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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 aided 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 told UNB.

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

Referring 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, conformed 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, the 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 hand-out 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 freedom 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.

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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 reiterated by State Minister for Foreign Affairs Abul Hasan Chowdhury who saw her off at the ZIA.

Ctg Kotwali thana OC suspended

CHITTAGONG, July 17: The Officer-in-Charge of Kotwali thana of the district was suspended today for his negligence of duty, reports UNB.

When contacted, CMP Commissioner Ashraf Huda confirmed that OC Fazlul Kabir had been suspended and departmental action would be taken against him.

Bid to loot Saudi meat in Barisal

From Staff Correspondent
BARISAL, July 17: At least 10 persons were injured, two of them seriously, in police action at Amtali of Barguna district last night.

Police and witnesses said, the police resorted to lathicharge when a group of people tried to loot 65 pieces of Saudi sacrificial meat from the Amtali thana parishad.

Two seriously injured Harun, 25 and Amirul, 20, were admitted to hospital.

PW-3 narrates Aug 15 incidents

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that Sheikh Hasina burst into tears time and again when he narrated to her the assassination of country's founding father Sheikh Mujibur Rahman during one of her visits to Tungipara, the ancestral village of Bangabandhu.

"Almighty Allah will do the justice," Hasina had told him, Rama said as defence counsel Mukul questioned him if he was asked by her to go to court or magistrate or thana to inform the matter.

The PW-3, Selim, started his deposition after being introduced by special PP Serajul Haq. Prosecution lawyer advocate Ramzan Ali also interrogated Selim during his deposition to the court.

Selim had come to Bangabandhu's house in 1967. He worked at the house as a servant and got a government job as Bangabandhu's personal staff in 1972.

Earlier, the arrested accused Col (ret'd) Syed Farooq Rahman, Col (ret'd) Sultan Shahriar Rashid Khan, Col (LPR) Muhiuddin, Honorary Captain (ret'd) Abdul Wahab Joardar and former state minister Taheruddin Thakur were brought to the court.

Narrating the incident, Selim said he and Rama woke up hearing the sound of opening the door of Bangabandhu's bedroom. They were sleeping on the corridor in front of the room.

As Bangabandhu, wearing gas (vest) and lungi, was going downstairs, Amma (Begum Mujib) gave me spectacles and a purjabi of Bangabandhu to give him at the reception on the ground floor.

Selim said he found Bangabandhu at the reception telling someone by phone to give message to Rajarbagh and Cantonment that miscreants had attacked his sister's house.

"At this time, rain of bullets hit the wall, and Bangabandhu and I sat on the floor," Selim said and added Bangabandhu went upstairs after not finding anyone over telephone. "I followed him."

He continued: We found Kamal bhai on the staircase. He was going down to the ground floor. Bangabandhu closed the door after going inside his room. At this time, we heard heavy firing from the south direction.

From the window of Sheikh Jamal's room, he said, he watched several army men in black uniform entering the house opening fire. He then took shelter in the bathroom of Jamal.

Selim, who was then, 21, told the court that from the bathroom he heard the attackers asking all inmates of the house to surrender.

"Later, I saw two army men in black-uniform coming upstairs. Again I took shelter in the bathroom."

Selim said: The two men with stengun came to me. I thought they had come from cantonment receiving news of attack on Bangabandhu's house.

"But it was not correct.... As soon as I came out of the bathroom they opened fire on me. Four bullets struck my hand and abdomen and I fell down," the PW-3 said showing the court his wound marks.

He said he sat on the floor leaning against the wall and saw the army men taking Bangabandhu towards the staircase.

"Seeing me wounded and bleeding, Bangabandhu said the boy has been working at my house since his boyhood and asked who has fired shots at me."

Bangabandhu also said, "Where will you take me? Why are you making nonsense? What do you want?" But the army personnel didn't reply, Selim told the court.

"Afterwards I heard sounds of firing, I heard Bangabandhu groaning," said an emotional Selim.

After sometime, Selim said, he saw Begum Mujib, Sheikh Naser, Rama and Russel being taken towards the staircase.

But, Begum Mujib shouted near the staircase, "I will not go there, shoot and kill me here," said Selim.

