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All set for opening of Bangabandhu Bridge

Bangabandhu Bridge over the mighty river Jamuna opens tomorrow, reports UNB. Arrangements have been completed for a colourful inauguration of the bridge, the longest in South Asia and 11th largest in the world.

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina will open the 4.8-km long and 18.50-metre-wide bridge at 10 in the morning.

Some 1000 guests, including representatives from donor agencies, heads of foreign missions in Bangladesh, 300 journalists, including 30 from abroad, will attend the opening ceremony.

Bangladesh Television will telecast the opening ceremony live. Several other international TV channels like CNN and BBC will cover the programme.

On the day, the bridge and several spots at its both sides will be decorated with the portraits of Bangabandhu and Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina.

Six pandals — one for the Prime Minister's rally, two for guests and three for journalists — have been erected at the western side of the bridge.

The main function will be held at Saidabad in Sadar thana of Sirajganj. Special security measures have been taken by the law enforcing agencies and the special security forces of the Prime Minister.

The Prime Minister along

with invited guests is expected to arrive at the venue from the eastern side located at Bhuapur in Tangail district.

After the inaugural session, Hasina will address a public rally. Later, she will inaugurate the rail communications over the bridge. She will cross the bridge along with some selected guests by a special train.

Hasina would be travelling

Special train service

Two special trains have been arranged for running between Ishwardi and Jamtoli for the convenience of those interested in attending the opening ceremony of the Bangabandhu Jamuna Bridge, reports UNB.

The first train will leave Ishwardi at 6:30 am and reach Jamtoli at 9:30 am. Similarly, it will leave Jamtoli at 3 pm and arrive at Ishwardi at 6:10 pm, said a Bangladesh Railway press release yesterday.

The second train will leave Ishwardi at 8:15 am and reach Jamtoli at 11:15. It will depart from Jamtoli at 4 pm and reach Ishwardi at 7:10 pm.

Also on Monday and Tuesday, all trains between Ishwardi and Sirajganj Ghat will ply up to Jamtoli instead of Sirajganj Ghat for the convenience of the people.

from Saidabad West Bangabandhu station in Sirajganj to East Bangabandhu station at Bhuapur. The railway authorities have sold 600 tickets to the guests for the special trip.

The bridge, a 900 million US dollar project, is being implemented by the government of Bangladesh with the financial assistance of World Bank, Asian Development Bank (ADB) and the Japanese Overseas Co-operation Fund. The donors are providing 200 million dollar each.

The project covers massive infrastructural works as well as resettlement. Under the resettlement programme, about 400 families out of 17643 affected because of land acquisition have been rehabilitated.

With the opening of the bridge, it will take 6-8 hours instead of 7-12 hours to travel from Dhaka to northern districts of the country.

Donors hoped that the bridge would usher in a new era in the communication sector and give the country's economy a boost. The bridge will help in accelerating industrial development in western part of the country, economists said.

The World Bank recently said the bridge would integrate Bangladesh economy, commerce and communications more than perhaps any other physical infrastructure has done.



A boy collecting water from the fountain at Shahbagh intersection to supply to some consumers in the area as water crisis continues in the city. —Star photo

69 Muslim rebels killed in Algeria

ALGIERS, June 21: Algerian government troops killed at least 65 Muslim rebels in the midst of a flare-up of 'terror' in remote areas of western Algeria, local dailies said today, reports Reuter.

Remote regions in the (western) provinces of Relizene and Mascara and in the (south-western) regions of Saïda and Tissemsilt have been experiencing a terror campaign since last week," said La Tribune newspaper.

It said Muslim rebels had increased raids on villages and attacks at fake roadblocks on civilians.

BJMB inaugural function begins

SIRAJGANJ, June 21: Men and women from different walks of life participated in a marathon today to mark the beginning of a three-day inaugural function of the Bangabandhu Jamuna Bridge, reports UNB.

Women's marathon started at 8:24 am from the western side of the bridge. A student of Bhuiyanpur College won the first prize taking 86 minutes to reach the destination at the eastern side of the bridge.

The men's event started from the eastern side at 11:10 am and returned to the same place at 1:00 pm touching the western end of the bridge.

