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Visiting Foreign Secretary of Pakistan Najmuddin Sheikh called on Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina at her office in the city yesterday. — PID photo

Prospects of trade ties with Tripura discussed

The prospects of mutually beneficial trade and business relations between Bangladesh and India's Tripura state came up for discussion during a meeting yesterday at the conference room of Dhaka Chamber of Commerce and Industry (DCCI), reports BSS.

The physical closeness of Tripura with Bangladesh, and the common language and culture and the food habit of the two peoples were described as sound basis for exploring the potentials of business relations.

Welcoming an eight-member delegation from Tripura Chamber of Commerce and Industry (TCCI), Fazle R M Hasan, acting president of DCCI expressed the hope that the first ever visit of the chamber members of Tripura would open up new avenues of contacts among the business community. There are immense scope of trade promotion between Bangladesh and India, but unfortunately it was one sided, he noted.

Hasan pointed out that because of its geographical location, there can be good business links between Bangladesh and Tripura through land routes. Tripura can import items from Bangladesh at a cheaper rate due to less transport cost and similarly Bangladesh can also import items through Tripura border, thus reducing heavy pressure at Benapole and other customs points, he observed.

The acting president of DCCI requested TCCI members to identify the items which can be transacted through Tripura-Bangladesh border and stressed regular exchange of information between the two chambers to achieve the declared objective of higher trade from mutual advantage. He thanked the people of Tripura for their support during the Bangladesh War of Liberation.

Parliament tidbits

From page 1
list of the works done by the former BNP government. He, however, dropped the project from his list and said the Chair to expunge it from the proceedings after his party colleagues reminded him that the project was not implemented.

Deputy Speaker Abdul Hamid, who chaired the entire sitting of the Sangsad yesterday, reminded the MPs, especially those who spoke in the House for the first time, that the yellow light would be on two minutes before the expiry of the time allotted to them and the red light when the time expired.

While doing so, Abdul Hamid told BNP lawmaker Prof. Rezaul Karim, "Your red light will be on after eight of 10 minutes time given to you." The Chair hastened to add, "Not your red light but mine."

Participating in the discussion on the proposed budget, some Opposition MPs made a common statement that they wanted to go to their respective constituencies to highlight the problems in those areas.

Going one step further, BNP lawmaker Mosharrar Hossain Manju told the Chair, "Now I will take you Mr. Speaker to my area Barisal by crossing the Meghna and other rivers."

Similarly, another BNP lawmaker Fazul Azim told the Chair, "Please, allow me some more time because I'll have to go to my constituency."

BNP legislator Dr. Ehteshamul Haq Nasim Biswas, the son of President Abdul Rahman Biswas, getting the floor to speak on the budget, told Deputy Speaker, "I've special

PM's directive to ensure proper road traffic system

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina yesterday directed the authorities concerned to take appropriate measures for ensuring proper traffic system across the country to avoid road accidents, reports BSS.

She also ordered for taking legal action against violation of traffic rules, speed limit and vehicle fitness to reduce such accidents.

The directive came when the Prime Minister expressed her deep concern at three fatal road accidents in which SP of Pabna Jamsheduddin Bhuiyan, police constables Abdur Rashid, Ashraf and Naik Mohammad Jahangir and assistant chief of the Ministry of Industries Mohsin Khandker and Zahurul Hoque, sub-assistant engineer, Water Development Board, Thakurgaon were killed on Friday and Saturday.

New cantt at Trishal likely

The government has a plan to set up a cantonment at Trishal in Mymensingh district, reports UNB.

This was stated by Energy and Mineral Resources Minister Lt. Gen. (rtd) Noor Uddin Khan in Parliament yesterday afternoon replying to Mirza Azam of Awami League during question hours.

Khan, however, did not mention when the Trishal cantonment project would be implemented.

Samad Azad

From page 1
Bangladesh.

The Kuwaiti leader especially appreciated the clearing operations by Bangladesh army contingent working in Kuwait. The Kuwaiti leader also recalled the support and cooperation of Bangladesh during and after the period when it was under the illegal occupation.

Abdus Samad Azad reiterated Bangladesh's firm commitment to the development and expansion of Bangladesh-Kuwait brotherly relations and cooperation in all possible fields. The two leaders agreed to discuss bilateral relations in further detail during official meeting to be held tomorrow.

Budget

From page 1
discriminations.

