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## \$10m Italian soft loan for 4 projects

Italy has agreed to provide Bangladesh with 10 million US dollars this year as soft loan for four projects, reports UNB.

The projects are: Chittagong Water Supply Project, Rehabilitation of Main Line Section of Bangladesh Railway (West Zone) and Extension of Inland Container Depot at Dhaka and Procurement of Container Wagon and their Equipment.

The agreement was reached at an official meeting between the two countries at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs yesterday.

The two sides at the meeting also agreed to exchange regular high level visits between the two countries to bolster Dhaka-Rome ties in all fields.

State Minister for Foreign Affairs Abul Hasan Chowdhury led the home team at the 3-hour talks that covered the entire gamut of bilateral relations as well as regional and international issues of common concern.

Visiting Italian Deputy Foreign Minister Ms Patrizia Tozza led her country's six-member team at the talks which also discussed ways for expansion of trade and economic cooperation between the two countries.

The Italian side has assured Bangladesh of considering its proposal on Generalised System of Preference (GSP) in tariff concession, an official said after the meeting.

The official also said that an Italian delegation would visit Dhaka shortly to see the investment climate in Bangladesh.

Bangladesh has sought Italian financial assistance for setting up a footwear fashion design institute to provide

training to workers. During the talks, the Italian DFM appreciated the present government's development efforts and success in microcredit system as well as its policy for improving relation with neighbours.

Shah also lauded Bangladesh's involvement in the newly formed economic blocks like BISTEC, Developing 8 and the South Asian Quadrangle.

At the talks, the state minister for foreign affairs was assisted by Commerce Secretary Syed Alamgir Farouk Chowdhury, Water Resources Secretary ATM Shamsul Huda, acting Foreign Secretary M Aminul Islam and Director General (Europe) of Foreign Office Nazim Ullah Chowdhury.

## Time for closing shop now 7 pm

The government has refixed the timing for closing shops at 7 pm instead of 8 pm to ease the sufferings of the people in the wake of deficit in power production, reports UNB.

The decision was taken under Shops and Establishment Act of 1965 for limiting the use of electricity in the evening, said an official handout.

The changed schedule will be effective with immediate effect.

## Dacoity at city house

A gang of dacoits looted money and gold ornaments worth about Tk 2.33 lakh from the house of a businessman at Wari in the old part of the city early yesterday.

Police said, the gang of about five armed men broke their iron grills and entered the ground floor house of Ashraf Ali Chowdhury at about 3:30 am. They tied the family members and took away Tk 45,000 and gold ornaments.

Sutrapur police arrested the security guard of the house, Faruk Alam, and a maid, Shamsun Nahar, for their alleged involvement in the dacoity.

A case was lodged.

## Khaleda

She underlined the fact that seven joint-venture projects in Bangladesh in collaboration with Italian entrepreneurs were initiated during her government.

The BNP Chairperson hoped that trade between Bangladesh and Italy would flourish in future. To this effect, she invited a delegation of businessmen and investors from Italy to visit Bangladesh.

Ms Toia thanked Begum Zia for her remarks and stated that the Italian government is fully committed to helping development of the developing nations in Asia, particularly of Bangladesh.

She said she would try to make all possible efforts in this regard to promote greater cooperation between the two countries.

The Italian Deputy Foreign Minister hoped that the laudable initiatives taken during Begum Zia's regime would be further expanded in future.

BNP Secretary General Abdul Mannan Bhuiyan, Advisors M Morshed Khan MP and MM Rezaul Karim were present on the occasion.

The Italian DFM was accompanied by Italian ambassador in Dhaka Dr Raffale Miniero and other high officials of Italian foreign office.

## BNP plans

days for us to reply to the BTV letter", BNP secretary general Abdul Mannan Bhuiyan, MP told The Daily Star last night.

Earlier, on Sunday night, Mannan Bhuiyan had said that the reply would be sent in a day or two and that he would talk to the BTV authorities about the programme.

However, the BNP secretary general said last night they would hold the planned discussion with the BTV authorities after replying to their letter.

