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PHILIPS

PM calls for int'l cooperation in forecasting cyclone

The Panel on Tropical Cyclone of World Meteorological Organisation and ESCAP began a week-long session in the city yesterday to finalise agreement to promote coordination for effective pre-warning services to reduce losses caused by natural calamities, reports UNB.

Besides the representatives from WMO, EC and ESCAP, experts from Germany, India, Pakistan, Thailand, Sri Lanka, Oman, Maldives and Bangladesh are taking part in the 25th session of the Panel in Dhaka.

Inaugurating the session at the International Conference Centre in the morning, Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina called for international cooperation in forecasting cyclone to reduce the loss of lives and property.

The Prime Minister said cyclones and other weather patterns are constantly on the move and can travel hundreds of kilometers in a day. Therefore, international cooperation is vital for exchange of weather information across the globe.

The Panel is a very special kind of regional platform to

promote and coordinate this type of activities to observe, monitor, understand, predict and protect the atmosphere," she added.

She said, "Our efforts to improve the quality of life will be

Attack on Swapan's Shahjadpur house

SIRAJGANJ, Feb 24: Gunmen attacked the house of newly appointed Deputy Minister for Commerce and Industries Hasibur Rahman Swapan at Shahjadpur Bazar in Shahjadpur and exploded crackers indiscriminately today, reports UNB.

Police said the unidentified miscreants attacked Swapan's house at about 8 pm and exploded crackers inside it.

During the incident, the panic-stricken shop owners of the Bazar kept the shutters down.

Swapan blamed BNP and its front organisations for the attack. BNP, however, denied the allegation.

closely inter-linked with our success in strengthening the Meteorological Department and weather forecasting systems. This will reduce the loss of human lives and material resources."

It will also help us in making advance planning in agriculture, irrigation, cropping pattern, afforestation and related matters, she added.

Describing the meteorological satellite as the magic eye, Hasina said super computers and highly sophisticated numerical analysis increased the accuracy of forecasts.

The weather radars help to closely monitor a cyclone, she said, adding that it also helps updating the forecast for the place and time of its landfall.

"All these help us in making advance and accurate weather forecasting, alerting people and reducing losses."

The World Meteorological Organisation (WMO) representative Elsa Hossain Al-Majed and ESCAP representatives C Ertuna also addressed the inaugural session.



Indian film star Mamata Kulkarni performing at a charity show at a city hotel yesterday evening. — Star photo

Khaleda to visit 3 northern dists from March 3

By Staff Correspondent

BNP chairperson Begum Khaleda Zia will visit a three-day visit to three northern districts from March 3, said a party press release last night.

Leader of the Opposition in Parliament Begum Zia is scheduled to address the 42nd conference of the Institution of Engineers, Bangladesh (IEB) in Rajshahi city on March 3. She will also visit Gaibandha and Naogaon on March 4 and 5 respectively and address public rallies and the party workers in the two districts.

The Opposition Leader will leave Dhaka for her planned tour on March 3.

Earlier, two BNP lawmakers from the northern districts joined the government, raising speculation of similar moves by some other BNP MPs from the area.

PDB starts talks with AES for power purchase agreement

Negotiations for finalising a 22-year power purchase agreement (PPA) between the Power Development Board (PDB) and AES Transpower Ltd of the USA began in the city yesterday, reports BSS.

The agreement is being discussed to buy electricity from the proposed 360 MW Combined Cycle Power Plant, a private power project to be implemented at an estimated cost of 200 million US dollar at Harpur near Dhaka by the US company.

PDB chairman Nuruddin M Kamal and Director of AES Transpower Gary M Junger led their respective sides.

Tom West, Legal Advisor to the Power Cell, Martin G David, Advisor to the AES and Scott Kickers, Project Development Manager of AES were also present, during the negotiations.

BARC seminar on oilseeds Scientists to look for oil from rice bran

By Staff Correspondent

The country spends over Taka 1,000 crore every year only to meet the import bill for edible oil although it has enormous prospects for increasing oilseed production.

Against this backdrop, the country's leading agronomists, scientists and marketing experts put their heads together yesterday to finalise a set of recommendations for increasing oilseed production and lessening dependence on imports.

A two-day national seminar on "Potential of Research, Extension and Marketing of Oilseeds in Bangladesh" began at the auditorium of Bangladesh Agriculture Research Council (BARC) in the city yesterday. The Directorate of Agricultural Marketing (DAM) organised the seminar.

