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BNP chairperson and Leader of the Opposition in Parliament Begum Khaleda Zia addressing leaders of the Zia Parishad at her Minto Road official residence in the city yesterday. — Star photo

Congress reaffirms its support to Gujral govt

CALCUTTA, Aug 10: The Congress Party ended a two-day convention today reaffirming its support to the fragile 14-party United Front government, led by Prime Minister Inder Kumar Gujral, reports AP.

There is no possibility of immediate elections, party chief Sitaram Kesri told reporters. The United Front coalition is dependent on the Congress Party for its survival.

No party could form a government if the Congress Party withdraws its support and early elections will be necessary. India held last general elections in May last year and the next one is due in the year 2001.

Kesri exhorted the party workers to win back the confidence of people to recover the ground lost to Hindu nationalists and lower castes.

He appealed to Sonia Gandhi, the inheritor of Nehru-Gandhi dynasty, to assume leadership role. "You should

take up any responsibility you desire to rejuvenate the party," said Kesri in his speech to party workers yesterday.

The party, which suffered its worst election defeat in May last year, feels that the widow of assassinated former Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi could be a vote-catcher in a future election.

The party has lost credibility with several party leaders jailed or charged with corruption. "Give me discipline and confidence and I will give you power in New Delhi," Kesri told the party workers today.

But the party suffered a setback a day earlier when Mamta Banerjee, a top state leader, formed a breakaway group from the Congress Party. Banerjee has been critical of the dominance of aging leaders in the affairs of the Congress.

APF adds: Sonia Gandhi was under renewed pressure today to take over the leadership of the Congress(I) Party.

Congress leaders told the party's national convention today that Sonia should put aside her reluctance and plunge into active politics.

"She has to lead us," said Madhavrao Scindia, a former federal minister, drawing applause from thousands of delegates. "Sonia Gandhi shares Rajiv Gandhi's vision of a new India and the Congress, which keeps India's minority government in office, would benefit immensely from her leadership."

Sylhet Paper Mills incurred a loss of Tk 1 cr in 23 days

SYLHET, Aug 10: Sylhet Pulp and Paper Mills has incurred a loss of over Tk one crore during last 23 days as production halted for shortage of chemicals, reports UNB.

Officials said chemicals could not be carried to the mills from Chittagong due to disruption of rail and road communications caused by the gaswell explosion at Magurchhara in Sunamganj district last June.

The sources said pulp supply from across the country also remained suspended due to the impasse.

Commissioner of West Bengal, PK Basu, Chief Engineer of India's Teesta Project, and its joint and deputy commissioners KR Joshi and P Nandi.

The Bangladesh team, which is led by water expert Khalilur Rahman, include JRC director Towhidul Anwar, Teesta Project chief engineer Aftab Alam Ansari and executive engineer Kazi Golam.

The Indian delegation flew into Saidpur Airport at 11:25 am today. On way to the Teesta Barrage Project rest house 'Abasar' at Doani, they visited the Dhundi main irrigation canal.

The meet on the Teesta water-sharing issue being held after a long break, will open up a new horizon in water management between the two neighbouring countries, Bangladesh delegation member Aftab Alam Ansari told UNB.

He also said that the talks had first begun in 1973 during the Bangabandhu's government and the discussions continued in the 4th, 5th, 6th, 7th and 8th JRC meetings.

After the inspection, Ansari added, the Indian delegates "realised the actual condition" of

the Teesta flow.

The river has changed its direction and now flows into the Jhinaikuri and Buri Teesta rivers in Dimla thana of Lalmonirhat district as there is no embankment on the river from Par-Mekliganj on the Indian side to the Kaliganj border here.

Today, the members of the JRC standing committee held only informal talks and briefed newsmen at Abasar.

Formal discussion between the two sides will be held tomorrow at 5 pm.

