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ON BOARD COURIER
EACH DAY EVERY DAY
TO INDIA

PM: Opposition

From Page 1

including gas and power. Steps were also taken to improve law and order and make parliament accountable.

About terrorism, she said the government was able to scale down the incidence of terrorism, to a large extent, but it could not be stamped out due to non-cooperation of the opposition.

Referring to police action on BNP on the city streets, Hasina said holding meetings on the street was banned following demands from the press and the people and venues had been designated for holding public meetings.

Asked if she would take any initiative to bring the opposition back to parliament, the Prime Minister said: "We are trying to bring back the opposition to the House and we hope good sense will prevail upon them and join the House."

About the impasse over the formation of parliamentary standing committees, the Prime Minister said the government side agreed to accommodate all 113 BNP MPs in the proposed committees as per their demand. Now they are claiming 120, although they don't have this strength in parliament.

Asked if her government would take legal steps against corrupt ministers of the previous BNP government, the Prime Minister said the Bureau of Anti-Corruption was investigating it and action would be taken on basis of its findings.

About the peace accord between the government and the Chakma tribal leaders, she did not specifically say when the agreement was going to be signed. "Discussion is on ... the accord will be signed as soon as an understanding is reached."

Donors concerned

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Its concern at the "unnecessary delay" of regarding both the projects.

An International Development Association (IDA) mission in its draft aid memoire Monday noted. "The delay in government approval of the Haripur second stage evaluation (presently two months after completion of evaluation) is a matter of some concern and it is hoped that the negotiation process with the lowest evaluated bidders of Haripur and Meghnaghata projects will commence within a few days.

For the Meghnaghata Project, AES was prequalified along with four other private companies including Marubeni Corp, ABB Power, Genting and Midland. On September 3, after PDB opened the power tariff offer of these companies, AES was officially declared the lowest bidder. AES's average tariff for 22 years was 2.79 cents per unit.

While its nearest competitor Marubeni's offered 3.37 cents per unit. In other words, the difference between AES and Marubeni stood at around 80 million US dollars in terms of use of power during the said 22 years, sources noted.

AES's tariff proposal included a zero tariff rate in the initial period and growing rate over the years.

PDB authorities, however, started raising different technical questions about the financing schemes of the companies concerned. Even said that AES's zero tariff offer in the initial period was not acceptable.

Night coach passengers robbed

MANIKGANJ, Nov 6: A gang of dacoits looted money and valuables from the passengers of a night coach on the Dhaka-Aricha highway in Dhamrai thana in the early hours of today, police said.

Some 10 dacoits, who were

traveling in the guise of passengers, attacked others at 12:30 am when the Jessore-bound coach reached Tuliwala area of Dhamrai. The gang looted cash and valuables worth about Tk 1.5 lakh before fleeing away.

The dacoits also beat up some

passengers who tried to resist them.

About Begum Zia's allegation against peace accord, Hasina said Begum Zia does not want peace in the Hill Tracts. "Does she mean that the establishment of peace in the Hill Tracts would jeopardise the country's independence?"

About the issue of giving transit to India, she said agreement on land, water and air transit with India was signed in 1980 during the rule of President Ziaur Rahman.

Replies to a question about the ensuing three-nation business summit in Dhaka on November 23, she said it would help expand trade and economic cooperation among Bangladesh, India and Pak-

istan.

Nepal importing firearms from China

KATHMANDU, Nov 6: Nepal is importing undisclosed amounts of firearms from China to replace old weapons, an army source said today, in a move which could antagonise neighbouring India, reports AFP.

Indo-Pak talks

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malayan territory, now shared between them with a third in Pakistan and the rest in India. India's share of Kashmir is the only majority Muslim state in the predominantly Hindu country, and New Delhi accuses Islamabad of arming and funding a Muslim insurgency in Kashmir that has left 16,000 dead since 1990.

Pakistan says it provides only moral support to the militants.