Inaugurating the seminar, Agriculture and Food Minister Begum Matia Chowdhury underscored the need for evolving high-yielding varieties (HYVs) and "short-duration crops."

"If our scientists can do this, we will be able to make a breakthrough in oilseed production," said the minister.

Matia Chowdhury sought answer from scientists as to why no home-grown "easy technology" has yet been evolved to extract oil from rice bran. "Paddy grows thrice a year in this country and we can get oil from rice bran. What made you refrain from exploring this area over the years?"

She said there will be no use holding seminars just to maintain a routine unless "you set a

target for yourselves and strive for achievements."

After the minister finished her speech, BARC Executive Chairman Dr Zahurul Karim, who was presiding over the inaugural session of the seminar, stood up on the dais and said, "I hope I will be able to search out research papers on rice bran by late Prof A Karim and definitely the seminar will look into the prospect for extracting oil from rice bran."

Director General of Bangladesh Agricultural Research Institute (BARI) Dr MA Mazed, Director of the Directorate of Agricultural Marketing (DAM) Md Mominul Haq and DAM's Project Director, Crop Diversification Programme (CDP) MM Anwar Hossain also spoke at the opening session, followed by a technical session yesterday evening.

Speakers at the seminar said, against a recommended dose of 35 grams oil intake per person per day, people in the country can have only 11 grams. Due to population growth, per capita oil production is now under a negative growth rate, they said.

WB assistance

From page 1
ways and feeder roads, to construct 55 km Nalka-Hatikamrul-Banpara road, to repair 100-km long national and other internal road.

The money would also involve repair works of some bridges, culverts and expansion of roads.

Clinton warns Iraq

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Kuwait.
"The lifting of the sanctions is not in my hands, this is an issue for the (UN Security) Council. But there is a reference in the document to that issue," said Annan.

Annan said he hoped to "accelerate the process" of disarming Iraq, so that "we will be seeing light at the end of the tunnel."

Annan recently convinced the UN Security Council to allow Iraq to double crude sales to 5.2 million dollars every six months.

Following the UN-Iraq accord, oil prices on the London market fell by 50 cents a barrel, with North Sea Brent trading at 14.18 dollars.

Russia, which steadfastly opposed military action, will work with the United States to draft a UN security Council resolution on Iraq, the Kremlin announced according to the Interfax news agency.

Kuwait is the only Gulf monarchy to give the United States permission to use its territory to launch air strikes — was pleased.

"We are happy that such an agreement has been signed because it spares the region from the dangers of a confrontation," Kuwaiti Foreign Minister Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah said.

In Iran's first reaction to the agreement, state radio described the accord as a precious diplomatic victory and a turning point in the 50-year history of the United Nations.

Promotion

By Staff Correspondent

Iktedar Ahmed, Director of the Judicial Administration Training Institute, has been promoted as district and sessions judge and posted as Judge of the Special Court for Representation against Women and Children, Comilla, official sources said.

Partnership with Tullow

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Ever since, the government is offering Mobil-Petronas block 11 (along with Tullow). But the joint venture, which is following a wait-and-see policy, insisted on working in both blocks 9 and 11 with Tullow.

Meanwhile, Tullow chief Aidan Heavey in an interview with AFX news, London, early this month expressed his confidence that Tullow would get at least 50 per cent of the equity in block 9 while it would get block 11 all alone.

Expressing hopes that the share price of Tullow in Ireland and London would shoot at least three to four times when the block negotiations would be completed, Aidan Heavey said that Tullow intended to drill two wells in block 9 this year, four to six wells in 1999 and two in the following year.

Commenting on the work plan of Tullow, which has been repeatedly termed an 'over ambitious' plan by independent experts, a Petrobranga senior official said that the plan was realistic and that was why the government wanted Tullow in these blocks.

Asked whether any foreign company, under any Production Sharing Contract (PSC), had ever drilled so many ex-

ploratory wells in such a short time, the official said that no company did so in the past but it was not impossible to drill 10 wells in three years. "It's a matter of commitment and financial capability," he said.

If both the blocks 9 and 11 are given to Tullow to develop, a company having 5.8 million Irish pound turnover in 1996, Tullow will have to drill about 20 wells in the next three years. The cost, which will be around about 120 million US dollars.

"We are aware of the cost involvement and Tullow's ability. Of course, Tullow will have to furnish the full bank guarantee before signing the PSC. If it is unable to provide the guarantee, no agreement will take place," the official said. "We have not yet asked for the full bank guarantee from Tullow."

