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Foundation of Saidabad Water Treatment Plant laid PM asks WASA to reduce system loss at any cost

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina yesterday asked the Water Supply and Sewerage Authority (WASA) to immediately bring down the system loss, which she termed "most alarming," reports UNB.

"At any cost, you'll have to reduce the system loss in the technical and administrative sectors," she said while laying the foundation of Saidabad Water Treatment Plant in the morning.

The WASA has no scope for holding anybody else responsible for its administrative loss, Hasina said, asking the authorities to find out the causes behind the system loss and take effective steps to resolve the problem.

She directed the authorities concerned to "take strict administrative action against those responsible for the losses caused due to willful negligence or ill motive."

The massive Saidabad Water Treatment Plant involving a cost of Tk 750.43 crore will be completed by 2001. Bangladesh government is providing Tk 270.70 crore, while rest of the money is being provided by the World Bank and the governments of France and Japan.

With the completion of the

first phase of the project, the Saidabad Plant will have the capacity to supply 225 million litre water per day.

On completion of the project in three phases, the total capacity will be increased to 900 million litre daily (MLD) by 2001.

According to official sources, the current deficit of water supply for over 9 million people of Dhaka city rose to 450 MLD against the total demand of 1300 MLD.

Dhaka WASA presently operates 222 deep tubewells producing about 98 per cent of all water supplied. The remaining two per cent is supplied by the three small surface water treatment plants — one at Chandighat on the Buriganga river and other two at Narayanganj.

In 1992, with the assistance of donors a master plan was developed for water supply in the city and on the basis of this plan, a long term investment programme was made.

Dhaka WASA is now implementing the first stage of the investment programme, constructing the 225 MLD capacity Saidabad Water Treatment Plant.

Addressing the foundation laying ceremony, the Prime

Minister said as a service oriented commercial organisation, the WASA must ensure that water tariffs are realised from all valued customers. "This organisation must be transformed into a profitable one."

Later, the Prime Minister laid the foundation stone of the Saidabad Water Treatment Plant at the project site.

Bogra clash

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The youth, Faisal, 18, was admitted to Mohammad Ali Hospital with stab injuries.

Witnesses said some 200 BCL workers again went to Banani area at noon, blasted bombs and traded several blank shots.

AL-BNP clash

From Page 1

while a police Sub-inspector and three constables taken to the police line hospital.

Meanwhile, thana BNP called a dawn-to-dusk hartal in the thana headquarters tomorrow protesting what it said the attack on the BNP meeting by Awami League activists.

Asian, African states urge KSA to ease crackdown

DUBAI, United Arab Emirates, Oct 21: Asian and African nations today accused Saudi Arabia of beating and imprisoning illegal workers and residents and called on the Kingdom to ease its crackdown, reports AP.

Diplomats from Pakistan, India, Bangladesh, Somalia and Nigeria said they filed complaints with the Saudi Foreign Ministry after receiving reports that some of their citizens have been beaten and imprisoned by Saudi security forces. The diplomats spoke on condition of anonymity.

The diplomats said they demanded an end to the harassment and asked the Saudi government to give them more time to arrange for illegal workers and their families to return home.

One African diplomat said Saudi police have surrounded entire neighbourhoods in Jeddah and were raiding homes and shops to search for illegal workers. The diplomat spoke on condition that he was not further identified.

There was no comment from Saudi authorities.

The appeals came after a three-month amnesty for illegal workers expired on Thursday. Saudi authorities have launched a crackdown to un-

cover illegal workers and residents that remain in the country.

There were an estimated 700,000 illegal workers in Saudi Arabia before the crackdown. About half entered the oil-rich kingdom as Muslim pilgrims and stayed after their visas expire.

2 policemen hurt examining pipe gun

From Our Correspondent

NARAYANGANJ, Oct 21: Two policemen were injured when bullets accidentally went off a seized pipe gun they were examining at Siddhirganj thana Monday night, police said yesterday.

ASI Kaisar Ali, 44, was hit with bullet in his hand while constable Abdul Kader, 45, was injured in the belly.

They were rushed to Dhaka Medical College Hospital. Later, Kaiser was shifted to the Orthopedic Hospital.

The pipe gun was seized from one Reazul Islam, 24, at Godnail village at about 11:30 pm Monday.

Tragic end of a Gharial

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(NACOM), passed on the information to Mohammad Anisuzzaman Khan, a leader of NACOM and a wildlife biologist in Dhaka.

