

Rao cancels Punjab trip

Threat to life?

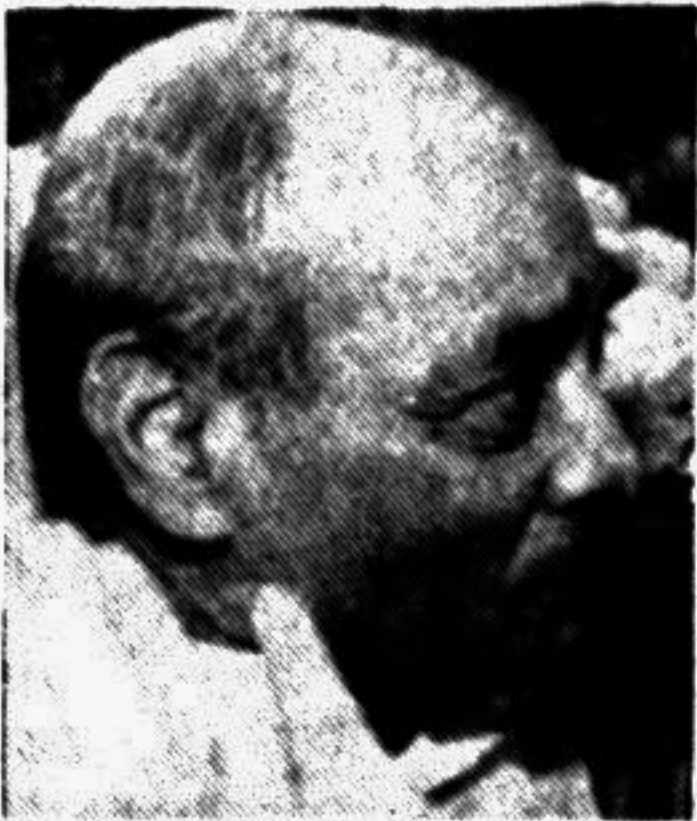
NEW DELHI, Jan 3: Indian Prime Minister PV Narasimha Rao cancelled a trip today to the state of Punjab because of bad weather, officials said, denying that it was called off because of a reported threat to his life, reports AFP.

Rao had been scheduled to take a special aircraft to the Punjab city of Patiala, 200 kilometers northwest of here, but the flight was cancelled because of dense fog, an official spokesman said here.

Rao had been scheduled to inaugurate the 83rd Indian science congress in the northern city and award prizes to scientists. She would have returned to the capital after three hours.

The Prime Minister last

visited Punjab in September after the car bomb assassination of the state's Chief Minister Beant Singh by Sikh



separatists, and officials had mounted unprecedented security in Patiala on Wednesday. Thousands of policemen

was brought into the city from all over Punjab, India's only Sikh-majority state, and the conference venue, the university, was sealed off. Scientists were given special invitations to attend.

The spokesman said the visit was not called off for security reasons. "Not all," the official said. "It is because of weather."

The cancellation came some 10 days after Punjab police announced the arrest of three Sikh separatists who had allegedly plotted to assassinate the prime minister when he visited Patiala.

The police said explosives had been seized from the three men along with a remote-control device which was to have triggered the bomb.



Awami League President Sheikh Hasina addressing a public meeting at Bangabandhu Avenue in the city yesterday. - Star photo

Hasina

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to relinquish power because they embezzled crores of taka.

AL general secretary Zillur Rahman and central leaders Begum Sajeda Chowdhury, Abdul Mannan, Tofael Ahmed, Abdul Razzak, Mohammad Nasim and Amir Hossain Amu also addressed the rally.

"Call the head of a neutral administration by any name you like — Prime Minister, Prime Advisor or Chief Advisor — but the polls must not be held under one-party administration," Amu asserted.

Amu, who held a series of behind-the-scenes talks with BNP leaders told the rally that the Opposition was not serious about the name of the proposed interim body, but fervently wanted that the person heading it must be neutral and non-partisan.