The decisions regarding blocks 9 and 11 remain crucial to the block negotiation process. The negotiators have discussed with various foreign companies about the 12 blocks but the progress as regards signing any PSC so far remains confined to primary selection of different companies for different blocks. The actual negotiations, which will ensure Bangladesh's interest, have not yet begun.

JCD to gherao BTB Bhaban today

By DU Correspondent

Jatityabadi Chhatra Dal (JCD), the student wing of BNP, will gherao the BTB Bhaban at Rampura in the city at 11 am today to protest, what it called, "distorted presentation of the Shaheed Minar incident" on BTB.

JCD blamed the activists of BCL and Awami League for the act of vandalism at the Central Shaheed Minar on Saturday in the presence of BNP Chief Begum Khaleda Zia.

Sharp reaction

From page 1

103 deputy secretaries.
There are vacancies in five posts of secretaries, 13 additional secretaries, 30 joint secretaries and over 100 deputy secretaries.

The rest of the recommended positions will be filled up soon when the SSB meets again, likely to be on March 1.

This was the first en masse promotions since 1992.

BCS-Prokrichi leaders after their meeting at the Institution of Engineers on Monday said the promotions would further affect the parity between different cadres.

The meeting chaired by MA K Azad observed that it followed the precedence of one sided promotions although there are no fixed criteria to fill vacancies in the posts of deputy secretary to secretary from one particular cadres only.

An official, preferring anonymity, belonging to the erstwhile CSS cadre, said they want restoration of the weightage of three years that they got over the EPSC and EPSS officers during their induction into the SSP as deputy secretary in 1980 and 1983.

On those dates CSS officers of upto 1970 batch and EPSC/EPSS officers of upto 1967 batch only were inducted into the SSP, he said.

PM with editors

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On the privatisation process, the Prime Minister said the government has taken a step to use the land of public sector mills and factories as industrial plots.

The mills will also be handed over to the workers. If they want to take those on cooperative basis, they will be given priority. "We are getting response from the investors in this regard."

About the government commitment to alleviate poverty, the Prime Minister said steps have been taken to improve the economic condition of the people and strengthen the rural economy.

When asked about the arsenic contamination, city traffic congestion and unemployment problems, the Prime Minister said the government has taken special measures to deal with arsenic contamination.

She said the government has plan to construct ring road around the capital, flyovers at different points and mono-rail to ease the city's traffic situation.

The editors in the meeting raised various problems of the newspaper industry including the low rate of government sponsored advertisement, availability of newsprint and abuse of criminal law in filing defamation case against the journalists.

A special reference was made

Indian CEC lauds election laws in Bangladesh

From a Correspondent

NEW DELHI, Feb 24: India's Chief Election Commissioner M S Gill today lauded the election laws of Bangladesh and said India has learnt a lot from the neighbouring country.

Expressing this view to Chairman of Bangladesh's Fair Election Monitoring Alliance (FEMA) Fakhruddin Ahmed, who is now here to see the process of parliamentary elections, Gill said India and Bangladesh have a lot of commonalities and "so much to learn from each other."

Referring to Bangladesh's law for holding election within 90 days, Gill said the Election Commission's proposal to the government to amend the representation of People Act of 1951 by reducing the time for conducting by-elections from two years to six months had been carried out.

Nearly two weeks back, Gill had suggested a "temporary and absolutely neutral caretaker government" at the state-level in the run-up to the election in India in the pattern of Bangladesh, saying such an arrangement would provide level-playing fields for all political parties in the electoral battle and stop accusations by non-ruling parties of bias.

AL leaders meet

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There was speculation that a detailed discussion on expansion of the consensus government would take place at the meeting. But the leaders ended the meeting briefly, expressing grief at the death of a former AL legislator, Moleuddin Bhuiyan.

Bhuiyan, an elderly AL leader and former president of Narshingdi district Awami League, died in the city yesterday.

Nari Samaj concerned at violence against women, children

By Staff Correspondent

Sammilito Nari Samaj in a statement yesterday expressed grave concern at the regular reports of violence against women and children and the inability of the authorities to ensure immediate follow-up.

Three convenors of the Sammilito Nari Samaj Naila Khan, Shaheen Anam and Helen Rahman in their statement mentioned that "Of special concern are the two cases reported in national dailies yesterday. One is the case of Shahnaz Begum, allegedly beaten and set on fire by her husband Zahurul Haq. The other is the report on the maid, allegedly raped by the son of the family she works for at Mohammadpur thana and their subsequent torture on her."