President of the Bangladesh Olympic Association (BOA) and former Army Chief Lt Gen (ret'd) M Mahubur Rahman led the team comprising BOA and national sports federations in the marathon.

Power failure

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"Besides, there is no co-ordination between the transmission relays of different power plants. If relay of one power plant trips, other plants start tripping one after another," another source said.

Between September and December next, the power generation and supply capacity may be enhanced to 2100 MW.

The PDB, Energy Ministry, Power Cell, Petrobangla and other authorities concerned continue to function without any co-ordination. When the Prime Minister took over the charge of the Energy Ministry by removing Lt Gen (ret'd) Noor Uddin Khan few months ago, it was thought that his leadership would remove the problem of lack of the coordination.

"Coordination has not improved. Most of the files do not go to the Prime Minister," he added.

The private sector power plant schemes, all of which are at least one year behind schedule for one reason or the other, also have not been geared up. The Meghnaghat Power Plant scheme which is more than a year behind schedule now due to disagreement between the PDB and US company AES over several technical issues, remains stagnant.

Sources said that although the government had ultimately 'favoured' AES by withdrawing certain terms and conditions, AES was not proceeding with the project in the pretext of delay in the government decision for its another project, Haripur Power Plant.

Of the planned four barge-mounted private plants in the private sector, which were originally scheduled to start operation from September last year, only one 100 MW power plant, constructed by US company Wartsila, will come into operation in August-September. The three others, to be constructed by three companies, are uncertain. One of these three companies has made some progress.

Rajuk officials

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Rajuk officials said after snatching the video camera the gang assaulted the officials and chased them away from the area.

The survey to determine the exact extent of lake encroachment was started following a ministerial order to find out how the lake and its green areas were allocated to individuals.

Minister for Public Works and Housing Mohammad Nasim visited the Gulshan lake area on May 6, after reports of indiscriminate filling of lake appeared in The Daily Star. Nasim also formed three probe committees consisting of senior Rajuk officials, to investigate encroachment and how plots were allocated inside the lake.

One of these committees came under attack yesterday. Rajuk officials said they had lodged a case with Gulshan thana accusing the former MP and 'some others'. Gulshan police last night said that preliminary investigation revealed that two to three persons, including the former MP, were involved in the attack. "We could not recover the camera or arrest anybody because they seemed to have fled the area," said a Gulshan thana duty officer.

Rajuk officials said they had constantly come under threat during their work.

Strengthen co-ops to boost rural economy: PM

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina has called for boosting the rural economy by strengthening the cooperative movement in remote village areas, reports UNB.

"Poverty alleviation activities are to be started from the grassroots level in the rural areas to make it really effective," she said, while reviewing the activities of the LGRD and Cooperatives Ministry at the Secretariat yesterday.

In this regard, she stressed the need for setting up more co-operatives and called for intensifying the movement.

The Prime Minister said co-operatives can be a better means for the people to grow more food, increase production through fisheries, poultry and dairy, farming and sell their products at fair prices.

About micro-credit programme, Hasina said it is also a very good tool for poverty alleviation.

The Prime Minister suggested proper coordination among the Roads and Highways, Water Development and LGRD divisions for better result in project implementation.

About the Arsenic-free drinking water, she suggested the use of surface water, including purified pond water.

She said a pond should be kept reserve in each village for getting Arsenic-free water which can be used for drinking after purification.

Officials present in the meeting informed the Prime Minister that areas with arsenic-contaminated water have been identified and proper measures taken to make the water free from arsenic contamination.

The meeting also discussed the means of easing traffic jam in Dhaka city, including construction of road divider, link road, ring road and fly-over.

The meeting was told that water situation in the capital has been improved and steps are being taken to improve the situation further.

LGRD and Cooperatives Minister Zillur Rahman apprised the Prime Minister about various activities of the ministry and gave a brief resume of their progress.

LGRD secretary Hasnat Abdul Hye apprised the PM about the 1997-98 ADP projects under the ministry.

He said there are 112 such projects under the ministry with an allocation of Tk 1308.09 crore for 1997-98 and 97 per cent of the allocation have been utilised in the current fiscal year.