"We want to discuss not only the programme Begum Zia has been invited to but the BTV's policy and conduct to us as a whole," he informed.

Asked whether the reply would be positive or negative, Mannan Bhuiyan said, "We're ready to participate in the programme as per the authorities' plan but with an assurance of dealing with the matter in a neutral manner."

To another question if his party would put any pre-condition for taking part in the programme, he replied that they were still discussing the issue.

## Transport strike in Barisal Div continues

From Staff Correspondent

BARISAL, July 16: The transport strike in 35 routes of Barisal, Patuakhali, Jhalakati, Barguna and Pirojpur under Barisal division continued for the third day today.

Meanwhile, two BRTC buses were reportedly damaged by some 20 to 25 terrorists near the Patuakhali bridge at about 3:00 pm today. They also assaulted some 60 passengers and looted money and other valuables.

Injured passengers were admitted to different hospitals nearby.

The transport strike was called by the bus and minibus owners associations and worker unions of different districts under Barisal division last Monday.

## Dhaka-Sylhet road link to be restored soon: Samad Azad

HABIGANJ, July 16: The Dhaka-Sylhet road link is expected to be restored in a few days, Foreign Minister Abdur Samad Azad told a public gathering here today, reports BSS.

The Dhaka-Sylhet road link was snapped on July 14 following the collapse of a bridge over river Khowai at Shayestaganj — 14 kilometres from the Habiganj town due to onrush of flood water.

Azad, who is also looking after the day-to-day affairs of the Prime Minister's routine programme in her absence, said the government of Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina always gives priority to mitigating public sufferings and took initiative to mitigate the sufferings of the people of Sylhet, Habiganj and Moulvibazar.

The Foreign Minister said a floating bridge would be constructed at the bridge site with the help of the army in a few days.

Finance Minister Shah AMS Kibria, Communications Minister Anwar Hossain acting chief of Bangladesh Awami League Amir Hossain Amu, Prime Minister's Adviser on Parliamentary Affairs Saranjit Sengupta, local MP Mostafiz Shahid Enamul Huq also spoke on the occasion.

## Flyovers

by end of 1998 when an international tender will be floated. Sources said total investment of the WB in this project is likely to be Tk 400 crore of which about 70 per cent will be spent for construction of the flyovers. The remaining 30 per cent will go to the traffic division and other relevant departments.

The flyovers will largely help reduce traffic jam in the intersections, officials at the city traffic division said.

When asked why Gabtoli was not given priority in construction of flyover as the area is often clogged with traffic, a DCC official said they were planning to build four lanes of divider roads with separate 'relief roads' for the local traffic to reduce congestion there.

"Once traffic get into the divider roads at Gabtoli, it will not be able to turn left or right until it comes to the end of the divider," said a DCC official explaining that the lanes will then enable the travellers to avoid hassle at Gabtoli.

## Gulshan Lake

the way all low-lying areas were filled up, Dhaka was not even left with five per cent.

"Rajuk has overlooked the Master Plan by approving the project which is totally illegal. Moreover, they have also violated the construction law of 1996 by allowing buildings more than six storeys high in a residential area," Wares said.

AMA Muhith, Chairman, Institute of Environment and Development, termed the transaction as 'opaque and undesirable'. "With the very little information we have on the project, it is clear that it will have a dangerous environmental effect in the area. This must be discussed at the technical level," he said.

Prof Nazrul Islam, Director, Centre for Urban Studies demanded immediate publication of the project details. "We have coordination committee, professional bodies, environmental groups, why should not they have a say on how such a huge project should be implemented," he said.

## Asia Cup

81 balls with four fours before falling to the same bowler. Pakistan earlier in the day tore apart a weak Bangladesh bowling attack after skipper Rameez Raja won the toss on a bright sunny morning.

Opener Saeed Anwar, who was later adjudged man-of-the-match set the pace for the Pakistan with a prolific innings of 90 off 94 balls after which Raja (52), Inzamam-ul-Haq (77) and Salim Malik (62) made a mess of the bowlers.

