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Top Indo-Pak diplomats meet to set up working groups

MALE, May 14: Top diplomats of India and Pakistan met today to set up working groups to advance the directive given by their prime ministers to resolve the 50-year-old conflict, a diplomat said, reports AP.

Foreign Secretary Salman Haider and his Pakistani counterpart Shamshad Ahmad met today at the end of the 3-day ninth SAARC summit here.

Haider's informal meeting with Ahmad came two days after Prime Minister Inder Kumar Gujral of India and Pakistan's Nawaz Sharif met.

No details of today's meeting were available. The foreign secretaries were accompanied by some key officials of the respective foreign ministries.

Gujral and Sharif broke through a three-year stalemate and agreed to discuss their 50-year dispute over the Himalayan state of Kashmir.

Despite the unexpected congeniality they displayed in public, Gujral said he had rejected a request from Sharif to remove Indian army forces and paramilitary troops from Kashmir.

Speaking to reporters late Tuesday, Gujral said he told Sharif the troops were there to stop terrorism.

Khaleda goes to Rajshahi today

From Our Correspondent
NATORE, May 14: BNP chairperson and Leader of the Opposition in parliament Begum Khaleda Zia is expected to arrive in Rajshahi tomorrow. She will attend a programme to be held in Rajshahi in observance of the 'Farakka Day'.

According to sources, Begum Khaleda Zia will also meet local BNP leaders and workers. The BNP chairperson will address a public meeting at the Madrasah Maidan on May 16. The local units of BNP and its front organisations will organise the public meeting in observance of the 'Farakka Day'.

On May 17, Khaleda Zia will address the Rajshahi Divisional Conference of Jatiyatatabadi Samik Dal.

ALCWC meets today

By Staff Correspondent
The first meeting of the newly-elected Awami League Central Working Committee (ALCWC) will be held at 11 am today at Ganobhaban with party president Sheikh Hasina in the chair.

Later, the ALCWC members will place wreaths at the portrait of the Father of the Nation Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman at Bangabandhu Bhaban at Dhanmondi and offer Feteha there, said a press release.

BSF releases 2 Bangladeshis

From Staff Correspondent
SYLHET, May 14: The Indian Border Security Forces (BSF) released two Bangladeshis yesterday. The BSF had kidnapped them from the river Kushiya when they were fishing on Friday.

However, the BSF has not yet returned the three fishing boats and nets.

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Consensus on all CHT issues, agreement soon

By Special Correspondent

A consensus has been reached on all issues with the Parbaty Chhattagram Jana Sanghati Samity (PCJSS) to bring peace in the Chittagong Hill Tracts, Abul Hasnat Abdullah, Chairman of the National Committee on CHT, said here yesterday.

"We arrived at a consensus on all issues. An agreement will be signed soon," Abdullah told reporters with a triumphant smile last night at the porch of Padma, the state guest house where he held four days of intensive negotiations with the PCJSS delegation led by Jyotindriyo Bodhipriyo Larma alias Shantu Larma.

But he declined to elaborate. Shantu Larma, standing beside him, only smiled when Abdullah made the announcement.

Abdullah also said the PCJSS delegation is not going to meet the Prime Minister. PCJSS sources said earlier that they had sought an audience with Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina to "break the impasse" in the talks which began on May 11.

The PCJSS delegation is leaving for Dudukchara in Khagrachari sometime this afternoon. They will brief their 'comrades' on the progress of negotiations which was the

24th since peace talks began in 1986.

On demands for land rights the government had earlier said that tribespeople would have their traditional rights on the land. Several thousand tribal refugees who returned home from Tripura in India were given back their lands in cases where those were occupied illegally.

More refugees are awaiting their turn to return home, bidding their time on the outcome of the peace negotiations. Yesterday's announcement would definitely spur their return, according to sources concerned.

On the crucial issues of

withdrawal of security forces, as demanded by the PCJSS in their five-point demand, the authorities clearly told them that it would not be possible to withdraw the forces. They would stay in their Cantonments once the ceasefire becomes permanent and peace is restored after decades of violence.

Precisely on what issues and terms the negotiators worked out the 'consensus' to prepare the ground for an agreement was not known.

A ceasefire is holding in the three hill districts of Rangamati, Khagrachari and Bandarban since August 1992, despite occasional breaches. The

ceasefire will expire on June 30.

The prospects for peace brightened when the National Committee was reconstituted and talks began in earnest in October last year. This was the fifth in the series since the new committee resumed negotiations after 13 rounds of talks between the previous committee and the PCJSS failed to negotiate a settlement. But two BNP members of the present committee did not attend the current series of negotiations.