The current meeting, a follow-up to the talks between local officials of JRC on Sunday last week at the Burimari border zero point, will discuss the construction of the one-and-a-half kilometre link embankment from India's Par-Mekliganj to the zero point of Kaliganj border.

This is virtually a preparatory exercise before the secretary-level meeting, scheduled for August 29-31, when the two sides are expected to finalise a permanent agreement on the sharing of Teesta waters.

The JRC officials will also make recommendations to the 33rd JRC meeting, scheduled for November in New Delhi.

Editor: Mahfuz Anam

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Fifth Five-year Plan Tk 257cr projected for cultural sector

The draft fifth five-year (1997-2002) plan (FFYP) has projected an outlay of Tk 257.12 crore for the development of the cultural sector of the country, reports BSS.

The total amount will come from the public sector. In addition the private sector is expected to invest one third of the public sector amount during the period.

Of the outlay, Tk 200 crore will be spent for the implementation of spill-over projects, Tk 10 crore for language and literature, Tk 15 crore for library and archives, Tk 25 crore for fine and performing arts, and Tk 7.12 crore for archaeological sites, museums and other areas.

Under the draft FFYP, the ongoing programmes for research and development of Bengali language and literature will be completed. The National Book Centre will be turned into National Book Development Council. New programmes for research on the lives and works of the great people of the country and Liberation War will be taken up.

The construction of National Archives building and the second phase of development programmes for district public libraries and non-government public libraries will be undertaken. National Library and training programme will be developed, and programmes for development of copyright office, Mahanagar Pathagar and protecting intellectual property

rights will be taken up.

The ongoing programmes for the establishment of national art gallery, national theatre and music centre, cultural centres at Rabindra Kachari Bari at Shahzadpur, cultural complex at Cox's Bazar, tribal cultural institutes at Rajshahi, Khagrachhari, Monipur, Rangamati and Bandarban will be completed during the fifth plan period.

Port workers call off gherao programme

From Staff Correspondent

CHITTAGONG, Aug 10: The Coaster Hatch Workers Union postponed its gherao programme of Chittagong Port office, scheduled for tomorrow, till August 18 at the request of a minister and the port users, union leaders and Port officials said.

They said that the request came for postponement of movement of the hatch workers against the backdrop of a meeting to be held on August 13 on congestion surcharge in Singapore between Chittagong Feeder Trade Committee (CFTC) and the delegation of Chittagong port users.

In line with the request the coaster hatch workers union agreed to postpone the gherao programme of port office.

Feni clash

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ed today in Academy, Birinchi and Banani para areas.

During the two-hour clash, the houses of BNP leader and Fazlirah UP chairman Shamsul Haq and businessman Nurul Absar Bachchu were ransacked, police said.

BNP men and police exchanged several rounds of fire. In the last two days, Al men dominated but today BNP took control over the areas.

On Saturday, Awami League supporter Shamsul Haq Hazari was beaten up by BNP men. Eight workers of both the parties were injured in clashes following the incident.

The clashes erupted after local industrialist Shamsul Huda Majumder was seriously injured in bomb explosion on Friday night.

Police yet to identify bodies found inside flat at Mugda

By Staff Correspondent

The bodies of two persons found dead inside a flat Saturday night at North Mugda under Sabujbagh thana in the city were yet to be identified.

Police recovered the decomposed bodies, that bore marks of injury, to the Dhaka Medical College Hospital morgue for autopsy. They also found blood stains on the floor of the third floor apartment.

A young man had rented the flat on July 26 and came there the same day with a woman, police said quoting the owner of the house.

Indian army chief

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border, he said.

He replied to questions on the current state of Indo-Pak relations which, he said, had now been dealt with by civil servants of both countries. He referred to the round of talks recently held in New Delhi and the expected next round in Islamabad.

Earlier, General Chowdhury told a group of newsmen at the Indian High Commissioner's residence that he would rule out a drastic cut in defence budget "unless there is a radical change in the security system. Every country will need a strong army."