He said later the army personnel took Sheikh Naser, Rama and Russel to the ground floor and Begum Mujib to the bedroom. "I heard sounds of firing and groaning of women in the bedroom."

Selim said: After sometime firing was stopped and I was still sitting on the floor. One armyman asked if I would be able to go downstairs and some of them took me there.

"While going downstairs I saw the body of Bangabandhu lying on the staircase and I was taken down over his body," said Selim.

He continued: Reaching the verandah of ground floor I saw

The Italian Deputy Foreign Minister referred to her talks with Bangladesh 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 was 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.

Replying 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.

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.

'FFs to foil attempt to destroy Shikha Chirantan'

Leaders of the Muktiyoddha Sanghati Parishad have urged the pro-liberation forces to launch a vigorous movement to stamp out the killers, and collaborators of Pakistani occupation forces during the War of Liberation in 1971 from the country, reports BSS.

"Get prepared to face the challenges of the raskars who wanted to put off the eternal flame (Shikha Chirantan) by destroying its structure," they told a rally in front of the Jatiya Press Club.

Chaired by the chairman of the Muktiyoddha Sanghati Parishad (MSF) Col (Ret'd) Shaukat Ali, MP, the meeting called for intensifying the movement against anti-liberation force and said that the freedom fighters would take to the streets from today and would not return home until the raskars are eliminated from the country.

"We will give a befitting reply to the defeated forces of 1971 if they come to destroy the Shikha Chirantan," he warned.

Bangabandhu had opened the door. "I heard the sound of firing after I woke up... fire was coming from southern side of the house and it was one sided," he said.

"Peeping through the window of Jamal bhai's room, I saw about 3 to 4 people attired in black firing towards the house from outside the gate," he told the court.

He said he saw Bangabandhu making phone calls from the reception, but could not say whom he (Bangabandhu) was talking or trying to contact.

In reply to a question from Advocate Ruhul Amin, the counsel for Major (ret'd) Noor, the prosecution witness said he made the statement with police on October 3, 1996.

Selim said he was seriously injured after being hit by stray bullets and was in the Dhaka Medical College Hospital for one month and three days and Prof Matur Rahman had treated him.

He said he was taken to the hospital about two to two-and-a-half hour after he was wounded.

About the army personnel he saw firing towards the Bangabandhu's house, Selim said "possibly I'll be able to recognise them if I see them now."

State defense for Major (ret'd) Rashid Chowdhury, Major (ret'd) Abdul Aziz Pasha and Capt (ret'd) Majed also cross-examined PW Selim.

The court was adjourned till 10:30 am on July 21 (Monday).

While making the deposition, Selim informed the court that all nine members of the Bangabandhu family, excepting Sheikh Hasina, had resided at the Dharmadhi residence.

"Excepting Sheikh Hasina and Sheikh Rehana, who were abroad during the incident, all the seven were killed at the house at about 5 am on August 15, 1975," he said.

His nearly one-and-a-half hour deposition concluded at 1:30 pm when the court was adjourned for lunch break.

Five out of the 14 state defence lawyers for the absconding accused in the murder case also cross-examined Selim.

Replying to a question from Advocate Mahbubuddin, the counsel for Major (ret'd) Bazul Huda, PW Selim said Sheikh Kamal and Sheikh Jamal went out on August 14, but returned home by 10 to 10:30 pm.

He said both the brothers used to have their dinner by 10 to 10:30 in the evening. He said he had served dinner to both the brothers on August 14 night.

Replying to another question, Selim said he woke up on August 15 at about 5 am when

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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 Committee meeting held at the Secretariat yesterday with Foreign Minister Abdus 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 onslaughts.

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 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, Anwara, Banskhali, Chandanai and Patia thanas in 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 tubewells in the flood-hit areas of Bandarban.

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

Khaleda visits flood-hit areas in Feni

BNP Chairperson Begum Khaleda Zia yesterday visited the flood-affected areas of Chhagalnaiya, 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, Jangabari, Chhagalnaiya, Pathannagar, GM Hat, Parshuram, Chithalia, Fulgazi Bazar, Sirpur, 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 tomorrow
Ashari Purnima, a religious festival of Buddhist community, will be observed at Shakyamuni 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.

