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The World on Time

DMK backs off from threat to quit Gujral's govt

NEW DELHI, July 17: India's shaky centre-left coalition overcame a four-day-long crisis today when a regional party backed off from a threat to quit Prime Minister Inder Kumar Gujral's government, reports Reuters.

The crisis blew over after leaders of the 15-party United Front agreed in a four-hour meeting that its squabbles could only help rival Hindu nationalists waiting to grab chances in a likely mid-term election, alliance leaders said.

The Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam (DMK) party decided not to press its threat to withdraw its four ministers because it was upset with some coalition partners. Information and Broadcasting Minister Jaipal Reddy told reporters.

"I would say the problem is over," Reddy said.

The United Front has 178 lawmakers in the parliament's 545-member lower house and gets vital support for its minority rule from the Congress Party, which has 140 deputies. Congress itself was thrown out of power in elections in 1996.

The coalition is ranged against the Hindu BJP which controls 193 votes. Opinion polls indicate the BJP would stand a good chance of capturing power if a mid-term election were held now.

The DMK, sinking differences with communist partners, also endorsed a decision by the United Front not to admit a breakaway group of Gujral's Janata Dal party, the Rashtriya Janata Dal (RJD), alliance leaders said.

Shima murder

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an appeal could be preferred against the acquittal order in the Shima murder case within the shortest possible time.

The case file will be examined by the Attorney General being advised by the three DAGs, the AG said.

A high-powered committee headed by the chief law officer of the country is needed to be formed for investigating and prosecuting sensational important criminal cases, KS Nabi said.

Acquittal of the accused in the Shima murder case, if resulted from lack of proper investigation, should be severely dealt with, the AG said.

"Preferring an appeal in the Shima murder case is being treated with top priority and after scrutiny of the relevant papers, the appeal against the acquittal of the accused will be preferred soon," he said.

President

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the podium, they said.

At this stage, the President, cordonned by his securitymen, left the venue.

One person, identified as Khalil, was picked up by police from the scene. He was taken to Motijheel thana.

An official handout later said, an organised unruly group in the garb of religion obstructed the President's Eid-e-MiladunNabi programme at Baitul Mukarram Mosque premises.

President Justice Shahabuddin Ahmed attended the function timely. But as a sequel to the post-hartal demonstration, some unruly people in the garb of religion tried to create chaos before Magreb prayers.

The organised group created noise and obstruction in a pre-planned way at the time of the inauguration of the MiladunNabi programme by the President.

This unexpected and awkward situation disrupted the President's function, the handout said.

BCS exams

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made on the basis of merit and 55 per cent on the basis of quota for different districts. Of the 55 per cent, 30 per cent goes to the FFs, 10 per cent to women and 5 per cent to the tribal people.

The PSC in its annual report published recently suggested abolition of the 30 per cent quota for FFs as female fighter candidates are not available now.

For the 17th BCS Examinations, PSC had invited applications on March 30, 1995 to fill up 1,475 vacant posts. Preliminary test was held on September 15 the same year and written examinations were held from May 5 to June 1, 1996. The results of written examinations were published in October and psychological test of the candidates was held in November the same year. Later, the viva voce had also been completed.

Meanwhile, the preliminary test of the 18th BCS Examinations was also held and written examinations will start from mid-August, PSC sources said.



Kocheril Raman Narayanan (R) is embraced by Congress President Sitaram Kesri (L) yesterday in New Delhi after Narayanan was elected President of India by a landslide majority becoming the first Hindu "untouchable" to hold the post.

—AFP/UNB photo

Narayanan elected Indian president

NEW DELHI, July 17: Kocheril Raman Narayanan was proclaimed Indian President today, becoming the first Hindu "untouchable" to hold the post of head of state, reports AFP.

Narayanan, 75, crushed his only rival, former chief election commissioner T N Shekhar, in nationwide polling held on Monday, domestic news agencies said.

Narayanan, who is currently India's vice-president, will be sworn in as the president next week at the British-built Presidential Palace.

The five-year term of president Shankar Dayal Sharma ends on July 24.

