

Dhaka to raise Farakka issue at Rome confce

Bangladesh is expected to raise the Farakka issue at World Fisheries Ministers Conference beginning in Rome today, reports UNB.

The FAO-sponsored two-day conference in the Italian capital will be attended by ministers of 49 countries.

Official sources here say-

AB Bank to open branch in Bombay

Star Report

Arab-Bangladesh Bank Limited (ABBL) is expected to open its first overseas branch in the Indian commercial city of Bombay soon.

"We received permission from the Indian government late last year and we are planning to open a full-fledged branch in Bombay by the end of May or early June next," a top official of the bank said yesterday.

AB Bank would be the first local private sector bank to open a branch in India and the first Bangladeshi bank to start operations in Bombay, considered the commercial hub of the neighbouring country. Sonali Bank currently operates a branch in Calcutta.

"We are trying to tap into the huge financial transactions between India and Bangladesh which is routed through Bombay," the official said.

Official imports from India totalled about Tk 2,000 crore last year while unofficial estimates place the figure much higher.

AB Bank is aggressively expanding its overseas operations and has already opened a representative office in London and has also received permission to open a representative office in Myanmar.

It is also planning to set up offices in New York and Hong Kong.

terday indicated that the Bangladesh delegation, headed by Fisheries and Livestock Minister Abdullah Al Noman, is expected to seize the opportunity to draw world attention to the adverse impact of Farakka barrage on Bangladesh's socio-economic life.

Unilateral withdrawal of water from the international river, Ganges, at the Farakka barrage by India played havoc with agriculture, irrigation, fisheries, forestry, power system and environment of the lower riparian Bangladesh.

Bangladesh has suffered an aggregate loss of resources worth about Tk 13,300 crore due to the withdrawal of waters from the Ganges and other rivers in dry season during last 20 years.

The 21st world fisheries ministers conference will devise ways of increasing global fish output through transfer of technology among the countries. It will also discuss problems prevailing in agriculture and food sector and exchange ideas on how to resolve those.

The meet will focus on environmental degradation caused by the disruption of natural rivers in upper riparians and Green House effect.

Khomeini's son in coma

NICOSIA, Cyprus, Mar 13: The son of the late Iranian leader Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini, a possible contender for high office, is brain dead after suffering a severe heart attack, state-run Tehran Radio said Monday, reports AP.

Dr Hassan Arefi, head of the 30-man medical team treating Ahmad Khomeini at Tehran's Baqiyatollah Hospital, was quoted as saying that his heart was still beating but that his brain and nervous system stopped working after the attack Sunday.

No police report yet on 'Zia Murder Case'

From Staff Correspondent

CHITTAGONG, Mar 13: The police report sought by the court of Chief Metropolitan Magistrate, Chittagong regarding the 'Zia murder case' has not been submitted till date despite repeated reminders to Kotwali thana over the past 14 years, court sources said.

Soon after the failure of Manzur's attempted coup an FIR was lodged with Kotwali thana in connection with President Zia's death.

Talking to The Daily Star over telephone, CMM, Chittagong, Motiur Rahman said: "Few days ago also we sent a reminder to the police asking them to submit their investigation report but we haven't yet received it."

Sources say, Kotwali police is yet to find out the relevant case file on Zia's assassination that took place at the Chittagong Circuit House on the night of May 30, 1981.

When contacted, Kotwali police said: "We don't know anything about it."

However, a fresh investigation is likely to be made by the police for submitting a report to the court, sources say.

The Deputy Commissioner (North) of Chittagong Metropolitan Police told this correspondent this evening: "It depends on the government's decision whether we should reopen investigation or not I still don't know anything."

He declined to elaborate. Meanwhile, a CID team which arrived here from Dhaka yesterday, left Chittagong this afternoon after visiting the Fatikhahri tea estate area from where Gen Manzur was arrested and also the Hathazari area.

