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Water pact was possible as Cong or BJP not in power: Kuldip

Eminent Indian columnist Kuldip Nayar yesterday said that signing of the water sharing accord between Bangladesh and India has been possible as neither the Congress Party of the BJP is in power in Delhi.

"The secret of this pact is that there is a non-Congress and non-BJP government in India," the Columnist said while speaking at a discussion meeting organised by 'People's initiative on water sharing and Women for water sharing' at the Jatiya Press Club yesterday.

Water resources expert Prof Ainun Nishat and academicians Prof Sajjadur Rashid and Prof Zakir Hossain, also addressed the meeting. A documentary film titled 'Ganges: The Dying River' produced by Nazreen Azim on behalf of the forum was also shown.

He however said in India there has recently been a growing awareness about the value of water and it planned use. "There is now a movement to understand the value of water. We have not been conscious of its use. But that aspect is changing," he said.

The water treaty has not been linked with anything like trade or transit. It is upto the people and government of Bangladesh to decide whether it would open the Chittagong Port and go for greater economic and trading links with India," Kuldip said.

He said Pranab Mukherjee, who was Indian External Affairs Minister in Congress government earlier, had linked water sharing with transit, but this government has not linked it with anything.

In this connection he referred to a new thinking in Patna, the capital of India's Bihar state where a suggestion has been made that there should not be any more dams that will obstruct the natural flow of rivers. The thinking is against all dam, Farakka included," he said.

The Narmada Dam constructed in India could not start functioning till now due to people's opposition, concerning environmental and ecological impact," he observed.

Dwelling on the just concluded 30-year Ganges water sharing accord, Kuldip said that Indian Premier Deve Gowda had assured that no more water could be withdrawn without the Centre's permission. However he pointed out that in India, water was a state subject.

Water expert Prof Ainun Nishat who was closely involved in the water agreement said "During the negotiations we could examine the actual availability of water at Farakka which was earlier kept confidential." "We found that water availability was the same as in 1977."

Prof Sajjadur Rashid said that the provision for conflict resolution in the just concluded treaty "was not totally absent, but was weak".

Mannan Bhuiyan

From Page 1 solved by the ruling party." Asked about the conditions that they feel would create a pre-dialogue atmosphere, he said the ruling party should have sincere willingness to solve the problems.

First, they will have to stop repression and free BNP leaders and workers arrested on 'false' charges.

Bhuiyan said about 10,000 BNP men fell victim to the ruling party's 'repressive acts' like arrest or warrants of arrest. At a public meeting recently, Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina had stated that her government would look into the matter, if BNP could submit a list of its arrested leaders and workers who were detained on political grounds as claimed by BNP.

When his attention was drawn to the Prime Minister's remarks, Bhuiyan said: "If the government formally tells us, we are ready to produce a list of our workers who were arrested in false cases."

The BNP leader alleged that more than 100 activists of his party had been killed in the last six months. The government is filing cases on false allegations against our ministers only to tarnish the image of BNP," he complained.

Bhuiyan reiterated the allegation that the Speaker, who is the custodian of the Parliament, was not playing impartial role. "He is not neutral... he has been conducting the Parliament with partisan outlook."

The BNP Secretary General resented that his party was not given proportionate representation in different parliamentary committees.

He said a few BNP members had been included in the parliamentary committees without consulting the Leader of the Opposition or the Opposition Chief Whip.

Bhuiyan slammed the ruling party for sidetracking the issues of national importance during parliamentary deliberations.

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The Daily Star seminar on 'Vision of the Young' Emphasis on science & technology to expedite development suggested

In the next decade, Bangladesh should accelerate its pace of development by giving more emphasis on the use of science and technology and adopting a stable economic policy, young professionals and students said at a seminar in the city.

A number of students and professionals below the age of 29 participating in the seminar on 'Vision of the Young' held in observance of the Silver Jubilee of victory in the Liberation War expressed the view that Bangladesh could achieve its economic goals by promoting local industries and creating large number of jobs by setting up dozens of export processing zones.

Organised by The Daily Star in cooperation with the Rotary International, Independent University of Bangladesh (IUB) and North South University, the seminar held on Tuesday was attended by a large number of students, doctors, engineers, entrepreneurs, cultural activists, journalists and other professionals.

Editorial on page 4 The field of science and technology is always being ignored. Nobody thinks about it although it has the potential to dramatically improve the lot of the people," she added.

She emphasised ensuring safety of women in all walks of life to enable them to utilise their capabilities to serve the nation.

Kamrul Ahsan, an engineer, said that he wanted to see the victory of good and honest men in all spheres of national life in the next 10 years.

