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AL has fulfilled some pre-polls pledges: PM

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina here today said that cooperation of all is needed to march towards self-reliance of the nation, to free it from poverty, hunger and illiteracy, reports UNB.

"Power is a responsibility to serve the nation and perform duties for the welfare of the people," she said calling upon all irrespective of political opinion to work for the prosperity of the nation.

Addressing a huge public rally at the local Niaz Mohammad High School ground, the prime minister said economic prosperity of the nation is the main target of the government.

"Economic development is essential for removing poverty and illiteracy, creating jobs for the people while political stability is the prerequisite for economic advancement and attracting investment," she said.

In this context, she urged the opposition to help maintain political stability for investment, industrialisation and economic uplift of the country.

Referring to sub-regional grouping, Hasina said it is aimed at ensuring economic progress of the nation through cooperation of all.

Criticising the present role of the BNP, she said it was quite friendly towards India when in power, but has now taken an anti-India stand while out of power. "BNP did not say anything when they were in power,

but now they are speaking against India."

The nation's image has been restored following the steps taken by the Awami League government, and the donor countries are coming forward again, she added.

Referring to the election pledges, Hasina said her government is taking steps to fulfil all its commitments. Already, some of them have been implemented.

In this context, she mentioned the signing of the historic Ganges water treaty to ensure due share for Bangladesh.

"The on-going peace process in the Chittagong Hill Tracts region also made good progress because of the sincerity and commitment of the government," she said.

Hasina said, "The present government does not believe in tall talks and usually completes what it says it will do."

In the past, she alleged, signboards were placed and plaques erected, but no real work was done for the good of the people.

Referring to the problems of Brahmanbaria district, the prime minister assured of government steps to introduce some more honours course in the local government college.

She said a bridge would be constructed on the river Meghna with financial assistance of the donor countries. For this, the government would start negotiation soon, she added.

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Down to Earth

Vicious Rackets in Adulteration

By A S M Nurunnabi

It has been lately reported that the number of adulterated food items in the market is rising and officials of the Institute of Public Health (IPH) have warned that unless laws against food adulteration are amended with stringent provisions, there is no hope of improving the situation.

The Public Health Laboratory of the IPH in its last report has stated that more than 45 per cent of the food items tested in course of last one month was found to be adulterated. This gives an indication of the magnitude of the problem involved. According to many observers, the problem is more serious, so much so that adulteration practices may be described as ubiquitous in the city, as elsewhere. The incidence of such practices affects not only food stuffs and medicines but also every conceivable area of consumption. The adulteration goods are also found to be novel and ingenious which keep changing to avoid detection and effective deterring actions.

The main targets of adulteration use to be foodstuffs like milk, edible oil, flour, sugar, medicines, etc. Recently, the metropolitan detective branch police reportedly unearthed one counterfeiting outfit at Lalbagh dealing in spurious vitamins, baby food, jellies, ball-point pens, cosmetics and what not. To many, the Zinzira area of Dhaka is considered to be the home of fake and low-quality goods. There were reports on the existence of factories making large-scale production of adulterated vegetable ghee and marketing it by using well-known brand names. There are also reports of manufacture in this area of fake dry-cell batteries bearing well-known brand

names, spurious China-made transistor radios and a host of other spurious products which find easy market among the rural people. Dholaikhal area in the city similarly carries ill-repute as a source of fake mechanical items.

Perhaps it may not be fair to paint the Zinzira picture always in dark colours. From 1986-87, the textile and garments industries founded there began to play an important role in raising the volume of our exports. Nowadays various products of good quality are produced at Zinzira which are free from the common stigma. The garments industries at Kaliganj in Zinzira area are said to produce high-quality jeans pants, jackets and other garment items which are exported. There are also reportedly high-grade textile mills in these areas which produce sarees of such good quality that they can withstand competition from Indian sarees inducted into the market through irregular channels.

On the other hand, it seems that in some respects, there is substance in the general notion that Zinzira-made products are synonymous with fake and low-quality goods. Some unscrupulous people, in their lust for earning considerable riches within a short time, are said to be behind the large-scale racket for producing spurious commodities of many kinds and marketing them all over the country.

If we turn our attention from the Zinzira scene for a while, we may be appalled at the enormity of other adulteration crimes particularly relating to medicines, as reported from time to time in newspapers. According to a recent report, a raid conducted by CID police has un-

earthed a factory operated by a gang for production of fake medicines of life-saving category by counterfeiting labels and packages of such drugs produced by reputable pharmaceutical companies. This is not the first case of this nature. The sheer recurrence of these incidents goes to prove that such rackets are well-entrenched and their perpetrators are not afraid of the law. They seem to become more daring as they fake the products of leading companies by using their own sophisticated technology and by simulating the trade mark and packaging of these leading companies.