The CID team completed its probe here keeping its movements almost unknown even to the police of Hathazari and Fatikhahri thanas.

Informed sources said, the CID may also interrogate some relevant persons who were in charge of signals duty at the cantonment and passed messages to TV and other media following the coup.

Programme

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The programmes will begin with the gherao of the thana headquarters throughout the country on March 16 and the district administration offices on March 19 to protest the price spiral of rice, fertiliser, paper and other essentials.

The Khaddya Bhaban in the capital will also be gheraoed and demonstrations held by the opposition parties on March 19.

A countrywide road-rail and waterways barricade programme will be enforced on March 23.

The opposition parties will conduct a mass contact campaign in the capital and throughout the country from March 24 to 27 to drum up support for the 'Dhaka Siege' programme on March 28.

Awami League chief Sheikh Hasina announced the agitation programme at a press conference held at the Dhanmondi party office yesterday evening.

Jatiya Party acting Chairman Mizanur Rahman Chowdhury announced the programme from a rally at the south gate of Baitul Mokarram mosque in the afternoon.

Mizan Chowdhury said, "Constitutionally the government has no existence because of the opposition MPs' mass resignation."

The country has been pushed to a crisis on two fronts — by the 'ineffective and corrupt government,' Mizan said.

He said that besides the constitutional crisis there is also the possibility of a food crisis as fertiliser distribution was in the hands of BNP partymen.

The Ameer of the Jamaat-Islami Golam Azam, at a press conference at the party office, announced the programme. He blamed both the ruling party and the Speaker for 'flagrant violation of the Constitution.'

The Jamaat chief accused the ruling party of trying to cling to power illegally. He also accused the BNP of killings and repression of opposition party workers.

Dhaka Bar polls results: Filing of case condemned

By Court Correspondent

Some 777 lawyers belonging to the Dhaka Bar Association, in a statement yesterday condemned the filing of a case challenging the results of the polls of the association.

The statement said the filing of the case had tarnished the image of the lawyers' community.

Lutfi Alam a presidential candidate in the recently held Bar Association elections, filed the case alleging that Abu Sayed Sagar had been declared the winner illegally.



Awami League Chief Sheikh Hasina announcing fresh agitation programmes at her party's Dhanmondi office yesterday. Also seen are AL general secretary Zillur Rahman (C) and presidium member Abdus Samad Azad (R). — Star photo

Hasina: Corruption

From Page One

ers are not getting fertiliser although the production capacity of the Bangladesh Chemical Industries Corporation (BCIC) is more than that of the national requirement, she said.

Referring to the PM's statement at the World Summit for Social Development in Copenhagen, Hasina said if she meant what she said, she must concede to the Opposition demand for general elections under a caretaker government.

"We welcome the main theme of the summit — giving back the people their power. We want to empower the people and for this a free and fair election is required," Hasina said.

"The people are the focal point of politics and economics," she said, but the PM does not believe in this and that is why she wants, to rig the elections," the AL chief alleged.

She also said that the country had become a market for Indian goods under this government.

"When I went to Rajshahi, I thought it was an Indian city because Indian goods have flooded the Rajshahi region."

The AL president announced a fresh programme of agitation to protest the price hike of essentials and to press the demand for dissolution of parliament, resignation of the government and general elections under a caretaker government.

Senior Awami League leaders including Abdus Samad Azad, Mohiuddin Ahmed, Abdur Razzak, Sajeda Chowdhury and Zillur Rahman were also present at the press conference.

She also alleged wrongdoing in deals signed by the government with Alcatel of France, Saipem, Occidental, Hyundai, Price Water House, Halcrow and some others. But she did not furnish documents to substantiate any of the allegations.

She alleged that the Anti-Corruption Bureau did not take up investigation into alleged corruption by ministers since the PM herself was involved in corruption.

About the industrial sector, she said some 5000 industries and factories were closed down during the rule of this government. Hundreds of thousands of workers were also retrenched, she added.

