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## Razzak tells Paris confce Dhaka to seek help from India, Nepal for optimum use of water resources

The International Conference on Water and Sustainable Development opened in Paris with an inaugural statement by the French President Jacques Chirac on Friday, reports UNB.

According to a message received here yesterday, the Director-General of UNESCO, Federico Mayor, delivered the address of welcome at the UNESCO headquarters in Paris.

The conference is being attended by delegations from eighty countries headed mostly by ministers, heads of a number of international organisations, representatives of organisations involved in water resources management and private companies in this field by the initiative of the French Government.

The Minister for Water Resources of Bangladesh Abdur Razzak is leading a four-member delegation to the conference. The Bangladesh minister made a statement at the plenary session in the morning.

In his statement, the minister elaborated the actions being undertaken by the Government of Bangladesh in the management of water resources in the country.

Speaking on first ever adoption of the "Bangladesh Water and Flood Management Strategy" in September 1995, the Minister said that the main thrust of this strategy was to work towards preparing a national water policy and for the adoption of a National Water Resources Management Plan for efficient utilisation of the water resources of the country on a long, medium and short term basis.

While thanking the French government for taking the initiative to hold the conference, the minister recalled that the Bangladesh's Flood Action Plan was also adopted with the strong support from France.

Referring to the treaty concluded with India in 1996 on sharing of waters of Ganges, the minister said that Bangladesh would be seeking collaboration with India and Nepal for an integrated development of the river basins for optimum utilisation of water resources of the rivers shared by these three countries.



BNP Chairperson and Leader of the Opposition in Parliament Begum Khaleda Zia addressing the biennial conference of Chhinnomul Hawkers' Samity at the Institute of Diploma Engineers in the city yesterday.

## Abbas burdened DCC with Tk 150cr debt: Hanif

**By Staff Correspondent**  
Dhaka City Corporation Mayor Mohammad Hanif yesterday said that the recent statements made by former mayor Mirza Abbas were motivated, untrue, baseless and made to create confusion.

The Mayor at a press briefing at his Nagar Bhaban office said, "He accused me of depriving him of a victory in the mayoral election but soon after his defeat, he contested the parliamentary election and lost it. Who bluffed him then? It only means that he is detached from the people."

"He was my predecessor and had remained in the office for two years and seven months. It was his misrule during this time that brought his defeat."

Refuting Abbas' statements Hanif said that Abbas had left only Tk six crore, not Tk 33 crore in the DCC account when he quit. "He also burdened the DCC with a debt of Tk 150 crore."

"He only made unrecorded payments to his own contractors and held back payments of others," Hanif said.

The Mayor denied that there was any irregularity in allocation of tenders in the DCC and said all the allocations were made under the existing rules and regulations.

He said it was not expected of a former mayor to behave in such a manner. "If this continues I will be forced to point out his successes and failures of two years and seven months," he said.

## Gen Aurora calls on Hasina

Li Gen (ret) Jagjit Singh Aurora, Commander of the Indo-Bangladesh Joint Command during the country's liberation war, made a courtesy call on Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina at her official residence at Ganobhaban yesterday morning, reports BSS.

Paying glowing tributes to the memory of Father of the Nation Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, Gen Aurora said he inspired the whole nation for freedom. He described Bangabandhu as a "great personality" and said he (Aurora) also cherished the memory of father of Sheikh Hasina.

"I will cherish the memory of the great Liberation War of Bangladesh and the surrender of arms by the Pakistani occupation forces at Suhrawardy Udyan on December 16, 1971," he said.

Sheikh Hasina said the Bangladeshes would always remember the great moment of arms surrender by the Pakistani occupation forces. "We will hold high the memory of those great events," she said.

The Prime Minister told the general that her government has decided to build "independence monument" at the historic Suhrawardy Udyan where the occupation forces surrendered to the Indo-Bangladesh Joint Command.

## 117 aliens including Bangladeshis jailed, caned in Singapore

SINGAPORE, Mar 22: Singapore courts have sentenced 117 illegal immigrants to jail and up to six strokes of the cane for entering Singapore illegally, The Sunday Times reported, says AFP.

Most of the 117 foreigners, who pleaded guilty on Saturday, had sentences ranging from one month to six weeks in jail and four to six strokes of the cane, the report said.

Those who pleaded guilty to overstaying were meted out punishments of one month in jail and four strokes of the cane, it said.