There had been serious disagreement on extension of the tenure of the three hill councils which ends on June 30. PCJSS leaders want them to be re-

placed by a 'regional council' with wide powers. But government wants to give the hill district councils wide authority under elected leaders. As per their five-point demand the 'regional council' is to have autonomous power, with its Chairman enjoying the rank of a minister.

There had been disagreements on the fate of settlers from the plains who constitute nearly half of about 800,000 people in the hills, home to 13 ethnic minorities belonging to different tribes.

The Chakmas who dominate the PCJSS constitute 24 per cent of the population. See Page 12 Col 8

JCD-BCL clash Rajshahi BIT closed sine die

From Our Correspondent

RAJSHAHI, May 14: The Bangladesh Institute of Technology (BIT), Rajshahi has been closed sine die following a clash between the activists of the Bangladesh Chhatra League (BCL) and the Jatiyatatabadi Chhatra Dal (JCD) today.

Twelve persons were injured in the clash. Three of them were admitted to the Rajshahi Medical College Hospital. Four rooms of a hostel were set on fire and 18 rooms of three hostels ransacked.

According to police, a BCL worker was beaten up by some unidentified persons yesterday. The BCL blamed the JCD for the incident. Some youths attacked the main hostel this noon and a clash ensued.

The BIT authorities have asked the students to vacate their halls by 7 pm.

Rivals stab BCL activist, another beaten up

By DU Correspondent

Two activists of the Bangladesh Chhatra League (BCL), the student wing of the ruling Awami League, were injured yesterday on the Dhaka University campus in an intra-party conflict.

The victims were identified as Babu, a second year student of the Department of Sanskrit and Selim of the Mathematics Department. According to sources they belong to the 'Bakhtak' group of the BCL. Babu was stabbed and Selim was beaten up reportedly by the Faridpur-Madarpur group led by Shamim Ahmed in front of the Madhu's Canteen at around noon.

They were attacked reportedly for not offering 'salam' to Shamim Ahmed on the day before yesterday.

The incident took place when the leaders of two factions were at a meeting to resolve the issue.

CU situation tense as Shibir calls hartal today

From Staff Correspondent

CHITTAGONG, May 14: Tension mounted on the Chittagong University campus as the Islamic Chhatra Shibir backed 'Shikka Sangram Parishad' gave a call for hartal at the university tomorrow, campus sources said.

Meanwhile, BCL activists continued their strike on the campus for the eighth day today by blocking the entrance to the university.

As a result, no classes were held and no vehicles could enter the campus.

Shibir activists damage railing on road near Baitul Mukarram

Chhatra Shibir activists yesterday damaged the railing dividing the road on the north side of Baitul Mukarram national Mosque, reports UNB.

Police said the Shibir activists demonstrating in the afternoon demanding withdrawal of 'terrorists' and police from

See Page 12 Col 8

Male Declaration adopted

SAARC states for free trade area by 2001

MALE, May 14: The ninth SAARC Summit ended here today with a landmark decision to create a free trade area in South Asia by the year 2001 to facilitate trade and increase economic linkages between the SAARC countries, reports UNB.

In a 14-page declaration, the SAARC leaders agreed to steadily relax trade barriers until a free trade zone is established by the year 2001.

The declaration also committed the leaders to cooperate on eradicating poverty by sharing resources and pooling expertise for strengthening laws to end child prostitution and boosting literacy levels in the region.

Announcing the decisions at the concluding session of the 3-day summit, the new chairperson of the seven-nation forum, President of the Maldives Maumoon Abdul Gayoom called for making SAPTA effective by removing trade barriers and also by focusing on trade facilitation measures.

The SAARC leaders have agreed to take effort to enhance trade and economic cooperation in the region to further strengthen it by taking specific steps to promote and protect investment and other measures supportive to SAARC joint ventures.

Gayoom said South Asia is a large market and it should be geared to ensure peoples' benefit from the economic resources and trade potentials. "South Asia needs to be prepared for the next century."

He stressed the need for developing infrastructure, adequate communication networks and simplified documentation procedure to strengthen economic cooperation.

The summit decided that civil aviation authorities of the member states would meet with a view to establishing direct air services between the SAARC capitals to promote people-to-people contacts and encourage tourism.

A group of eminent persons representing all SAARC countries will be appointed to review SAARC achievements and to examine ways to provide further impetus to the regional cooperation, he said.