The academic atmosphere in the educational institutions has been destroyed due to "Terrorism unleashed by the ruling party's student wing."

And educational equipment and materials including paper have become dearer, she said.

attention to this inconsistency. Emdad explained that the 1981 statement was in fact drafted by Shamsur Rahman and he had just signed it.

A CID source said that Emdad had made a similar confessional statement on June 22, 1992 before a special government agency but as there was no case in this connection the agency could not follow up the matter.

Our court correspondent says, Maj Gen (ret) Abdul Latif and Lt Col Shamsur Rahman were produced before the CMM at around 5 pm yesterday.

A police van brought the accused amid tight security provided jointly by CID personnel and the police. Investigating officer of the case ASP Abdul Kahhar Akhand and a number of other police officials were present in the court.

Court Inspector Shahjahan told the CMM that the two accused, along with Major (ret) Emdad, had snatched Gen Manzur from police custody and killed him to hide the truth behind the death of President Zia.

He also submitted that during Zia's assassination on May 30, 1981 the accused were in service in the Chittagong cantonment and the killing of Manzur was carried out under direct supervision of the accused. The CID arrested them

upon a confessional statement made by Emdad, the inspector told the court. He also sought a 10-day remand for proper investigation of the case by interrogating the accused.

On the other hand, Gen Latif's lawyer Abdul Kalam said that his client was picked up by CID personnel from his Uttara residence for discussion. He said Latif, who is 60, is suffering from old-age complications. Besides, his wife is under treatment at the CMH, Dhaka.

Advocate Abdul Kalam told the court that Gen Latif has no son to help him. Also, he does not even know the charges against him and therefore, under these circumstances, the petition for remand should be rejected.

Latif's son-in-law was present in the court. The lawyer hired to defend Lt Col Shamsur Rahman failed to submit the power of attorney in time and could not therefore plead on behalf of his client.

CMM Shahiduddin Ahmed, after hearing both the sides, granted the CID a five-day remand.

Meanwhile, the CMM yesterday also rejected a prayer for granting Maj Emdadul Huq bail.

Emdad's wife Nazneen Huq had moved the petition.

USAID praises Dhaka's economic progress

WASHINGTON, Mar 13: The United States Agency for International Development (USAID) has lauded the economic advancement that Bangladesh has made during the past few years, reports BSS.

Margaret Carpenter, Assistant Administrator for Asia and Near East division of USAID in a testimony before the subcommittee on Asia and the Pacific on March 8 said that the percentage of Bangladeshis living in poverty has declined reasonably from 80 to 40 per cent during the period of USAID assistance.

The administrator said: Once written off as a development basket case, Bangladesh has made remarkable progress in grappling with rapid population growth rates, staggering poverty and over growing demands for food. She claimed that food production increased because of USAID's support for fertiliser marketing, pricing reforms and new agricultural technologies, and today Bangladesh is almost self sufficient in rice production, the staple food of the people.

The hearing of the subcommittee was chaired by its Chairman Doug Bereuter while Congressman Sherrod Brown from Ohio, Congressman Herman from California and other showed their interest to know about the investment opportunity in Bangladesh.

Margaret Carpenter said, "With the support from the USAID the birth rates have dropped dramatically. The average Bangladeshi woman now has 27 great grandchildren instead of 216."

She said that some of this success has grown out of expanded grass-roots participation in the economy, particularly by women. More than 160,000 people have benefited from USAID's women's enterprise development project, which has created or expanded small businesses such as rickshaw repair, tailoring and craftmaking. Another 30,000 farmers — 80 per cent of whom are women — have also gained new skills and income from fish pond culture through USAID's agricultural research project, she added.

She further said that the demands for goods are gradually increasing in Bangladesh. Throughout Bangladesh, people are demanding more goods and more imports. Commercial imports of US wheat, for example, now average 50 million US dollar per year.