He accompanied Dr Naser Khan of the department of environment management, East West University, Dr Najmus Ahsan Kalemullah of Dhaka University and Saleem Samad and Principal Abdul Rauf Khan, former MP from the area.

From October 17 to 19, the team scanned the possible nesting sites of Gharial along the Padma in fishing boats, extensively talking to fishermen to gather information about sightings of the reptile.

Finally, they located the fisherman who trapped the baby Gharial. He had no idea that it is a protected animal and does no harm to people, surviving solely on fish, having a taste for Pangash and cat fish.

They also spoke to other fishermen and people, explaining the nature of Gharial and the need to conserve it. They also urged them to report its sightings so that arrangements could be made for their survival.

Anisuzzaman Khan, who took its picture after scooping out the reptile from its grave, told The Daily Star yesterday that Gharial was listed as a critically endangered species. A census carried out in 1974 put the world population of wild Gharial at less than 150 adults, of which 100 were in India.

They once abounded in the three tributaries of the Ganges, the Girwa and Chambal rivers in India and the Tapi Narayani river in Nepal. Scattered individuals are found in the Narayani and Indus rivers in Pakistan, the Karnali and Babri rivers in Nepal and the Jamuna and the Padma rivers in Bangladesh, he said.

In India, there are a few Gharials left in Manas and Subansiri tributaries of the Brahmaputra river, and the Ken, Son and Ghagra tributaries of the Ganges. The southern limits of its range in Mahanadi river in Orissa State once was as far south as Godavari in Andhra Pradesh of India.

Based on his own observation and surveys, by Dr Ali Reza Khan, AW Akhond, Dr Farid Ahsan, Mizan Rashid, Mokhesur Rahman, SMA Rashid, Sakawat Hossain and Sirajuddin, the Gharial population in Bangladesh rivers had declined.

Anisuzzaman Khan said, From 15 in 1981 in the Ganges/Padma in Chapai Nawabganj and Rajshahi be-

tween Godagari and Diar Khidirpur and Yusufpur, their number fell to 10 by 1984. Only five were seen in 1985 in the area, three in 1987 and two in 1991. There had been no more sightings in the Ganges/Padma afterwards in area.

In the Brahmaputra/Jamuna there were seven in 1981 between Gaibandha and Bahadurabad ghat. But there were three at Gaibandha in 1984 and three at Bahadurabad in 1985. A pair was sighted last time in Bahadurabad in 1987. But there had been no more sightings by wildlife biologists since 1991.

At the same time, killing of five Gharials was reported in 1981. 80 eggs were destroyed, five juveniles were caught, two of those kept at Rajshahi Zoo. In 1984, three were killed, 47 eggs were destroyed at Khidirpur and Godagari and Chardiar and Gaibandha areas, virtually routing those reports of three more deaths came in 1985, including the largest one in Rajshahi area. In 1991, two more killings were reported.

However, during a recent survey for river dolphins in the Ganges and the Brahmaputra by Khan, five new sightings were reported to him by fishermen, suggesting survival of some in the Jamuna and Bhuapur, Sirajganj and Aricha and in the Padma between Nagarbari and Lohajang. Of these, one was killed at Taota in Jamuna, one was collected by the Dhaka Zoo from the Padma in Munshiganj. The third was killed in Kadamtali in the Padma on October 2. The last two were reported between Nagarbari and Harirampur area.

The recently reported sightings, Khan says, are important indications that there are still a few individuals, still surviving in these areas. He said the fisherman who netted the Gharial reported something big had slithered away, which he suspected to be the mother Gharial. Gharial has been included in the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) Red Data Book for endangered species and the Convention of Trade on Endangered Species (CITES) as one of the globally threatened reptiles.

The Bangladesh government also accorded its priority status in a number of conservation project documents, putting funds for their captive breeding in the Bhawal National Park.

The IUCN chapter in Bangladesh is likely to conduct a field survey soon to determine its latest status and renew conservation efforts for its survival, Khan said.



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Magurchhara 'Facts about loss of radioactive isotopes should be disclosed'

By Staff Correspondent

The Wildlife and Nature Conservation Society of Bangladesh (WNCBS) has demanded full disclosure about the mysterious loss of radioactive isotopes in the mud thrown up in the explosion at an exploration well for gas in Magurchhara, Maulvi Bazar recently.

A meeting of the WNCBS on Friday reviewed the situation following the explosion, the reported loss of the radioactive isotopes as reported in newspapers, expressing alarm at the situation.