Looking forward to the next century the work of the group will be of immense value in identifying ways, to integrate activities and target in a SAARC agenda for 2000 and beyond which, he said, would also indicate what can and should have to be achieved by the year 2020.

Gayoom pointed out that a See Page 12 Col 3

Colombo to host tenth summit

MALE, May 14: The 10th Summit of the seven-nation South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC) will be held in the Sri Lankan capital of Colombo in 1998, reports UNB.

SAARC Chairman and President of the Maldives Maumoon Abdul Gayoom declared the venue of the 10th summit at the concluding session of the 9th SAARC Summit at Darubaarage Hall here today.

Exact date will be finalised through consultation with the member countries.

Commentary

Hon'ble parliamentarians, please behave honourably

By Mahfuz Anam

In a most disgusting show of parliamentary discourtesy, two MPs from the opposition BNP insulted the deputy speaker hurling abusive invectives in a loud voice which could be heard even by the journalists sitting in the upper gallery. To make matters worse, the MP who made the more vulgar remark had the gall to issue a public statement saying that he said no such thing, which when brought to the Deputy Speaker's attention, prompted him to say that he himself heard the comment. So now we have a case where an MP utters a vulgarity in public, and then denies it in writing. This to us shows that the person concerned not only DOES NOT have much respect for the parliament and the office of the presiding officer (in this case the Deputy Speaker) but he also does not have much respect for public opinion, thinking that the fact of his public misbehavior, heard by so many, can be wiped out by a public denial. We think BNP leaders should have reprimanded him and apologised on his behalf.

Quite often MPs have been seen to raise questions of privilege when negative comments about them are published in the press. As 'people's representatives' they seem to think that they are above criticism. But

what happens in this instance. An MP has, in the hearing of many, including journalists, insulted the Deputy Speaker. To avoid further embarrassment and perhaps not to further complicate relations with the Opposition the Deputy Speaker may have decided to overlook the matter. But we the public cannot, and will not. Thanks to TV and Radio coverage we are privy to what goes on in that sanctified forum.

As the MPs have rights and privileges, we, the people, have our rights too. We pay a huge amount of money — hundreds of crores — to hold elections. Then we pay several crores to keep the institution of the Jatiya Sangsad running nearly Tk 16,000 per minute, if we are not mistaken. In addition, we give our MPs salary, allowances, telephone and travel privileges etc., not to mention tax free vehicles. For what? To utter insults at the Speaker. To quarrel all the time. To abuse and speak ill of each other every time they rise to speak.

On behalf of the voters we would like to ask how many minutes of this parliament have been spent to discuss the most urgent problems of the people, like public health, malnutrition, violence against women, falling standards of education, rising drug addiction

among youth, rising unemployment, arsenic poisoning in vast areas of southern Bangladesh. Honourable Members of Parliament, have you ever asked yourself as to why the poor of this country spent hundreds of crores to elect you and then continues to spend a huge amount of money to maintain you? Is it to see you go at each others' throat at every opportunity? Is it to see that you insult the other party's leaders on every occasion that comes your way? Is it to see you thumping your files on the desk like unruly children in a kindergarten class just so that the proceedings of the House is disrupted? Is it to see you making outlandish claims about your party's achievements, and saying the most outrageous mis-facts about the other? Is it to see you raise issues with the sole purpose of embarrassing the other side? Please tell us what did the nation gain from what has been going on during the last few days?

As the saying goes if one does not look after his or her own honour, others cannot look after it for them. So, if the parliamentarians do not look after their own honour and hat of the House then how can we the people, look after it? Honour is something that no

See Page 12 Col 6

New Vice Chairman elected 2 more DSE councillors resign: EGM June 25

By Rafiq Hasan

A Dhaka Stock Exchange Council meeting yesterday elected Abdul Haq as its new Vice-Chairman and fixed June 25 for holding an Extraordinary General Meeting (EGM).

Two DSE councillors, Khwaja Abdul Qudus and Khurshid Alam, submitted their resignation letters immediately after the meeting at noon. Final decision on their resignation will be taken at the next board meeting of the DSE likely to be held within a week. Honorary Secretary General of the bourse Shahid Khan told The Daily Star after the meeting.

A section of DSE members and general investors have been demanding removal of all councillors who have been charged in the share market scam cases.

Asked why he resigned from

the council body although he was not accused by the probe committee, Khwaja Abdul Qudus said, "I resigned to help reorganise the board, hoping that it would bring a positive result by inducing better people into the [DSE] board."