The 117 illegal immigrants were among 300 foreigners — from India, Bangladesh, Indonesia, Myanmar, Thailand and Sri Lanka — whose cases were heard at a marathon session in the local courts Saturday, the report said.

## Row over 'holiday charges' at Benapole

BENAPOLE, Mar 22: Tension prevails between the Benapole port authority and the importers over "holiday charges" after the customs personnel started work on weekly holidays, reports UNB.

Revenue Board recently ordered the customs office of Benapole to remain open and collect duties and taxes on weekly holidays.

But port authority insisted on charging Tk 500 for each consignment on additional work on weekly holiday on Saturday.

The Clearing and Forwarding Agents have refused to pay the money called the "holiday charge".

## Transport strike in Sylhet called off

**From Staff Correspondent**  
SYLHET, Mar 22: The Sylhet District Transport Workers Association has called off its indefinite strike programme in all the four districts of Sylhet division from tomorrow morning.

The decision was taken following a fruitful meeting with the district administration and local leaders held at the Deputy Commissioners' office this morning.

The district officials have assured the transport workers of taking steps to arrest those responsible for attack on transport workers and damaging of vehicles at Mendibag Mirchub Stand in Sylhet town on March 30.

## Patuakhali Polytech Instt closed

**From Staff Correspondent**  
BARISAL, Mar 22: Patuakhali Polytechnic Institute has been declared closed sine die following a clash between the activists of BCL and JCD at midnight last night.

The authorities have asked the resident students to vacate their hostels by 10 am this morning.

## 11 houses gutted in Chittagong

CHITTAGONG, Mar 22: At least 11 houses were gutted in a fire that broke out near the Asiatic Cotton Mills at Atoor depot under Panchlaish thana here this morning, Fire Service and police source said, reports BSS.

The blaze, originating from a burning cigarette at about 6 am, raged for an hour. One person was injured and nine houses and two cotton godowns were gutted.

## Bills to set up employment bank, folk art foundation

Two new bills were introduced in the Jatiya Sangsad yesterday, report agencies.

Finance Minister Shah ASM Kibria introduced The Karmasangsthan (employment) Bank Bill '98 while State Minister for Youth, Sports and Culture Obaidul Quader moved the Bangladesh Lok-o-Karu Shilpa Foundation Bill '98.

The "Karmasangsthan (employment) Bank Bill" sought establishment of a new bank for creating job opportunities for unemployed youth.

Termining the initiative of setting up of the Karmasangsthan Bank as unique Kibria said, it would extend credit to thousands of educated unemployed youths. Bangladesh had already earned name and fame in the international community for its micro-credit programme, he added.

Referring to bank loan default culture, the finance minister said bank loan defaulters were created by the past governments.

Regarding devaluation of the currency 10 times by the present government, Kibria pointed out that the BNP government during its five-year rule devalued the Bangladesh currency 23 times.

Earlier objecting to the introduction of the bill, Major (ret) Hafiz demanded a full debate on the banking sector.

He said that the banking sector was today faced with evil pressures from different quarters particularly from the trade unions.

The Jatiya Sangsad yesterday heard a brief but lively debate on 'obscenity and Hindi culture' as an opposition lawmaker said it was 'spoiling the Bengali culture and heritage.'

Major (ret) Akhtaruzzaman (BNP-Kishoreganj) raised the debate while opposing the Bangladesh Lok-o-Karu Shilpa Foundation Bill.

He wondered how this government would promote the Bengali culture when Bombay film star Mamata Kulkarni was performing 'naked dance' in public in the city.

Obaidul Quader in reply, said the obscene culture was patronised by the past BNP governments when Princess Lucky Khan displayed vulgarism in public.

"Mamata Kulkarni's dance was not so vulgar as that of Princess Lucky Khan," he said evoking laughter from both sides of the House.

Defending the government's effort to enrich the Bengali tradition and culture, he said the BNP government had allowed dish antenna through which people across the country were being acquainted with all sorts of obscenity of alien culture.

## Hunger strike

**From Page 1**  
The notice was, however, withdrawn at night on an order from VC Iqbal Mahmud. The VC issued the order for withdrawal of the notice after his meeting with the Prime Minister.

When contacted about 10 last night, the VC said, "I have given order to withdraw the notice following a meeting with the Chancellor of the University."

He also said he will address a press conference on admission rules today.

