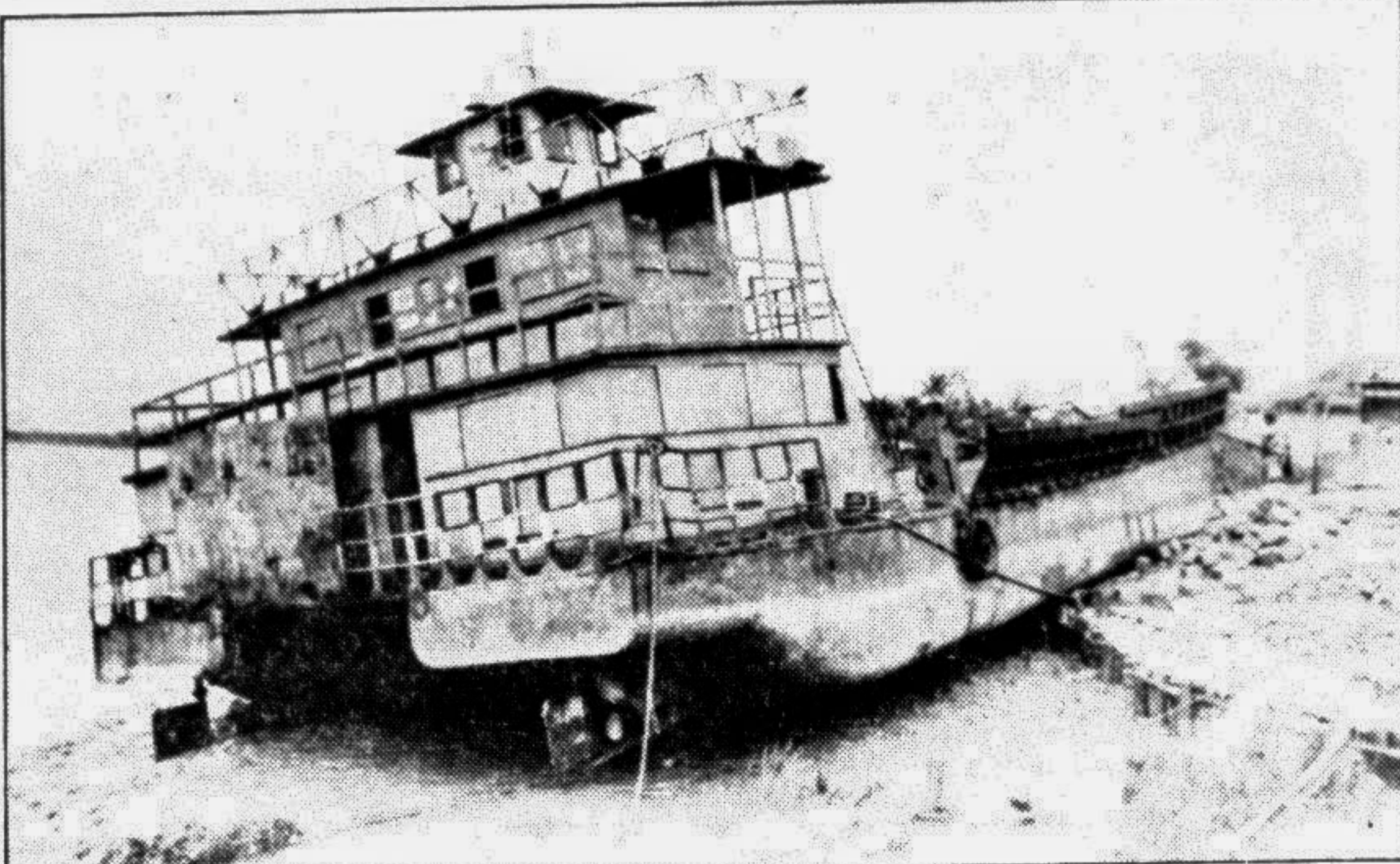


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TO INDIA

A ferry boat in the river Shankha in Chittagong was pushed onto the bank during Monday's cyclone. — Star photo

Yeltsin fires Dy Defence Minister

MOSCOW, May 20: President Boris Yeltsin sacked Deputy Defence Minister Konstantin Kobets today after he was charged with bribe taking, the Kremlin spokesman said, reports AFP.