The results were declared several hours after officials began counting nearly 5,000 votes polled by national and state politicians in 27 Indian states and union territories.

Narayanan's victory was widely expected as he had the backing of all the country's mainstream parties.

His challenger Shekhar was supported by the hardline Hindu nationalist Shiv Sena Party which rules the western Indian state of Maharashtra of which Bombay is the capital.

The election of Narayanan, a former journalist, university lecturer and diplomat, is seen as a victory of the mass of so-called Hindu "untouchables" who still suffer discrimination at the hands of upper-caste Hindus, analysis said.

Son of a physician, he escaped most forms of discrimination, working his way up from relatively humble beginnings before studying at the London School of Economics.

He was ambassador to Thailand, Turkey, China and the United States before joining the Congress (I) Party and becoming a member of parliament.

His background as an intel-

Miladunnabi

From page 1
through "Jasne Julus" processions, *milad mahfils*, discussions and *waz mahfils* across the country.

Bangladesh Beter and Bangladesh Television started broadcasting special programmes highlighting the significance of the day.

Islamic Foundation began a fortnight long programme yesterday.

The programmes include regular seminars and *waz mahfils* and an Islamic book fair at the south gate of Baitul Mukarram national Mosque till July 30.

The High Court Mazar Administrative Committee organised a *waz mahfil* at the mazar premises after the Magreb prayers yesterday.

Tamaddun Majlis arranged a discussion and Hama-Naat mahfil at Jatiya Press Club auditorium yesterday afternoon.

Fire-exits

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6) increase in fine for violating safety measures.

Besides, a three-member committee, headed by the Director General of Fire Service and Civil Defence, was formed to review the fire-safety measures in the garment industries and to submit a report with appropriate suggestions.

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The Daily Star

Dhaka, Rome sign 3-yr cultural accord

A three-year cultural exchange programme between Bangladesh and Italy was signed at the Cultural Ministry in the city yesterday, reports UNB.

State Minister for Cultural Affairs Obaidul Quader and visiting Italian Deputy Foreign Minister Senator Patrizia Toia signed the exchange programme on behalf of their respective governments.

The exchange programme signed under the cultural agreement of 1991, included exchange of delegation, scholarship, films, radio and television programmes, and cooperation for development of culture, science and technology and sports.

Secretary in charge of the Ministry of Cultural Affairs Syed Yusuf Hossain, Italian Ambassador to Bangladesh Dr Raffaele Miniero, DGs of Bangla Academy, Shilpakala Academy and National Museum were present.

Patrizia Toia left Dhaka yesterday winding up her three-day visit to Bangladesh.

Talking to newsmen at the Zia International Airport prior to her departure, she stressed the need for bolstering Dhaka-Rome ties in all fields of cooperation.

Describing as excellent the existing relations between the two countries, Ms Toia hoped that the visit would help those to strengthen further.

"Time has come for the two countries to come closer to expand both economic and political relations," she said.

Similar sentiment was reciprocated by State Minister for Foreign Affairs Abul Hasan Chowdhury who saw her off at the ZIA.

The Finance Minister told the meeting that all concerned banks have been asked to take necessary steps so that the jute growers get fair price of their produce.

He underlined the need for purchasing jute at the right time to make the farmers get fair price as per the commitment of Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina.

The figures were given at a high-level inter-ministerial Disaster Management Coordination Committee meeting held at the Secretariat yesterday with Foreign Minister Abus Samad Azad in the chair.

The Foreign Minister told the meeting that he talked to Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina on Wednesday and yesterday morning and informed her of the latest flood situation and the relief and rehabilitation

The Italian Deputy Foreign Minister referred to her talks with Bangladeshi ministers and leaders during the visit and said it would add impetus to the existing relation.

Giving a brief resume of the visit, she said, "It has created a positive evaluation." In this context, she appreciated the "ambitious programme" in economic and social sectors of Bangladesh.

She told newsmen that an Italian economic delegation would visit Bangladesh shortly to see investment opportunities for foreign investors.