Film director Rafi Hossain envisaged a political situation in which the parties would not oppose each other just for the sake of opposition but would make constructive criticism of each other.

Munir Saha, a journalist, emphasised need for a change in the mentality of the people to accommodate women in all professions. "There should not be any impediment to a woman in any sector," she added.

Alim Aziz, a writer envisaged a Bangladesh where 'nature would be protected in order to allow young minds to build their imagination.'

Anwar Sadat, a student of Dhaka University, argued that the government should formulate a policy to protect local industries and their products from unfair competition with imported goods.

In India, they protected their industries in the sixties and the seventies. Now their industries and industrial outputs have achieved an international standard. If our industries are protected, our products will also reach a standard to survive in the international trade," he maintained.

He believed that if corruption could be removed none could stop the development of Bangladesh.

Mahbub Tarek, another DU student, stressed improvement of political values so that politicians could not get away with false promises.

Zahedi, a former student of the DU, opposed student politics saying, "I was a resident student of Mohsin Hall. I had seen student politics closely. Believe me, there is no need of student politics and I am sure there won't be any need of it in the next decade."

He emphasised formulating common long term economic policy so that it remains stable and can contribute properly to development of the country. "I don't think there is much difference between the major political parties as far as their economic policies are concerned. So there is no reason why they can not agree on a specific economic guideline," he said.

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Bangladesh Mahila Parishad brought out a procession in the city yesterday marking its conference. —Star photo

Bangabandhu Memorial to be built beside Dhanmondi Lake

Bangabandhu Memorial, a monument dedicated to Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman will be built on the bank of the Dhanmondi Lake, officials said.

It will be constructed in front of the Bangabandhu Museum at Dhanmondi Road No 32.

The Ministry of Sports and Cultural Affairs will supervise construction of the monument.

It is expected to be completed by March 26, the officials said.

The Planning Commission has already approved a scheme under which the Dhanmondi Lake will also undergo a massive facelift to beautify the monument's surroundings.

A floating restaurant then will cater to the needs of visitors, the officials said.

6 construction workers injured in BIRDEM fire

At least six construction workers received serious burn injuries in a fire on the third floor of the BIRDEM hospital building at Shahbagh in the city yesterday evening.

The fire broke out in ward no 42 (old), where about nine workers were engaged in renovation work at around 6 pm.

The victims — Abdur Rahman, 30, Lutfor Rahman, 22, Rahmat Ali, 40, Jainul Abedin, 30, Nannu Miah, 25, and Nurul Islam, 27 — were admitted to the Dhaka Medical College Hospital (DMCH). Three of them were in critical condition.

It was not immediately known how the fire started. But a senior official of the hospital said the fire broke out due to a leakage in the gas line.

However, according to fire service sources, the flame started due to an electric short circuit.

The employees of BIRDEM, popularly known as Diabetic Hospital, extinguished the fire within a very short time. They used the fire fighting equipment installed in the hospital premises.

Three units of the fire brigade and an ambulance also rushed to the spot.

The hospital authorities have formed a six-member committee to investigate the fire incident, said an official of BIRDEM last night.

The official said there would be no disruption in the medical services due to the fire incident.

BNP protests govt 'non-cooperation' in Silver Jubilee celebration

Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP) has protested government's non-cooperation in celebrating the Silver Jubilee of Victory in the Liberation War.

It also protested Awami League activists' attacks on rallies and processions organised by BNP at various places in the country.

The protests were made at a BNP meeting held at the party central office yesterday with party Secretary General Abdul Mannan Bhuiyan in the chair, says a press release.

The meeting sharply reacted to what it said announcement of setting up a Liberation War Museum in Chittagong instead of Shaheed Zia Memorial Museum and replacement of the foundation stone of a memorial laid by the then prime minister Begum Khaleda Zia at Rayerbazar in the city by a new one laid by present Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina.

Attended by central leaders of BNP's front organisations, among others, the meeting congratulated the people for celebrating the Silver Jubilee in a befitting manner.

It said that though different political parties had taken up various programmes in celebration of the Silver Jubilee, the government lent no cooperation, rather, it created obstacles in many cases.

The BNP meeting said that their efforts to erect arches in memory of "Shaheed Bir Shresthas" in the city were resisted and in some cases police dismantled arches and warned against further attempts to erect those.

It alleged that "armed" activists of Awami League removed BNP's banners from the Martyred Intellectuals' Memorial at Mirpur at dead of night.

Protesting the announced plan for setting a Liberation War Museum in Chittagong, BNP warned of severe consequences if Shaheed Zia Memorial Museum was destroyed there.