Three other councillors — Raquibur Rahman, AG Azam Chowdhury and vice-chairman Ahmed Iqbal Hasan — resigned earlier. DSE Chairman Intiaz Hossain was removed by a no-confidence motion at the last board meeting after he declined to resign.

Hossain subsequently gave a letter to the DSE challenging the legality of his removal. When contacted last night, Hossain said, "I wanted to know whether it was done according to the DSE constitution. If it is

See Page 12 Col 5

DUCSU committee may be dissolved today

By DU Correspondent

The Vice Chancellor of Dhaka University, Prof. Abul Kalam Azad Chowdhury, will meet the leaders of different student organisations at a meeting of the DU Parishesh Parishad today.

The question how the DUCSU election will be discussed in

See Page 12 Col 4

JCD observes strike at IU

From Our Correspondent

ISLAMIC UNIVERSITY, May 14: The pro-BNP Jatiyatatabadi Chhatra Dal (JCD) observed a day-long strike at the Islamic University today demanding punishment to those responsible for attacking its two activists Tuesday afternoon on the campus.

The two JCD activists — Amin and Liton — were seized

See Page 12 Col 8

JS snippets

By Nazmul Ashraf

Speaker Humayun Rashid Chowdhury pointed out that BNP lawmaker Abul Kalam Azad inserted an extra word while reading out his notice in the Jatiya Sangsad yesterday.

In a lighter vein, the Speaker drew Azad's attention to say, "You've mentioned an extra word" — request — which was not in the text of your notice."

The Chair's comment was apparently prompted by another BNP member, Najimuddin Alam, who inserted several sentences into his notice blaming the ruling party-backed terrorists for realising tolls from the HSC examinees at his constituency in Bhola.

See Page 12 Col 7

Corruption case filed against ex-chairman of Mongla Port

From Our Correspondent

JESSORE, May 14: The Anti-Corruption Bureau has filed a case against the ex-chairman of the Mongla Port Authority and 14 others for misappropriating one and a half crore taka worth of fuel.

The case was filed with the Khalishpur thana yesterday. The accused are: Ex-chairman, Nazrul Hossain, Executive Engineer Abdul Motin, Assis-

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Minister admits in JS

Dhaka didn't get water as per agreement

By Staff Correspondent

Water Resources Minister Abdur Razzak admitted in the Jatiya Sangsad yesterday that the country had received less than the agreed quantum of Ganges water in some of the 10-day cycles during the last four months and said the government was examining the reasons for the reduction.

"We're examining and discussing the matter with our counterpart and we seek the co-operation of all to realise the agreed quantum of water," the minister said responding to criticism of the Opposition BNP lawmakers.

Quoting from a chart on the quantum of waters, agreed and actually received over the four-month period, the minister said, "We got more water than mentioned in the agreement in some cycles while less in others."

Replying to a query from M K Anwar of BNP, Razzak also explained that the country was deprived of the agreed quantum of waters as melting of ice in upstream was not according to expectations, decreasing the flow of water at the Farakka point this year.

"This is nothing unusual It happened in the past too," he commented.

The minister also denied a charge made by the Deputy Leader of the Opposition, Badrudzo Chowdhury, that his

replies to the questions on the Ganges water were contradictory.

In reply to a supplementary query by M K Anwar, Razzak admitted getting less water than the agreed quantum while in a written reply to Zafrul Islam Chowdhury of BNP, he claimed of getting the agreed quantum through the printed chart showed differences between the quantum of water agreed and received.

According to the chart, the country received 62,019 cusec of water against the agreed quantum of 62,180 during January 1-10, 49,556 cusec against 49,635 during January 11-20, 48,884 cusec against 48,672 cusec during Jan 21-31, 45,604 cusec against 45,604 cusec during

See Page 12 Col 4

Tribal separatist violence India to deploy more troops in 6 states

NEW DELHI, May 14: India will deploy thousands of additional troops in six of its seven far-eastern states hit by tribal separatist violence, Home Minister Indrajit Gupta said Wednesday, reports AFP.

Gupta told parliament that four army battalions would be sent to Assam, two each to Tripura, Manipur and Arunachal Pradesh and one each to Mizoram and Meghalaya.

Each battalion of 1,200 personnel would help para-military forces and army already deployed in the regions, he said. "These states are currently affected by secessionist, subversive and violent activities of insurgent groups," he said.

The government is also providing financial assistance to (the seven states) to procure arms and ammunition.



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