

Turkish jets hit Kurd camp: 200 killed

ANKARA, Mar 21: Turkish planes pounded Kurdish rebel camps inside north Iraq for a second day today and Turkey's defence minister said 200 rebels had been killed, reports Reuters.

A military spokesman in Diyarbakir, nerve centre for the cross-border operation, said at least eight Turkish soldiers had also been killed.

The death toll among the rebel was disclosed earlier by Defence Minister Mehmet Golhan who told Reuters that about 200 had died in what officials term, the biggest military operation that Turkey has mounted.

Turkey's ground forces — up to 35,000, backed by tanks and artillery — secured a zone 40-km deep inside north Iraq in the massive hunt for separatist guerrillas, Turkey's state radio said.

"The aim is to cause as much destruction as possible," said a military official in Diyarbakir, from where the operation against the Kurdistan Workers Party (PKK) is being controlled.

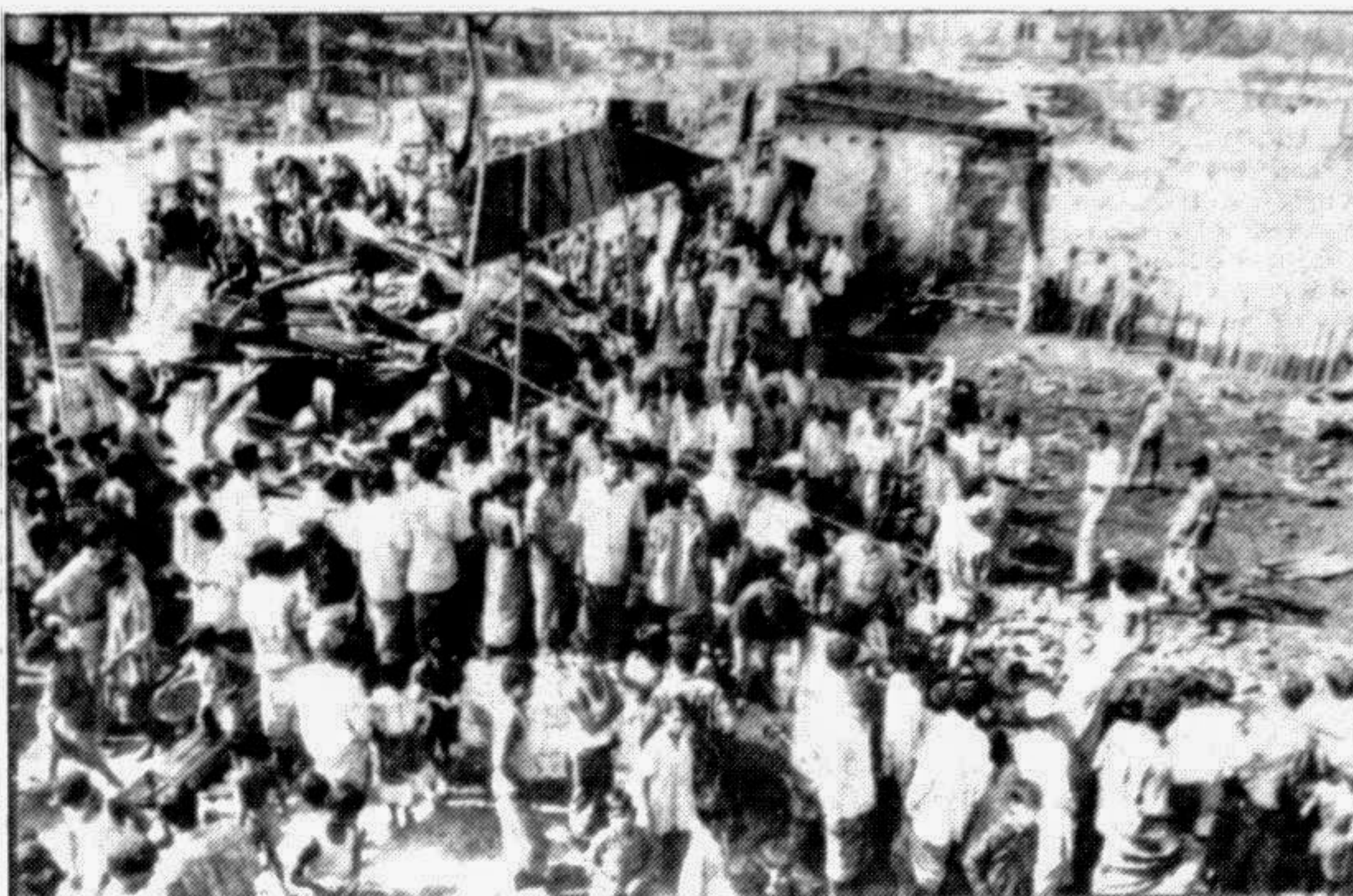
Diplomats and military analysts, however, said the long buildup before Monday's pre-dawn cross border incursion had squandered the element of surprise and given PKK fighters time to slip away, or back into Turkey.