Rab meets Hasina

JSD leader ASM Abdur Rab had a meeting with Awami League president Sheikh Hasina at her Dhanmondi office yesterday evening, reports UNB.

They discussed latest political situation and ways to gear up agitation to realise the demand for a caretaker government.

LDF leaders will meet Hasina today.

IEH irregularities
State minister
heads new
probe body

By Mizan Ali

Another probe committee has been formed with State Minister for Tourism Abdul Mannan heading it to investigate the irregularities in Islamia Eye Hospital (IEH) in the city.

"It has been assigned to me by the Health Minister as the IEH is situated in the constituency from which I was elected an MP in the last elections," said Abdul Mannan, while talking to The Daily Star.

The three-member committee will probe the mismanagement of services and facilities for patients and the conflict between the hospital management and the staff.

Two other members of the committee are the Director General of Health and a joint secretary of health.

Earlier, an inquiry conducted by a Health Directorate probe body found vari-

ous irregularities.

A number of patients had to suffer eye removal in the IEH following faulty cataract operation there late last year.

The Health Directorate probe body found that one-man control, grouping and mismanagement led to chaos in the affairs of the IEH. The probe report was published on November 30 last.

Director of the hospital Dr Mustafizur Rahman went on leave a few days after the publication of the report.

It was reported in September last that eyes of at least 12 patients were removed following faulty cataract operations at the hospital during the first 10 days of the month.

Press reports also said that in late August, eyes of 25 patients who underwent cataract operations at the IEH were removed because of fungal infection.

Senate okays bill but
stalemate persists

WASHINGTON, Jan 3: Weary of the partial federal shutdown of federal government, the US Senate has voted to immediately return furloughed civil servants to work, reports AP.

House Republicans, however, stood firm against Tuesday's measure until President Clinton agrees to a budget-balancing deal, and after three hours of negotiations with Clinton, no such breakthrough was reported.

Saying "enough is enough," Senate Majority Leader Bob Dole got unanimous approval for a measure temporarily re-open closed government facilities while the budget talks continue.

Highlighting differences between the Republican-

dominated House and Senate, House Speaker Newt Gingrich said he preferred to link an end to the 18-day-old federal shutdown to a budget-balancing accord.

Gingrich, Republican of Georgia, and other congressional leaders met Tuesday night at White House in the latest round of talks over ending federal deficits by 2002.

When it was over, White House spokesman Mike McCurry read a bipartisan statement saying the bargain-ers had made "constructive progress" and would meet again Wednesday afternoon.

"I hope we can reach an agreement," Clinton said before the session. He called the Senate vote to return workers to their jobs "a very good sign" and urged the

House to do the same.

Gingrich said he would discuss the Tuesday evening meeting with rank-and-file Republicans on Wednesday. But earlier, he said the closure would end when there was a deal to balance the budget.

Jamaat

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Jamaat Secretary General Matur Rahman Nizami told a party rally at the north gate of Baitul Mukarram mosque in the afternoon.

The formula articulated by the Jamaat leader almost matched the last month's announcement by Prime Minister Begum Khaleda Zia that her government might consider a council of advisors under the President if the "Constitution permits."

The Midnight File

32 Pak senators oppose
US move against Iran

ISLAMABAD, Jan 3: Some 32 Pakistani senators opposed to a covert US programme against Iran today called upon the United Nations to check any move that could destabilise the Tehran government, reports AFP.

Time for compromise

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how much faith she has in the public's good sense to vote correctly. We have always done so in the past.

Then again the argument can be turned on its head and said, what is there for the opposition to lose if there is no 'chief', and the President heads a Council of Advisors? The most important thing is that the opposition and the ruling party will fight the election from the same level — outside the government. Sheikh Hasina and Khaleda Zia will both contest the election as private citizens. This is a significant victory for the opposition and does set a level playing field.