Dhaka City Mayor Mohammad Hanif, State Minister for LGRD and Cooperatives Mofazzal Hossain Chowdhury Maya, Cabinet Secretary Ataul Huq, Planning Commission Member Kazi Shamsul Alam and high officials of the ministry were present.

Bankruptcy court

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introduced pragmatic and updated two laws of bankruptcy and money suit courts to suit the present day needs, the minister pointed out.

The present government is very much aware of proper application of the two laws. Bankruptcy and money suit court is complementary to each other, he said.

There are provisions in the laws to protect the interests of both loan receivers and givers for keeping the country free from loan default culture, the minister said.

He pointed out that work was fast progressing for necessary infrastructural development for the constitution of the Law Reform Commission, Metropolitan Session Court and Green Court.

The law minister said the

Accused dies

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The dead was identified as Jallil alias Masum, 20, son of Muktar Ali, police said, adding that he was an accused of committing a dacoity in a house at N C Roy Lane Wednesday noon.

Jallil went to meet his friend Rajib, another accused in the dacoity case, at Nasiruddin Khan Lane in the afternoon.

When he reached near Rajib's house a section of local people caught him and beat him up.

Later, police rescued him in a critical condition and took him to the DMCH where he succumbed to his injuries at about 11 pm on Saturday.

The body was sent to DMCH morgue for autopsy. None, however, was arrested in this connection till filing of this report last night.

A murder case was filed with Lalbagh thana in this regard.

N-accord

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construction of two 1000 mw nuclear power plants at Kudankulam in Tamil Nadu became necessary following the break-up of Soviet Union in 1991.

Adamov, who is leading a Russian delegation, had a meeting with Prime Minister Atal Behari Vajpayee in Manali before finalising the accord.

PM: Bilateral issues

From Page 1

mate of confidence" in South Asia.

Pakistan High Commissioner in Dhaka Karam Elahi when contacted said, "We welcome the visit of the Bangladesh premier. We want to discuss why it all (the nuclear tests) happened and what is the background. You cannot cure a disease without finding its cause."

He further said, "Pakistan seeks the good offices of all friendly countries for resolution of problems."

He, however, said that the Kashmir issue is central to all mediations between India and Pakistan.

Officials said that this would be the sixth meeting between Sheikh Hasina and Nawaz Sharif in the last two years. The two premiers met in Istanbul during the D-8 summit, at Edinburgh during the Commonwealth Summit, in Maldives at the 9th SAARC Summit, on March 23 last year in Islamabad during a special OIC Summit, the OIC Summit in Tehran and most recently during the Three Nation Business Summit in Dhaka.

present government is constitutionally committed to appointing Ombudsman in the country to ensure administrative accountability and to establish social justice.

Eighty per cent work has already been completed and legislative steps will be made very soon, the minister said.

Governor of Bangladesh Bank Lutfar Rahman Sarkar, who attended the function as the special guest, said remarkable stability has been brought in the overall economic sector in recent times and some reformatory steps have also been made in the banking sector in the wake of sudden economic down swing in south East Asia.

Referring to the loan default culture, Lutfar Rahman Sarkar said the culture has weakened the overall economy of the country and a number of reasons have been traced out to bring back overall discipline in the economic sector.

Referring to a section of dishonest bankers involved in loan default, Sarkar said about 8,050 officers and employees of the banking sector had been terminated on charge of corruption during the last 15 years. Chittagong City Mayor Alhaj ABM Mohiuddin Chowdhury, in his brief speech, urged all to launch a concerted approach to stop the loan default culture in the country for restoration of healthy discipline in the economic sector.

Sharif

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framework for the talks. A Foreign Office spokesman, underlining the "importance" of the upcoming meeting between Sharif and Vajpayee in Colombo, said they could "send the foreign secretaries of the two countries back to the negotiating table".

The foreign secretaries, high ranking civil servants, held three rounds of talks last year.

The process came to a halt when Islamabad accused New Delhi of refusing meaningful talks on the explosive Kashmir dispute between the two countries.

The spokesman reiterated that the "root cause" of tensions between Pakistan and India had to be tackled and resolved to pave the way for peace and stability in the region.

The PM and her entourage will depart Dhaka on Wednesday at 7 am and return to the capital at around 10:30 pm.

