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NCST meet held Setting up of bio-technology instt discussed

The fifth meeting of the National Council on Science and Technology (NCST) was held at the international conference centre here yesterday morning, reports BSS.

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina who is also president of the council presided over the meeting.

The meeting reviewed the activities of the on-going projects on science and technology in the country.

It also discussed future development projects including programmes on genetic engineering and setting up of a bio-technology institute.

The meeting stressed the need for giving priority to the expansion of genetic engineering related research and speedy implementation of genetic engineering technology.

Proceedings of the fourth meeting of NCST was approved and discussion was held on the progress and implementation of the decisions taken in the previous meeting.

Finance Minister Shah A M S Kibria, Education Minister A S H K Sadeque, Water Resources Minister Abdur Razzak, Commerce and Industries Minister Tofael Ahmed, Energy Minister Noor Uddin Khan, Agriculture Minister Begum Motia Chowdhury, Health and Family Welfare Minister Salahuddin Yusuf, Environment and Forest Minister Begum Sajeda Chowdhury, State Minister for Science and Technology Dr Mohiuddin Khan Alamgir, State Minister for Textiles K M Jahangir, members of parliament secretaries concerned scientists, educationists and researchers were present at the meeting.

Attack on APP's house at Narsingdi

From Our Correspondent
NARSINGDI, Feb 3: A group of terrorists attacked the house of an Assistant Public Prosecutor at Maddhaya Kandapara in the town at midnight on Monday night.

The terrorists damaged furniture of the house and looted goods worth about Tk one lakh from the house of Assistant PP Sweaty Shahia, 30.

According to family sources, the attack was sequel to previous enmity. But Sweaty Shahia filed a dacoity case with Narsingdi police.

Peregrine

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A total of 10 local entrepreneurs who include former bureaucrat Enam Ahmed Chowdhury, garment tycoon Nurul Huq Sikder and insurance magnate Nasir Chowdhury have also agreed to "keep the management structure intact", sources close to them said.

The proposed company has already applied for licence as a non-banking financial institution.

Runa Alam, Peregrine CEO in Bangladesh, will retain her position in the new company. Enam Ahmed Chowdhury, a former ERD secretary and until recently the vice-president of the Jeddah-based Islamic Development Bank (IDB), will be the chairman.

"The directors of Peregrine Capital Limited have approved the transaction leading to a complete takeover by a group of investors with the authorisation of the liquidator of Peregrine Investment Holdings Limited," the company announced in a press statement yesterday.

"Union Capital Limited will carry on the business of investment banking and asset management with particular concentration on infrastructure financing, corporate finance, investment trading, sales and brokerage, project finance, private equity and lease financing. It will also undertake research and advisory activities," the announcement said.

The buy-out deal of the Bangladesh business and undertakings of Peregrine Capital Limited ends speculation about the collapse of the investment bank, whose Hong Kong and Chinese operations have been bought by a French bank and another partner.

BJP vows

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choice is between nationalism and a foreign hand," the BJP said, without naming Sonia Gandhi.

The BJP manifesto also promised to create 10 million jobs a year, double India's food production and achieve full literacy by the year 2010. It also promised to offer free education and set aside a third of parliament seats for women, but set no schedule for those goals.

The BJP criticized the economic reforms started by the Congress Party six years ago. It said domestic industries needed at least seven years of protection from foreign competition, though foreign investment was welcome to help India develop its infrastructure.

A K Khandaker tells trial court My allegiance to Mushtaque govt was to avert civil war

Former Air Chief A K Khandaker has said that he expressed his allegiance to Mushtaque government to avert a civil war and later resigned driven by conscience, reports UNB.

"I finally made up my mind that it is not possible to keep myself involved in the process of injustice and conspiracy and left Bangladesh on August 17," he said.

Next day, he said, he went to Bangladesh and submitted his resignation letter as the country's first Chief of Air Staff to the Principal Secretary to the President, Mahbubul Alam Chashi.

Making his deposition to the trial court yesterday as the 48th prosecution witness in Bangladesh Murder Case, Khandaker said he along with Army and Naval Chiefs were taken to Bangladesh after the assassination of Bangabandhu on August 15.

"They took us from the radio station to Bangabandhu with escort and kept us confined there" on the plea of discussions and meetings.

The witness said some days after he had tendered his resignation Mushtaque called him at Bangabandhu to say that it was accepted. But he would be officially informed of the decision afterwards.