Trade barriers

From Page 1

proposed in the 1997-98 Finance Bill, might encourage export of Bangladesh goods to India.

Mumtaz Ahmed referred to the huge illegal border trade that deprives the two governments of valuable revenue and said, "Strengthening and smoothening of legal border trade is extremely important for the mutual benefit of India and Bangladesh."

Yusuf Abdullah Harun said Bangladesh had experienced a mounting trade imbalance with India, which stood at around one billion US dollars in 1995-96.

The FBCCI President pointed out that the India's tariff reduction on the import of 572 items was being "held up" by the Indian bureaucracy.

"We need the cooperation and support of our business friends in India to remove all the impediments and barriers which discourage export from Bangladesh to India," he said.

On the transit issue, Harun said, "There are direct gains, as well as positive externalities, to be accrued by both our countries through the transit and corridor arrangements."

Alamgir Faruk Chowdhury, urged business leaders to meet frequently with the aim of identifying impediments in bilateral trade.

Buddha Purnima

From Page 1

ation will organise a discussion at the International Buddha Bihar at Meral Badia today.

State Minister for Religious Affairs Maulana M Nurul Islam will attend the function as chief guest while national Professor Dr Nurul Islam and Bangla Academy Director General Syed Anwar Hossain will be the special guests.

Buddhanada Bhikkhu and Bangladesh National Buddhist Youth Federation will hold separate programmes to mark the day.

Terrorist held

From Page 1

Gulshan, Tejgaon, Mohammadpur and Mirpur areas.

A couple of weeks ago, the Home Ministry announced a reward of Tk 50,000 for information leading to the arrest of Aslam.

The eight others arrested during yesterday's drive were identified as: Razib, Taru, Babu, Babul, Sagar, Sentu, Ripon and Rubel. Police said, they were trying to arrest the other members of the gang.

"It was a commando-style raid on the house on Road No 4, in Old DOHS," said a DB official adding Aslam fired a shot when the plainclothes policemen climbed by using ropes Aslam's second floor rented flat.

However, Aslam could not escape this time as the DB team, led by Akram Hossain, an Assistant Commissioner of Police, cordoned off the house acting on a tip-off.

Aslam and his wife came to the flat last Friday, said an official adding "we collected some 152 addresses of Aslam" in the Dhaka Metropolitan area.

After the confession of Aslam, police raided Tejgaon and Uttara areas and arrested the eight others. They also picked up 10 others on suspicion.

Three cases have been filed.

Editor: Mahfuz Anam

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The Daily Star

UNLF calls 30-hour bandh in Manipur from today

IMPHAL, May 20: Two underground organisations have called a 'Manipur Bandh' to protest against Prime Minister I.K. Gujral's visit to the state on Thursday, reports PTI.

The banned United National Liberation Front (UNLF), fighting for an 'independent Manipur', in a statement circulated here yesterday has called for a 30-hour bandh beginning at 0600 hours tomorrow.

It urged the people to boycott Gujral's visit, stating the authorities were indulging in "state terrorism."

The imposition of black laws (such as Armed Forces Special Powers Act), security excesses and killing of innocent civilians were being done under what it termed "colonial administration" in Manipur, the statement said and warned that anyone violating the underground order would be responsible for any consequences.

However, it exempted fire services, media, emergency hospital services and other religious functions from the purview of the bandh.

Another well-known underground set up Revolutionary

People's Front (RPF), political wing of the People's Liberation Army (PLA), has called the Manipur bandh on the day of the visit of the Prime Minister in protest against forcible merger of Manipur with the Indian union.

Official sources said the Prime Minister was scheduled to arrive here in the afternoon of May 22. During his stay, Gujral would address a public meeting and leave for Kohima the next morning.

Lanka in Pepsi Cup finals

HYDERABAD, May 20: Sri Lanka entered the Pepsi Independence Cup Tournament finals defeating New Zealand by 52 runs with 5.1 overs to spare at the Lal Bahadur Stadium here tonight, reports PTI.

Brief score: Sri Lanka 214 all out in 48.3 overs (Kaluwitharana 44, Mahanama 41, Attapattu 41). New Zealand 162 all out in 44.4 overs (M Horne 41, Chris Harris 26 no).

Transport strike in N-dists withdrawn

RAJSHAH, May 20: The indefinite transport strike in the northern region called by Bangladesh Sarak Paribahan Sramik Federation was withdrawn today, reports BSS.

