan, were among 26 people killed overnight in the troubled state of Kashmir as troops launched a crackdown ahead of a Hindu pilgrimage, police said in Srinagar today.

Move for DU normalcy

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an agreement between the feuding groups to help restore a congenial atmosphere on the campus. The VC may continue his dialogue with the student leaders today. He is likely to sit with the DU Teachers' Association (DUTA) leaders and officials concerned separately following his talks with the student leaders.

Meanwhile, no classes were held at the Dhaka University in the first three days of this week because the teachers and students separately observed strikes to protest the terrorist activities on the campus Thursday last.

The DUTA yesterday urged the government and the university authorities to take appropriate action against the 'terrorists' and ensure security of the campus residents.

The association, at an emergency meeting of its executive committee said that a large number of armed terrorists from outside regrouped on the campus in last few days and they were moving beyond police brandishing firearms.

The meeting said that neither the government nor the university authorities took any action to defuse tension on the campus although press reports termed the campus situation volatile and apprehended further clashes.

It warned that the government and the university au-

Israel-Jordan road link

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strate in the search for peace. Actually, Jordan and Israel have been in de-facto peace since the 1967 war, when Israel drove Jordanian troops out of east Jerusalem and took control of the West Bank.

But Christopher, noting that the crossing connects the sun-kissed resorts of Aqaba and Eilat, said this has been a place of longing, where Israelis and Jordanians could stand on the beaches and see each other, but not know each other.

King Hussein of Jordan said he hoped it would produce peace between Syria and Israel, as well.

"You know President Assad feels the need to move ahead... It is our hope we will see progress on all fronts," Hussein said referring to Syrian President Hafez Assad.

Christopher said today that 'Israel and Syria still have a great distance to go' to make peace.

He said his meetings this week with Rabin and Assad 'have begun to lay the groundwork for progress towards peace.'

In a sobering note, though, Hassan, speaking in Arab and English, said the border crossing is still being negotiated. Jordan, like the other Arabs, is demanding territory from Israel and is likely to get it.

There was a huge sense of euphoria on the Israeli side, with virtually the entire government present and flags from both countries raised in the hot desert air.

Jordanians were more subdued. King Hussein did not attend, although he was to host a lunch for Rabin and four other Israeli leaders afterward. The country also did not raise Israeli flags.

Jordanian opposition groups, including Islamic funda-



Awami League chief and Leader of the Opposition in Parliament Sheikh Hasina yesterday speaking in support of the demands and sympathising with the non-government primary school teachers who have been agitating in front of the Jatiya Press Club. —Star photo

Pry teachers

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government to meet their demands immediately.

Addressing the gathering of the teachers Hasina said the government had lost its right to stay in power as it had failed to fulfil the demands of the teachers and other professionals.

Terming the primary school teachers as basic elements to eradicate illiteracy, she said if they were deprived of their rights, building of the educational infrastructure would not be possible.

Hasina accused the government of betraying the people, saying it had breached commitments made to the professionals and let loose terror throughout the country.

The government claims it has allocated the highest budget for the educational sector, but the reality does not reflect this, she told the demonstrators. "Otherwise, the primary teachers would not have taken to the streets with their several demands," she said.

"How the teachers can teach the students if their minimum needs are not met," said Hasina and urged the government to talk to the primary teachers for an immediate decision to solve their problems.

President of the teachers' association Major (Retd) Asaduzzaman said, several thousand teachers passed the third day yesterday of their sit-in and were determined to continue it until the demands were met. He urged the government to meet their demands immediately to mitigate the sufferings of the teachers who have come from different parts of the country to realise their 'just' demands.

West Bengal govt to renovate Thakurbari

CALCUTTA, Aug 8: To revive the past glory of the house of the Tagores at Jorasanko, the focal point of the Bengal Renaissance, the West Bengal government has embarked on an ambitious Rs seven-crore project in coordination with the human resources development ministry, reports PTI.

Disclosing this at a press conference here today, the state's Higher Education Minister Prof Satyasadhan Chakraborty said that efforts would be made to turn the ancestral house of the Tagores, replete with memorabilia of Rabindranath and his ancestors, into a centre of cultural excellence and renovate it to make it more attractive to both domestic and foreign tourists.