They also questioned whether all the 200 dead were rebels.

"They are not always so careful at distinguishing between PKK fighter and refugees," said one western military analyst who asked not to be named.

"The actual rebels may have just melted away. They certainly had time. If we knew in Ankara of the build-up, then surely the knew, too."

The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) in Geneva also expressed concern about refugees, saying it was investigating reports from local authorities near the Iraqi town of Zakho that Turkish forces had rounded up Kurds and taken them forcibly back into Turkey.



A big fire gutted 63 shops at Maddhya Badda Bazar near Gulshan in the city yesterday. — Star photo

63 shops gutted at Badda Bazar

By Staff Correspondent

A fire gutted 63 shops at Maddhya Badda Bazar in the city yesterday morning, fire brigade sources said.

Nobody was, however, injured in the blaze that reportedly originated from a short circuit at about 11:30 am.

Fire fighters put off the blaze after an hour.

The extent of damage is estimated at Tk 50 to 60 lakh.

Two killed in police firing

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involved field trips to the fertilizer factories and a number of districts.

The main causes of the fertilizer crisis, according to the Allgoed report, are: mismanagement in present distribution through Deputy Commissioners, inefficiency at delivery points, inadequate supply, corruption of certain mill officers working in tandem with corrupt dealers, and export of fertilisers at a time when the country needed those most.

The looting incident occurred at the shop owned by one Runu, a fertilizer dealer, who took a delivery order from the DC three days ago.

However, police sources could not confirm the incident.

Awami Sangram Parishad of Sarishabari Thana unit will organise a day-long token mass hunger strike today at Pugalidigha High School premises to demand arrest and punishment of the black-market dealers responsible for crisis of fertilizer.

In Dhaka, Wasek Al Azad, the sacked chairman of Bangladesh Chemical Industries Corporation (BCIC), yesterday said the corporation had no role in the present fertilizer crisis.

"I will not say anything now, but what I can say is that BCIC had no lapses in producing and disbursing fertilisers," Azad, who was fired on Monday, told UNB.

The BCIC, the monopoly public-sector owner of the country's six fertilizer factories, produces annually more than 20 lakh tons of fertilisers against a domestic demand of about 18 lakh tons.

When contacted over telephone, Azad said he had received an official order on Monday afternoon asking him to retire from his services. But the letter did not mention any reason for his forced retirement, he added.

"I received the retirement letter gracefully... But I am now very tired," Azad said declining to answer queries about the immediate reasons for the present crisis.

A recent USAID report cited mismanagement in fertilizer distribution as a major contributor factor to this year's (1994-95 FY) projected shortfall in food production — 33.98 lakh metric tons according to a World Food Programme estimate.

USAID consultant John Allgoed came up with the report after a recent study that

Change in SSC exam routine

The authorities have made slight amendments to the schedule of the Secondary School Certificate examinations under the four education boards of the country which are to be held in the afternoon of May 8, reports BSS.

Under the changed schedule, Higher Mathematics examination will take place on May 9 from 10:00 am to 1:00 pm. The Home Economics examination will be held on the same day from 2:00 pm to 5:00 pm, a PID handout issued last night said.

It said the examination of Science (for Social Science section) will be held from 2:00 pm to 5:00 pm on May 8 as per original schedule. The schedule of other examinations will remain unchanged, the handout added.

One murdered in city

By DMCH Correspondent

Armed miscreants killed a retired government official at Mohakhali in the city yesterday morning, police and hospital sources said.

Abdul Gafur, 60, was an ex-secretary of the Bangladesh Industrial Training Assistance Centre (BITAC) in the capital.