It is no ordinary crime to cheat the people on life-saving drugs. So it is an urgent need that, in place of the sporadic nature of such raids, the law-enforcing agencies should pursue such cases with the required vigour all the way down to the roots of such crimes in order to eliminate them lock, stock and barrel.

Considering the enormity of the crimes related to adulteration, the laws framed in the old days and considered lenient, ought to be made tougher, as felt in all quarters. At the same time, it is felt by observers that active resistance groups are to be built up by consumers for protection. It also seems to be the responsibility of the manufacturers to try to ensure that no fake product is marketed in their names in order to safeguard their goodwill in business.

In this context, it is also felt that the Public Health Laboratory and the Bangladesh Standard and Testing Institute should continue to play more active roles in tackling the scourge of adulteration.

Shahjalal Varsity JCD calls off proposed strike

From Staff Correspondent

SYLHET, May 16: The Jatiyatada Chhatra Dal (JCD) has called off its 3-day strike at the Shahjalal University of Science and Technology which was scheduled to begin on May 17.

The decision was taken last night following a fruitful talks between the Vice-Chancellor and the leaders of the JCD.

The JCD-Chancellor assured the JCD leaders of immediate publication of the enquiry committee report on Feb 19 incident.

The university was closed since Feb 19 following a clash between the activists of JCD and BCL.

Kibria welcomes changes in DSE leadership

From Staff Correspondent

Finance Minister Shah A M S Kibria yesterday welcomed the removal of the chairman of Dhaka Stock Exchange, saying that a change was required for the good of the capital market, reports UNB.

Talking to newsmen at the airport he said he hoped that the new DSE leadership would take steps to bring about changes following the trend of the modern world. He assured that the government would extend all support to this end.

About the restructuring of Securities and Exchange Commission (SEC), the market regulator, the minister said the entire matter is now under consideration of the government.

13 diseases
per cent, 18 per cent of whom are under-five children.

2 extortionists held in city

By Staff Correspondent

Construction workers caught two extortionists from the site of an apartment project at Dhanmondi in the city yesterday and handed them over to the police.

They were identified as Faizul Islam alias Ripon and Abdul Motin.

Dhanmondi police arrested the two and also recovered a revolver.

Police said the arrested men and two of their accomplices attacked the project contractor of Zeal View Apartment on Road No 6/A at about noon and demanded toll.

Water treaty BNP apprehension has come true, says Mannan

By Staff Correspondent

BNP has accused the government of diverting public opinion around the world from the adverse impact of the Farakka Barrage in a planned manner by signing the Ganges water-sharing treaty with India.

"They accord not only deprived the country of its due share of waters but also jeopardised its interests," BNP Secretary General Abdul Mannan Bhuiyan, MP, told a discussion meeting marking the 'Farakka Day' at the BNP central office in the city yesterday.

Mannan Bhuiyan, also claimed that BNP's instant apprehension about the treaty had now come true.

Explaining, he said, the agreement resulted in less quantum of water for Bangladesh this year than that received last year. "The prime minister as well as the water resources minister told lies on the floor of the Jatiya Sangsad after befooling the people in the name of the treaty," he alleged.

The BNP leader further alleged that though Sheikh Mujibur Rahman had apparently permitted India to commission Farakka Barrage on an experimental basis, in reality he gave permission for its permanent commissioning causing disaster to the country.

Similarly, the government of Sheikh Hasina also took a position against the interest of the people by signing the water sharing treaty, bypassing the Sangsad, and ignoring the people, even her own party and the cabinet.

He also called for stronger resistance against the 'liar', 'betrayor' and 'deceiver' AL government, under the leadership of BNP chief Begum Khaleda Zia.

Chaired by Sadek Hossain Khoka, the meeting was also addressed by MK Anwar MP, Hafizuddin Ahmed MP, Haris Chowdhury, NI Khan, Abdul Khaer Bhuiyan and others.

Depression

From Page 1

could take shelter on a short notice.

The storm, the first this year from the Bay, already generated a hot and humid weather for the past couple of days.

The maximum temperature yesterday 39.3 degrees Celsius, was recorded at Rajshahi. In Dhaka it was 34.3 degrees, in Khulna 36.5, Barisal 35.2 and in Sylhet 33 degrees.

But a welcome shower of 6 mm broke the heat spell at Bogra.

In Dhaka, after a sultry afternoon, a brief shower releasing cool winds in the evening, brought relief to the citizens reeling under the sweltering heat for the past few days.