The project, for which the state government has earmarked Rs 70.97 lakh and the human resources development ministry Rs 58.22 lakh, will be completed in two phases, he said.

The renovation of the 210-year-old Tagore house, popularly called 'Thakurbari', will be entrusted with the archaeological survey of India and the Indian National Trust for Culture and Heritage (INTACH).

The state's Information and Cultural Affairs Minister Buddhadev Bhattacharjee said that the UNESCO, which suggested thorough renovation of the dilapidated building on the pattern of the Stratford-on-Avon to preserve the house of William Shakespeare, might be approached for future funding for the project.

BNP moves

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stand-off.

Both the sides accused each other of lack of 'sincerity' to resolve the problem.

Meanwhile, as part of its mass campaign, the BNP will hold a public meeting at the Gulistan Square in the capital today. Organised by the city unit of the party, the meeting will be addressed by senior BNP leaders.

Similar meetings would be held in the districts and thanas, BNP leaders said.

Nirmul body to launch organisational drive

By Staff Correspondent

The Ghatak-Dalal Nirmul Jatiya Samannaya Committee will launch a drive next month to restructure its existing committees across the country and extend its network.

It will organise rallies, processions and demonstrations throughout the country in October to rally support against the killers, collaborators and 'war criminals' of 1971 and the communal-fatwabaz forces as well as to demand a ban on politics by the Jamaat-Shibir-Freedom Party axis.

The decisions were taken at a representatives' meeting of the Samannaya Committee at the Engineers' Institution auditorium in the city yesterday.

Chaired by Begum Sufia Kamal, the meeting was attended by representatives from different parts of the country as well as from the city.

The meeting also adopted several resolutions condemning the attack on the Nirmul member-secretary Prof Abdul Mannan Chowdhury at the Dhaka University and the Chittagong killings of July 26 and demanded judicial inquiries into both incidents. It also condoled the death of Jahanara Imam and at the same time congratulated the new chief of the committee Sufia Kamal. Another resolution criticised the DU authorities for not allowing yesterday's meeting at the TSC auditorium of the university.

The representatives, central leaders of the Samannaya Committee and some leaders of political parties having representation in the committee including the Awami League general secretary Zillur Rahman, Abdur Razzak MP of the same party, Kazi Aref Ahmed of the JSD, Mohammad Afzal of the Jamaat-Shibir axis and to expose their fascist character.

Sufia Kamal said only unity of the pro-Liberation forces could make the anti-fundamentalism campaign successful. She urged all concerned to carry forward the agitation with courage and determination.

"We want to be true Muslims and wish to serve the country," she said and sought the mercy of Almighty Allah.

Bosnian Serbs admit Scores of Muslims put in forced labour camp

SARAJEVO, Aug 8: Bosnian Serbs have confirmed they rounded up scores of Muslim men and put them in a forced labour camp, an International Red Cross official said today, report AP, Reuter.

Lisa Jones, a Red Cross spokeswoman, said a list of 111 Muslims given to her agency last week was the first Serb confirmation that a large group of Muslim men were taken to a camp in northeast Bosnia over the past few weeks.

The move to the camp at Lopare was part of a recent ethnic cleansing campaign in which about 300 Muslim women, children and elderly men have been forced from the northeast city of Bijeljina, Jones said.

Ethnic Serbs in Bosnia have been accused of conducting the most widespread 'ethnic cleansing' campaign of the war. Hundreds of thousands of people, mostly Slavic Muslims, have been forced from their homes in the 70 per cent of Bosnia now controlled by Serbs.

The Serbs, despite facing total isolation after Serbia cut all ties, showed no sign they were ready to retreat from their rejection of the latest peace plan for the republic.

A Bosnian Serb leader demanded that any territorial division of Bosnia leave Serbs in control of 64 per cent of the republic. An international peace plan would leave them

US wants India to pledge never to build N-bomb

NEW DELHI, Aug 8: The United States wants India to pledge never to build a nuclear bomb but realises in needs a strong defence to keep peace in the 'troubled' Asian region, Washington's new envoy to New Delhi said today, reports Reuter.

In his first public address since taking office last week, US Ambassador Frank Wisner also said Washington would continue pushing India and Pakistan to resume negotiations to settle a longstanding dispute over the Kashmir region.