His sons — Manzur (27) and Murad (22) and daughters — Martina (27), Tazina (25) and Selina (20) were also injured in the attack.

Police arrested one Abul Khaer in connection with the murder.

According to police and witnesses, a group of eight youngmen, armed with iron rods, sticks and other lethal weapons, attacked Abdul Gafur while he was supervising the construction work of the boundary wall of his 61, Arajpata house beside the residence of the late Shamsuddin at about 9:30 am. His children also came under attack when they came to save their father.

Fatally injured, Gafur was rushed to the Dhaka Medical College Hospital (DMCH) where he expired at around 1 pm.

According to reports, Gafur had a boundary dispute with his neighbour some ten years ago. Gafur started constructing the boundary wall after a court had recently given a verdict in his favour. His neighbour, Shahjahan, the son of the late Shamsuddin, had challenged the judgement at the higher court.

According to witnesses, the hired goons of Shahjahan killed Gafur and injured his children.

Gafur's son, Abul Bashar filed a case with Tejgaon police accusing eight persons, including Shahjahan, of killing his father.

The body of Gafur was sent to the DMCH morgue for autopsy.

Reception to meritorious students

Government yesterday accorded a warm reception to 456 meritorious students who were placed in the merit lists of the SSC and Dakhil examination of 1994, reports UNB.

Prime Minister Begum Khaleda Zia distributed prizes and certificates among the students of the four education boards and the Madrassah board in a colourful ceremony at the Osmany Memorial Auditorium in the morning.

Addressing the function organised by the Education Ministry, the Prime Minister called upon all to work together for creating a congenial academic atmosphere and said youths would achieve more success in a peaceful atmosphere.

"We all have to remain alert so that the continuation of education of our children is not hampered," she added.

Begum Zia underscored the need for united efforts to turn the country's huge population into productive workforce.

"We have a great challenge in future. To face this challenge, we have to acquire knowledge and march forward in the field of science and technology," the Prime Minister said.

She said her government has given top priority to education since its assumption of power as it believes that there is no alternative to education to ensure national development.

The Midnight File

Eight killed in Kashmir

SRINAGAR (India), Mar 21: Startled by the noise of a bus tire bursting, security forces in insurgency-torn Jammu-Kashmir state fired bullets indiscriminately Tuesday, killing four civilians, police said. The incident occurred near a village about 18 kilometres from Srinagar, the summer capital of the only Muslim-majority state in predominantly Hindu India. All the four people killed were villagers who were walking on the road. Also on Tuesday, soldiers killed four suspected Muslim rebels in Sopore, 60 kilometres (37 miles) north of Srinagar, police said, reports AP.

Hasina blames BNP policy

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It was attended by some 7,000 leaders and workers, including 1500 delegates from 56 thanas and 474 unions in Rangpur, Lalmonirhat, Kurigram, Nilphamari, Dinajpur, Thakurgaon and Panchagar districts.

Hasina will address a public meeting at Kashinathpur in Pabna tomorrow and another meeting at Kotalipara in Gopalganj on Thursday.

Hasina said hard-won democracy had been crippled by the BNP's inefficiency and undemocratic attitude in last four years. Calling the BNP as the killer of democracy, she said political character of this party has not changed.

On present crisis, Hasina said the Prime Minister, ministers and BNP MPs were trying to shift their failure on others. There is no sound food policy, no sound policy for fertilizer distribution system. Vast tracts of land would remain uncultivated due to fertilizer crisis.

She said the BNP men were given licence of fertilizer at the directives of ministers. These people collected fertilizer in advance and sold it in black market creating unrest among farmers.

Hasina, however, asked her party workers to remain vigilant so that misery of the people due to the present crisis does not aggravate further.

Referring to the BNP's propaganda, particularly in election time, she said the entire country had turned into a market of Indian goods, but the government maintained "mysterious silence."

The conference was also addressed by Zillur Rahman and Abdul Jalil, Tofael Ahmed, Mohammad Nasim, Abdur Rahim, Mostafa Jalal Mohiuddin, Ashiqur Rahman, Muhtaz Hossain and Abdul Mannan.

Deportees' issue

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ported in some of the media.

The spokesman said, "The Ministry of Foreign Affairs re-assures that Bangladesh and the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia have been maintaining excellent brotherly relations."