Abdur Rashid Sarker of Jatiya Party said "the so-called Tk 100 crore subsidy to the agriculture sector was nothing but a mockery with the peasants." Demanding "direct subsidy for the peasants," he said, "There is no alternative to giving direct subsidy to the peasants, if the government really means business."

Appreciating the 'subsidy', AL legislator Mostafa Kamal urged the government to make sure that the peasants get the facility in time.

Dr. Alauddin Ahmed, a former AL presidium member and now a BNP lawmaker, criticised the proposed budget as "it did not address the problems of the poor, especially the helplessness of family members of martyred freedom fighters."

Gautam Chakrabarti of BNP criticised the proposed reduction of tariff on import of double-decker buses, while increasing the duties on import of all transports including tempoes.

Some 18 members took part in the discussion on the proposed budget yesterday. They included Khan Tipu Sultan, Khaleda Khanam, Jannatul Ferdous, Abdus Sattar, Farida Rauf, Hossaina Wahid, and Segupta Yasmin of AL, Jamiruddin Sircar, Ehteshamul Haq, Mosharrar Hossain and Rezaul Karim of BNP and Jainul Abedin Sarker of UP.

Earlier, Deputy Speaker Abdul Hamid, who chaired yesterday's sitting, disposed of three call attention notices. The chair adjourned the sitting at 10:00 pm for resumption at 3:00 this afternoon.

Tk 15 cr post-flood rehabilitation plan

By Reaz Ahmad

The government has taken up a Tk 15 crore post-flood rehabilitation programme, said officials sources.

Of the total allocation, Tk 10 crore has been earmarked for reconstruction of damaged houses and the rest Tk 5 crore for agricultural rehabilitation.

Over 45 lakh people in 151 thanas in 37 districts were affected in the recent flood, according to official statistics. Twenty-three people died in flood-related incidents and crops on 1.4 lakh acres of land were damaged fully while those on 3.7 lakh acres partially.

Minister of Agriculture, Food, Relief and Disaster Management Begum Matia Chowdhury told The Daily Star that though it was not possible for the government to fully compensate the flood loss, "at least, our efforts will make people feel that there is a government who cares for them."

The government of Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina inherited a virtually empty relief fund when it took over power on June 23, said the minister.

When I took over the charge of this ministry, there was only a cash of Tk 13,000 in the fund, meant for relief to flood victims.

Under the rehabilitation programme, steps are being taken to arrange easy availability of seeds and fertilizer for the flood-affected marginal farmers. Tubewells now out of operation in the flood-hit areas will be repaired free of cost and new ones will be sunk on emergency basis wherever necessary.

The government plans to channel most of the fund and other resources through district administrations.

Search for Tareq's body

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The Gazaria police meanwhile had taken three of Tareq's friends — Rocky, Murad and Mustafa — on remand for three days and they would be produced before the court today.

Some other friends of Tareq including a girl friend named Lubna who was with Rocky in the car were, however, absconding, police said.

According to some police sources at Gazaria, blade of a cargo vessel might have hit the head of Tareq that ultimately led to his death.

Giving reasons why the body could not be traced a senior police official said, "the strong current of the river might have swept the body away."

Abul Kashem in his complaint lodged with the Gazaria thana said, "Rocky is the main culprit behind the murder of Tareq. His other friends are also involved in the murder. Rocky even crossed over the Meghna bridge and went to an isolated bank of the river for dumping Tareq's body."

Police, quoting the statements of the three arrested friends of Tareq said, "Tareq along with his friends Rocky and Lubna after dinner at Steam Boat Restaurant went for a long drive towards Comilla."

Stopping the car near the Meghna ferry ghat, Tareq wanted to take a dive, said police quoting the statements of his friends, recorded with them. They were then intoxicated, police claimed quoting the statements of the arrested persons.

According to the complaint lodged by Tareq's father on August 15, Tareq was picked up from his house by his friend Rocky to have a dinner at the Chinese restaurant Steam Boat on the night of August 14. Tareq did not return home