Hydrocarbon exploration

From page 1
ries, which also included state-owned BAPEX, submit their bids either singly or jointly to explore oil and gas with their own investments.

The minister told newsmen at the Petrocentre that the investment to the tune of two billion dollars only in gas exploration operation is a conservative figure and the actual investment could go up to a much higher level.

The investments could go up to three billion US dollars by the year 2005, just only for exploration purpose, if at least five wells are drilled during the period, he said.

Khan pointed out that more money would be invested in the processing and development of gas fields as well as in the downstream businesses, taking the total figure to a high amount.

"By the grace of Allah, we are going to make our fortune, our luck," he said.

Representatives of the bidding companies, who were present at the news conference, hoped that they would be able to invest millions of dollars for the exploration and development of gas fields if they win

the bids.

An executive of Chevron of the USA, the company that bid for only one block, told newsmen that they are hoping to invest one billion US dollars for the exploration and production of gas.

But Andy Penneyard, the representative of Shell Hydrocarbons Holdings BV which is bidding for six blocks, said that his company would invest "multi-billion dollars" from exploration up to downstream businesses.

The energy minister said after evaluation of the bids at the expert level, agreements will be signed with the successful companies under production sharing contracts (PSCs).

Arther Anderson of the USA, a renowned consultancy firm, has been appointed for the purpose following the suggestion of the World Bank, he said.

The successful bidders will be picked up by August 16 and the PSCs will be signed with them by December 16, Khan said, adding that the companies would start their drilling operation early next year.

The gas would be used in power generation and fertilizer production and in production of liquefied natural gas (LNG), the minister said.

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 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.

Hartal observe at Bogra
BOGRA, July 17: A half-day hartal was observed here today protesting the killing of Jatiyatabadi Chhatra Dal activist Masum, reports UNB.

Local district unit of JCD called the hartal demanding immediate arrest and exemplary punishment to the killers. Masum was killed by unidentified terrorists on Monday night.

All shops and business establishments were closed and vehicles went off the road.

Abolish quota
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The examinees under the banner of 'BCS Examinations Movement Council' made the demands at a press conference at the Jatiya Press Club yesterday.

They said that to press home their demands, they would hold a rally on Sunday and then submit a memorandum to the PSC.

The government had earlier announced the provision for 30 per cent quota in jobs for the wards of freedom fighters on March 26 last.

The movement Council claimed that except 37,000 'raskars' all the people of the country had direct or indirect role in liberating the country through the war in 1971.

Leaders of the Council said though 28 months have passed since the process of 17th BCS examinations began, the results were yet to be published. How can we appear at the 18th BCS written examinations while they are yet to know the results of the previous examinations, they asked with a sense of frustration.

Md Aminul Akhter, Joint Convenor of the Council read out a written statement at the press conference. Md Akbar Hussain, convenor of the Council, and its members Anasul Haq, Md Mohiuddin Milky, Alamgir Hussain, Rouf Sarkar and Ali Hussain were also present.

Ctg port

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will be taken soon.

He said a committee is now working to explore the possibilities and ways and means of exporting computer software which is considered as a very promising export sector for Bangladesh.

The meeting reviewed the overall export situation of the last fiscal year and took stock of its progress.

It was informed that the total export crossed last year's target of 4.3 billion US dollar which is 14 per cent higher than that of 1995-96.

The meeting decided to continue to provide external marketing assistance at the rate of 10 per cent on FOB value on export of jute yarn and twine.

CHT talks

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They said the PCJSS delegation is likely to leave sometime this afternoon for their temporary headquarters at Dudukhara on the Bangladesh side of the border with Tripura, carrying the copy of the agreed draft of the proposed agreement, for discussions on it with their colleagues.

However, there had been no briefing last night for the second consecutive day. Earlier on Tuesday, NCCHT convenor Abul Hasnat Abdullah told newsmen in a single sentence statement that both sides were working on the draft of the agreement.

But there had been none for the past two days to brief about the progress of the talks or even to say how long the talks would last.