## Annan unveils plan to streamline UN

UNITED NATIONS, July 16: Secretary-General Kofi Annan on Wednesday unveiled a sweeping plan to reform the United Nations, the result of strong criticism of the world body from its most influential member, the United States, reports AP.

Annan called the reforms, which aim to streamline the United Nations for greater efficiency, the "most extensive and far-reaching" in its 52-year history.

The aim is simply to transform the organisation," he said. The Republican-led Congress has refused to pay the 870 million dollar it acknowledges it owes the United Nations without specific reforms.

The plan does not address some of the most controversial congressional demands — such as reducing the US share of the budget and crediting the United States for some of the money it spent supporting peacekeeping operations.

The 95-page report also does not address demands from the developing world for reforms of the Security Council, through which the United States and other permanent members set the organisation's agenda.

Annan said the success of the plan requires "close partnership and cooperation with member states." The report includes measures which Annan can take now as well as recommendations which require approval from the 185-member General Assembly.

Annan's plan aims at streamlining the cumbersome UN administrative structure under a new, five-member Cabinet directed by a deputy secretary-general.

## JRC meet Saturday

The 32nd meeting of the Bangladesh-India Joint River Commission begins here on July 19 at the state guest house Meghna, an official handout said in Dhaka last night, reports BSS.

Water Resources Minister Abdur Razzak will lead a 13-member Bangladesh delegation while India's Water Resources Minister Sheersara Oja will lead his country's delegation at the two-day meeting.

The Indian delegation will arrive here on July 18. Water Resources Minister Abdur Razzak will receive them at the Zia International Airport.

## Singapore, air chief calls on president

Singapore Air Force Chief Major General Goh Yong Siang made a courtesy call on President Justice Shahabuddin Ahmed at Bangabhab yesterday, reports UNB.

Welcoming the Air Force chief, President Shahabuddin called for close cooperation between the air forces of the two countries.

The President referred to the memorandum of understanding (MOU) signed between the two countries in February, 1994 and said Bangladesh Fore is interested in developing training cooperation with the Singapore Air Force.

He hoped, such cooperation would be strengthened in future, an official handout said.

Major General Goh Yong Siang thanked the President for receiving him and members of his delegation. He said the air forces of the two countries are working together in developing their professional skill.

Chief of Air Staff Air Vice-Marshal Jamal Uddin Ahmed was present on the occasion.

## Clashes leave over 170 dead in Rwanda

KIGALI, Rwanda, July 16: Clashes between Rwandan army and Hutu rebels in Rwanda's north have left more than 170 people dead, including civilians, a local official said today, reports AP.

The Tutsi-led military had killed 136 Hutu rebels in two districts which are in Ruhengeri during weekend clashes, according to Boniface Rucagira, governor of the northern Ruhengeri prefecture. He said the two sides had been "at war" from Friday to Sunday.

## Heavy exchange of gunfire on Korean border

SEOUL, July 16: In the most serious armed clash in almost a year, North Korean soldiers fired at least 10 mortar rounds at a South Korean border post Wednesday during heavy exchange of gunfire, the Defence Ministry said, reports AP.

North Korea said several of its soldiers were wounded in the exchange along the central part of the Korean border, the world's most heavily armed.

No South Korean casualties were reported in the shooting, which each side blamed on the other.

North Korea accused South Korea of committing a "grave armed provocative act." South Korea called it an "intentional provocation" by North Korea.

It was the most serious armed clash since last September, when a North Korean submarine was found aground off South Korea's east coast. In a subsequent manhunt, 24 North Korean occupants of the sub and 13 South Korean soldiers and civilians were killed.

South Korean border guards spotted at least seven North Korean troops on the southern side of the demilitarised zone shortly before 11 am (02:00 GMT) and ordered them through a loudspeaker to withdraw, the ministry said.

When the North Korean soldiers continued moving southward, South Korean soldiers fired some 200 rifle shots into the air as a warning, it added.

The North Koreans fired rifles at the South Korean soldiers, the ministry said, and the South Koreans then directed fire at the northerners with machine guns and recoilless rifles.