The meeting protested Awami League activists' attacks on BNP rallies and processions at various places including Gopalganj, Nagarpur, Sonagazi, Shoilakupa and Nandail.

Ctg TV Centre opens today

CHITTAGONG, Dec 18: The much awaited full-fledged Chittagong Centre of Bangladesh Television will be inaugurated tomorrow, reports BSS.

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina is expected to formally inaugurate the TV centre in the afternoon which was built at Pahartali Hill top adjacent to Foy's Lake at a cost of about Tk 67 crore with financial and technical assistance from France.

The inaugural function is likely to be telecast live from Chittagong Centre, official sources said.

Initially ten-minute news and 50-minute programme depicting the tradition and cultural heritage of Chittagong will be telecast every day.

Jamaat leaders say Water treaty poses threat to country's sovereignty

Jamaat-e-Islami outright rejected as subversive the Ganges water-sharing treaty signed by the prime minister of Bangladesh and India in New Delhi last week, reports UNB.

"It has not only deprived Bangladesh of its legitimate share of the Ganges water but also poses threat to the country's independence and sovereignty," party's acting Amier, Abbas Ali Khan, told a rally here yesterday.

Khan quoted West Bengal Chief Minister Jyoti Basu, the architect of the treaty, as saying at a press conference in Calcutta that it would facilitate India to get the larger quantum of water, to use Chittagong Port and also get a corridor through Bangladesh to quench insurgency in their seven eastern states.

The Jamaat leader also cited a recent statement of Indian Prime Minister HD Deve Gowda claiming that the water-sharing treaty had paved the way for solution of other bilateral issues.

Khan observed that Gowda by making such remarks had indicated to the much-talked-about road transit and export of electricity to Bangladesh.

Police from other districts were called in and deployed around the besieged prison along with paramilitary BDR to prevent any jailbreak and bring the situation under control.

Another report adds: The government can consider the demands of the rebellious prisoners only when they will be disciplined and bring normalcy in the Jessore Central Jail, said an official.

"We cannot be hostage to the rebels," said the Deputy Commissioner of Jessore reached by telephone from Dhaka last night, as all efforts till time to resolve the crisis went in vain.

Replying to a query, the DC said the government wanted a peaceful solution of the revolt.

Local politicians as well as administration were trying their best to resolve the problem.

Education Minister AHSK Sadique yesterday talked to local politicians of Jessore on his way to Khulna.

The minister also inquired about the latest situation of the jail revolt from the authorities concerned.

Editor: Mahfuz Anam

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Finance Minister SAMS Kibria speaking at a roundtable on 'Bangladesh: An Agenda for Action' organised by Bhorer Kagoj, a vernacular daily, at Hotel Sheraton in the city yesterday. —Star photo

Consensus on reforms, good governance

From Page 1 sity the finance minister said that 'hidden cost' of the government had been putting heavy budgetary pressure. "We are spending more money in fertiliser subsidy than in education. The previous government increased subsidy in this sector and it is crushing us."

About the country's macro-economic situation, the finance minister said the rate of inflation is as low as below three per cent which is putting no immediate pressure on the economy.

He noted that there has been a healthy trend in imports, import of intermediary goods and raw materials has increased. "I agree that import-export figures need to be watched carefully. But one should not be too pessimistic looking at figures. There are some silver lining too," he said.

About credit disbursement, Kibria said the government is following a go slow process because the huge chunk of term loans, given earlier, may turn into a serious problem for the banks.

The finance minister said the government is counting on an investment-induced growth since foreign aid flow has stagnated over the years. "Rate of investment is already increasing. Although I do not expect a spectacular growth this year, but still it will be around 5.5 per cent and six per cent by next year."

Former finance minister M Saifur Rahman giving his view on the study report, said the country should determine its own agenda for development.

He was highly critical of the World Bank and said the Bank sets agenda without realising the reality and often makes superficial comments.

The Bank is criticising our nationalised commercial banks for having bad loans while there are at least two to three hundred big banks in the West that are facing the same

loan defaulting problem as we are facing," he said.

"Thousands of World Bank programmes have gone bad because of the problems, but they would not admit it," Saifur said.

He said that the persisting power shortage problem in the country was due to the Bank's 'wrong policies' in stopping lending in the power sector in 1989.

Criticising the Bank's suggestion for recapitalization of the private banks by the government, he said this will have disastrous effect on the economy.

Saifur felt that good governance and political consensus were the two mantras (principles) for development. "The political culture of conflict is hindering our growth," he said adding "we should not mar

economic prospect of the country for short term gains."

Tofael Ahmed said cooperation between the political leaders is a must for success of development programmes.

"If there is a consensus between political parties on privatisation, even the trade unions can not deter the programme," observed Tofael.