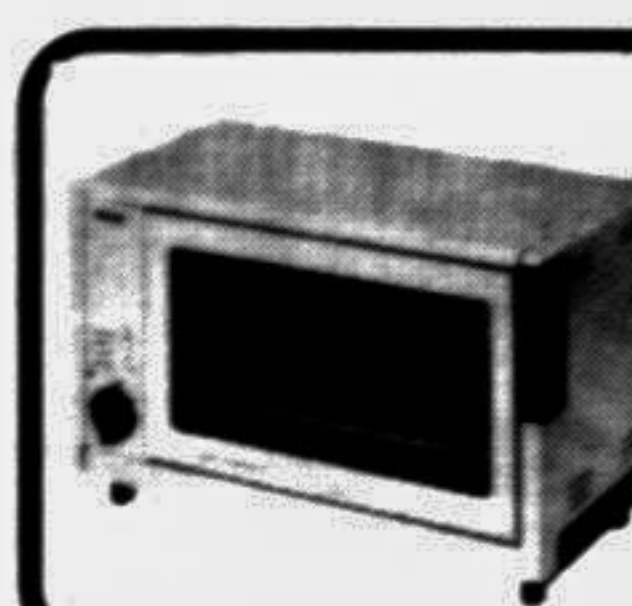
BCL worker held from court premises

SIRAJGANJ, Aug 18: Police arrested an activist of the Bangladesh Chhatra League (BCL) from court premises in the town on Saturday evening in connection with a murder case, reports UNB.

Police sources said, Shahidul Islam Mithu was nabbed following a murder case filed against him with the Shahjapur thana.

According to police, a cow-boy named Ukil, 20, of Jinnadaha village in Shahjapur thana was murdered by some miscreants recently.

Earlier, the court granted bail to Joyal Abedin, secretary, Bangladesh Agricultural University Chhatra Dal Unit, on Saturday.



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Let's make things better

PHILIPS

Minister tells JS Govt considering construction of bridge over Padma

Communications Minister Anwar Hossain Manju yesterday said the government is seriously considering the construction of a bridge over the river Padma, reports BSS.

Replying to a call-attention notice from Alhaj Md Abdul Wahab (BNP-Jhenidah) at the Jatiya Sangsad, he said the head of the government has given clear instruction to start work towards construction of such an important bridge.

The minister said there is no denying the need of the bridge over the Padma for manifold reasons and the present government fully recognised this.

He told the member that construction of three bridges in Sailakupa thana in the Jhenidah district will begin soon although some faults were there regarding the tenders for the bridges.

Replying to another call-attention notice by Shamsul Huq (AL-Mymensingh) about inertia in the reconstruction of the Mymensingh railway station, the communications minister said measures are underway for repair and improvement of the station.

Some changes in admin

By Staff Correspondent

Some changes have been made in the upper tier of the administration.

A H M Abdul Hye, Member, Planning Commission, has been appointed Secretary of the Local Government Division while Sayed Alamgir Faruk Chowdhury, Secretary, Local Government Division, has been transferred to the Ministry of Commerce, says a PID handout.

The Chairman of the Bangladesh Inland Water Transport Authority (BIWTA), Md Nurul Abedin, has been appointed Additional Secretary, Ministry of Health and Family Welfare.

Md Omar Faruk, Managing Director, Bangladesh Biman Corporation, has been appointed Member, Land Appeal Board.

The Managing Director of the Bangladesh Shipra Rin Sangstha (BSRS), Al Amin Chowdhury, has been appointed Managing Director of Bangladesh Biman Corporation.

1.50 lakh tonnes urea buffer stock likely

The government is planning to create a buffer stock of 1.50 lakh metric tons of urea to deal with any possible fertilizer crisis in the country, parliament was told yesterday, reports UNB.

Replying to a question from Abdul Mannan Talukder (BNP-Sirajganj), Agriculture Minister Begum Matia Chowdhury said steps are being taken to increase the fertilizer buffer stock centres to 21 from the present 19.

She said the 19 buffer stock centres were set up by the state-owned Bangladesh Chemical Industries Corporation (BCIC) in 19 regions in 1995-96 fiscal year.

Matia Chowdhury said at present there is no plan to build up stocks of fertilizer in each thana.

360 Royal Bengal Tigers, JS told

Environment and Forest Minister Begum Matia Chowdhury told the Jatiya Sangsad yesterday that the population of Royal Bengal Tigers was 360 in the Sundarbans in 1993, reports BSS.

Answering a question from Zafarul Islam Chowdhury (BNP-Chittagong) the minister said the number of tigers was determined by wild animal expert KM Tamang on the basis of pug mark samples through compartment method.

Kalpna's mother

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also released a statement at the conference.

"BHRC has misquoted me intentionally," Bandhuni Chakma said adding "I vehemently condemn and protest this lie."

She urged the Prime Minister to help rescue her daughter.

