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Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina talking to US Ambassador David N Merrill at the Zia International Airport prior to her departure for Washington yesterday to attend the Micro Credit Summit there. — PID photo

Reported remark of Khaleda on water issue sparks debate

By Staff Correspondent

The Jatiya Sangsad yesterday witnessed a brief but stormy debate on former Prime Minister Begum Khaleda Zia's reported comment about the Ganges water sharing issue.

The ruling Awami League challenged to prove Begum Zia's remark that she forgot to raise the issue of water-sharing during her visit to New Delhi in May, 1992 while the Opposition BNP strongly denied the incident.

Noises, shouts, counter-shouts and desk-hittings gripped the House for sometime while senior members of both the sides delivered heated statements, defending their respective positions, as well as accusing each other of violating rules.

Water Resources Minister Abdur Razzak triggered the un-scheduled debate during the question-hour by quoting former Prime Minister as saying on her return from New Delhi that she forgot to raise the water-sharing issue with her Indian counterpart during her visit to India.

Taking the floor, an angry Chief Whip of the Opposition Khandakar Delwar Hossain charged Abdur Razzak for making an untrue statement involving Begum Zia while replying to questions.

How can the minister give such an untrue statement without producing any document? said Khandakar Delwar, also blaming the Chair for not allowing his party members to speak and not running the House as per rules.

Ruling party lawmaker

CHT bills passed

Claiming that the present government had a special relation with India, Mashur said it was possible to hold elections in the Chittagong Hill Tracts if the government persuaded India to create a congenial atmosphere there. "So the government should not seek extension of the tenure of the local bodies in the hill districts," he argued.

Abdul Alim, another BNP MP, told the House that the "crisis" in Chittagong Hill Tracts began with the head of the first government of the country asking the tribal people to become "Bangalees".

"It is unfortunate that the present government is now making efforts to withdraw army from the troubled zone, when the Shantibahini has been disturbing peace in the area with Indian support," Alim added.

Jatiya Party MP M K Alam Chowdhury observed that the provision for 'appointing' an interim council was a clear shift of the ruling Awami League from democratic principles.

While opposing the bills, BNP legislator Prof. Shahidul Islam said it was unfortunate that the government was giving the Shantibahini leaders, who have been killing "our fellow citizens" in the hill districts, the honour of state "guests" and holding discussions at the state guests house.

Arguing against the provision for 'appointing' the proposed interim council, BNP MP Major (Retd) Akhtaruzzaman said it was ultra vires of the Constitution. Quoting from Article 59 of the Constitution, he said local governments at all times have to be run by elected representatives of the people.

The provision for appointing an interim council in the hill districts is nothing but an attempt to make the administration of the region partisan, he said.

Mashur Rahman of the BNP claimed: "The Shantibahini had been killing our people with military backing from India."

Speaker Humayun Rashid Chowdhury adjourned the House at 5:00 pm yesterday till 11:00 this afternoon.

Earlier, BNP lawmaker M K Anwar demanded revision of the ruling by the Chair on whether a technocrat minister could speak on behalf of another ministry. Deputy Speaker Abdul Hamid who was in the chair at that time said that he would give a ruling after due scrutiny.

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PM leaves

From Page 1
services, and senior civil and military officials.

Foreign Minister Abdus Samad Azad, LGRD Minister Zillur Rahman, Finance Minister SAMS Kibria, Chief Whip Abul Hasnat Abdullah, Mayor of Dhaka Mohammad Hanif, Dean of diplomatic corps PLO ambassador in Dhaka Shahta Zarab and US Ambassador David N Merrill were among them.

During the tour, Hasina will lead a 15-member delegation that includes State Minister for Foreign Affairs Abul Hasan Chowdhury, State Minister for Planning Dr Mohiuddin Khan Alamgir, Mofazzel Hossain Chowdhury Maya MP, Kalparanjani Chakma MP, Seguita Yasmeen MP and Foreign Secretary Farooq Sobhan.

She will touch Miami, USA, today and reach Washington on February 1.

