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SAARC Secretary General Naem U Hasan called on Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina at her office yesterday. —PID photo

SAARC can play effective role in economic cooperation: PM

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina yesterday said Bangladesh wants to see the seven-nation SAARC playing an effective role in fostering regional cooperation in the economic front, reports UNB.

"We have already identified various fields of economy where the SAARC can play an effective role to reach the benefit of regional cooperation to commonman," she said.

The prime minister was talking to the visiting Secretary General of South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC), Naem U Hasan, at her office in the city.

Stressing the need for a strong regional cooperation under the framework of SAARC, she said this regional forum should be made effective like other regional groupings, including the Association of South East Asian Nations (ASEAN).

"We want that the success of SAARC trickles down to the common people of the region for the overall welfare and development of the member countries," she said.

Hasina said people-to-people contact is essential among the over one billion people of the subcontinent and for this, the idea of regional cooperation was mooted back in 1973 by Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman.

She told the SAARC secretary general that her government attached priority to ensuring peace and order in the society, economic stability and poverty alleviation within the shortest possible time.

"And for this, we are taking necessary steps," she said, adding that the government was trying to ensure a peaceful atmosphere and education for all which are very important for economic development and job creation.

It was informed in the meeting that Bangladesh government has taken measures to enable elected representatives of the country visit the SAARC countries without visa. The meeting emphasised that facilities should be extended to the business community also to boost trade and commerce among the member states.

Naem U Hasan expressed his happiness to note that the government has given importance to SAARC and identified the fields of cooperation among the regional countries.

He also praised Bangladesh's idea of exerting efforts for confidence-building among the SAARC countries.

Foreign Secretary Farooq Sobhan was present during the meeting.

BSS adds: The visiting SAARC Secretary General also had a meeting with Foreign Secretary Farooq Sobhan yesterday.

During the two and a half hours meeting, held at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the two sides discussed implementation of the decisions taken in the meeting of SAARC Council of Ministers in New Delhi in December last year, a foreign office source said.

The issues to be taken up at the SAARC Council of Ministers' meeting on Children of South Asia were also reviewed during the talks, the source said.

He said the two sides discussed matters relating to draw a collective position of the South Asian nations to be placed before the World Food Summit which will be held in Rome in November.

Major elements relating to the cooperation between SAARC and European Union also figured in talks, he added.

Mourning programme

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soil of Bangladesh and none would be allowed to go unpunished. "The countrymen must try the self-confessed killers of Bangabandhu."

Abdul Mannan MP said they would have to realise the commitments given to the nation by Father of the Nation and the revenge of Bangabandhu's killing should be taken through bringing smiles on the faces of the poor people of the country.

"Those who did not want to see an independent Bangladesh had killed Bangabandhu, but they (killers) have already been defeated," he added.

Presided over by Mohiuddin Ahmed, the meeting was also addressed by Water Resources Minister Abdur Razzak, Health and Family Welfare Minister Salahuddin Yusuf, Dewan Farid Gazi MP, Sheikh Selim MP, central leaders Iy Rahman and Amir Hossain Amu.

Meanwhile, people wearing black badges from far and near have started streaming into the mazar venue to pay their respect to the late leader.

The entire Tungipara thana has been decorated with black flag, banner and festoon. The banners were inscribed with Bangabandhu's messages and demand for trial of the killing. Black arches have been erected at different places of Gopalganj district.

On August 15, 1975, Bangabandhu was brutally killed and his elected government overthrown in a bloody coup.

Except two daughters — Sheikh Hasina and Sheikh Rehana — all members of the Mujib family were killed in the coup led by some disgruntled army officers.

Immediately after steering back to power, the AL government declared August 15 as the National Mourning Day.

It will be a public holiday and the national flag will fly half-mast.

On the occasion of the state mourning, an elaborate programme has been drawn up by Awami League and various socio-cultural organisations.

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina will fly to Tungipara tomorrow to place wreath and offer feteiha there.

State-run radio and television have drawn up special programmes to commemorate

the 21st anniversary of the assassination of Father of the Nation.