The challenge of the moment is a historic compromise — for the people, for democracy and for a peaceful election. Whosoever is seen to do more for that compromise will win the hearts and minds of the voters. Everybody wants an end to this political conflict. We are frustrated, and are tired. We refuse to continue to be a hostage in the hands of partisan politics which are no longer serving public interest.

Could it be that both sides have lost faith in the people and are therefore unduly concerned about peripheral issues like who will be in what vantage position and when. Are they not ignoring the fact and WE THE PEOPLE are the ultimate judge. Election is OUR RIGHT. It is the process through which we express our views — punish bad leaders and reward good ones. If anybody tempts with that process, WE THE PEOPLE are likely to be far more outraged, than any political party.

If we could have toppled Ayub Khan and Yahya Khan (in Pakistani days) and fought a Liberation War, and then toppled the autocratic regime of Ershad, we can definitely topple any government which distorts and manipulates OUR WILL, that we express through elections. We have fought too many battles for democracy to allow anybody to get to power through rigged elections.

5 killed, 40 hurt
in Jhenidah
road accident

From Our Correspondent

JHENIDAH, Jan 3: Five persons were killed and 40 injured when a Chuadanga-bound night coach fell into a roadside ditch at Jhaphapia, about 4 kilometers away from here this morning.

Of the dead, 4 were identified as Chand Ali, 22, Jamat Ali 30, Jahidul 20, Hasibul 20 and rest could not be identified.

Twenty seriously injured passengers were admitted to the Jhenidah Sadar Hospital. The condition of injured Jahurul Islam was stated to be critical.

Remember both Bhutto (Z.A) and Marcos (F.) rigged elections and then fell. We will teach the harshest of lessons to whoever that tries to steal our elections from us. Therefore trust the people. We will know when and if elections are rigged. Take other steps to make election free and fair — strengthen EC, put DCs, TNOs, police under EC, bring in as many foreign observers as possible, permit citizens group to monitor polls, and remove all controls from radio and TV. Let us take any other measure, if there is any.

But God's sake end this intransigence and go for a historic compromise on the two issues at hand, and leave the rest to us — THE PEOPLE.

What is the alternative if there is no compromise? There will be violence, loss of property and of course loss of lives. Both sides will say that the other side is responsible. Shout as you will, but in our eyes both will be judged as culprits. Will all that chaos, turmoil, uncertainty, unrest, violence and death do any good to any genuine political party?

The challenge, as we said, is to compromise. But do we have political leaders of vision, courage and sufficient love for the ordinary people to make that sacrifice? This challenge is particularly for Begum Zia and Sheikh Hasina, for only big leaders can compromise. Please trust the people, compromise, and go for an election participated by all. You both owe it us.

RMG market

From Page 1

guing that it was retarding the textile sector's development and thus delaying the establishment of its linkage with the RMG sector.

According to the review, textile sector in Bangladesh was enjoying the "heaviest" protection which reduced its competitiveness and thus encouraged smuggling of foreign fabrics.

To make Bangladesh's exports, including the RMG exports competitive with those of the neighbours, the World Bank review strongly advocated "appropriate" exchange rate in relation to competitors and removal of infrastructural constraints, including a chronic port congestion.

It also emphasized on streamlining the complicated Bonded Warehouse system which is at present burdening the garment factories with extra costs in the form of pay-offs.

The review pointed out that a medium to large garment factory required 12-24 interactions with the customs authorities every month for the release of raw materials and export of finished goods. Informal payments during the encounters cost a factory about Tk 250,000 a year.

Grilling after killing
My wife is still alive,
Sharma tells court

NEW DELHI, Jan 3: A former Indian politician charged with murdering his wife and burning her body in a restaurant's tandoor oven claimed in court here Tuesday that his wife was still alive, reports AFP.

Sushil Sharma, the former president of the local youth chapter of India's ruling Congress (I) Party, started the New Delhi High Court with his claim.

The former President of the Delhi Youth Congress was arrested after a nationwide manhunt and is facing trial for the gruesome murder, which sparked protests across India.