Khaleda

From Page 1

They are not allowing us to speak in the parliament. The Speaker is using the Chair like the president of Awami League. They are trying to make the parliament ineffective, she said.

Begum Zia accused the government of creating a reign of terror all over the country. She criticised the government for what she called replacing the elected VC of Rajshahi University by a 'partyman'.

Presided over by BNP city unit president Ekhlaq Hossain, the meeting was addressed, by among others, Moudud Ahmed, Zamiruddin Sirker, Khondoker Mosharrif Hossain, Aminul Haq, Kabir Hossain, Alauddin MP, Abu Hena MP, Mayor Mirjanur Rahman Minu, Gayeshwar Roy, Alamgir Kabir MP, Harun-ur-Rashid MP, Aman Ullah Aman MP and Nadim Mostofa MP.

Before going to the meeting, Begum Zia offered fatiha at the mazar of Shah Mokhdum and visited the Padma to observe the level of water.

She will inaugurate the bi-ennial divisional conference of Jatiyatadabi Sramik Dal at the Zilla Parishad auditorium tomorrow morning.

UNB adds: The BNP chairperson said that her party would launch a separate programme in the northern region for protecting the country and people's rights.

"We'll declare separate programme for this region if the government repression is not stopped," she told the meeting.

About law and order, the BNP leader, quoting official statistics, said 25,000 people were killed in the first 11 months of the Awami League rule. "Four people are being killed in every 24 hours," she pointed out.

B'baria TV relay centre opens

From Staff Correspondent

A new television relay centre was inaugurated here today by Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina at a simple function, reports BSS.

Inaugurating the centre, the Prime Minister said that her government wanted to expand the communication network to every nook and corner of the country. She said the people would be able to enhance their knowledge through various educational programmes aired by the electronic media.

The function was also addressed by State Minister for Information Prof Abu Sayeed, Information Secretary Kazi Raquibuddin Ahmed and Director General of Bangladesh Television Syed Salahuddin Zaki.

She said with the commissioning of the relay centre, the transmission command area would be spread to 80 sq. kilometre covering Brahmanbaria, Habiganj, Kishoreganj and parts of Narsingdi and Comilla.

Ashura

From Page 1

main attraction *Tajta* and *Bolta Gahwara* processions will be brought out from the *imambaras* in the capital and other districts — Kishoreganj, Sylhet, Manikganj, Comilla, Fariapur, Narayanjan, Khulna, Noakhali, Chittagong and Khagrachhari.

The 10th day of Muharram is also observed with due solemnity in neighbouring India, Pakistan and Iran.

On the occasion, Hussaini Dalan Imbarara in Dhaka, the largest in the country, will bring out its traditional colourful procession, *Manzil Gust*, at 10 am.

Mobutu

From Page 1

been struck with other generals to allow the rebels to enter the city peacefully.

Meanwhile, the families of Zairian soldiers further north of Kinshasa were also hurriedly crossing the river, Red Cross workers said.

Mobutu's departure followed reports that his three top generals told him they could not and would not defend the capital. Laurent Kabila, whose rebel troops have seized most of Zaire, has refused to halt his military advance while Mobutu dallies, clinging to his office.

Mobutu slipped out of the capital so quietly today — in contrast to the usual sirens and police escort that accompany his motorcade — that many residents did not know he was gone.

The capital was calm, with markets, shops and restaurants open and the streets filled with residents. But truckloads of machine-gun toting soldiers were out in force today along the road to the airport.

A western diplomat, speaking on conditions of anonymity, said there was a strong chance that Mobutu would flee the country today. French TF1 said Mobutu was going to Morocco, then on to France, where he has a villa on the Riviera. It cited no sources.



Sarbadiyia Farakka Protirodh Andolon brought out a procession in the city on Farakka Day yesterday. —Star photo

'Ensure sweet water flow to save Sunderbans'

By Staff Correspondent

Speakers at a discussion meeting in the city yesterday stressed the need for increasing the flow of sweet water into the channels of the Padma to save the Sunderbans.

The discussion meeting was organised by the Coastal Area Resource Development and Management Association (CARDMA) at the Press Club to mark the Farakka Day. The speakers highlighted the adverse affect of less flow of sweet water on the environment and ecology.

Begum Hasna Moudud chairperson of the CARDMA conducted the discussions, participated by among others, water experts Dr Ainun Nishat and Amjad Hossain, geologist Dr Zakir Hossain, MA Jabbar and Amir Kharsu.