Meanwhile, the leaders of the BHRC were correct, the government should take immediate steps to bring her back from Tripura. They demanded rescue of Kalpna and punishment to the abductors. Kabita Chakma, Bartika Chakma, Jhinu Chakma and Somary Chakma of the HWF were present at the press conference.

Documents seized

From page 1
— Col (rtd) Farooq Rahman, Col (rtd) Shahriar Rashid Khan and Major (rtd) Khairuzzaman — were arrested from the city on August 13 for their alleged involvement in activities that could "threaten the lives of some very important persons".

They were sent to the Dhaka Central Jail on 30 days' detention under the Special Powers Act.

British minister

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Affairs, Home Minister, Commerce and Industries Minister and some other ministers to discuss matters relating to bilateral trade, economic co-operation and immigration issues, according to official sources.

Dr. Fox who looks after immigration and consular affairs with the responsibility for South Asia will also visit Sylhet from where most Bangladeshis now living in Britain originate and familiarise himself with consular and immigration operations. He will also visit some British-aided projects in the country.

The British Under Secretary will also visit the Jatiya Sangsad and meet leaders of Chamber bodies.

Dr. Fox is likely to meet the press prior to his departure for Nepal on August 23.

Bangladesh is the second largest recipient of British bilateral aid having received over 56 million Pounds (Taka 364 crore) in 1994-95.

He said the media could play a crucial role in building confidence of the investors in the economy by correctly informing the people about the health of the economy.

Landless

From page 1
He pleaded enactment of law guaranteeing rights of the sharecroppers and minimum wages of the farm labourers.

"No government measure has yet been taken for this," he observed.

Presiding over the opening session federation president Jotunul Abedin said: "We do not get pay commission or wage commission.... we want to be defined as labourers or employees."

A total of 150 farm labourers, national-level workers and farmers organisations, representatives of donor agencies, NGOs and UN bodies participated in the workshop.

BNP memo

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workers, and compensation for the injured, and hoped that the government would take steps to stop harassment of and repression on BNP activists.

15 unions in Sirajganj inundated

SIRAJGANJ, Aug 18: Flood water from the rain-swollen Jamuna submerged the low-lying areas of 15 unions in five thanas of the district today, reports UNB.

Of the affected unions, five were in Kazipur thana, two in Sadar, one in Belkuchi, four in Chouhali and three in Shajapur thanas.

Officials said, standing crops, including seed beds on some 91 acres of land were washed away by the surging water.

Meanwhile, some 150 families of char areas were rendered homeless due to erosion by the river Jamuna.

In Manikganj, considerable portions of eight unions in two thanas of the district have been inundated following spate of the Jamuna and the Padma.

The district's Hariampur and Daulatpur thanas are now being affected by the flood water for the second time this year.

Officials recorded 8cm rise in water level of the river Jamuna at Aricha point during the last 24 hours.

Allowances to FFs

1784 applications pending

By Staff Correspondent

The Muktiyoddha Kalyan Trust provides Tk 7 crore 8 lakh allowances annually to 2,493 families of shaheed freedom fighters and 1,042 disabled freedom fighters.

This was disclosed yesterday in response to a question raised by Kader Siddiky, Bir Uttam, an Awami League lawmaker by Energy and Mineral Resources Minister Noor Uddin Khan who informed the House that 1,784 more applications for allowances are now pending with the Trust, of which some 477 applications had been scrutinized.

He said the applicants, whose cases had already been scrutinised, would be entitled to the allowances when the Trust gets necessary funds.

DU halls

From page 1
General students now apprehend that clash may erupt any time between the armed activists of BCL and JCD or between those of the rival factions of the BCL, the sources said.

Central leader of Chhatra League S M Kamal Hossain, who also was with Sheikh Helal during the gun attack, told journalists at the press club here in the evening that the miscreants tried to kill the Awami League candidate, but missed the target. A bullet incidentally hit Nasir, he added.

AL activist

From page 1
incident, but could not exactly say which party the deceased belonged to.

Central leader of Chhatra League S M Kamal Hossain, who also was with Sheikh Helal during the gun attack, told journalists at the press club here in the evening that the miscreants tried to kill the Awami League candidate, but missed the target. A bullet incidentally hit Nasir, he added.

Awami League MP from Bagerhat-3 constituency Abdul Khaleque Talukdar, former upazila chairman of Fakirhat Layekuzzaman and Khulna city Jubo League president Mizanur Rahman Mizan also accompanied Helal during the electioneering.

Meanwhile, both BNP and AL brought out separate processions to protest the attack and killing of party activist Nasir.