The AL programme includes placing of wreaths at Sheikh Mujib's portrait at the Bangabandhu Bhaban in the city at 7am, offering feteiha at the Banani graves of August 15 martyrs at 7:30 am, feeding the destitutes at different wards in the city from 12 noon to 2 pm, holding *milad mahfils* and special prayers at places of worship and bringing out a mourning procession in the city at 4 pm.

Besides, discussion meeting highlighting the day's significance would also be held at the thana and district levels.

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Ceasefire in Chechnya

MOSCOW, Aug 13: Russian and rebel Chechen forces today agreed a ceasefire to take effect at noon (0800 GMT) on Wednesday, the Interfax news agency reported, quoting the rebel command, says AFP.

The accord provides for a separation of the belligerents and an exchange to wounded and dead, the Chechens said.

The agreement was reached at talks today in the village of Novy Atagi between Chechen Chief of Staff Aslam Maskhadov and the commander of Russian forces in Chechnya, General Konstantin Pulikovskiy.

An earlier AP report said: Russian troops battled separatist fighters in the Chechen capital today as commanders of the two sides began talks on ending the bloody, eight-day battle for the city.

Gen. Pulikovskiy, and separatist military leader Aslam met this evening in a village south of Grozny, the Interfax news agency said, quoting officials in rebel headquarters.

On Monday, Alexander Lebed, Boris Yeltsin's security chief, and Maskhadov agreed to talks to halt fighting and withdraw rebel fighters from Grozny, which is gripped by some of the fiercest battles since the war began in December 1994.

The rebels continued to control the city center, driving around in cars and four-wheel-drive vehicles. The Russians pelted them with tank, mortar and sniper fire, but there was no sign they were launching a ground assault to retake the centre.

A correspondent for Russian Public Television was reported dead, fatally shot in the head, Ramzan Khadzhiyev was the 19th journalist to die in the 20-month-old conflict.

Lebed, Yeltsin's special envoy to the region, returned to Moscow yesterday after a secret meeting with rebel commanders, and blasted the Russian military for mishandling the war. He said he plans to take personal charge of military operations in Chechnya, where the rebel offensive has left hundreds of Russian soldiers dead and wounded.

The separatists continued to attack government buildings yesterday and there was heavy sniper fire. Russian helicopters fired rockets, and Russian tanks and mortars near the ruins of presidential palace shelled residential areas throughout the night.

No AIDS patient in Ctg city: Physicians

CHITTAGONG, Aug 13: Some leading physicians of the city have said that there is no AIDS patient in the city, reports BSS.

The physicians said this while exchanging views with Chittagong city Mayor Ahaj ABM Mohiuddin Chowdhury in the corporation auditorium here last night, a city corporation press release said today.

The physicians said that only a Thai national, carrying HIV positive, died of the disease a week ago. "We are not yet confirmed that Mohammad Selim, a suspected AIDS patient, is attacked by the same disease, they informed the meeting.

The press release further asserted that there was nothing to be afraid of the news of detection of AIDS as published in a section of newspapers.

The physicians present on the occasion included Director of Chittagong Medical College Hospital (CMCH) Col. Shamsul Islam, acting chairman of the Skin and Venereal Disease of CMCH Dr AQM Serajul Islam, Prof ASM Mujibul Haq, Dr Mohammad Abdul Faiz, Dr Sultanul Alam, Dr ASM Tarek and chief health officer of the city corporation Dr MNA Mamoon.

The press release further said that the persons having any information about suspected AIDS patient should contact chief health officer of the city corporation over phone number 228868.

36 DU senators urge MPs to repeal Indemnity Ordinance

Thirty-six senate members of Dhaka University yesterday demanded of the government to take initiative to try the killers of Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman.

In a joint statement, the senators urged all the parliament members to repeal the Indemnity Ordinance.

The signatories to the statement include Dr Abul Kalam Azad, Dr ATM Zahurul Huq, Dr M Shahadat Ali, Dr Mohammad Muniruzzaman, Dr Sultanul Alam, Dr M Anwar Hossain, Dr AAMS Arefin Siddique, Prof Abdul Mannan Chowdhury, Ramendu Majumdar, Dr Syed Modasser Ali, Dr ATM Nurur Rahman Khan and Dr M Inamul Huq.