Replies to a question on GSP for Bangladesh items in European Union countries, she assured that it will be done in consultation with other European member states.

Banks asked to disburse fund for purchasing jute

The banks have been directed to take necessary measures for effective and speedy disbursement of funds required for purchasing jute, reports BSS.

The directive was given at a high-level meeting to review the price, production and purchase of jute held in the city yesterday with Finance Minister Shah A M S Kibria in the chair.

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Flood situation in 22 dists reviewed

35 lakh people affected, crops on 1 lakh acres destroyed

More than 35 lakh people of 6 lakh families in 22 districts have been affected by the floods that caused extensive damage to crops and property, reports UNB.

The flood also claimed 77 lives so far, according to official figure.

The figures were given at a high-level inter-ministerial Disaster Management Coordination Committee meeting held at the Secretariat yesterday with Foreign Minister Abus Samad Azad in the chair.

The Foreign Minister told the meeting that he talked to Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina on Wednesday and yesterday morning and informed her of the latest flood situation and the relief and rehabilitation

activities.

Standing crops on one lakh acres were completely damaged and on some 1.60 lakh acres partially. About 3,000 cattle perished in the flood on-slaughts.

The flood also damaged more than 600 kilometres of roads totally and 2,500 kilometres partially in the affected districts. A total of 125 educational institutions were damaged fully and 442 partially.

Besides, some 362 bridges and culverts were damaged in the affected areas. A large number of mud-and-thatched houses were also washed away.

The meeting was informed that diarrhoea broke out in the affected areas following the recession of flood waters. Seven

people have so far died of diarrhoea.

State Minister for Disaster Management and Relief Talukder Abdul Khaleque told the meeting that the worst flood-hit areas are Bandarban hill district and Satkania, Andhra, Banskhali, Chittagong and some parts of greater Sylhet district.

He said assistance for house-building and agricultural rehabilitation would be the priority sectors for these areas.

The government had made an emergency arrangement to set up 50 deep tube wells in the flood-hit areas of Bandarban.

Similar arrangement has also been made for other flood-hit areas.

Hydrocarbon exploration

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Khaleda visits

flood-hit

areas in Feni

BNP Chairperson Begum

Khaleda Zia yesterday visited the flood-affected areas of Chhagariai, Fulgazi and Parshuram thanas in Feni district, reports UNB.

She distributed some relief

materials among the flood victims who apprised her of their misery and alleged that the extent of damage was higher in this year's flood due to government negligence.

They also told the Leader of the Opposition in Parliament that they did not get any relief material till date, said a party press release.

She visited Muhuriganj, Karaiyabazar, Jangalbari, Chhagariai, Pathnagar, GM Hat, Parshuram, Chithalia, Fulgazi Bazar, Sripur, Munshirhat, Darbarpur, Anandapur and Kalirhat.

After visiting the flood-hit areas, Begum Zia exchanged views with local journalists at Feni Circuit House.

Begum Zia returned to Dhaka at night.

Ashari Purnima tomoitow

Ashari Purnima, a religious festival of Buddhist community, will be observed at Shakumundi Buddha Bihar at Mirpur Section 13 here tomorrow, reports UNB.

On the occasion, a daylong programme will be held at the Bihar premises from 6 am, said a PID handout yesterday.

Zia murder case

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tigation and police headquarters will ensure compliance of the order.

The IO, in his prayer, mentioned that investigation could not be completed due to time constraint.

Assistant Commissioner (Prosecution) ASM Ataur Rahman put up the case on behalf of the IO.

Sri Lanka, two points up after their win over Pakistan in the opening game, are concerned about the poor form of wicket-keeper Romesh Kaluwitharana. Lanka de Silva will play if Kaluwitharana is dropped from an otherwise unchanged side.

Sri Lanka need only to beat India to reach the final, their last game will be against Bangladesh, who lost to Pakistan on Wednesday.

Asia Cup

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dulkar said.

India will name their team on the morning of the match as they have not had an opportunity to practise at the stadium.

Sri Lanka, two points up after their win over Pakistan in the opening game, are concerned about the