Northern soldiers at a guard post across the border returned fire with a round from a recoilless rifle, about 10 mortar rounds and two more rounds of unidentified artillery, the ministry said.

Forty-five minutes after the initial gunfire, South Korean soldiers called for a cease-fire through loudspeakers. The North Koreans stopped shooting shortly thereafter.

## Former minister Sushil Adhikari dead

A former minister and adviser to the President Michael Sushil Adhikari died of cancer Tuesday at a nursing home in Calcutta. He was 73, reports BSS.

Michael Sushil Adhikari who hailed from the Adhikari family of Barisal Christian community, was an eminent social worker, litterateur and president of the Bangladesh Baptist Sangha.

He was associated with several philanthropic organisations. He was also linked with a number of international organisations, a press release said.

Adhikari who authored a good number of books, was the recipient of several awards including Jatiya Grantha Kendra Award in 1988 and Lions International Award in 1976.

He left behind his wife, two daughters, one son and a host of friends and well-wishers.

The body of Sushil Adhikari is expected to arrive tomorrow and his funeral is likely to be held the same day at Baptist Sangha office in Senpara Park, Mirpur at 2 pm.

## West urged not to fear Jihad

CAIRO, July 16: An Islamic conference here appealed today for the West not to fear calls for Jihad, or holy war, which it said are often misinterpreted but are legitimate acts of defence recognised by international law, reports AFP.

The final resolution of the international conference on dialogue between Islam and the West, which ended today, said that Jihad is lawful in Islam for dealing with aggression and injustice.

"It's a legitimate act of defence recognised in principle by international law," the resolution said.

Delegations from 85 countries participated in the conference, which opened Sunday and was organised by the highest Sunni Muslim authority, Cairo-based Al-Azhar.

The resolution also called for "international media not to publish articles which could lead to hatred between the members of different faiths."

It also said that academic books should "demonstrate more tolerance for other beliefs."

The conference participants also denounced "terrorism in any form" and called on the media "to stop likening terrorism to Islam and Muslims."

"It is not necessary to mix the legitimate defence against aggression and occupation with criminal actions perpetrated by fanatics or racism under the cover of religion," they said.

The conference also called for "non-Muslim countries to let Muslims practice their religion in its entirety, that is, not just in prayer but in personal rights, too."

## Ataul Huq goes to Singapore today for treatment

The Cabinet Secretary, Ataul Huq, is going to Singapore today for treatment, according to his family sources.

Ataul Huq was admitted to the National Institute of Cardiovascular Diseases on June 25 after a heart attack.

## JCD calls hartal at Bogra today

BOGRA, July 16: Jatiyatadabi Chhatra Dal, the student wing of BNP, has called a half-day hartal in the district tomorrow protesting the killing of a JCD activist, reports UNB.

Masum, 20, the JCD activist, was stabbed to death by unidentified terrorists at New Market in the town on July 14.

Activists of BNP, Juba Dal and Chhatra Dal brought out a joint procession in the town this evening in support of hartal.

## Jute purchase

Out of which, 18 lakh bales will be exported and rest will be used in the local jute mills.

Jute Ministry officials said that they expect that about 10 lakh bales of raw jute will be imported by China.

During the first 11 months of the previous fiscal year, the country earned Tk 465.87 crore by exporting 17.80 lakh bales of raw jute and Tk 1075 crore was earned by exporting jute goods.

## 3 missions

Advocate TM Akbar, counsel for Lt Col (LPR) Mohiuddin Ahmed, during cross-examination, opined that Rama's age was over for government job when he joined the Livestock Directorate at Gopalganj in 1992.

Advocate Akbar, in an inscription, tried to bring out from Rama that there were sophisticated arms of Sheikh Kamal, Sheikh Jamal and chief security Mohiuddin in a room on the second floor of the house.

Earlier, plaintiff of the case AFM Muhitul Islam had made his deposition before the court and defence counsels also completed cross-examination of the first prosecution witness.

Sharfuddin Mukul will continue cross-examining Rama when the court resumes at 10:30 am today.