Soon after the incident, a group of young men attacked former MP of BNP Nargis Ali at noon at Fakirhat. She was injured and her private car damaged. Police, however, rescued her from the attackers.

A late night UNB report adds: Police sources said Nasir was hit by a bullet that accidentally got fired from a licensed gun owned by the candidate. The gun was being carried by another party worker.

Police arrested Shabbid Iqbal (32) who was reportedly carrying the gun at the time of the incident.

Pak FS

From page 1
who wanted to return should do so and those who wanted to stay should have legal documents. He, however, added that there was a humanitarian aspect which was being taken into consideration by his government.

Bangladesh Foreign Secretary Farooq Sobhan, when asked about the issue, stated that there were no Bangladeshis in Pakistan and even if they were people of Bangladesh origin they were nationals of Pakistan.

In reply to a question on the issue of stranded Pakistanis Farooq Sobhan said, "It does not help the relationship if one looks into the past."

He was satisfied over his current visit and hoped that there shall be more regular and annual exchanges between the two governments at the secretary level.



Finance Minister SAMS Kibria addressing as chief guest the seminar on 'Budget for 1996-97 and Reforms Programme', jointly organised by the Metropolitan Chamber of Commerce and Industry and Economic Reporters' Forum in the city yesterday. — Star photo

Consensus on reforms needed

From page 1
better comparative advantage is also limited.

In the first session of the seminar, World Bank's resident representative Pierre Landell-Mills opened the discussion and said the present government has taken over when the economic situation is difficult with loss of reserve, high inflation and marked increase in government borrowing.

"It is imperative not to let the situation go out of hands," he said adding that careful macro-economic management for stability is needed.

He felt that public expenditure has to be further curtailed than envisaged in the budget and that the projects in the ADP had to be ruthlessly examined to ascertain their priority.

Dr. Wahiduddin Mahmud, former adviser in the caretaker government, said despite a commendable increase in savings rate in four years in the early 90s from six per cent to 14 per cent, it slid down by about three per cent thereafter.

"The gains in savings was lost and unfortunately, the gains had not been used in investment, leaving no tangible gains," he noted.

Dr. Mahmud said an enormous task now is to raise savings rate to 16 per cent in the next four years.

Prof. Rehman Sobhan said the World Bank, after several years, says reforms have just started. He rejected this claim by saying "When you reflect where we are today, it is the end result of 15 years of reforms. We have to find way re-

form process had limited impact on economy."

Pointing out that the growth rate had been arrested at around four per cent since 1982, Prof. Sobhan said this means the elements of reforms did not succeed.

"This state of arrested development suggests that we have foregone potential growth that could have emerged from successful reforms," he maintained.

Saifur Rahman, MP, the immediate past finance minister, said economic discipline cannot not be expected if there are no rules and regulations.

"If judicial process is not good, nothing can be done," he said. "I had caught people taking away crores of taka from banks, but it will not work if the judicial system is not good," he said.

He mentioned that the bankruptcy act had been lying with the Law Ministry for 18 months.

Saifur said sound macro-economic management and fundamentals are essential for investments.

The former finance minister was critical of the World Bank's role regarding the government's effort to mobilise savings through savings instruments.

He agreed with Finance Minister Kibria's statement that the government single-handedly cannot deal with major policies. "There should be a national consensus on basic issues. National politics should rule over party politics," he maintained.

Syeduzzaman, who was finance minister during

Ershad's rule, chaired the session. In his concluding remarks, he said that public savings should be raised by reducing public losses.

Morshed Khan, MP, said the private sector's role was snatched away in the early days of the country, resulting in today's situation. The government should get out of business as soon as possible, he asserted.

Latifur Rahman, former president of the MCCI, said tax reform is essential to raise savings and industrial surplus.

The concept of consolidated balance sheet should be introduced since it is a world wide practice, he noted.

About the poor condition of the banking sector, as mentioned by the finance minister, Latifur Rahman said "much has been said about this, but very little has been done."

"Why the private sector should take the pinch of salt when we can do things to deal with the situation?" he asked.

Imtiyaz Hossain, Chairman of Dhaka Stock Exchange (DSE), said macro and micro level policies are needed to start mobilising funds from various areas for investment.

Mahfuz Anam, Editor of the Daily Star, said both the private and public sectors should be efficient and reforms should be carried out in a transparent manner.

He said the media could play a crucial role in building confidence of the investors in the economy by correctly informing the people about the health of the economy.