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Work on city car parking lots will begin in July

The government has undertaken a project on the construction of modern electro-mechanical car parking infrastructures at various important places of the city to ease traffic jam.

A DCC source told BSS yesterday that the Taka 49.50 crore project under the auspices of the Local Government Division would be implemented by the Dhaka City Corporation (DCC) during the coming fiscal year.

The source said after completion of the project, the traffic jam at places like Gulistan, Mohakhali, Mohammadpur, New Market, Kawan Bazar, Tejgaon, Mouchak Square, Sayedabad and Motijheel will be eased to a larger extent.

Of the total amount, Taka 18.20 crore will be provided by the Bangladesh government and Taka 31.30 crore in foreign currency will be provided by the Chinese government for construction of 10 three-story parking infrastructures with 1,124 sq meter floor space each.

The construction of the parking lots, which is time-befitting with the present perspective of DCC and also consistent with the under-preparation Fifth Five-Year Plan, will start in July this year and end in June next year.

According to the main objectives of the project, car parkings could be provided at several storeys of a building on a small land which will lessen the rate of road accidents in the city.

Besides, cars can be saved from sun, rain or other possible damages as they will remain within the covered structures under mechanical parking system.

The source said there would be no possibility of lifting of cars under this system while this would generate huge revenue earnings.

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Schoolboy killed during AL factions' gunfight in Shahjadpur

SIRAJGANJ, Jan 29: A schoolboy was shot dead and 15 people were injured during armed clashes reportedly between two local factions of the ruling party at Shahjadpur thana headquarters today, reports UNB.

The dead was identified as Nazimuddin, 15, a class VIII student of Shahjadpur Pilot High School and son of Tara Mian of the poura area.

Witnesses said Nazimuddin was hit by a bullet in his belly in crossfire on his way home amid the gunfight allegedly between the supporters of two local Awami League leaders at 3 pm.

The ill-fated boy ran with the bullet upto his residence from where family members rushed him to Bogra Mohammad Ali Hospital but he succumbed to his injuries on the way, family sources said.

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Suranjit at press confce

Constitution doesn't bar non-MP minister from answering questions

Parliamentary Affairs Advisor to the Prime Minister, Suranjit Sengupta MP yesterday said that the Constitution does not bar any non-MP minister from answering to questions not related with his ministry, reports BSS.

Speaking at a press conference at his parliament building office, he said according to parliamentary dictionary, speech, statement and answering questions do not have the same connotations and the Constitution only bars a technocrat minister in delivering speeches or statements on matters not related to his ministry.

Sengupta made the comments in connection with the recent parliamentary debate on State Minister for Planning, Dr Mahiuddin Khan Alamgir's authority to speak in parliament on issues other than his ministry.

Sengupta referred to three precedences during the past BNP regime when BNP minister Tariqul Islam answered question on behalf of other ministers in their absence while he was a non-MP minister.

The ruling party leader, however, said the spirit of the Constitution is to uphold public representation in parliament and that is why it has imposed limitations of delivering speeches or statements by non-MP ministers on issues of other ministries but did not bar him from answering questions on ministries other than his own.

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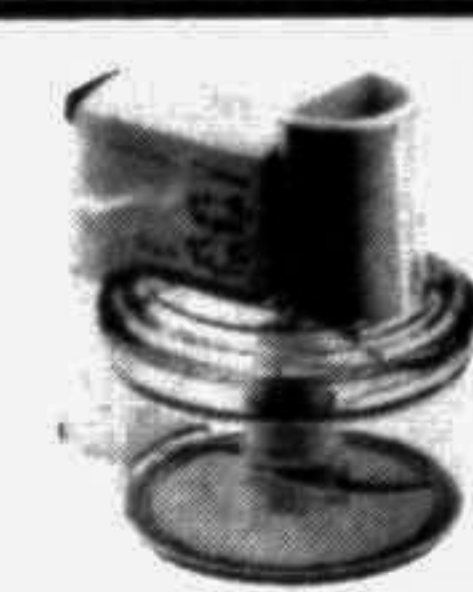
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