MEMBERS OF PARLIAMENT, 1997

4-6 NOVEMBER 1997

COMMONWEALTH PARLIAMENTARY ASSOCIATION & BANGLADESH PARLIAMENT SECRETARIAT



Leader of the Opposition in parliament and BNP chairperson Begum Khaleda Zia addressing a seminar for MPs in the city yesterday.

—PID photo

Interview with Pak PM

From Page 1

measures: drug and terrorism; mining, trade and economic; Siachin glacier; Turiab dam and economic cooperation environments. Nawaz Sharif reportedly said at the Male meeting with Prime Minister Inder Gujral that it did not matter which group finished its task earlier. Whoever's recommendations were ready, they could be implemented straightway. In other words, the journey towards normalcy can continue even when the core issue of Kashmir is under discussion.

Immaculately dressed in grey suit (Salwar Kameez) and sporting a brown jacket, the Pakistani Prime Minister talked to me at length in the library of his imposing official residence. He spoke mostly in English but used Urdu and Punjabi at times. He evaded no question. Nor did he fumble for an answer.

He said he was determined to delay the project, one source said. "The ministry received the letter and is now checking various issues raised unnecessarily."

For Haripur project, AES beat Occidental-Uncolac offer by a wider margin. Their average tariff offers for 22 years were 2.73 cents and 3.46 cents per unit respectively. The difference is worth about one billion dollars in 22 years.

In the face of severe power crisis, the Energy Ministry had officially taken a position to speed up bidding for and implementation of private power projects. But by now, both Meghnaghata and Haripur projects are at least five months behind schedule.

Asked why he did not encourage people to people contact, the Pakistan Prime Minister said he was all for it. "Students from the two countries should also meet," interjected Mushahid Hussain. He said he had made the offer at Jawaharlal Nehru University when he was in Delhi two months ago. Nawaz Sharif welcomed the idea adding, "I want people from different professions to meet and pool ideas so as to help the two countries overcome the problems facing them." He said Pakistan had relaxed visa restrictions. "As many as 400 visas are being issued from New Delhi every day. We want to issue more," he said.

I pointed out that despite several efforts in the past there was no exchanged of newspapers and books. He said it should take place immediately. He turned to Mushahid Hussain and asked him to prepare a note for the implementation of the suggestion. I reminded the prime minister that such orders had been given in the past without any result. "The bureaucrats are primarily to blame," I said. The Pakistan Prime Minister agreed with me. "Yes, bureaucrats on both sides have sabotaged good efforts."

When it came to Benazir Bhutto's corrupt practices, Nawaz Sharif talked about it with a relish. "She has herself said she kept the money out because it was not safe in Pakistan," Nawaz Sharif said. He inquired from me what procedure the Indian parliament adopted in such cases. "The power to disqualify a member rested with the election commission in Pakistan," he said. But he did not know what it would do in Benazir case. He wanted to know if India's election commission had any specific powers.

Talking about corruption of politicians he said there was no difference between India and Pakistan. All that came out in India was familiar. "We have similar things happening here," he said. Mushahid Hussain joined to emphasize how there was no difference between the two countries in such matters.

"Why don't you think of land reforms," I asked him.

Dhaka to host global fine art show in future: PM

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina yesterday expressed her hope to host a global fine art exhibition following the success of the Asian Art Biennial, reports UNB.

"Inshallah, we'll arrange the global fine art exhibition in future," she said while inaugurating the 8th Asian Art Biennial at the Osmany Memorial Hall in the morning.

More than 500 art works by some 300 artists from Bangladesh and 34 foreign countries will be on display in three galleries of the city during the 25-day Asian art exhibition.

The Prime Minister said her government has already taken a number of steps for advancement of art and culture in the country. "We've annulled the performance control act."

She said the government has

taken up a gigantic task of establishing a "Sonar Bangla Cultural Complex" in Dhaka for the enrichment of national conscience in cultural arena.

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