He said the overstaying nationals of all foreign countries including other Arab countries have been deported in a large number pursuant to the November 1994 Saudi amnesty to deport all overstayers or those staying illegally in Saudi Arabia.

Many Bangladeshis, who had gone to Saudi Arabia on umrah or visit visas and did not return within the period of validity of their visas approached the Bangladesh missions in Jeddah and Riyadh for 'out passes' to facilitate their return journey within the period of the amnesty, he said.

The spokesman said that till Sunday (March 19) the Bangladesh missions in Saudi Arabia issued 7,964 outpasses.

He said that the majority of the outpass holders availed of the opportunity of amnesty and already left Saudi Arabia.

Besides, he said, Saudi Arabia maintains deportation camps round the year at its points of entry and exit to deport overstayers from whatever country they might be.

He said that many pilgrims including those from other Arab countries try to stay back either for religious purposes or other reasons including employment.

He said that from time to time the Saudi authorities apprehend them and arrange for their repatriation.

He said that a large number of overstayers, lacking valid papers, also surrendered to the deportation camps seeking repatriation.

The spokesman said that the media reports about deportation of Bangladeshis apparently covered such normally repatriated persons.

The spokesman said that the Bangladesh missions in Riyadh and Jeddah as well as the Ministry of Foreign Affairs apprised the Saudi authorities of the position of the overstayers. The matter of alleged ill treatment meted out to the Bangladeshi deportees by the crew on board the vessel Mecca-1, has also been conveyed, he said.

He said that from January 1994 to March 19, 1995 some 25,717 Bangladeshis were awaiting deportation and 1996 were sent back last week.

Gen Latif's statement

rejected his bail prayer and sent him to the Dhaka Central Jail.

Filing a petition for Latif's bail, his lawyer Ali Asgar Swapan said the accused was innocent and was not involved in the Manzur murder case.

After 14 years of the incident, the case was filed just to harass the accused, Swapan said, adding that Latif was not even named in the report of the inquiry commission formed earlier comprising some High Court judges.

Other lawyers, defending him, argued that the victim of the incident — Gen Manzur — was killed in a military revolt and it was not an intentional killing.

Opposing the bail prayer, Court Inspector Shahjahan said the case was a very sensational one and Manzur was not killed in a military revolt.

There was no revolt at that time, he said, adding that vested quarters had killed Manzur to save the killers of the then president, Ziaur Rahman, who was killed two days earlier on May 30, 1981 in an abortive coup reportedly led by Gen Manzur.

Major Gen Abul Manzur was snatched from the police on June 1 and subsequently murdered, he added.

Hearing both sides, the court rejected the bail prayer, but asked the jail authorities to provide Latif with division status.

The court also said that Latif's lawyers could meet him as per the Jail Code.

Advocate Abdul Kalam, Advocate Abdul Haq Bhuiyan, Advocate Syed Ahmed Gazi and Advocate Dulal Mitra moved bail for the accused.

Meanwhile, our Chittagong Correspondent adds: Major (ret'd) Emdadul Huq, who was arrested as the main accused in the General Manzur murder case, has not yet been brought to Chittagong to be produced before the court of the chief metropolitan magistrate here which will try the case.

The CMM's court on March 16 sent a production warrant to the CMM's court, Dhaka for sending the accused by March 28, a judiciary official here said.

The court has also fixed April 2 for taking up the case relating to Gen Manzur's death.

Emdad's wife, who is expected to arrive here shortly, is likely to try for her husband's bail from the court here, sources said.

Meanwhile, Chittagong Jail officials say that facilities are available inside the district jail to accommodate any division prisoner.

"We don't need to go for any extra arrangements in case of accommodating division prisoners," the jailor told the correspondent.

Morarji Desai hospitalised

BOMBAY, Mar 21: Former Indian Prime Minister Morarji Desai, was admitted to the Jaslok Hospital here yesterday as he was suffering from bronchitis, reports PTI.

According to his son Kanti Desai, his condition was reported to be stable. Morarji had celebrated his 100th birthday last month.

AL, JP activists put up barricades on Dhaka-N'ganj road

From Our Correspondent

NARAYANGANJ, Mar 21: Activists of the Awami League and the Jatiya Party put up barricades on the Dhaka-Narayanganj road as police intercepted their processions today.