"The United States proceeds from an understanding that India requires a strong national defence," Wisner told the Confederation of Indian Industry, an industry trade association.

"You live in a region that will not cease to be troubled for many years to come. There's no question that a strong national defence effort must be maintained."

Wisner, who filled a post that to India's frustration had remained vacant since March 1993, said Washington wanted the international nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) to be extended to India when it is renegotiated next year.

"We will continue our efforts to find ways with you to slow the forward momentum in the creation and deployment of weapons of mass destruction," he said.

Islamic group opposes blasphemy law

The Bangladesh Islamic Revolutionary Movement (BIRM), a pro-Awami League organisation, yesterday strongly opposed the demand for enacting a blasphemy law by what it called anti-liberation elements, reports UNB.

Addressing a press conference at the Jatiya Press Club, BIRM Secretary General Maulana Ziaul Hasan said the anti-liberation forces, led by Jamaat leader Golam Azam and Khatib of Baitul Mukarram Mosque Obaidul Haq, were demanding blasphemy law to take revenge of their defeat in the Liberation War of 1971.

"He also demanded the removal of Obaidul Haq from the post of Khatib. The post should not be used by the anti-liberation forces for political purpose as members of all political parties offer prayers behind him," he said.

The BIRM leader said no religious minded people could tolerate the speeches of the Khatib and the Peer of Charmonal delivered at the Manik Mia Avenue rally as those were contrary to Islam and independence of the country.

The organisation demanded scrapping of the Indemnity Ordinance that blocked the trial of the killers of Sheikh Mujib and announcement of August 15 as the "National Black Day."

Moulana Ziaul Hasan said some anti-liberation elements had killed Sheikh Mujib and his family members on August 15, 1975, and promulgated Indemnity Ordinance on September 27 to protect the killers.

Drought

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anonymity. "The situation has deteriorated to such an extent that the irrigation pumps had to be activated for transplantation of the seedlings."

Agriculture experts now feel that this would raise the cost of production causing either an increase in next year's rice price or a loss to the farmers if prices remains dull.

"How much has been planted is not as important as how much could be sustained in the next few weeks," said another official.

Officials have identified 21 northern districts as currently experiencing a drought-like situation.

According to sources, a proposal for the rehabilitation of the drought stricken farmers is now under consideration of the Agriculture Ministry. Under this programme, farmers hit by the dry spell may be provided assistance. Official confirmation of the programme could not be had.

Meanwhile, the Agriculture Extension Department has taken some steps to help the farmers. It is advising the farmers to collect whatever rainwater is available by raising the boundaries of the crop lands. Other techniques for retaining the moisture of the land are also being applied.

Agriculturists are specially worried about the current dry spell because this may hit the major rice producing season — the *aman* season. The country's projected *aman* production for 1993-94 is 94.90 lakh tonnes against the total production of 197.20 lakh tonnes. "If the last-minute monsoon rain comes, we might yet be able to overcome the situation," said Dr Sharafat Hossain Khan, Member (Crops) of the BARC.

The Midnight File

Ban on carrying arms in Islamabad

ISLAMABAD, Aug 8: Pakistan today banned private citizens from carrying arms in Islamabad — including politicians and religious leaders who are often accompanied by gun-toting bodyguards. Prime Minister Benazir Bhutto ordered the ban in the capital in a crackdown on violence. And Information and Broadcasting Minister Khalid Ahmad Khari told a news conference after a cabinet meeting it could be imposed in other towns, reports Reuter.

Delhi extends president's rule in Kashmir

NEW DELHI, Aug 8: The union cabinet today approved the introduction of a resolution in parliament for extension of president's rule in Jammu and Kashmir by six more months from September 3, official sources said, reports PTI.

Contaminated water

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Hye, said that local people had brought out a procession and lodged a complaint with the nearby supply office of the WASA nearly three weeks ago.

An elderly Motaleb Ali Khan said that children clashed over collecting drinking water from the roadside taps on Wednesday.

A number of men, women and children gathered on different lanes of Baddanagar, Nilambar Shah Lane and Enayetganj areas to narrate their tales of suffering.