He showered praises on the Bangladesh Army. "It's very professional. It has a goodwill in our country."

Then a major in the Eastern Command which placed him in the Jessore Sector during Bangladesh's War of Liberation, now a highly-decorated general, he still remembers those glorious days. "In 1971, we used to be called mitrabahini (allied forces) by your people. I've come to say that we are still your allies."

Talking on insurgency that bothers bilateral relations, he said both India and Bangladesh were now speaking in the same tone. "Restoring peace has been high on our agenda."

Asked if India still believes that the United Liberation

Front of Assam gets support from Bangladesh, the General evaded a direct answer. "Certainly from time to time the transborder movement of insurgents is a common issue between India and Bangladesh both. ULFA figures in that."

But, he said, changed government policies have been "extremely helpful of late."

He hinted that this was still an issue. "I wouldn't be so quite definite about it (whether Bangladesh is still doing it). But definitely these are discussed from time to time."

Peace also is need of the hour, the General said, as business and economy take precedence over politics these days. "If we don't have peace in our region, we won't be able to benefit from the opportunities from regional cooperation."

He made a particular reference to Myanmar's becoming a member of the ASEAN which "we (India and Bangladesh as members of SAARC) are hoping to do business with."

The General said both Kashmir and India's seven north-eastern states bordering Bangladesh, were equally important in terms of external relations.

Speaking on external threat to India, he didn't make a direct reference to Pakistan. "I don't want to say anything about it sitting in this country."

LGC recommendations

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of the Jatiya Party, former secretary Kazi Azhar Ali, former secretary ATM Shamsul Huq, Begum Taherunnessa Abdullah and Pro-Vice Chancellor of the National University Dr. Borhanuddin Khan Jahangir. Secretary of the Ministry of Local Government and Rural Development (LGRD) AHM Abdul Hal was the Member Secretary of the Commission.

On receiving the LGC report, the Prime Minister constituted a five member secretary committee headed by the Cabinet Secretary to work out a mechanism to implement its suggestions report as soon as possible. The members of the 'secretary committee' include the Law Secretary, Establishment Secretary, Finance Secretary and the LGRD Secretary.

Chairman of the LGC Rahmat Ali MP told this correspondent this week that the government should take up the issue of introducing the local government system on "priority basis." "If introduced in the way the LGC has recommended, the local bodies will contribute to bringing about revolutionary changes in the rural economy, development, education and culture."

Despite repeated attempts in the last couples of days, neither the cabinet secretary nor the LGRD secretary was available for comment, while the Law Secretary expressed his ignorance about any progress in scrutinising the LGC recommendations.

However, the Terms of Reference (TOR) of the LGC included preparing outlines for village,

union, thana and district level local government bodies which have to be, on the basis of the governing party's commitment for strengthening of the local level bodies, democratic, representative and development friendly decentralised institutions. The government did not say anything about the Divisional level administration run by the Divisional Commissioners (DCs) and the LGC also ignored the issue.

The TOR also included outlining the responsibilities as well as activities of the local government bodies; determining their sources of revenue and resource mobilisation system; the mechanism for adopting development plans and their implementation at local levels and the sources of money required to implement those; expenditure on revenue accounts and the sources of money required for it. The TOR also included determining the manpower needed for day-to-day activities, stratification of the man-power, responsibilities of officials and employees who will work at different levels of the local bodies and fixing the salary structure of the man-power and the relation between the national level government and the local bodies, and other related issues.

In a deviation from the TOR, the LGC has left the issue of fixing the salary structure for the Commission to be a Finance Commission to be created in future. The LGC suggested that a Finance Commission comprising 'political personalities and experts' should be created by law which would determine the

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Women repression complaint cell opens at Khaleda's official residence

A "women repression complaint cell" has been opened at the 29 Minto Road official residence of the Leader of the Opposition in Parliament Begum Khaleda Zia, reports UNB.

A seven-member committee has been formed to oversee the Complaint Cell with former MP Farida Rahman as its chief.