Two video films on environmental and ecological problems caused by the Farakka Barrage were also screened at the meeting. One of those were filmed in West Bengal state of India and the other in the south western region of Bangladesh.

"Immediate intervention is required to ensure flow of at least 10,000 cusec water in the Goral to save the Sunderbans and the southern regions of the country," observed Dr Ainun Nishat, professor of water resources at the BUET. He stressed the need for constructing the Ganges Barrage and strict monitoring of withdrawal of ground water in the coastal region.



Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina inaugurating the Ashuganj-Bakhrabad gas pipeline in Brahmanbaria yesterday. — PID photo

Top 20 defaulters

From Page 1

99.90 crore in overdue loans. Originally these three companies were not known to be linked with the Beximco Group. The link was revealed after the Beximco Group came forward as guarantor when the AB Bank, under directives of the central bank, put pressure to recover the loans. Beximco Investment Ltd has guaranteed payment of the outstanding debts of these companies to AB Bank.

Bengal Carpets, with Tk 58.78 crore in overdue loans, is the third highest defaulter. It is owned by Abul Khair Litoo, Mohua Khair, Abdul Khalek, Monsurul Karim, and Mostaque Alam Chowdhury.

Bangladesh Solvent Oil Ltd is fourth on the list with Tk 56.92 crore in overdue loans. It is owned by Mark Rahman Chowdhury, Mohit Rahman Chowdhury, Momenur Rahman Chowdhury, Nasim Banu Chowdhury and Momenur Rahman Chowdhury.

AP Vegetable Oil Industries Ltd, owned by Daulatia Ali and Mohammad Ali, is the fifth top defaulter with Tk 46.08 crore in overdue loans.

Mohammad Ali also owns Dhaka Vegetable Oil Ltd, a publicly traded company, which ranked sixth on the list of defaulters. He was on the BNP ticket in the February, 1996 election and was elected an MP.

Dhaka Vegetable Oil has overdue loans of Tk 46.08 crore. The other owners of the company are MA Rashid, Hemayet Uddin Ahmed, Kazi Shahed Hasan Ferdous, Belayet Hossain Sharif, Suruzzaman, Arif

Mahmud, Humayun Kabir, Ajit Kumar Chowdhury.

Golden Ship Breaking Industries Ltd, owned by Abu Bakar Siddique and Solaiman Chowdhury, is seventh on the list, with Tk 42.98 crore in overdue loans.

Bogra Cotton Spinning Co Ltd comes eighth, with Tk 38.54 crore in overdue loans. The five owners of the company are: Arifur Rahman Bhandary, Fazlur Rahman Bhandary, Golam Kibria Bhandary, Nojesh Ali Sardar, and Wahidur Rahman Bhandary.

Showkat Hossain Chowdhury's Soheli Enterprise, which has Tk 36.17 crore in overdue loans, is the ninth highest defaulter.

Satkhira Fisheries, owned by JK Paul, Jabed Ali Sarkar and SM Chowdhury; ranks tenth, with Tk 36.17 crore in default loans. Khulna Fisheries Ltd owned by Ikrom Ahmed and Sakhawat Mobin Chowdhury has overdue loans totalling Tk 36.09 crore and comes 11th on the list.

But facts show that SM Chowdhury of Satkhira Fisheries and Shakhawat Mobin Chowdhury of Khulna Fisheries are the same person. According to sources, these two companies — which have a combined overdue loan of more than Tk 72 crore — are front companies of the Beximco Group.

Bangladesh Auto-rickshaw's Chalak Samity comes twelfth with Tk 28.94 crore in overdue loans. This obscure organisation was set up during the Ershad regime and was backed by the Jatiya Party. But all the money it gained was misappropriated during that period. It no longer occupies its office address of 19, Nawab Habibullah Road, Shahbagh.

Its owners include Abdul Ghani, Abdul Rod, Humayun Kabir, Mazrul Huda and Samiz Dewan.

Orion Laboratories Ltd is number 13 on the default loan table, with Tk 28.77 crore in overdue loans. This company is part of the Orion Group which also owns the publicly traded Orion Infusion Ltd — also on the top 20 defaulters' list. Orion Laboratories is owned by Ahmed Rafique, Arzuda Karim, M A Halim, Obaidul Karim, Wahidul Alam and Zaren Karim.

Rajshahi Steel and Engineering Works Ltd is the fourteenth biggest defaulter, with Tk 28.47 crore in overdue loans. It is owned by ANM Bazul Hoque, Liakat Ali and Mamtazuddin Chowdhury.

Sijans Steel Ltd stands fifteenth, with Tk 28.10 crore in overdue loans. Its owners are Jafar Ahmed Chowdhury, Nurul Alam and Shaful Alam.