The first Air Vice Marshal of the country also told the court that he was replaced by Group Captain Tawab who was staying in Germany at that time.

Khandaker, who represented Bangladesh government when Pakistan occupation forces surrendered on December 16, 1971, said Tawab had retired from Pakistan Air Force with all benefit during the Liberation War.

Referring to the oath of allegiance to the post-August 15

government by the three services chiefs, the witness said he found Khandaker Mushtaque and Taheruddin Thakur in the radio station.

Among those present there were Major Noor, Major Dalim, Major Rashid, Major Farooq and Major Shahriar. One of them said the three chiefs will have to express allegiance to President Mushtaque.

"Taheruddin Thakur wrote the text of allegiance for us to read out and it was recorded and broadcast," said Khandaker.

Earlier, he said, an anxious Army Chief Major General K M Shafullah called him and he went to the headquarters of 1st Bengal Regiment of 46 Brigade where he found a total indiscipline and chaotic atmosphere.

"Carrying arms, Major Rashid and Major Dalim were at the office room. There were also some army personnel with black and khaki uniforms and with arms," Khandaker said.

Elaborating the dismal situation there, Khandaker said most of them were at the age of irrationality and tension. "A minor confrontation or disagreement could have laid to a spray of killings."

Under the circumstances, he said, he was forced to go to the radio station and so was Naval Chief Admiral Khan.

In this respect, the then Air Chief said before he reached the office, Shafullah was compelled to agree to go to the radio station to express his allegiance to the new government.

"We were taken to the radio station with open-jep escort by Major Rashid and Major Dalim who were carrying arms."

A K Khandaker said Khandaker Mushtaque Ahmed and Taheruddin Thakur followed them to Bangabandhu from the radio station with escort.

"Khandaker Mushtaque took oath as President in the afternoon while the cabinet in the evening. The officers who were at the radio station were present on the occasion," he said.

Besides, the witness said, Major Rashid, accompanied by his wife (Zobaida Rashid), was sitting on the front row during the swearing-in of the cabinet ministers.

"She was the lone lady present in the oath taking ceremony," he said. He could not say her name when asked by the judge. "I came to know about her identity from others."

The former air chief said he first learned the news of assassination of Bangabandhu over telephone from Shafullah on August 15 morning.

"I talked to Bangabandhu last on August 14 night and I was astonished hearing the news. I asked Shafullah if he was sure and he said yes," the witness recalled.

Khandaker said immediately after he went to Shafullah's residence on foot wearing casual dress. Shafullah was looking very sad at that time.

"I found General Zia there in full uniform, but after a while Brigadier Khaled Mosharraf came there with casual dress like me."

The witness said they instantly decided to maintain total discipline in the armed forces. "Later I went to Air Force HQ and asked my senior officers to maintain strict discipline."

Prosecution lawyers informed the court that their next witness will be former Naval Chief Rear Admiral M H Khan, an energy minister Lt General (ret'd) Noor Uddin Khan.

The court was adjourned till 9:30 am today.

Burglary in Grameen Bank in Cox's Bazar

COX'S BAZAR, Feb 3: A burglary was committed in Eidagoo Grameen Bank of the town on Sunday night in which the miscreants decamped with cash worth over Tk 1.07 lakh, reports UNB.

Police said, the burglars broke open the locks of three doors of the bank and escaped with the money.

A case was filed with the police.

5 of a family

From page 1
fied as Sourav, 5, Madhobi, 20, 70-year-old mother of Anil Chandra and Sheuli. Sheuli died today.

The Civil Surgeon was not available for comment on the disease and deaths. However, Dr Abdus Salam, chief of Admitari thana health project, confirmed four deaths.

Dialogue

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was sincere to make the parliament effective.

The Speaker had also brokered an AL-BNP talks a year back, resulting in a four-point agreement that enabled BNP to end its abstention from the House at that time.

Offering the fresh dialogue, Nasim also told Mannan Bhuiyan that the government had already accepted BNP's four-point demand. The demands are withdrawal of cases against BNP lawmakers and other leaders, its proportionate representation in the JS standing bodies and neutral coverage of the Sangsad proceedings by the electronic media.

"We've showed good gesture on our part to resolve the crisis and it's now their turn to reciprocate," he said.

In reply, the BNP Secretary General told Nasim that he would discuss the proposal in his party forum and let him know the decision on the issue later.

Mannan Bhuiyan was not available for comments.