Prof Wahiduddin Mahmud said the country's macro-economy deteriorated since fiscal 1994-1995 with saving and investment gap widening and budgetary and trade deficits increasing.

The trend is still continuing, I do not see reasons for being very much concerned, but this is a worrying trend. This has to be stopped through appropriate blending of fiscal and trade policies," said Prof Mahmud.

"There seems to be an economic stagnation, but that may be a reflection of economic stagnation," he observed. Domestic savings which increased during 1993-94 and 1994-95 fiscal years has now stagnated or is declining losing the early gains, he said.

Dr Mohammad Yunus said the country needs to go fast for change in the world context to benefit from emerging opportunities.

"We have to ask ourselves — is our politics appropriate for that fast change? Are we opening up fast?" he said.

Dr Moyeen Khan said the question of subsidy in agriculture has to be considered in the light of the European countries and in the USA instead of being driven by donors.

Others who spoke on the occasion are former secretary Mujibul Haq, Managing Director of BMDC Shalma Khan, former secretary Kazi Fazlur Rahman and author of the World Bank's report Dr Shekhan Shah.

Mongla Port workers call off strike

Workers of the Mongla Port called off their strike yesterday after reaching an agreement with the authorities, official sources said here, reports BSS.

Nearly 6,500 workers went on strike over a wage dispute on November 11 leaving several ships carrying fertiliser, cement and general cargoes stranded at the port.

The officials said the workers agreed to resume cargo handling in the evening after the authorities came to an agreement with the Dock Workers' Association on their demands which include higher wages and benefits and employment of more workers.

Peruvian rebels

From Page 1 drinking in an elegant marquee on the lawn when the explosions occurred.

"Moments later, heavy gunfire had us all flat out on the ground," she said. "The guerrillas stalked around the residence grounds threatening us: 'Don't lift your heads up or you will be shot.'"

Bowen said police fired tear gas into the compound, but the rebels wore gas masks so only the hostages were affected. Witnesses said the rebels were armed with automatic rifles and grenades.

In the initial attack, police captured five suspected guerrillas before being forced out of the compound in the upscale San Isidro district of Lima.

Japan's ambassador, Morihisa Aoki, said in telephone calls from inside the compound to Japanese broadcaster NHK that the rebels wanted to talk directly to Fujimori. He said he was being held in a room by five or six of the guerrillas, whom he described as young men armed with pistols and rifles.

Early today, the rebels threatened to kill the remaining captives.

Japan's NHK public broadcasting network reported that executives from the Lima branches of Toyota Motor Corp, NEC Corp, Asahi Chemical Industry Co, Matsushita Electric Industrial Co and Mitsui Mining and Smelting Co, were among the hostages.

9 Khulna JCD leaders sued

From Staff Correspondent KHULNA, Dec 18: The city unit of Jubo League has lodged with Kotwali Thana a case against nine JCD leaders and activists for damaging the portrait of Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman and a dias here on Tuesday evening.

City JCD president Tuhin, who is also wanted in two other cases is one of the accused.

Minor boy rescued

Mirpur police arrested three child traffickers from Savar area Tuesday night and rescued an abducted minor boy from their den, reports BSS.

Police said, a group of unidentified child traffickers kidnapped a one and a half year old boy Munna, son of Beauty Akhter, a resident of 676 Shevrapara under Mirpur police station here on Sunday.

A team of Mirpur police after a long drive, rescued Munna from a house of one Mohiuddin Ahmed of Tarap Rajahat area under Savar thana. Police arrested Faizunnahar alias Chhabbi Begum 24, Zahid Hossain, 26, and Nannu Miah, 20 for their alleged involvement in kidnapping Munna.

3 child traffickers held in Savar

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Bangladesh Games

From Page 1 sations are taking part in 23 games, which will take place in 19 venues.

The participants of the games took part in a march past.

Besides, the inaugural programme was marked by games song presented by Shakila Zafar and her troupe on board a decorated vehicle. A patriotic song was presented by Apel Mahmud and co-artists.

Different organisations, Army, Ansars, Viquearunnisa School and Saontal community of Dinajpur demonstrated colourful display, which was witnessed by some 20,000 people. The programmes included dance, song and other demonstrations.

Abdus Sattar Nini and Kamrunnahr Dana carried the games' torch from Mirpur National Stadium to the Dhaka National Stadium. Mahabub Ara Gini and Mosharrar Hossain Khan lit the Bangladesh Games flame at the Dhaka National Stadium tower.

President of the Organising Committee of the Games and Finance Minister SAMS Kibria, State Minister for Youth, Sports and Cultural Affairs Obaidul Kader,