The strike was called off following "fruitful discussions" at a joint meeting held here Monday with high officials and leaders of the Sarak Paribahan Sramik Federation, an official source said.

Rajshahi Divisional Commissioner Md Rezwanul Haq, Additional Divisional Commissioner Md Delwar Hossain, DIG Police, Rajshahi Range Abud Salam, Deputy Commissioners, Police Superintendents of the Division, high level officials, Joint Director, labour and leaders of the Bangladesh Sarak Paribahan Sramik Federation were present in the meeting.

Meanwhile, Bangladesh Sarak Paribahan Sramik Federation sources said that transport services in the northern region resumed this morning after "fruitful discussions" with the government officials and leaders of the Sarak Paribahan Sramik Federation.

Ctg: Cyclone

From Page 1

team visited the area. The villagers claimed that they needed more cyclone shelters there.

At Tollar Deep Ferryghat in the river Shankha under Banskhalhi thana, two ferries were seen rushed up the shore by the wave. The Banskhalhi-Cox's Bazar road was blocked by fallen trees.

No report of casualty was received when the team visited the area. But some people were seen with minor injuries.

The ferry service is expected to be restored later today while people were seen crossing the river with motorised boats.

In Patenga, roofs of some brick-built houses were also seen blown away.

In Shitakund thana about 26 kilometres south east of the port city, at last 70 per cent houses were damaged. People at Jahanabad village said they took shelter in factories and other pucca constructions as there was no cyclone shelter there.

India to fence border with Pakistan in Kashmir

JAMMU, India, May 20: India plans to erect barbed wire fences along the border with Pakistan in the disputed state of Kashmir, a government minister said today, reports AP.

Earlier attempts to fence the Line of Control were disrupted by gunfire from the Pakistan army, but this time the fence would be built 600 feet (200 meters) inside Indian territory, said Mohammad Maqbool Dar, the junior interior minister.

India says pro-separatist guerrillas infiltrate the border with help from the Pakistani army, Pakistan, which denies giving active assistance to the rebels, opposes the fencing because the region is disputed.

Work could begin any time on fencing the entire 800-kilometer (500-mile) line, Dar told a news conference in Jammu, the state's winter capital.

The Line of Control was drawn after the 1971 war, one of the three Indo-Pakistan wars.

Ershad visits cyclone-hit areas

CHITTAGONG, May 20: Jatiya Party Chairman and former President HM Ershad today visited different cyclone-hit areas of the district, reports UNB.

The JP Chief from the airport drove straight to different places of south and north Potenga, including Lalair Char, Natir Para, Steel Mills Bazar, Fuhari Bazar, Nazir Para, Chharidhar, Nizam Market and Katch Char.

He talked to the cyclone-affected people and assured them of all possible help.

Local unit of Jatiya Party distributed relief materials among the affected people.

Activities at Mongla port begin

KHULNA, May 20: Usual activities of the Mongla Port began here today after the withdrawal of cyclone warning signal, reports BSS.

The loading and unloading of import and export cargo at the port was suspended due to the depression formed in the Bay of Bengal on May 18.

At present, eleven ships are waiting at the port for discharge of import cargo and loading of export cargo.

Top 20 defaulters: BB claim denied

By Staff Correspondent

Solitech International Ltd in a statement yesterday claimed it was not a loan defaulter as stated by Bangladesh Bank.

It said the loan in question is a subject of reconciliation to determine the period of liability and fix responsibility as the company after its incorporation in 1970 was taken over by the Beximco group in 1985 and operated as a construction division of the Beximco group till October 1990 when the Group decided to separate to fall under the present management.

Meanwhile, another person has denied being a director of Orion Laboratories and Orion Infusion Ltd, the names of which have come up in the top 20 defaulters list.

Ahmed Rafique in a statement yesterday said he had resigned from both the companies long ago and his resignation had been accepted by the companies on December 1, 1994. It has also been endorsed by the Registrar of Joint Stock Companies, he said.

However, the Bangladesh Bank list of the defaulters still shows Solitech as a defaulter and Ahmed Rafique as director of Orion Laboratories and Orion Infusion.