Later, Nasim also talked with Home Minister Rafiqul Islam regarding withdrawal of cases against BNP lawmakers and leaders. The Home Minister informed Nasim he was yet to receive any list of cases from the BNP.

About BNP's other demands including reinstallation of the pontoon bridge leading to President Ziaur Rahman's Mazar in the city, the AL negotiator told Mannan Bhuiyan that those could be settled once they start discussion.

Nasim said he also tried to contact Deputy Leader of the Opposition in parliament Prof AQM Badruddoza Choudhury and Opposition Chief Whip Khandakar Delwar Hossain yesterday but both the BNP leaders were not available.

DCC

From page 1
quired. It also says no person shall transfer by gift, sale or otherwise to any other person any wild animal, unless he is in possession of a certificate of lawful possession of respect thereof.

However, Forest Department officials have not taken any action against persons keeping wild animals. The reasons are unknown.

In the absence of any such action by the Forest Department officials, the trade in wildlife is going on unabated, sources said.

In Chittagong, the Railway Market is another centre where wild animals are traded, they said. "Many of these animals are bought by foreigners for kitchen delicacies," said a source.

The DCC Chief Vet himself offered these correspondents a pair of bears for Tk 60,000 when he was approached as customers. In a recorded telephonic conversation, he said it would take a month for him to procure and supply the animals.

When asked whether it was legal to keep the animals, he replied, "I will issue a certificate so that you may keep it without hassle from the law."

He said it was not illegal to keep those animals as pets. The law is against selling, not keeping them as pets, he said.

Opposition

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chair. The meeting described the surrender of arms by the Shantibahini as an 'eye wash' saying that it will be a stage managed game to legitimise the 'so-called peace accord'.

It demanded stoppage of harassment on the anti-accord activists and release of leaders and workers of the combined alliance.

The meeting was represented by BNP leaders Syed Wahidul Alam, MP, and Dastagir Chowdhury, Jamaat central leader Maulana Mominul Huq Chowdhury and local leader Abu Taher and Shamsul Islam, Democratic League leader Moinuddin Kaderi Shawkat, JACPA leader S M Jahirul Huq and IOJ leader Mufti Izaharul Islam Chowdhury.

Shooting incident at PMO : CID officials interrogate 30 people

By Staff Correspondent

At least 30 people were interrogated by officials of the Criminal Investigation Department (CID) till yesterday in connection with the recent shooting incident at the Prime Minister's office.

Investigating Officer Fazlur Rahman informed that those interrogated included persons living in the neighbourhood of the PMO's Tejaon office and some officials and staff who were on duty there when the incident took place.

He said investigation in continuing and the process 'is being delayed' as some persons who are due to be interrogated are not available in Dhaka because of the Eid.

Tejaon thana informed that the FIR filed by the APS to the Prime Minister's Political Advisor did not accuse anyone by name.

It, however, alleged that the gun shot was fired to kill Dr S A Malek, Political Adviser to the Prime Minister.

Mentionably a lone gun shot shattered the window panes of Malek's office on Wednesday last.

Six killed in Kushtia road accident

From Our Correspondent

KUSHTIA, Feb 3: Six persons were killed and four others injured when a speeding bus hit a three-wheeler from behind near 4th Mile Point on Kushtia-Jhenidah road last night.

The dead were identified as Nurul Islam Moina, 42, of village Bhadalia, Ishak Ali, 50, and Abdul Quddus, 45, both from village Sargopur under sadar thana, Subal, 18, of Sreerampur, Kishanath, 26, of Alamdanga and Sarawat, 29, of Sreerampur in Alamdanga thana of Chuadanga district.

The government also turned down a subsequent UNHCR plea to allowing the 21,000 refugees to stay permanently in Bangladesh.

5 Bangladeshis

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suffered 80 to 90 per cent burn. Bernama news agency quoted a hospital official as saying.

Karn Kam Peng, acting assistant commissioner of police said the explosion occurred late afternoon at the Fumiland Industries Sdn. Bhd. factory in the Pandamaran light industrial estate, near Malaysia's premier harbour, Port Klang.

He said there was an explosion when one of the victims tried to douse a sawdust fire below the tank with a water hose.

While putting off the fire, they splashed water on the tank to cool it, but the tank exploded.

Rohingya

From page 1

Cox's Bazar", he said referring to the tense situation after inmates, revolted and took control of the camps recently.

He said the situation in Kua-palong camp, housing some 9,000 Rohingyas, had improved but it remained "difficult" at Nayapara camp with 12,000 refugees.