It demanded full disclosure of facts about the dangers the isotopes had posed to humans, flora and fauna, according to a press release issued by Prof Harounur Rashid, president of the WNCBS.

It said "the situation calls for answers to a number of questions in the backdrop of a damage to the environment. These are: Under whose authority the radioactive isotopes were permitted to be brought into the country for oil and gas exploration, what were the safeguards envisaged for their use? How many other such canisters of radioactive isotopes are present in the country?"

Besides, it added, "What is the precise nature of the danger of radioactivity in the Magurchhara area as a result of the loss of isotopes either now or in the foreseeable future when the dry season causes the mud to crack? Has the Bangladesh Atomic Energy Commission been requested to investigate the radiation and measure it?"

Footpaths between Curzon Hall, HC to be opened for weekly markets

By Staff Correspondent

The recently constructed footpaths along the road between Curzon Hall and the High Court will be opened for weekly markets, sources in the Dhaka City Corporation said.

The wide footpaths were constructed on both sides of the road recently replacing the only purpose-built richshaw lanes of the city. The footpaths will be opened to hawkers on Fridays and Saturdays, the DCC sources said.

Mannan Bhuiyan

From Page 1

"The Sangsad has been turned into a club of those in power. That's why, we've been abstaining from attending parliament session. We made our best efforts to make the Sangsad effective but the ruling party did not come up with any initiative to resolve the impasse. Rather, its provocative activities aggravated the situation," Mannan Bhuiyan observed.

12 Bangladeshis

From Page 1

Meanwhile, a flag meeting between BDR and BSF at Company Commander level was held today but it ended with no result, BDR sources said. Another meeting at Battalion Commander level will be held tomorrow.

A tense situation is prevailing in the area.

Bangabandhu murder

From Page 1

Major Rashid came to the regiment, Lt Col (LPR) Muhiuddin in the dock.

Making deposition, Jamrul said CO Major Rashid on August 14 afternoon, 1975 asked him to keep the key of store with himself not to give it to the Quarters Guard.

Captain Jahangir was regiment's Quarter Master with whom Major Rashid came to the ammunition store at 11 to 11:30 in the night, he said.

The witness also informed that the two officers had come by a 'doz car' and they were accompanied by 10 to 12 soldiers of Artillery and Lancer. "Co Major Rashid saheb asked me to open the lock of ammunition store and the soldiers coming with him took ammunition to the car at his (Rashid's) order," he said.

The witness said the ammunition taken away by soldiers at the instruction of Rashid included shells of artillery gun and bullets of rifle, stengun, SMG, LMG, pistol and revolver.

"Rashid saheb later asked me to keep the store under lock and key and stay at the unit line as he may need more ammunition," the PW said.

Jamrul said Rashid left the regiment after he put the store under lock and key. "I went to unit line after informing on-duty sentry of Quarter Guard."

He said Subedar Major of the regiment Anisul Islam came to the line at 6 to 6:30 am on August 15 and asked the troops who were in barracks to remain stand-by in uniform with arms and ammunition.

The soldiers who were at line received ammunition from me as per rule with written document and we were kept stand-by in the regiment," said the retired Naik Gunner.

The PW-26 said at that time

Khaleda visits Kalihati tomorrow

By Staff Correspondent

BNP chief and Leader of the Opposition in the Jatiya Sangsad Begum Khaleda Zia will visit Kalihati in Tangail tomorrow where a disastrous road accident killed 65 people recently.

A party press release said Begum Zia will meet the family members of the victims. The accident occurred on October 15.

On her way to Kalihati, the Opposition Leader will also visit the houses of two professors, killed in the accident, at Tangail town.

Major Rashid came to the regiment and went out after staying there for sometime.

"I came to know from the soldiers who were coming and going that Father of the Nation Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, his family members and other relatives have been killed," he said.

In the meantime, he said, he heard from a personal transistor Major Dalim announcing "Sheikh Mujib has been killed," he said.

"I also came to know that Major Khandakar Abdul Rashid, Major Farooq, Major Muhiuddin, Major Rashed Chowdhury, Major Shariar, Major Dali, Major Noor, Captain Mostafa and some other officers were involved in the killings," said the PW.

He said afterwards days Captain Jahangir asked him to calculate the ammunition of the store. "But I found less bullets and shells for every weapon."

The witness said: As I told Captain Jahangir that ammunition is less inventory sector he replied, "Co Major Rashid asked for recording the account as it is now on ledger."