10 workers killed in Quetta coal mine blast

QUETTA, Pakistan, Aug 13: Ten mine workers were killed in an explosion in a privately owned coal mine near here today, officials said, reports AFP.

The explosion was caused by the accumulation of methane gas in a tunnel at the coal mine located 30 kilometers (18 miles) east of this capital city of southwestern Baluchistan province, they said.

Farooq, Shahriar arrested

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produced some documents relating to the firearms which were being examined. A GD was lodged with Gulshan thana in this connection.

Major (ret'd) Khairuzzaman was on a diplomatic posting at the Bangladesh Mission in the Philippines and returned to Dhaka recently after the Foreign Ministry recalled him along with five other army officers posted at different missions abroad and believed to have been involved in the killing of Bangabandhu. None other than Khairuzzaman responded to the recall notice issued by the foreign ministry. The last day for responding to the notice expired yesterday.

The five other diplomats who have been absconding from their posts and believed to be seeking asylum in some foreign countries are: Major (ret'd) Noor Chowdhury, Major (ret'd) Shariful Haq Dalim, Major (Ret'd.) Mohiuddin, Col (Ret'd.) Abdul Aziz Pasha and Major (Ret'd.) Rashid Chowdhury. They were absorbed in the Foreign Service after the assassination of Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman. The Foreign Ministry is learnt to have requested his counterparts in several countries to deny them asylum.

According to witnesses, a contingent of policemen and plain-clothed securitymen surrounded the two-story brick house of Col (ret'd) Farooq before he was arrested.

"I was awakened by the barking of the dog and as I came out I was told not to open the main gate," said the gatekeeper, "then two plain-clothed men came in by climbing the

boundary wall. After a brief talk with the *Sahib* the main gate was opened and a lot of uniformed policemen came inside."

When asked if there was any resistance, the gatekeeper said that Col (ret'd) Farooq asked questions to the policemen but there was no physical tussle. He was not handcuffed when

and many people used to come in and out of the house every day," the securityman said.

After the arrests, the three were taken to the Detective Branch office at Minto Road in the city. A police official said that the Special Branch (SB) oversaw the arrests and put them at the DB premises for security reasons.

At exactly 5:25 pm yesterday, surrounded by heavy security, Farooq, Khairuzzaman and Shahriar were brought out of one of the DB buildings. They were then put in a white micro-bus along with an uniformed police officer and few other plain-clothed securitymen. As the few photo-journalists rushed to take photographs, Farooq, dressed in an off-white *Kabuli Kurta*, smilingly winked at them and waved his hand. At least two trucks carrying riot police and other vehicles escorted the convoy towards the Dhaka Central Jail.

'PM to raise CHT issue in JS soon'

RANGAMATI, Aug 13: Dipankar Talukdar, MP from Rangamati, said here today that Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina would soon raise the Chittagong Hill Tracts (CHT) problem in the Jatiya Sangsad in order to reach a consensus, reports BSS.

Addressing the district officials in the Zila Parishad auditorium, Dipankar Talukdar said, the present government was committed to resolve the Hill Tracts problems in a peaceful manner.

"We have been here on shift-duty for the last 20 days, he has got four private cars



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JCD-BCL clash at Patiya: 10 hurt

From Staff Correspondent

CHITTAGONG, Aug 13: At least 10 people were injured in a clash between the supporters of Chhatra Dal and Chhatra League on Patiya college campus today, police and college sources said.

Three of the seriously injured persons were admitted to Patiya health complex.

The clash began at 11 am between the two rival groups centring collection of admission forms. But the groups used lethal weapons during the clash, police said.

Police rushed to the spot and brought the situation under control.

WB agency keen to provide loan for generating power

A delegation led by Manager of International Finance Corporation (IFC), an authorised agency of the World Bank, Roul Dewan, had a meeting with Minister for Energy and Mineral Resources Ltd Gen. (ret'd) Muhammad Noor Uddin Khan at the latter's office in the city yesterday, reports BSS.