Khulna Fisheries Ltd, Sakthira Fisheries Ltd and Pharmatek Chemicals Ltd in separate statements also said their subject loans with AB Bank is 'absolutely regular and repayment is continuing as per the repayment schedule' and the next payment is due on June 30, 1997.

However, the central bank's statement as of December 31, 1996 shows that these three companies were defaulters.

Unarmed United Nations observers monitor the line.

In the last six years, the Indian army says it has thwarted 300 infiltration attempts, killing 1,000 rebels and arresting an equal number.

Meanwhile, in Srinagar, the state's summer capital, six people were injured Wednesday when armed pro-government activists, often referred to as renegades by their critics, clashed with taxi drivers.

Witnesses said the renegades tried to commandeer a taxi in the downtown Lal Chowk neighbourhood. When other drivers protested, the rebels fired at them. The drivers then blocked the roads for two hours. Police fired tear gas shells to disperse them.

Young men clash with Ansars

By Staff Correspondent

Ansars fired at least eight rounds of shots in the air as a group of young men started clashing with them at the Bakla cinema hall near New Market in the city yesterday afternoon.

The clash between the youths and the Ansars on duty at the main gate of the cinema hall ensued as a group of about 30 men, reportedly led by some students of Dhaka College, stormed the hall ticket counter at about 3:15 pm.

Dhanmondi police said, none was injured in the clash that lasted about 20 minutes. However, police could not give the identities of the attackers.

The group attacked the guards at the entry gate as two young men were refused entry into the hall without ticket.

Ansars filed a case with Dhanmondi thana. None was arrested till last night.

Hostess

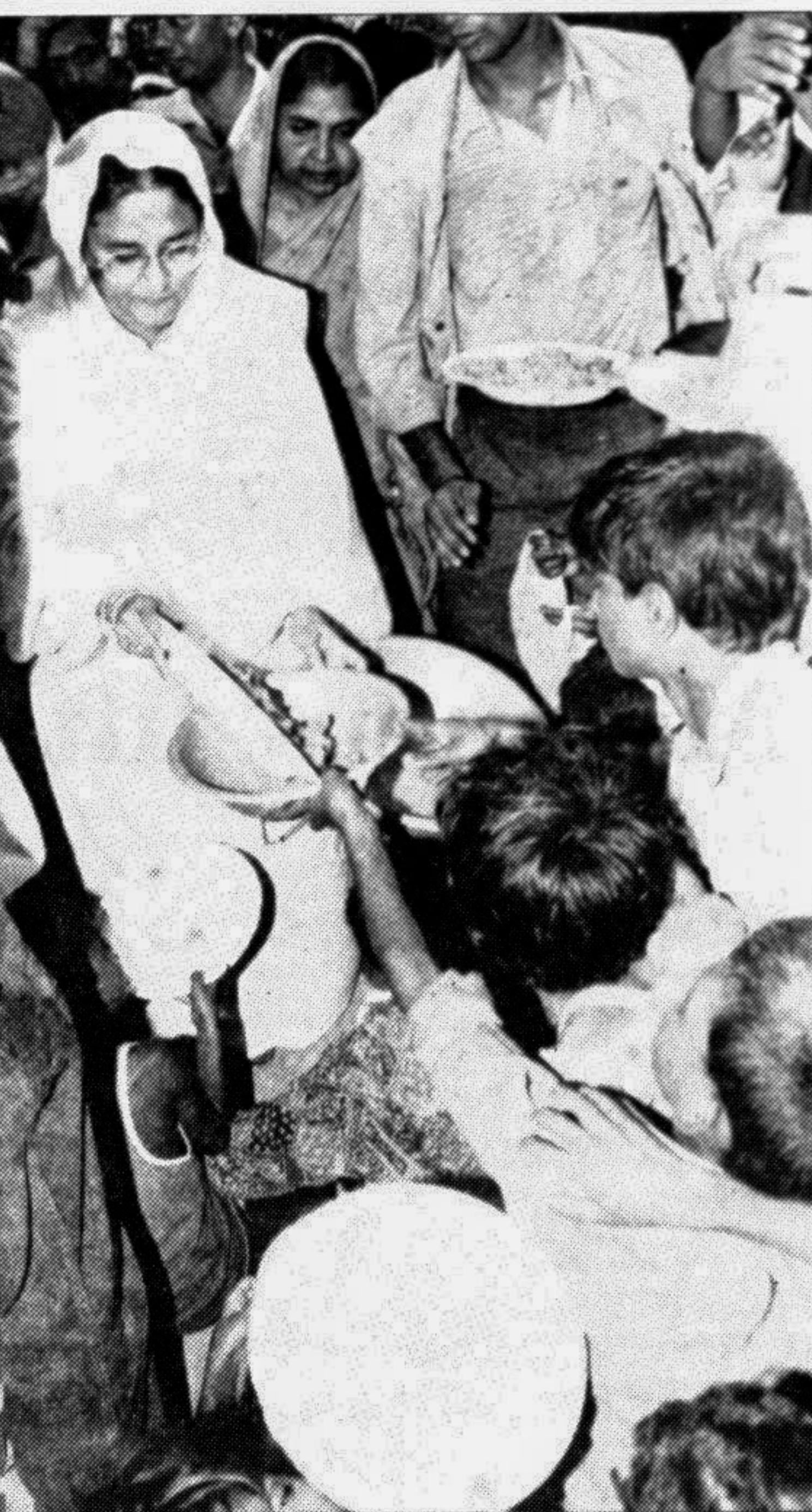
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PHILIPS



Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina distributing relief and cooked food among the cyclone victims at Laldia Char in Patenga yesterday. —PID photo

PM: Cyclone shelters

From Page 1

accompanied the premier, stayed back at Moheshkhali and Kutubdia respectively. Home Minister Rafiqul Islam was stationed in Cox's Bazar, Forest and Environment Minister Syeda Sajeda Chowdhury, Food and Agriculture Minister Motiyya Chowdhury and State Minister for Labour and Manpower Abdul Mannan were also stationed in Chittagong.

The Prime Minister sanctioned Tk 10 lakh in cash for Cox's Bazar district and also distributed some relief goods among 243 cyclone affected families at Kutubdia. She also witnessed distribution of food among the affected people at Laldia Char, one kilometre off the Chittagong International Airport. At Shikardarpa in Moheshkhali, Hasina consoled one Iman Ali, who lost his wife and four children in a wall collapse during the cyclone.

Earlier, two Army helicopters on carrying the Prime Minister and the other carrying a group of newsmen, took off at 10:15 am from Dhaka for a day-long visit to the cyclone-hit areas.

A trail of devastation was seen as the helicopter carrying the newsmen flew low over the affected areas. Talking to newsmen at Moheshkhali and Kutubdia, affected people said that nearly 80 per cent of the kutcha houses and hundreds of shrimp and salt-beds and betel-leaf plantations were damaged.

While briefing the Prime Minister, the Deputy Commissioner of Cox's Bazar said 15 people were killed in the district while 80 to 90 per cent of the thatched houses and 70 per cent of the semi-pucca houses in the seven thanas of the district were damaged. He termed Monday's cyclone that hit Cox's Bazar with a maximum wind speed of 230 kph as the 'longest lasting storm' in recent memory.

Out of 17 lakh people in 2,500 sq kms area in the district, the DC said only 1,85,200

people could be evacuated and sheltered in 353 cyclone shelters. He drew the Premier's attention on the urgency of building more cyclone shelters.

As the helicopter landed at Moheshkhali College ground and later at a paddy field near Kutubdia College, homeless people in flocks gathered around newsmen and said that till yesterday afternoon no relief reached them.

Talking to The Daily Star, Mokbul Ahmed, Principal of Moheshkhali College, and Nepal Kanti Dey, Medical Technologist at the local thana health complex, said that relief is yet to reach the affected people in the area. "Priority-wise, I consider that these people should first be provided with house building materials so that they get roofs over their heads," said the college principal.

According to the DC of Cox's Bazar, 16 MT of rice, Tk 1.5 lakh in cash and some garments were sanctioned yesterday for distribution among the affected people in the district.

Prior to her return to Dhaka, the Prime Minister had a brief meeting with district administration, military officials and elites of the city in Chittagong and appreciated their combined efforts in facing the aftermath of the cyclone.

"Our people have proved once again that they are experienced in tackling such a situation. Now, after the ravage of the cyclone, the affected people require food and pure drinking water on a priority basis," said Hasina.

She urged all to build houses on high lands in the cyclone-prone coastal belt and called for taking up vigorous afforestation programme.