"It took 10 to 12 days to make a tally of the ammunition," said Jamrul who went on voluntary retirement from Army in 1978.

Among the prosecution lawyers, Mosharrar Hossain Kajal, Sahara Khatun and Kamrul Islam were present at the courtroom during the trial proceedings.

Newsman exchange views with AL central leaders

A group of senior journalists yesterday exchanged views with the central Awami League leaders on the country's prevailing political and socio-economic condition at Awami Foundation, reports UNB.

Journalists Sontosh Gupta, Golam Sarwar, Iqbal Sobhan Chowdhury, Shaifur Rahman, Azizul Islam Bhuiyan, Monjurul Ahsan Bulbul, Akhter Ahmed Khan, Swapan Saha, Harun Habib, Shamim Ahmed, Abdul Jalil Bhuiyan, Shahjahan Sarder, Kamal Haider and Subash Chandra Sada, among others, attended the meeting.

Awami League presidium members Abdul Mannan, Zillur Rahman, Abdul Momin, Begum Sajeda Chowdhury, Amir Hossain Amu, Abdul Razzak and Mohammad Abdul Jalil, and central leaders Shamsur Rahman Khan, Prof Abu Sayeed, Abdul Mannan, Advocate Abdul Mannan Khan and Nuh-ul-Alam Lenin were present.

Voters' ID card project

From Page 1

data bank within that time. As per ECNEC decision, a six-member inquiry committee was formed by the EC to look into alleged irregularities in expenses and make recommendations for proper implementation of the project.

In its 85-page report, submitted on December 12 last year, the committee stated that it did not find any irregularity in the project expenses although its implementation was limited to issuance of ID cards only among 20 per cent of the voters due to various reasons. It noted that it was obligatory under law to provide every voter with an identity card.

The EC, meanwhile, revised the ID card project incorporating the data bank and submitted it before the May 27 ECNEC meeting. ECNEC rejected the six-member committee's report, saying it did not reflect the reality about the irregularities and wastage of funds. Furthermore, it decided to form a ministerial inquiry committee to look into the matter and submit its report by June 30, documents showed.

The EC immediately reacted to the ECNEC decision of forming a ministerial inquiry committee and said the government cannot interfere in any of its activities as per the constitutional provisions and

the Representation of the People's Order, 1972.

According to sources concerned, deterred by law to form a ministerial probe body, the government turned to the Comptroller of Audit and Accounts to carry out a thorough audit of the project. More than 100 auditors scrutinised the whole project in 64 districts and recently completed the process with "25 objections" against which the EC will appeal, EC sources said.

While the time consuming procedures continue, more than 100 vendors or companies, who had initially won bids for preparing electoral rolls, ID Card inserts taking photos of voters, laminating the cards and distributing those, are now inoperative with piles of materials they had invested on. EC sources roughly estimating their outstanding bills, said EC owed them about Tk 10 crore.

An investigation revealed that the Chief Election Commissioner, after receiving show cause notices from these companies, requested the Planning Commission to allow the EC to pay off about Tk eight crore in outstanding bills from the ID Card project account. The Planning Commission, in response, asserted that no such payment should be made unless the project was revived.

Dhaka-Beijing ties

From Page 1

for Foreign Trade and Economic Cooperation Sun Guang Xiang and ERD Secretary Dr Mashur Rahman intalled the accords on behalf their respective governments.

The Chinese Vice Premier, the Foreign Minister, the State Minister for Foreign Affairs, other members of the Chinese delegation and senior officials of the ministries concerned were present at the signing ceremony.

The Chinese financial assistance, to be given as commodity grant under the agreements, will support Bangladesh's economic and social development efforts.

As of today, the Chinese bilateral economic cooperation assistance to Bangladesh stands at Yuan 3,436 million (equivalent to Tk 1,759.23 crore).

At the amount, 2,186 million yuan (Tk 1,119.23 crore) has already been utilised for three

friendship bridges — Buriganga, Shambuganj and Mahananda — and establishment of some industries and power stations, purchase of ships and import of some essential commodities.

The remaining Yuan 1,250 million (equivalent to Tk 640 crore) is being utilised for the 4th friendship bridge over the river Korotoa, Boropukuria Coalmine Project, setting up of small industries in the private sector, ferries and sea trucks.

The Foreign Minister said the Chinese side responded positively to a request for increase of more imports of jute, jute products, leathers and other commodities from Bangladesh to narrow huge trade gap.