Other members are Prof Zobiaida Gulshan Ara, Begum Shamsunnahar, Begum Rabeya Siraj, Begum Shamsunnahar Kashem, Prof Shahria Akhter Bulu and Nazma Akhter, said a party press release.

England 25/1 at tea

NOTTINGHAM, England, Aug 10: Australia set England a record 451 runs to win the fifth cricket Test and equal the six-match Ashes series 2-2 Sunday, reports AP.

Australia were dismissed for 336 in the second innings leaving England 37 minutes batting before the tea break.

At tea, England were 25 for one after captain Michael Atherton edged paceman Glenn McGrath behind to wicket-keeper Ian Healy. The wicket marked the sixth time McGrath had dismissed Atherton in the series.

Only one in four Indians expect better ties with Pakistan

NEW DELHI, Aug 10: Only one in four Indians believes that the country's relations with its arch-rival Pakistan will improve, says an opinion poll published by an Indian news magazine on Sunday, reports AP.

But 40 per cent of 12,651 people interviewed said they expected the Kashmir dispute to be resolved. Seventy-one per cent said India must keep Kashmir.

India and Pakistan have fought two wars over the control of Kashmir.

The poll was published by India Today magazine five days ahead of 50th anniversary of India's independence from the British rule that also saw the creation of an Islamic Pakistan.

The magazine didn't give the margin of error.

Mohandas Gandhi, who led India's freedom struggle, is the official father of the nation. But Gandhi was regarded as the most inspiring leader by 18 per cent.

Mohandas Gandhi was chosen by 14 per cent. Indira Gandhi's father, Jawaharlal Nehru, India's first prime minister, and her son, Rajiv Gandhi, were placed behind Atal Behari Vajpayee, leader of Hindu nationalist Bharatiya Janata Party.

Corruption was identified as the greatest evil by 34 per cent, followed by unemployment with 20 per cent and inflation with 18.

More than one-third of the respondents said they expected India to break apart into separate nations over the next five decades, while 41 per cent said it would stay united.

The survey was carried out by polling organisation ORG-MARG in May and June.

40 killed in sectarian violence Thousands of troops deployed in Punjab

LAHORE, Aug 10: Authorities in Pakistan's eastern Punjab province deployed thousands of paramilitary troops today to combat a wave of religiously motivated violence, reports AP.

Police Rangers and Frontier Constabulary troops were taking up positions around the province in a bid to end clashes between Sunni and Shi'ite Muslim extremist groups.

More than 40 people died in bombings and drive-by shootings in Punjab in 10 days of mounting sectarian violence.

Federal authorities said the troops, backed by armored vehicles, will patrol the Punjab capital, Lahore, and other major towns where killings have become a routine occurrence.

The deployment came a day after unidentified assailants gunned down 16 people, most of them Shi'ite Muslims, in the Punjab province.

Hundreds of residents marched through the streets in protests across the province this week, demanding authorities provide better protection for their communities.

Deadlock at IU 13 students threaten to commit suicide

From Our Correspondent

KUSHTIA, Aug 10: Thirteen Islamic University (IU) students today threatened to commit suicide if the ongoing deadlock at the university was not resolved by August 18.

"We will be left with no option, but to kill ourselves if the university's long-running standoff does not come to an end," said a statement issued by the 13 students.

"We are being considered as burden of our families as well as the society because of our lengthy academic life," the statement added.

Mohammad Amirul Islam Tutul, an M A final year student of Economics department, is among the signatories to the statement.

The academic activities at the university came to a halt since June 26 as the Bangladesh Chhatra League enforced an indefinite strike on the campus demanding removal of Vice-Chancellor Dr Enamul Huq.

Biman

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plane safely just after the landing, the officials said and the aircraft was removed from the runway within three hours of the incident.

Three Biman flights, including an international one, were cancelled because of the incident. Biman's international flight for Kathmandu and two domestic flights in Dhaka-Jessore and Dhaka-Rajshahi routes were cancelled.