Officials earlier blamed the extremists provoking rioting at Nayapara to pressure the government not to send them back to Myanmar. They said the government insisted on early repatriation of the Rohingyas as they had been a burden on Bangladesh.

They are straining our meagre resources, one official said yesterday. We want them all back home as early as possible.

The 21,000 refugees are remnants of some 250,000 Rohingyas who fled to Bangladesh in early 1992 to escape alleged persecution by Myanmar's military junta.

Repatriation of the Rohingyas started in September 1992 following an agreement between Bangladesh and Myanmar. It came to a halt last April. Officials blamed the delay on foot-dragging by Myanmar authorities in granting clearance for the last Rohingyas to be repatriated.

The government also turned down a subsequent UNHCR plea to allowing the 21,000 refugees to stay permanently in Bangladesh.

\$8,000, gold worth Tk 6 lakh looted in Halishahar

CHITTAGONG, Feb 3: Eight thousand US dollars and ornaments worth about Taka six lakh were looted from a house in Halishahar residential area last night, reports BSS.

Four persons came to a house at Block No-1, Road No-2, Halishahar posing as relatives and pressed the calling bell.

When an inmate of the house, Kamaluddin, opened the door, the dacoits entered the house and confined all the inmates in a toilet at gunpoint. Kamaluddin returned home from the United States recently.

The dacoits then took away 8,000 US dollars and 40 tolas of gold ornaments worth about Taka six lakh.

A case was registered with Pahartali Police.

Woman gangraped, killed in Sirajganj

SIRAJGANJ, Feb 3: A young woman was slaughtered and allegedly after being gangraped at Bantiar char in Shahjadpur thana in the district on Monday night, reports UNB.

Police said they recovered the body of Sulekha, 22, from the char this morning and sent the body to general hospital for autopsy.

Faruk on remand

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gum on Monday at her residence of Kazi Nazrul Islam road Mohammadpur, it was claimed in the FIR filed by the victim's brother with Mohammadpur thana.

Ansar Ali, the Marriage Registrar of Rayer Bazar Marriage Registrar's office was sent to jail custody.

The FIR alleged that Faruk killed Toufika Begum in collaboration with the Marriage Registrar to illegally appropriate her property.

Prof Yunus

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recognition of Dr Yunus's "contribution in creating micro-credit system from which the people of Bangladesh and 57 other countries, including advanced nations like US and France are benefiting," according to a faxed message received from the Bangladesh embassy in Brussels.

The Embassy arranged a cultural function at the Catholic University of Leuven as a part of Prof Yunus's degree receiving ceremony.

Oslo accord

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Palestinian struggle." Prof Mohd El-Sayed Selim of Cairo University cited "strategic imbalance" in the Middle East as a major cause of failure of the peace process.

He said strengthening of Israel over the neighbouring countries has become a matter of concern. To bring equilibrium, besides UN or US, Asian powers like China and Japan should play a major political role, he observed.

Two other panelists in the morning session, Sulaiman Al-Najab of the PLO executive body and Mustafa Hamarneh of the Centre for Strategic Studies, Jordan also replied to questions from the participants.

The evening session saw a detailed discussion on the overall economic situation in Palestine and the occupied territories.

The panelists were Dr Hasan Abu Libdeh of Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics, Dr Yossi Olmert of Executive Council for Democracy, Israel, Dr Sara Roy of Centre for Middle Eastern Studies at Harvard University, Dr Ahmad Saad of Israeli Knesset and Chimmaya Garekhan.

Over 50 journalists from Asia and experts relating to the peace process participated in today's seminar through floor discussions. The topic for tomorrow, the concluding day, is "Israeli Negotiations and the Prospects for Peace."

Chetia not taken to court

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Code of Criminal Procedure (CrPC). Chetia now faces charges in three cases. The cases are illegal entry into Bangladesh, procuring Bangladeshi passports under fake identity and possessing foreign currency illegally. All these cases were filed by Mohammadpur police on January 5.

In the CMM's court yesterday, lawyers of Chetia prayed for immediate measures for his treatment, permission to visit him in jail and access to legal documents relevant to the cases filed against him. They also prayed for hearing of his bail petition in his presence.

The CMM ordered the jail authorities to take necessary steps for his better treatment and the copy section to provide the lawyers with necessary legal documents.