It was said in the Registrar's notice that the central cafeteria of the university will remain closed after 5:30 pm and all the gates of the campus will remain closed from 6 pm to 6 am every day. "None except teachers, officers and permitted persons will be allowed to enter the campus during this period," the official order said. The order also said that the central library will be closed after 5 pm instead of 9 pm earlier.

As the authorities locked the gates at 6 pm yesterday as per the order, agitated students brought out a procession and broke the lock of Gate No one and entered the campus.

A huge contingent of police force has been deployed at the Gate No one.

## JS: Rape, price hike

**From Page 1**  
up to Tk 40 per kg and young girls are joining prostitution for mere survival.

Rape, insecurity and spiralling prices have made the public life miserable, Mashur Rahman said. He also criticised the Prime Minister's comments at a public meeting in Dhaka on March 16 about Begum Zia and her party MPs.

Shamsuzzaman Dudu (BNP-Chuadanga) said it is a shame that even a minor girl is not safe under this government.

Former BNP Minister Shamsul Islam said the way the incidents of rape have been taking place, people have started calling this government as the "government of rape."

Rising on a point of order, Tofael Ahmed requested the Opposition not to do politics capitalising on issues like food or women repression.

He expressed the government's firm stand to deal with miscreants and urged the Opposition to reach a consensus on framing tough legislation to prevent criminals from social crimes of rape or repression on women.

Replying to the BNP allegation of price-hike of salt and onion, the Commerce Minister blamed the Opposition for trying to create artificial crisis of essentials.

He alleged that police nabbed BNP men while withdrawing three trucks of salt from Mirpur in Dhaka and 25 others in Barisal engaged in creating salt crisis.

Tofael said the government has a stock of 6.48 lakh tons of salt and there is no reason to increase its price.

About onion, he said production of onion was less this year in Bangladesh, India and Pakistan due to inclement weather.

To keep the onion price within limit and its market stable, the government has withdrawn 22.5 per cent customs duty, he added.

The price of rice has also been tackled by introducing the OMS throughout the country and the stock of fertilizer is also satisfactory, the Minister told the House.

He said that despite everything being normal, the Opposition, was talking about 'Silent famine' and crisis only to destabilise the situation.

Tofael said the government is ready to discuss any national issue in Parliament. He said industrial and power policies were discussed in the House while the discussion on terrorism was fixed. But BNP members did not turn up in Parliament to discuss those issues.

"Come up with constructive suggestions. We want to resolve all problems through discussion in Parliament," he told the opposition MPs.

The Jatiya Sangsad resumes at 11 am today.

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## Suspected rapist

**From Page 1**  
for the Chief Metropolitan Magistrate's (CMM) court and also prayed for a Test Identification Parade.

Besides, five others who were held under Section 54 in the rape case were also produced before the CMM's court yesterday.

The seven-year-old victim is under treatment at the Dhaka Medical College Hospital. Her condition was improving, said hospital sources.

Meanwhile, the investigating officer (IO) of the case, SI Alauddin, yesterday tried to talk with the girl at DMCH. As the girl is still in a trauma, the IO could not record her statement.

The victim's father filed a case under the Women and Children Repression Act with Sutrapur thana in this regard.

## Is gas reserve big enough

**From Page 1**  
available data, the current reserve could only be doubled.

Experts are also against pipeline export of gas as the country does not have enough gas and the domestic needs must be met first.

Late last month, Petrobangla Chairman Mosharraf Hossain, presenting the key note paper on the gas sector of Bangladesh at a seminar, projecting future gas demands in the country, said that presently the demand for gas was about 900 mmmcf and 2300 mmmcf while the government could supply only 800 mmmcf.

The demand will rise to 1225 mmmcf in the year 2000, with a supply gap of about 225 mmmcf. The estimated gap between demand and supply by the year 2005, 2010 and 2015 are expected to be in the order of 600 mmmcf, 1300 mmmcf and 2300 mmmcf respectively, Mosharraf Hossain said.

This indicates the magnitude of activities required in the sector from upstream exploration to downstream transmission and conversion to power and other products," the Petrobangla chairman said.

Besides, the poor gas availability, pipeline gas export requires huge investment to create the infrastructure and addressing international legal issues.

"Investment will be no problem to set up the gas pipeline infrastructure required for export," said Finance Minister SAMS Kibria. "Foreign companies are willing to invest here. Pipeline export is acceptable all around the world. The fears of negative impact is not true. To allow pipeline export of gas, a pipeline infrastructure of up to 500 km is required. By investing billions of dollars for the pipeline, the cost of gas to be extracted and supplied through that would be so high that sale will become impractical, experts say.