The aircraft, now in the hangar, will be ready for the scheduled flight by this noon, the Biman official told UNB, adding the landing gear has already been removed and the repairing work is going on.

The failed basic parts will be sent to the manufacturers, Fokker Aircraft company of Holland, for finding out the reason behind the disorder, the officials said.

State Minister for Civil Aviation and Tourism Dr Mohiuddin Khan Alamgir visited the spot and directed the officials to make the aircraft ready before its next scheduled flight.

BNP undecided

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Abdul Mannan Bhuiyan told this correspondent his party was still undecided on the issue.

"We're already in the anti-government agitation. Now we want to understand which parties are interested to join in the agitation. Then we'll decide if we'll go for an alliance or not," he said.

About his party's discussions with other opposition parties, Mannan Bhuiyan said they would continue such talks.

Kazi Zafar Ahmed told The Daily Star last night that his party was in favour of forming an alliance of nationalist, democratic and patriotic opposition parties.

Referring to his talks with other parties, he said BNP was yet to agree on the issue but Jamaat had given its consent.

"We'll have more talks and in case there is no consensus on constituting a front, we'll go for a simultaneous movement against the government," the JP leader said.

Jamaat's publicity Secretary Abdul Kader Mollah said his party was not interested in joining anti-state but to participate in a movement.

Indian army chief visits Comilla, Sylhet cantts

The visiting Indian Army Chief of Staff, General Shankar Roy Chowdhury, and members of his entourage visited Comilla and Sylhet cantonments yesterday, reports UNB.

On their arrival at the Comilla Cantonment, the guests were received by Area Commander Major General Muhammad Safool Afzal, said an ISPR release.

They were briefed about various training activities of the local army division.

Later, General Roy and his entourage went to the School of Infantry and Tactics (SIT) at Jaisalabad Cantonment in Sylhet.

The guests were also briefed about various training activities of the school and shown training facilities available there.

Degree course

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first chance, will get two more chances.

The committee has also suggested introduction of English as the medium of instruction in higher education at least temporarily, if not permanently.

M Phil courses will be for two years, one year for 'course work' and one year for research. Those who will get minimum 60 per cent marks in the 'course work' will be eligible for enrolment in Ph D courses. Teachers of universities and colleges will get the chance after completing three years of service. The Ph D course must be completed within five years, the committee said.

The committee also suggested enhancement of tuition fees and other charges for higher education and easy term loan and scholarship for meritorious students.

The 58 member committee headed by Prof Shamsul Haq was formed about five months ago. Nineteen sub-committee were formed to recommend measures on various issues in the education sector. The committee is likely to submit its report to the Prime Minister soon.

PM: Jute

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Principal Secretary to the Prime Minister Dr SA Samad, Finance Secretary Dr Akbar Ali, Jute Secretary MA Hannan, Banking Division Secretary Ameer-ul Muik and concerned officials were present in the meeting.

Mill. The rest nine are public limited companies, shares of which have been approved for off-loading through the ICB.

In the current fiscal year, the PB has identified some 82 enterprises for privatisation. "It is expected that the Board will be able to finalise the sale of many of the targeted units in the 1997-98 fiscal year," Zafarullah said.

"The Board has put a lot of importance on the transparency of the privatisation process. We have now introduced transparency in every stage of transaction which will be made subject to public scrutiny. We will also ensure accountability of the officials who will be involved with the privatisation process," he said.

The PB has so far identified 219 enterprises for privatisation. Intended buyers will be able to make choice of enterprises for which they have an interest in. The PB will then float tenders accordingly.

He said response from the buyers is very good and in the last two months about 200 offers have been made against some 25 units.

"We have proposed that if a buyer wants to pay the whole amount in cash, he will get 20 per cent rebate on the price. This proposal, made in view of the problems arising in payment of installments, is awaiting cabinet's approval," he said.