Since Chetia has been detained under the Special Powers Act, the CMM observed that permission from the Deputy Commissioner of Dhaka was required to visit the accused in jail.

The case under Section 54 of the CrPC under which Chetia was arrested was heard in the court of the Additional CMM. The lawyers pleaded that he should be discharged from this case on grounds that specific

cases have been filed against him.

After examining the documents of the three specific cases, an order regarding the discharge petition will be passed, the court observed.

Chetia, along with two others identified as Lakkhi Prasad Goswami and Babul Sharma, were arrested on December 21 last year from a flat in the city's Mohammadpur thana area. The two others arrested with him, however, were charged for illegal entry and stay in Bangladesh.

Earlier, the CMM had fixed February 3 for hearing the cases, following a petition moved by the Bangladesh Society for Enforcement of Human Rights (BSEHR) on January 20. The BSEHR had prayed for his production in the court and bail.

Advocate A B M Waliur Rahman, M Asaduzzaman, Prokash Biswas, Dulal Mitra and Alina Khan appeared for the accused.

During the hearing of the petition, the CMM observed that he will hear only that case for which lawyers have been empowered to represent Chetia.

Later the court heard all the three cases when the lawyers argued that they had forwarded the Vokalatnama through this court for signature of the accused.

Silk dev

From page 1

nalists accompanied the State Minister.

The silk industry in the country now requires some 250 tonnes of raw silk per year but hardly 30 tonnes are produced, it was gathered.

Riaz Khan told The Daily Star that though silk products were high value added clothing items and had a huge market abroad, neither the government nor the private sector was making adequate investment in the field. He said BRAC was competing with China to export its products to UK, Canada, France, Japan, and the Netherlands.

Talking to The Daily Star, a group of silk worm farmers and weavers said formation of co-operatives may help them earn higher profit. Silk reeling workers alleged that they were given only Tk 20 to Tk 30 a day for 7 am to 5 pm work.

Weavers earn only Tk 12 to Tk 15 for producing one yard of silk cloth. "I can weave two to three yards a day," said one weaver.

BRAC officials, however, said that they maintained about 30 per cent profit margin on the finished products and that the growers and weavers were properly paid.

It could not be known whether there will be any minimum wages for silk industry workers under the WB-financed project.

Arsenic pollution: Call for survey

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Dr Mahmudur Rahman of DCH said.

He said, "We made fatal mistakes by opting for use of ground water for drinking about forty years ago ignoring nature's gift of surface water. To ensure safe water for the people living in the affected areas, surface water should be considered as an alternative for a long-term solution."

Dr Rahman referring to the time needed to change the habit for use of surface water said, "For the sake of safe drinking water we have to choose the option now."

Till date there is no accurate data on the affected people and areas. However, Dr A Z M Iftekhar, project director of the UNDP-funded Arsenic Emergency Programme said, "The entire population could be at risk. As the government has to carefully consider all issues we have not been able to give immediate solution for the problem. We are now conducting an epidemiological survey that will give us the illustration of the actual number of patients across the country. Based on the data findings, we will go for mapping and further studies to assess the cause of the problems."

Dr Deepak Bajracharya, representing the UNICEF, said, "We are now at the learning stage. As of today, we have not been able to find out the original cause of the problem."

Referring to a data-based map of the country he said, "The field level water sample tests by the Department of Public Health and Engineering (DPHE) that largely installs tubewells, shows that a large number of

tubewells are contaminated." Khushi Kabir of ADAB said.

"There was serious lack of coordination among the organisations doing fact-finding work on the problem. There was shortsightedness in the whole process of planning. A lot more like awareness creating programme and information feeding system at the community levels need to be done."

She questioned if it was time to go for imposing embargo on sinking of new tubewells.

Babar N Kabir, speaking on the occasion said, "We would recommend that the government give the villagers options on use of safe water. It should be acceptable to them and they should choose what is best for them. We should avoid imposing things. World Bank is designing strategies according to the need of the affected people."

Attique Rahman of Bangladesh Centre for Advanced Studies strongly felt that use of surface water should be an immediate solution to the existing problem and it should be addressed at micro level as well as at macro level.

He said, "The problem of ground water contamination is going to stay for a long time. If we have to find ways out we have to face the reality. According to science, ground water is already contaminated as scientific explanations proved that more we pump out water more it is contaminated by the process of oxidation."

Dr Quazi Quamruzzaman, Chairman of DCH while making his presentation at the Roundtable said, "We are in fact trapped in arsenic. It is a big