This is only the tip of the iceberg; residents of a vast area in the older part of the city have been facing the similar problem," banker Shujauddin said.

WASA officials were not immediately available for comment on the allegation of the Baddanagar residents. Water supply lines were installed in the area more than two decades ago. No renovation and repair work was done during the period, he alleged.

According to official estimates, the city of seven million people need daily an estimated 140 crore litres of water, half of which is now supplied by the WASA from its 179 deep tubewells and a 120-year-old surface water treatment plant located at Chandni Ghat in the Lalbagh area. The plant, which is now under a BMRE programme, supplies 40 lakh litres of water, mainly for the residents of the older part of the city.

The WASA has some 1,294 kilometres of supply lines to serve its consumers, most of which are very old. Water lines and sewerage lines in many places go side by side and often there are leakages in the badly corroded galvanised iron pipes. Sometimes these lines are damaged when other agencies responsible for gas supply or telephone links carry out their expansion plans.

The WASA has 1.38 lakh connections for its bonafide clients. No one knows the number of illegal connections or those who have more than one supply line, sources said.

According to a recent report, nearly 45 per cent of the total supply of water in the city is wasted in different ways, which the authorities admit is a huge system loss.

In addition to the losses due to leaking pipes and stolen lines or connections, WASA's continuously mounting losses are compounded by the corruption among many of its employees who, in collusion with the consumers, often manipulate the bills.

Froglegs

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export the stock was fixed on 10 November the same year.

After the expiry of this final deadline, six companies reported that 5,63,740 pounds of their frogleg stocks still remained unsold. Of this stock, 35,270 pounds were in the process of being exported to the USA by one company and the rest were under the care of the Customs Department.

A proposal from the Commerce Ministry, supported by relevant agencies of the government, to allow export of the remaining stock of the froglegs was placed before a Cabinet meeting held recently. But the cabinet rejected the proposal and decided that the Customs Department should take immediate steps to destroy the whole stock of froglegs.

Explaining the reasons for not allowing such export, a well-placed source in the government said, that the quality of froglegs, stocked for years, might have suffered considerably.

"If any question about the quality is raised by the importers, it will affect our export trade adversely," he added.

Observers concerned expressed doubt whether the present stock is actually a part of the original stock of 24 lakh pounds estimated in January 1990.

"It could be that this stock has been built up again by killing frogs illegally after the expiry of the last deadline," they said.

Experts believe that both the killing of frogs and export of froglegs should remain banned totally for the sake of maintaining the ecological balance.

304 more Rohingyas go home

COX'S BAZAR, Aug 8: Another batch of 304 Rohingya refugees of 64 families voluntarily went back to their homes in Myanmar bringing the total number of repatriated persons to 60,295.

HC refers case

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The BBC was sued for telecasting a news programme on Taslima on June 30; while the Home Ministry made hardly any attempt to arrest the author and the Ministry of Information allowed the BBC's programme to be aired through Bangladesh Television, Amena Khatun alleged.

Amena said she had filed the case because the plaintiffs failed to give any satisfactory answer to her legal notice.

BBC sources in Dhaka said they had duly replied to the legal notice.

The complainant had earlier sent a legal notice to the BBC for telecasting the interview with Taslima Nasreen, which the Swadesh Party leader felt had hurt the religious sentiments of the Muslims, including herself.

The petition was moved by Advocate A B M Shamsud Doulah.

One arrested

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Acting on a tip off, a detective branch team, led by Assistant Commissioner Fazul Karim, raided a house in Badda and arrested the accused.

Police say that after hijacking a car from Motijheel, Zakir along with some other miscreants went to Gulshan, killed the constable and seized his rifle.

Police came to know about Zakir's involvement in the car hijacking and murder following the confession of the main accused Alam who was arrested immediately after the killing. Police also recovered the seized rifle after Alam's confession in 1989.

Zakir fled to India immediately after a warrant of arrest was issued against him. He returned to Dhaka recently.

According to police, Zakir is also wanted for several other cases.

3 Pakistanis

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The arrested passengers are Kamruddin, Delwar Hossain and Abdur Rahman. The Customs authorities have lodged separate cases.

Last Friday another consignment of contraband medicine valued at Tk 28 lakh was seized at ZIA from another incoming flight from Dubai.