Rahman Chemicals Ltd is the sixteenth biggest defaulter with Tk 27.98 crore in overdue loans. It is owned by 11 persons: MA Hafiz, MH Jamal, Nasreen Hafiz, Neema Jamali, Syed AKM Hafizur Rahman, Syed Mominur Rahman, Syed Monirur Rahman, Syeda Jahanara Atia Khan, Mahmud Jameel and Nima Jamali.

Pharmatek Chemicals Ltd comes in at seventeenth, with Tk 27.64 crore in default loans. It is owned by Delwar Hossain Khan, Mozarrar Hossain Khan, OMBK Ali, Osman Kabir Chowdhury and Sobhanj Ahmed.

Orion Infusion ranks eighteenth. It has Tk 27.58 crore in overdue loans on its accounts. This whole amount is deemed as sub-standard loan. Orion Infusion is owned by Ahmed Rafique, Arzuda Karim, Ebadul Karim, Golam Mohiuddin, Nilufer Nasrin, Obaidur Karim and Shafulur Rahman.

National Electric Co Ltd is number 19 on the list, with Tk 27.29 crore in overdue loans. It is owned by Ismatun Nessa Khanan, Ismatunessa Khatun, MA Rabbani, Nurat Ara Zaman, SA Rabbani, SB Zaman and Sayed Badruzzaman Siraj.

Last on the list is Saleh Carpet — a publicly traded company developed at a total of Tk 26.88 crore in overdue loans. Its owners are Badrul Haque, Dilara Begum, Rezaul Karim Chowdhury, Shah Newaz Chowdhury and Shamim-Ara-Begum.

AB gas pipeline

From Page 1

The 30-inch-diameter and 58 kilometre-long A-B Pipeline Project, financed by the World Bank, was implemented at a cost of Tk 279.15 crore, including foreign exchange component of Tk 183.91 crore.

The Prime Minister said much progress has been made in constructing two power plants in Haripur and Meghnaghat. Barapukuria coal mine is in the mid-stage of completion and a coal-fired power plant will be built there to solve the power problem, she said.

She noted that setting up of barge-mounted power plants at Shikabaha in Chittagong, at Siddhirganj in Dhaka and in Khulna is progressing fast.

Hasina regretted that decision of the previous government and its failure in implementing projects of energy sector in time had thrown the power and gas sectors in a total fiasco.

She said the World Bank had agreed to finance the 58 kilometre-long Ashuganj-Bakhrabad gas line project in 1992. But it took more than two years and a half to decide on signing the contract.

The past government could construct only 1.25 kilometres of the pipeline in four years before the rainy season in 1996 due to indecision and mismanagement, she added.

But, she said, construction of the remaining 56 kilometres of the Pipeline took only six months.

ADB loan
From Page 1
coming visit of the Prime Minister to Japan."

The Finance Minister termed the existing goodwill of Japan towards Bangladesh excellent. "Japan wants to mark the 25th anniversary of its diplomatic relations with Bangladesh through increasing economic cooperation," Kibria said.

The Finance Minister said during his talks with Japan International Cooperation Assistance (JICA) and Overseas Economic Cooperation Fund (OECF), he got tremendous positive response to the investment in Bangladesh in different sectors of development.

Kibria said both Japan and ADB had showed keen interest in providing financial and technical assistance to some major projects like construction of road-cum-railway bridge over Rupsha, Ganges Barrage Project and expansion of Sylhet International Airport.

The minister said he also had a fruitful discussion with Deputy Prime Minister of Malaysia Anwar Ibrahim on bilateral issues.

Kibria said the Malaysian leader had assured him of his personal initiative for setting up Bangladesh-Malaysian joint ventures in Bangladesh.

The Finance Minister said he had a meeting with the Deputy Prime Minister of South Korea which had become a bilateral donor of Bangladesh recently.

He said South Korea would provide at least 18 railway locomotives to Bangladesh this year.

He also had detailed discussion with the representative of the British International Development Cooperation (IDC).

The minister said he sought cooperation of IDC for the construction of a bridge on Dhaka-Sylhet highway over the Bhairab.

Kibria said Britain wanted to help Bangladesh in the construction of the bridge during the tenure of the past government, but the project work was stopped due to the non-purchase of the BNP government.

Kibria to sue

From Page 1

ister said and observed that such kind of motivated propaganda cannot be stopped without the protection of law.

Kibria termed such reporting "dishonest journalism" and suspected that some vested quarters were using a section of newspapers to tarnish his image and that of his family.

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