On the second leg of her visits to the cyclone-hit areas, the Prime Minister is scheduled to leave Dhaka for Hatia island this morning. She will also visit Sandwip, St Martin, Teknaf, Banskhalhi and Anowara, according to officials at the Prime Minister's Office.

BFUJ reception postponed

The Bangladesh Federal Union of Journalists (BFUJ) yesterday postponed the reception to the ICC Trophy winning cricket heroes due to severe cyclone that struck coastal belts, reports BSS.

The reception was scheduled to be held on May 23. Habibur Rahman Milon, convenor of the reception committee, has taken the decision after consultation with the leaders of the Dhaka Union of Journalists (DUJ) and the BFUJ, a press release said.

The BFUJ, DUJ and reception committee observed that it is an urgent duty for all journalists like others to extend all possible help to the cyclone victims.

Fresh date of reception to the cricketers will be announced later on, the press release added.

3 godowns, 30 shops gutted in Nilphamari

NILPHAMARI, May 20: Three godowns and 30 shops were gutted in a fire at Chilahati Bazar in Domar thana today, reports UNB.

Firebrigade personnel and witnesses said the fire was originated from an open oven at the house of one Shafiquddin near the bazar at about 1 pm and soon engulfed the market.

A branch of Sonali Bank at the bazar was also affected by the fire, but the officials removed its documents and papers to a nearby BDR camp.

Firefighters from Nilphamari Sadar, about 30 km from the spot, rushed to the bazar and brought the blaze under control after four hours of frantic effort.

AL forms 8 relief teams

By Staff Correspondent

Eight relief teams were formed at a meeting of the Awami League Central Relief Committee held at the party's central office yesterday.

The committee chairman, Amir Hussain Amu, was in the chair.

Of the eight teams the one led by Suranjit Sen Gupta, MP, left Dhaka yesterday evening for Chittagong, Sitakundi and Mirsharaj with relief goods, said a press release.

The other teams will be led by Abdul Mannan, Zillur Rahman, Dr Md Selim, Md Abdul Jalil, Shamshur Rahman Khan Shahjahan, Azizur Rahman, Muzaffar Hussain Paltu, and Ataur Rahman Khan Kaiser.

Kabila arrives in Kinshasa

KINSHASA, May 20: Laurent Kabila landed in Kinshasa today, four days after his rebel army swept Zaire's president Mobutu Sese Seko from power and Kabila proclaimed himself president of the renamed Democratic Republic of Congo, witnesses said, reports Reuter.

Clarification

Director General of Food, Md Sirajul Islam has clarified a news item headlined "Govt planning to export rice" published in The Daily Star yesterday.

The DG of Food said that the news quoting him as saying that government was planning to export rice in spite of the existing food gap was not properly reported.

Replying to a question from the reporter about the existing food situation, the DG had said that at present there was no restriction on export and import of foodgrains by private traders, the clarification said.

Investment

From Page 1

country concerned," he said. Hashimoto, however, was optimistic about the resolution of the problem in the 'near future'.

"The last but not the least a problem Bangladesh needs to solve for attracting more Japanese investment is the lack of development of software", Hashimoto noted.

Replying to another question, the Japanese Foreign Ministry spokesman said his government has "high regards for SAARC."

There are many industrialised countries including Japan which are poised to shift its investment from South East Asia to South Asia, Hashimoto said. "In that case, SAARC could play a very important role, facilitating interests of both the sides — investing countries and SAARC nations," he added.

WB suggests

From Page 1

were making an yearly loss of Tk 2500 crore, that could be utilised in meeting the urgent needs of the people and the society.

Zafarullah, also a leading businessman, called upon his colleagues to reestablish their credibility. "Businessmen should not only be termed as defaulters, they are generating employment and creating conditions for development."

He also urged the businessmen to invest in the SOEs, some of which are "gold mines" having bright prospect of becoming feasible. "Come, invest and buy these enterprises and make those profitable."

BCI President Sharif M Afzal Hossain suggested that a consultative committee be formed for the privatisation of bank with representatives from concerned ministries, MPs, labour unions and private sector.

He proposed a 5-year moratorium on CBA activities and labour politics to ensure congenial atmosphere in the industrial arena.

"Their wages should be determined as per productivity and their interest may be protected by ILO rules," he told the meeting attended by BCI directors and members.