"Nari Samaj questions why no arrest have been reported since the identity of the accused in both the cases are well known to the police. It also demands that reports of the concerned authorities be made public," the statement added.

Siege, hartal at Ctg Port won't be allowed without prior notice

CHITTAGONG, Feb 24: A meeting of the advisory council of the Chittagong Port here today unanimously decided not to allow any organisation or agency to enforce any kind of agitation programme like siege and hartal at Chittagong Port without prior notice, reports BSS.

Held at the port Rest House with Shipping Minister ASM Abdur Rob in the chair, the meeting also decided to resist all sorts of conspiracy against Chittagong Port and to form a powerful coordination committee comprising representatives from the Port Authority and port users to resolve day-to-day problems of the port.

It also said: Illicit opium poppy cultivation, opium production, heroin manufacture and trafficking remain a major problem in South-East Asia, particularly in Myanmar.

Although the number of opium abusers is falling in South-East Asia, the abuse of

Over 1m drug addicts in Bangladesh

The overall illegal drug business in the world involved 400 billion US dollars annually which is 8 per cent of the total world trade, reports UNB.

This was revealed in a report of International Narcotics Control Board for the year '97. David E Lockwood, UN Resident Coordinator in Bangladesh, presented the report at a workshop on 'National Precursor Control Policy Formulation in Bangladesh' at a city hotel yesterday.

The report revealed that there are more than 190 million drug addicts all over the world. The number in Bangladesh is over one million. The report said Cannabis naps the list of drugs used throughout the world.

"Bangladesh is also being turned into a drug consuming country where drug is easily available and more and more people becoming drug addicts," it said.

It also said: Illicit opium poppy cultivation, opium production, heroin manufacture and trafficking remain a major problem in South-East Asia, particularly in Myanmar. Although the number of opium abusers is falling in South-East Asia, the abuse of

heroin is on the rise, the report disclosed. Heroin is smuggled into India out of Pakistan and to a lesser extent, out of Myanmar. Buprenorphine and cough syrups containing codeine are smuggled out of India, the manufacturing country, into Bangladesh and Nepal; and the abuse of those products has continued in India, as well as in Bangladesh and Nepal.

It said the spread of HIV infection among injecting drug abusers is of particular concern in Vietnam and parts of Myanmar which is alarming for Bangladesh.

The workshop was jointly organised by INCB, United Nations Information Centre (UNIC), United Nations International Drug Control Programme (UNDCP) and Department of Narcotics Control (DNC).

Presided over by M Katebur Rahman, ADG of DNC, it was addressed by Md Abul Kalam Azad, joint secretary of ERD, Dr D C Jayasuriya, Coordinator, Regional Precursor Control Project for South-East Asia, west Asia, Khondaker A Hafiz, coordinator, UNDCP, Bangladesh and Kazi Ali Reza Raju.



From left: The seized pethidine ampoules, officials of the Drug Administration and DNC examining papers and log book of the factory, and machinery used for producing the drug. — Star photo

464 ampoules of pethidine seized

From page 1

found three people putting labels on the ampoules. We also found a huge quantity of empty ampoules in separate packets.

When company officials were asked to show papers, they failed to produce any valid document. "We have been producing the drugs on trial basis to check if the drug manufacturing devices were working properly. We had some raw materials in the stock so we decided to use those for test purposes," said Mahabur Rahman, one of the company officials.

But the company had no licence to manufacture or sell the drug, Drug Administration officials said.

In the meantime, two teams of intelligence officials from the Department of Narcotics Control (DNC) arrived there along with a police force. They asked the company officials to produce manufacturing licence of the drug. But they failed to produce any paper. After checking the log book of the factory, the DNC officials said they were convinced that the company was involved in the illegal production of the drug for quite some time. The drug has a great demand in the black market.

"We are now sure that they have stock of more of the drugs in the factory," said Mahfuzur Rahman, Assistant Director (Executive) of DNC.

The DNC officials asked for the key of the godown from the company officials but they said they had no key on the door was sealed. The DNC officials then asked the security officer of the company to break open the door of the godown. But he declined. Ultimately, after about two hours, the lock of the door was broken, officials of the DNC and the Drug Administration said.

According to Drug Administration officials, the company had a stock of at least 10 kilograms of raw materials to produce at least 40,000 ampoules.

No case was filed till filing of this report last night.

Editor: Mahfuz Anam

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