Sharma told judge SL Khanna on Tuesday that his lawyer, K G Bhagat, who died suddenly of a heart attack last month, had been planning to produce proof that his 29-year-old wife, Naina Sahni, was alive.

DNA tests conducted on the charred corpse found in

the open-air grill of a restaurant in a downtown hotel here on May 22 identified it as Sahni's body.

Two separate autopsies established that she had been shot.

Sharma told the judge that he had been receiving death threats and that the death of his Defence Counsel could be linked to his involvement in the high-profile case.

"Bhagat's death could be related to the threats he used to receive for taking up the case," Sharma said. He said his lawyer suffered a heart attack after arguing on the telephone with an unidentified caller.

Sharma has asked the court for special protection in prison and claimed to be the victim of a political vendetta.

He had been held in solitary confinement at a maximum-security prison here since his arrest in the city of Bangalore.

Amu contradicts
BNP's observation

Awami League presidium member Amir Hossain Amu yesterday contradicted BNP leaders' observation that the Opposition has set preconditions for talks on the political crisis.

"It's not a precondition. We have sought the government side's opinion on our proposal which was already discussed with them in past few days," he told UNB in a rebuttal to the statement published yesterday.

Amu, the main negotiator from the Opposition side, said during the talks with BNP leaders, the Opposition had proposed that an interim Prime Minister of Prime Advisor or a Chief Advisor — whatsoever it is called — should be appointed with full executive power of a Prime Minister to head a neutral non-party caretaker government.

The Opposition also suggested that election is not possible during the month of Ramadan.

Firecrackers
worth Tk 2 lakh
recovered

By Staff Correspondent

Police recovered a huge quantity of firecrackers worth about Tk two lakh from the Shakhari Bazar area in the old part of the city early yesterday.

Kotwali police during a raid in different parts of Shakhari Bazar from 12:30 am recovered the firecrackers in 60 sacks and 50 polythene bags, police sources said.

It was alleged that a section of unscrupulous traders in the area collected the firecrackers from different parts of the country for selling those on the occasion of the holy Shab-e-Barat, sources added.

However, the persons involved in the business fled away on the arrival of the police in the area.

SAARC finance
ministers' meet
begins in Delhi

NEW DELHI, Jan 3: The second meeting of the SAARC finance and planning ministers opened today with the seven member countries getting down to business on working out the modalities for eradication of poverty in the South Asian region, reports PTI.

External Affairs Minister and Deputy Chairman of Planning Commission Pranab Mukherjee opened the meeting saying the best remedy to poverty was to achieve a level of growth that could generate adequate income for all.

In this connection, the SAARC ministers observed that the region was blessed with tremendous resource potential which if harnessed jointly could provide people with a minimum level of income that could lift them above the poverty line and make it prosperous.

30 hurt in clash
for khas land

From Staff Correspondent

BARISAL, Jan 3: At least 30 people including 6 women were injured, 12 seriously in an armed clash between two groups of people over possession of khas land at Charborhan under Dashmina thana of in Patuakhali district yesterday evening.

Witnesses said, members of the Patuakhali Krishi Federation and the Bhumihin Krishak Samabaya Samity fought for about two hours for occupying 1200 acres of khas land.

Seriously injured Forkan, 30, Zakir, 36, Alam, 18, Khaleque, 60, Masarat, 55, Sahabuddin, 47, Salma, 16, Anura, 35, Kohinour, 30, Runu Begum, 25, Sirin Begum, 18 and Selina, 27 were admitted to hospital.

Closed door meet

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He declined to elaborate his proposal.

The Information Minister was also unwilling to disclose Dr Wazed's suggestions.

Meanwhile, there was no formal meeting between the negotiators of the ruling BNP and the agitating Opposition yesterday.