A competent source in Petrobangla pointed out that pipeline gas export becomes viable only when a country has some big reserve and particularly when some large gas fields were available. Middle Eastern countries, Siberia or Alaska and other countries which export gas through pipeline have more than 200 tcf of gas reserve.

Besides, pipeline export requires complicated agreements which could sometimes take as long as a decade to formulate, agree and sign — depending on technical, financial and political situation prevailing in the countries concerned.

"Signing of such an international agreement might take years because there are various complicated technical, legal and political issues which need to be addressed first," said the source.

"What we can get in the future is uncertain. What we have now is important. We cannot plan on what we do not have now but what we already have," said a Petrobangla expert. "We should not plan pipeline export of gas with our existing resources. We must first ensure meeting our domestic demand for the next 40 years."

## Khaleda to open Independence Day programme today

**BNP Chairperson Begum Khaleda Zia will inaugurate party's four-day programme in observance of Independence Day at 3 pm today at Diploma Engineers' Institute, said a press release, reports UNB.**

Another report says: She will address a public meeting tomorrow at Narayanjanj launch terminal.

The party's central leaders will also address the meeting to be jointly organised by Narayanjanj district and town committees.

## Peaceful co-existence

**From Page 1**  
founder Akku Chowdhury gave a resume of the present activities and future plans for the museum.

As Aurora drove down the memory lane recollecting the war days, the audience, composed of freedom fighters, intellectuals and dignitaries, gave an patient hearing and clapped, interrupting his speech. Aurora was given a standing ovation when he reached the museum.

Recalling the last episode during the Liberation War Aurora said, "We were taking preparation to end to the war by the end of October. Yahya lost his temper and Pakistanis began air strikes from the western front. The war broke out on the fourth of December and ended on the 14th of the same month. A ceremonious surrender took place on the 16th."

"We had advanced with 14 helicopters and Russian tanks, which could swim, through the line of river Meghna. But, preparation was there since May and our major task was to train MuktiBahini," said Aurora.

Recalling the role of MuktiBahini, he said, "Even today, those trained force of MuktiBahini is an asset for this country."

In an emotion-chalked voice Aurora said, "We (Indian force) has a farewell parade at the National Stadium in Dhaka on March 14 and Bangabandhu took salute. That day is still very fresh in my memory."

Turning to Indian politics, Aurora said though BJP has formed the government, the party could not go with its own election agenda and had to accommodate partners' agenda as well and uphold the national interests. "This reflects the non-communal spirit that majority of the Indian people are imbued with", he pointed out.

"After retirement in 1973, I settled down in Delhi by 1978. After the holocaust in 1984, Shikhs' holiest shrine in 1984, I joined politics upon request from a political party in the Punjab though I have no love for politics. Then I involved myself in activities to promote human rights and communal harmony," said Aurora, who was an elected member of the Indian Upper House from the Punjab for six years from 1986.

## বাণিজ্যিক পুট বিক্রয়

ঢাকার কাওরান বাজারস্থ পাশ্বেপথ (হোটেল সোনারগাঁও হইতে গীন রোড) সংলগ্ন দক্ষিণমুখী অত্যন্ত আকর্ষণীয় লোকেশনে ৩৮.১১ (আটত্রিশ দশমিক এগার) কাঠা সাইজের একটি বাণিজ্যিক পুট বিক্রয় হইবে। পুটটির সম্মুখভাগ ৯৮.৮ ফুট চওড়া এবং পুটের অংশ বিশেষ রাজডক এর নিকট হইতে বরাদ্দ ও রেজিস্ট্রেশন।

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(সময় সকাল ৯টা হইতে বিকাল ৪-৩০ মিনিট পর্যন্ত)

## Rejoinder from Summit Corporation

My company, Summit Corporation, has been erroneously included in the list of defaulters published in The Daily Star newspaper (22 March, 1998 issue) at Serial Number : 776.

I have certificates from all the banks through which my company has been conducting its business that at no time in the two years that my company commenced business, has my company ever defaulted in meeting any of its financial obligations.

I demand that the Bangladesh Bank publish an apology in the newspaper for the damage caused to my company's reputation within 7 (seven) days of the publication of this rejoinder.

My company reserves its right to any legal action that may arise from the above negligent listing.

**Editor: Mahfuz Anam**  
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