## 9 burnt alive

Mohammadpur and Tejgan stations took around two hours to extinguish the fire. A fire service official said it was difficult to enter the building as the staircase was narrow.

Meanwhile, the Fire Service and Civil Defence authorities have formed a three-member probe body headed by deputy director Altaf Hossain to investigate the incident.

A number of people from Mirpur areas rushed to the DMCH to try to identify the bodies. However, Mirpur police said none came to the thana to enquire about any missing persons till last night.

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## Six killed, 41 hurt in road accidents

At least six persons were killed and 41 others injured in separate road accidents in Naogaon and Khagrachhari yesterday and the day before, report agencies.

According to UNB, four people were killed and 40 injured when an overloaded bus fell into a roadside ditch near BSCIC industrial estate in Naogaon yesterday.

Three of the dead were identified as Sirajul Islam, 40, of Hatnagar village in Dhanorhat thana and Kobad Ali, 45, of Kashiipur village in Patnitola thana of Naogaon, and Zahedul Islam Zahed, 55, of Bhagyakul village in Srinagar thana of Munshiganj district.

The identity of the other dead, aged about 35, could not be known immediately.

Police said the accident occurred at about 9:30am as the Naogaon-bound bus from Dhanorhat skidded off the road as its driver tried to give passage to another bus coming from opposite direction.

Three of the injured — Tozzar Hossain, Nimal Mohanta and Harun — were rushed to the Rajshahi Medical College Hospital in critical condition. Others were admitted to Naogaon Sadar Hospital and a local clinic.

## Korean factory at DEPZ reopens

Youngone Hi-Tech Sportswear Industries Ltd at Dhaka Export Processing Zone in Savar reopened yesterday after four days of unscheduled closure due to labour unrest in the factory, reports UNB.

About 70 per cent of the workers of the Korean company joined their work, said an official of the Bangladesh Export Processing Zone Authority (BEPZA) which oversees the country's EPZs.

The sports-wear manufacturing company, an unit of the Youngone Group, was closed on Saturday following the labour unrest.

No untoward incident was reported yesterday as the situation was totally normal. The official said and informed that BEPZA Chairman Mozammel Hossain Khan also visited the factory yesterday.

The management of the Youngone company will explain the factory's situation at a press conference here today.

## Gas supply to Sunamganj cut off

SYLHET, July 16: It will take at least three months to resume gas supply to the district headquarters of Sunamganj, said an official of Jalabadi Gas Transmission and Distribution Systems Ltd here today.

Gas supply to Sunamganj was cut off after the detection of leakage and some technical faults in the gas pipe in Khashimara area in Doarabazar on the Chhatka-Sunamganj portion last Monday. The faults were detected after the gas pipe went under flood water.

## Low-lying areas

Louhaganj and Srinagar thanas of Munshiganj district may be inundated by this morning, Low-lying areas of Dohar and Nawabganj thanas of Dhaka district may be inundated by the same time.

The overall flood situation in Chittagong district improved further following sharp decline in water level in different rivers in the north and south, including the Shangu and Dohar.

Almost all the people evacuated from the flood affected areas have also returned to their homes, district administration sources said here tonight.

With the recession of flood waters the relief operations in the flood affected areas have been geared up.

## ICDDR,B

tance, formulating work strategy, maintaining organisational links and appointing and training high officials. The donors now want assurances that the centre would continue to run long-term projects like the planned 'International Family Planning Training Programme' and a five-year project on infrastructure development, course design and their implementation.

Current operating with an annual budget of 13 million US dollars, provided by more than 25 governments and international agencies, ICDDR,B has adopted a long-term strategy for international fund mobilisation and structural development. The fund would be spent for two hospitals under the centre and its research activities.

The ICDDR,B plans to expand its activities in some sectors in the next five years. These include modernising the method of treatment of diarrhoea patients and prevention of the disease, adopting measures to control maternal and infant mortality, accelerating the EPI and raising the nutrition rate, controlling population growth, taking effective steps to control STDs and HIV infection, promoting population research, evolving measures for sustainable and affordable health management and finding suitable formula to train up people in improved health care.