ঢাকা ওয়াসা বিজ্ঞপ্তি

পানির অপচয় বন্ধ করুন।। ম্যানহোলের ঢাকনা চুরি রোধ করুন

সম্মানিত গ্রাহকবৃন্দের বিশেষ অনুরোধে সমুদয় বকেয়া পরিশোধ সাপেক্ষে সারচার্জ ব্যতীত পানি ও পয়ঃ অতিকর পরিশোধের সময়সীমা সর্বশেষ ৩১ শে জানুয়ারী '৯৬ইং পর্যন্ত পুনঃ বর্ধিত করা হল।

পানি ও পয়ঃ অতিকরের বিল পরিশোধে ব্যর্থ গ্রাহকদের সংযোগ তাত্ক্ষণিকভাবে বিচ্ছিন্নকরণের জন্য কর্তৃপক্ষ পরিচালিত বিশেষ অভিযানের কার্যক্রম অব্যাহত রয়েছে। প্রধান রাজস্ব কর্মকর্তা ও ক্ষমতাপ্রাপ্ত কর্মকর্তা খেলাপি গ্রাহকদের মালামাল ক্রোককরতঃ বকেয়া আদায়ের কার্যক্রম গ্রহণ করছেন।

বকেয়া আদায়ের কারণে সংযোগ বিচ্ছিন্ন এবং পিডিআর এ্যাটের অধীনে মামলার বিড়ম্বনা এড়ানোর নিমিত্ত ৩১শে জানুয়ারীর মধ্যেই বকেয়াসহ হালনাগাদ আপনার পানি ও পয়ঃ অতিকর অবশ্যই পরিশোধ করুন এবং নির্ধারিত সময়ের মধ্যে বিল পরিশোধের জন্য প্রয়োজনে ঢাকা ওয়াসার সংশ্লিষ্ট রাজস্ব আঞ্চলিক অফিস বা প্রধান রাজস্ব কর্মকর্তা ও ক্ষমতাপ্রাপ্ত কর্মকর্তা (ফোনঃ ৩২৫২৪০) অথবা বাণিজ্যিক ব্যবস্থাপক (ফোনঃ ৩২৭২৪৫)-এর সাথে যোগাযোগ করুন।



আপনাদের সেবায় নিয়োজিত
ঢাকা ওয়াসা

ওয়াসা-জরতঃ/৯৬
ডি-২৪

Menon

From Page 1

learnt to have discussed the latest political developments as well as President's possible initiative under the constitutional ambit to overcome the crisis.

Menon, also a frontliner of the Left Democratic Front, reportedly told Biswas that someone should come forward to guide the nation at this critical juncture, and he could play that role.

"If Constitution fails, where does the President or the Prime Minister stand?... Take your stand in tackling the crisis," Menon was quoted by a source close to the left leader to have said.

During his meeting with Hasina, Menon was learnt to have also discussed the overall political situation and probable ways of a solution.

Senior Awami leaders were with Sheikh Hasina during the meeting with Menon at the AL chief's Dhanmondi residence in the morning.

Raw jute

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Bangladesh Jute Association (BJA) has congratulated the government for withdrawal of the restriction.

Vice Chairman of the BJA Rezaul Karim told The Daily Star over telephone that the withdrawal of the restriction was necessary in the greater interest of jute producers.

GF, LDF for
meaningful
elections

The Gano Forum and Left Democratic Front (LDF) yesterday suggested that a congenial atmosphere be created for holding a meaningful parliamentary elections with the participation of all political parties.

Talking to UNB, Workers' Party General Secretary and LDF leader Rashed Khan Menon and Gono Forum leader Pankaj Bhattacharya said there could not be any meaningful elections without the participation of all the parties.

"We'll definitely take part in the elections if we find that an atmosphere has been created for holding free and fair polls... Then we may not consider which party is taking part or not," said Pankaj.

The Gano Forum leader denied reports that his party had any discussion with BNP leaders on the elections issue recently.

He said the Gono Forum is yet to decide on joining the February 7 elections if held under an advisory council headed by the President.

Meanwhile, a Left Democratic Front (LDF) sources said they would have a meeting with Awami League today (Thursday) in the morning and with Gano Forum in the afternoon to discuss the worsening political situation.

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