The Chinese side was also requested to allow zero tariff access to Bangladesh products, he said.

The Chinese leader appreciated the government's efforts in accelerating the economic development as well as endeavours to promote relation with the neighbours.

He was apprised of the stagnation of the repatriation of the remaining 21,000 Rohingya refugees, Azad said.

He said the Chinese side has assured of supporting Bangladesh's candidature to the non-permanent seat of the Security Council in 2001.

BNP demonstration

From Page 1

and workers, release of the arrested partymen, withdrawal of ban on street rallies in the capital, full implementation of the National Pay Scale, scrapping of the Gram Parishad Bill and taking effective steps to contain terrorism, extortion, corruption and repression on women.

In the capital, the Dhaka city unit of BNP will arrange a procession from in front of the party's central office at Naya Paltan at 4 in the afternoon.

Meanwhile, the city BNP and its front organisations held separate meetings yesterday to discuss preparation for today's demonstrations.

4 TV officials

From Page 1

the TV station for reasons unknown. As Feroz Qaiyum protested their confinement, the soldiers also took him into the room.

Later, all the four were shot dead and dumped into a waterbody behind the Rampura Television Bhaban.

The identity of the four could be ascertained by their relatives by only seeing clothes found in the waterbody with skeletons after some days.

Revising the case lodged with Gulshan thana by the wife of Akmal Hossain way back in November 1975, police conducted investigation and arrested Altaf Hossain, a then Havildar of the Engineering Corps, put on duty at the television station.

Police said the killing might be sequel to an internal conflict between TV officials and employees at the time of turmoil when a group of army men killed Father of the Nation Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman and his family members on August 15 and four leaders in Dhaka Jail on November 3.

ASP Khalequzzaman of Criminal Investigation Department is investigating the case.

Brokers' activities

From Page 1

based on our findings," the member said.

According to SEC sources, the investors were alleging that the brokers were not executing their orders properly. Many investors complained to the SEC that the brokers were buying shares on investors' account but not giving them shares when the price was going high.

The SEC is going to check their books and accounts and ensure that the investors get the first preference," the SEC member said.

On September 29, the SEC had amended two sub-rules to ban "front trading" in brokerage houses. It had been banned since 1987, but the amendments were made to tighten the SEC grip and ensure enforcement.

The amendments were made so that the investors, get the first preference after buying of a share and not the broker, the member said.

NCCHT meet

From Page 1

letter to the PCJSS through Liaison Committee convenor Hammad Chakma, agreeing to hold the seventh round of talks between the two sides in Dhaka on November 18, the sources said.

The PCJSS, during a recent meeting of its top brass somewhere in the Agartala, the capital of the Indian state of Tripura, endorsed the draft but demanded certain amendments relating to the power and authority of a proposed Regional Council and police in the three CHT districts and land management.

Both sides earlier expressed their desire to sign an agreement during the next meeting, which will be the 25th since the PCJSS agreed in October 1985 to talk to end the insurgency.

AL-BNP meet

From Page 1

Only a couple of months ago, the Speaker-mediated talks failed to bear fruits. A five-man committee led by Nasim was assigned to look into the BNP charges of victimisation. The committee, with the other four places shared by both parties equally, has never met.

State of financial sector serious

From Page 1

pendence during the BNP regime than what it is now enjoying.

While agreeing with the observation that the central bank need more independence, the former minister was of the view that the Bangladesh Bank should have a certain degree of autonomy.

"Don't go over enthusiastic with the World Bank suggestion... Everything of World Bank is not equally applicable in Bangladesh and Rwanda. What is good for developed economies may not always be good for a poor country," he said.

"In the present situation in Bangladesh where the economy is not 100 per cent stable, the model of Bank of England or the US Reserve Bank cannot be applied," said Saifur Rahman, a front-ranking leader of opposition BNP.

He rather called for paying more attention to other fields like ensuring consistency in the management of the commercial banks and stopping frequent changes in the top position which is "not correct."

Saifur Rahman mentioned that people from the commercial bank were transferred to the central bank while central bankers were put in the commercial banks. He dubbed it a "musical chair" which hurts the "policy of stability."

The former finance minister, who also defended the sanctioning of substantial loans during his tenure as needed to attain higher growth, also op-

posed further liberalisation in the capital market and the banking sector.

He observed that merely transferring the nationalised banks to the private sector would not help them gain good health.

The BNP leader identified the "unhealthy situation" in the political arena as the main issue and said a political consensus on economic issues can only be developed if the government side wants it