Separate processions were brought out in the town to protest against yesterday's police attempt to arrest AL and JP leaders.

Police intercepted the processions when they reached the Chashara level crossing at around 10:30 am.

The processionists then put up barricades disrupting road and rail links with the capital Dhaka for sometime. They continued their sit-in till 11:30 am.

The meeting was told that 645 new post offices were set up in the rural areas during the last four years of the BNP government.

Pakistan Times privatised

ISLAMABAD, Mar 21: The state-run newspaper, the Pakistan Times, one of the country's oldest English-language dailies, has been sold to private interests, officials said today, reports AFP.

A privatisation commission decided to transfer the newspaper, which was founded by Pakistan's first Governor General, Mohammed Ali Jinnah, to Yousaf Saheem Daudpota, owner of a Sindhi-language paper published in Karachi.

Water Day today

World Water Day will be observed in the country as elsewhere across the globe today, reports UNB.

A seminar on "Fall of Water Level: Challenge to Rural Water Supply" will be held at the SPARSO auditorium in the capital.

Health Minister Chowdhury Kamal Ibne Yusuf will inaugurate the seminar organised by the NGO Forum for Drinking Water Supply and Sanitation, BRAC president Dr Fazle Hasan Abed will preside.

This year's theme for the World Water Day is "Water and Women."

This Day is being observed at a time when the country is facing a desert-like dryness with the level of underground water having fallen from 3 to 26 metres in 36 northern districts.

Nearly 4 lakh tubewells out of 16 lakh have recently gone out of order in different parts of the country.

Water project

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The negotiations with the International Development Agency (IDA), which is supposed to provide 75 million dollars for the project, were scheduled for this month, said sources in the ERD.

Sources, however, added that the implementation of the conditionalities was underway and the government would be able to reach a negotiations soon.

Introduction of a crash metering programme, appointment of the project head from the private sector, realisation of outstanding loans and reduction of system loss are among the conditionalities.

ERD sources said the government had in principle accepted the conditionalities and necessary steps had already been taken in this regard.

Of the total cost of the project, the Government of Bangladesh (GOB) would contribute 65 million dollars, while the rest would be channelised by the French government.

But sources said the component of the French aid (30m dollars) has not yet been determined.

The main objectives of the project are expansion of water supply and sewerage facilities in Dhaka, including construction of a surface water treatment plant at Syedabad, lead detection and rehabilitation, tariff study and preparation of a sanitation strategy.

The project is also aimed at enhancing the water resources management in the greater Dhaka and strengthening of institutional, financial and operational capabilities of Dhaka WASA.

The project was prepared by French consultants with inputs from IDA-financed studies.

Pabna irrigation project commissioned

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Such injustice cannot be tolerated.

Turning to the present acute fertilizer crisis in the country, the minister said a section of the press, not supportive of the government, has been creating panic among the people about fertilizer for the last couple of weeks.

He said incidents of looting of fertilizer by farmers were unprecedented in recent history.

"Does the responsibility lie on the government alone? Are not those people who are hoarding fertilizer, who are smuggling out fertilizer also responsible?" the Agriculture Minister asked.

Majid-ul Haq said that it has become certain people's habit to make people panicky and criticise the establishment for whatever happens in the country, as if there was none else to share responsibilities.

Referring to the Pabna project, the Agriculture Minister said, "Every work has both some good and bad sides. This one is also no exception. But a bad habit has been developed by us that we look for the bad side everywhere. We have to do away with this stereotype negative attitude once for all."

On last year's unprecedented drought in the northern zone, the minister said such a drought situation had never emerged in the last 100 years, adding that still the country had not faced a famine and none had died of starvation.

"There was not a single drop of rain in the last dry season in the northern region and yet we have successfully faced the aftermath. Droughts also occur in China, Australia and Somalia. But the press in those countries never blame the government for this," said Majid-ul Haq.

Because of the Prime Minister's timely steps the food crisis has not been as acute as feared, said the minister, adding that though the projection was for a 20 per cent shortfall in food production during the last dry season, the real shortfall was only seven per cent, as calculated by the government and 10 per cent according to the World Bank's estimate.

Turning to the demand for supplying fertilizer and pesticides free of cost, the Agriculture Minister said the East European countries, which used to do so, were now unable to do so and their economies collapsed only in a span of 70 years.