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The Midnight File

China, US sign MOU on satellite services

BEIJING, Mar 13: China and the United States today signed a memorandum of understanding on international commercial satellite launching services. The agreement valid for seven years constituted an important document for the two governments to coordinate and resolve trade issues in commercial satellite launching services and market accessibility reports PTI.

2 Hungarian ministers resign

BUDAPEST, Mar 13: Two Hungarian government ministers today handed in their resignations to protest against a week-end devaluation of the forint, the MTI news agency said. Welfare Minister Pal Kovacs and Secret Services Minister Bela Katona, both members of Prime Minister Gyula Horn's MSZP Socialist Party, also oppose a package of austerity measures adopted on Sunday, reports AFP.

Hartal passes off

From Page One

Medical College Correspondent reports that Muhibur Rahman, Joint Secretary of BCL Motijheel thana unit; Abdus Sattar, injured in Colapahar; Mohammad Hasan injured in Demra and Mostafa who was injured in Manik Nagar were admitted to the DMCH.

There were incidents of chase and counter-chase between police and pickets at Magh Bazar crossing and in Mohammadpur in the afternoon.

Although mechanised vehicular traffic remained off the city roads, rickshaws piled almost throughout the day. Rickshaws in greater numbers were available after 1 pm as they were exempted from the purview of hartal from that time.

Our Chittagong Correspondent reported that activities at the Chittagong Port came to a halt, loading and unloading of cargo did not take place.

In Narayanganj, at least 15 rickshaws were damaged by pro-hartal pickets while a tempo was set on fire.

The capital, however, for the second consecutive day wore a desolate look as almost all shops, commercial establishments, private offices and educational institutions remained closed. Most of the city banks, however, operated although transactions were poor. Kutchi bazars were open but supply of perishable items were scarce and prices were high.

Government offices continued to function although attendance was thin. Officers and employees at a number of government offices either stayed back overnight at their offices or travelled by rickshaws or walked to their places of work yesterday.

Railway sources said that train movement was affected in all the four railway zones of the country during the period. Train movement was disrupted in Chittagong, Dhaka and Pakshii as pickets put up barricades on Dhaka-Chittagong and Dhaka-Mymensingh routes. The locomaster and assistant locomaster of a train were injured when their locomotive came under attack from pickets at Kasba, near Comilla, sources said.

Pickets stopped the Dhaka-bound 254 train near Anandamohan College in Mymensingh in the afternoon. This also resulted in the stoppage of the Padma Express bound for Northern region for several hours. The Isha Khan Express remained stranded at Shohag station in Kishoreganj for nearly two hours in the morning.

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Bitman sources said that two international flights — of Saudia and Indian airlines — were cancelled while Bangladesh Biman's flight for Kuwait was rescheduled due to hartal. In the domestic sector, the Rajshahi and Syedpur flights were combined while the Jessore flight was cancelled.

No long distance bus pleted between Dhaka and other districts.

A large number of launches, however, operated from the Sadarghat terminal in the city.

A BSS report says five persons were injured in a clash between pro-hartal and anti-hartal activists at Jamtola on the Dhaka-Narayanganj highway. The report, quoting police sources, said the clash took place when Awami League activists brought out a procession in support of the hartal and some people opposing the hartal clashed with them.

The injured were given first aid.

Opposition activists exploded home-made bombs to create panic.

Management sources said different mills in the area, including the Adamee Jute Mills, Luxminarayan Cotton Mills and the Dhaka Vegetable Oil Mills Ltd functioned normally.

In Chittagong activities at the port came to a halt. Our correspondent says the attendance at the port was around 20 per cent, according to port sources. Three container ships awaiting unloading and loading of cargo, were unattended.

Mills and factories in the industrial belts were either closed or functioned with thin attendance. Shops and markets remained closed while offices and banks could not function normally.

Sporadic blasts of cocktails amid picketing market the hartal. Police also arrested over 20 pickets.

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10-point declaration

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