The member of the delegation had shown keen interest in providing loan assistance for generating power under private sector to meet power shortage in Bangladesh.

Removal of BUET VC demanded

The Bangladesh University of Engineering and Technology Teachers Association (BUETTA) yesterday demanded immediate removal of BUET Vice-Chancellor Prof M Shahjahan, reports BSS.

The demand was made at a general meeting of the BUETTA held in the city on Monday at the seminar room of BUET with its president Dr M Abdur Razzak Akond in the chair.

The meeting observed that the 'autocratic and arrogant' attitude of the Vice-Chancellor was tarnishing the image of the university.

The meeting urged the government to take necessary measures for the removal

22-member JSJ policy-making council formed

Jatiyatadabi Sangskritik Jote (JSJ) yesterday formed a 22-member 'policy-making council' and 61-member central executive committee with a view to uniting the nationalist forces, reports UNB.

The two committees were constituted with film director Chashi Nazrul Islam as President while Actor Babul Ahmed and Rafiqul Islam made senior vice president and secretary general respectively.

The members of the Policy-Making Council are film director Amjad Hossain, singer Anjuman Ara Begum, actor Ariful Haq, Syed Ahsan Ali, Khalilullah, Dr M Aminul Islam, Dr Khandaker Mustahidur Rahman, AK Piroz Noon, actor Ahmed Sharif, Khurshiduzzaman Utpal, Washimul Bari Rajib, composer Anwar Parvez, journalist Amanullah Kabir, Borhan Ahmed, lyric Mohammad Rafiquzzaman, Jostna Kazi, Rezabul Chowdhury, Babul Ahmed, Delwar Hossain, Rezaul Karim Talukder and Rafiqul Islam.

The office-bearers of the executive committee are Vice Presidents: Delwar Hossain, actor Nazmul Huda Becchu, Dr Tareq Shamsur Rahman, TV presenter Mahfuzullah, Advocate Mohammad Shahjahan Abdul Aziz Miah, Kawsar Rezaul Haq and Intiaz Hossain Chapal.

Joint Convenors: Dramatist Fagun Ahmed, actor Shahin Alam, TV presenter Advocate Elina Khan and Saifuddin Ahmed Jewel, Assistant secretary generals Dr Mukid Saiful Alam, Kazi Asaduzzaman Mamun and singer Milon Mehadi. Organising secretary Sarwar-e-Alam Shahriar, Finance Secretary Hahriar Khan, Publicity Secretary Shamima Chowdhury, Drama — Siraj Haider, Dance — Habibul Chowdhury, Music — Pulak Chowdhury, Film — Ikram Biju, Fine Arts — Gautam Kumar Deb, Literary and Publication — Tarek Mahmood, Mass Contact — Abul Hashem Rana, Child and Youth Affairs — Saurid Rahman Munim, Women Affairs — Badrun Nahar Khan.

Members: Jinal Abedin, Abu Saleh, poet Mahmud Shaif, artist Hafizuddin, Kabir Murad, poet Mosharrat Katim, Kazi Zakir Hossain, actor Abdul Aziz, Belal Ahmed, Farooq Hossain, Nuruddin, MA Aziz, Fazlul Karim, Mokhesur Rahman Chowdhury, Ibrahim Rahman, Mosharrat Hossain Thakur, Nur Hossain Rana, Anwar Pahlavi, Zinat Jahan, Nazmun Nahar Baby, Simky Khan, Khawaza Nayeem, Ferdous Zaman, Feroz AL Mamoon, Nazrul Islam Lablu, Eliza Chishtry, Rafique Iqbal, Mukta Rahman, Selina Khandaker Shova and Zakir Hasan Dulal.

VAT on shipping agents protested

The Bangladesh Steamer Agents' Association yesterday said that the proposal in the budget for 1996-97 fiscal year to impose VAT on shipping agents would cause adverse impact on the shipping agency business in the country, reports BSS.

The proposed VAT on shipping agents is totally against the principles of VAT and if the proposal is implemented it will lead to closure of many shipping agencies, houses, association chairman AFMA Asad said at a press conference in the city yesterday.