He further added that although the World Bank had prescribed that the government should waive subsidies on fertilizer and pesticides from December 1990, "We provided the farmers with subsidies till December 1993."

The minister said the government had reduced the price of fertilizer down by Tk 1,000 per ton, yet the situation did not improve because dishonest traders were hoarding fertilizer.

Majid-ul Haq gave the assurance that a fresh cost estimation would be conducted for studying the possibility of a similar irrigation project at Hurasagar in Sirajganj.

With Water Resources Secretary Md Nazrul Islam in the chair, the inaugural function was also addressed by local MP Quamruddin Yahia Khan Majlish, Chairman of the Bangladesh Water Development Board (BWDB) Majidul Islam and Neqbar Hossain Mondal, a beneficiary farmer of the Pabna project. Tarequddin Mia, Chief Engineer (northern zone) of BWDB gave the vote of thanks.

The BWDB executed the Pabna Irrigation and Rural Development Project which comprises 42.28 main canals, two pump houses, a 157.55-km flood control dam, 23 sluice gates, 629 irrigation infrastructures, 29.92 kms of metal roads and a number of bridges and culverts.

The Fisheries Directorate has also taken up pilot schemes for pisciculture in the main irrigation canal. The required annual operation and maintenance cost of the project is Taka 7.16 crore.

Surya Sen's Birthday today

By Staff Correspondent

The 101st birth anniversary of Surya Sen Mastierda will be observed today.

Surya Sen led an uprising against the then British rule in 1930 for which he was hanged in the Chittagong jail on January 12, 1934.

The Surya Sen Parishad yesterday began a two-day celebration through placing wreath at the Central Shaheed Minar yesterday afternoon.

Associate of Sen, Binod Bihari Chowdhury inaugurated the programme, while Kamal Pasha Chowdhury read out a declaration.

Prof Abdul Mannan Chowdhury, Advocate Subrata Chowdhury, Golam Quddus, Enamul Haq Shamim, Ishaq Ali Khan Panna, Afzal Hossain and Ruhin Hossain Prince were also present.

Today's programme includes laying of wreaths at the portrait of Surya Sen at 9 am at TSC of Dhaka University, and a discussion at 5 pm at the same venue.

Awami League presidium member Abdus Samad Azad, Justice Debesh Chandra Battacharya, Dr Zillur Rahman Siddiqui, Faiz Ahmed, Hasan Imam, Pankaj Battacharya and Hasanul Haq Inu will take part in the discussion, while Justice Kamal Uddin Hossain will be in the chair.

Elaborate programme has also been taken at the Noya-chitta residence of Surya Sen in Chittagong.

City water

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formed the meeting that most of the projects implemented during the last four years under the present government were for infrastructural development which included roads, bridges, culverts, primary schools, canal digging and flood control.

It was informed that significant achievement had been made in reducing rural poverty.

The meeting also reviewed the progress in alleviating rural poverty and discussed the condition of different city corporations including water supply and sewerage system of the Chittagong WASA.

It was observed at the meeting that due to numerous development programmes, employment for labourers in rural areas increased from 181 days per year to 247 days — enhancing per head annual income from Tk 12 thousand to Tk 18 thousand.

Results of Primary Scholarship Examinations 1994 Published

The results of the countrywide Primary Scholarship Examinations 1994 have been published. The results will be available at the office of the Divisional Deputy Director, Primary Education of Dhaka, Chittagong, Rajshahi, Khulna & Barisal Divisions. Besides this, measures have been taken to publicise the results at the office of the District Primary Education Officer of respective districts & office of the respective Thana Education Officer. 63702, 59427, 59676, 35752 & 18783 candidates took part from Dhaka, Chittagong, Rajshahi, Khulna & Barisal Divisions respectively in the Primary Scholarship Examinations 1994. Out of them 673, 602, 550, 284 & 188 have received scholarship in Talent Pool and 2630, 2083, 2332, 1281 & 683 in General Scholarship quota from Dhaka, Chittagong, Rajshahi, Khulna & Barisal Divisions respectively. Besides this, 196 in Dhaka Division, 511 in Chittagong Division, 60 in Rajshahi Division, 19 in Khulna Division & 49 in Barisal Division have received complementary scholarship.