He said since the shipping agents sell services to foreign shipping principals, hence there is no scope of recovery of VAT from them for payment to the government.

Asad said that the income of the shipping agents was small and they were to pay income tax of 40 per cent. Besides, he pointed out that revenue collection on account of VAT would be very meagre.

He urged the government to review and drop the proposal of VAT in order to save the shipping agents from closure and avert unemployment.

Jubo Dal

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conditions.

Selim, a Jubo Dal member, and a pedestrian Bashar were given first aid.

The Jubo Dal brought out the procession in the afternoon protesting attack on its two leader Sontosh and Rafiq. It blamed 'Awami terrorist' Shawkat Hossain Nannu for the attack.

In a statement, Jubo Dal president Mirza Abbas and general secretary Gayeswar Roy condemned the attack on its procession.

In a separate statement yesterday, BNP joint secretary general Ashraf Hossain condemned the killing of Chhatra Dal leader Shilpi at Mohanganj of Netrakona district. He blamed pro-Awami League Chhatra League for the killing.

Accord

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Rangpur and Panchagarh will be reduced by about 25 kilometre. The estimated cost of the bridge would be about Tk 587.10 million out of which, Chinese government would provide Tk 344.40 million.

The construction work is scheduled to begin on December 1 and expected to be completed with June 1998.

Talks on CTBT adjourned

GENEVA, Aug 13: Talks to reach a treaty banning nuclear tests were abruptly adjourned here today after India had threatened to veto further progress, delegates at the UN conference said, reports AFP.

JSAC

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could be privatised.

Sources, disclosing the fresh World Bank schedule, said the Bank wanted at least one mill to be off-loaded by September 30 and rest 17 by October next year in six phases.

The Bank asked for closure of another five losing jute mills by June next year and for disposal of BJC assets by April next.

The World Bank also sought halt to further loss-financing arrangement with jute mills and seizure of all government subsidies.

According to sources, the Bank review mission which visited Dhaka between July 6 and August 1 repeatedly resented stalled reforms during meetings with local officials.

The mission estimated that failure to carry out reforms pushed losses of the Bangladesh Jute Mills Corporation (BJMC) to about 84 million US dollars in 1995-96 fiscal year from the previous year's 64.5 million.

Under the original privatisation and closure schedule under the JSAC, losses of the BJMC mills were estimated to be reduced by about 45 million dollars by the year 1995-96.

Woman shot dead

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same thana received bullet injuries. The injured were admitted to Sathkira Sadar Hospital.

BSF alleged that they were involved in smuggling in the bordering areas.

Local BDR Company Commander formally protested the killing by sending a message to his Indian counterpart. The BDR's Khulna Sector Commander and Sathkira Battalion Commander visited the spot.

Power tariff

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had suspended all credit for the power sector and pressed for its reforms to make the sector profitable.

Following some actions of the government, the performance of BPDB, Dhaka Electric Supply Authority (DESA) and Rural Electrification Board improved.

The BPDB's net loss of Tk 352 crore in 1992-93 was reduced to Tk 280 crore in 1994-95. This loss was mainly attributed to a huge amount of interest on loans and exchange rate fluctuations.

The donors have been recommending from increase in the power tariff since last year, saying that it should be fixed only on economic considerations.

The energy ministry accordingly conducted a study on the power tariff structure of other countries and put forward a proposal to increase the tariff in phases.

The present demand for power exceeds 2000 MW against a power generation level of 1800 MW leaving a shortfall of 200 MW. It is projected by the energy ministry that the shortfall may reach 450 MW next year.

Hearing

From page 1

dent is not an office of the Republic.

As for the qualifications to become a President, the Attorney General said, a person, qualified to be a member of Parliament, can become President.

"Since the President is not in the service of the Republic, he is not holding any office of profit," KS Nobi submitted.

Maksudur Rahman argued that so far as the election of the President, is concerned, the decision of the Chief Election Commissioner is final.

Barrister Moinul Hossain, another amicus curiae, may begin his arguments today.