The entourage will include Foreign Minister Abdus Samad Azad, State Minister for Foreign Affairs Abul Hasan Chowdhury, Foreign Secretary Mostafizur Rahman, Principal Secretary to the PM Dr. S. A. Samad, DG South Asia desk Sirajul Islam, DG UN desk Jamil Majid and Press Secretary to the PM Jawadul Karim.

Supplementary budget

From Page 1

Only one of several hundred cut-motions against the demands for grants was placed in the House due to the absence of the lawmakers concerned belonging to the BNP and one each of the Jatiya Party and the Jamaat-e-Islami.

JP's Dr Rustam Ali Faraji was the lone MP present among those who proposed cut-motions against the demands for grants proposed by the ministers concerned. However, Faraji's also withdrew his motion following the minister's statement.

Speaking for most of the demands for grants, the finance minister claimed that his government had restored financial discipline and it was reflected in the smaller size of the supplementary budget for the outgoing fiscal year.

He termed as unique the practice of keeping the supplementary budget well within the limits.

Following approval of 29 demands for grants on different ministries, Speaker Humayun Rashid Choudhury applied guillotine for the rest of the cut-motions and put up the remainder.

Loadshedding

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tricity including 200 MW at Kaptai plants was generated today and out of it 70 MW was taken to Dhaka and 128 MW was supplied to Chittagang against the demand for 330 MW.

Residents here had to suffer a lot due to blackout last night. Power supply was however restored in the city at noon today the sources said but could not say anything about the situation in other areas of the district.

Meanwhile, football fans, failing to witness the World Cup football match, last night attacked the Newmooring power sub-station, pelting stones, and staged demonstrations at different places demanding power supply, police said.

CHT: 6 thrust areas

From Page 1

ence, denied that there was any difference of opinion with Larma or that he had kept himself away out of frustration as he was ignored.

UNDP Resident Representative David Lockwood said the development partners were reassured that the government intended to carry out the 'development packages' with the participation of the local people through the institutions.

The UNDP has prepared a 540 million dollar need assessment. The Planning Commission has also prepared a 175 million dollar project.

The donor representatives who attended the conference have briefed on the need assessment and they will take those up with their respective governments, Dr Alamgir said.

"There is a certain process to mobilise aid," David Lockwood said without elaborating. On Shantu Larma, he said, he also had discussions with him. "But I found him to be very shy in participating in discussions," he added.

Editor: Mahfuz Anam

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South Africa win second Test

Sports Reporter

South Africa went 1-0 up against England with a facile 10-wicket victory in the second Test at Lord's yesterday.

On the fourth day needing only 15 to win in their second innings, the tourists reached home without losing any wicket.

Earlier, England could manage 264 in their second innings after following on.

SL beat NZ

Sports Reporter

Hosts Sri Lanka posted a seven-wicket win over New Zealand in the second match of the Independence Cup played at the Premadasa Stadium in Colombo last night.

Telecom system in Barisal disrupted for 11 hrs

From Staff Correspondent

BARISAL, June 21: Telecommunication system in Barisal was disrupted for eleven hours from 7:30 am to 6:10 pm today due to technical fault, local T&T sources said.

During the period nationwide dialing (NWD), trunk booking and ISD system remained suspended.

Two experts — one from ITALTEL and another from TOTALETEL — reached Barisal this afternoon and restored telecommunication in the evening. ITALTEL, an Italian company and TOTALETEL, a Bangladeshi company jointly installed the digital exchange at Barisal some two years ago.

Dacoity at a office in Banani

A dacoity was committed at an office in the city's Banani area yesterday, reports UNB.

Witnesses said, a group of armed dacoits entered the Space Plus Ltd, a construction firm at Kamal Ataturk Avenue.

Bibiana well

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terday. The source further informed that Occidental has struck four gas zones at the Bibiana well and the company is very much optimistic about the reserve in the structure.

Meanwhile, the drilling rig used for drilling the well at Bibiana will now be sent to Kalachhara area of Srimangal where the US company is preparing to drill a new exploration well, the source added.

The new location is about six kilometres off the Magurchhara site, where an explosion took place in the early hours of June 15 last year.

Construction of an approach road towards the Kalachhara location is going on while other preparatory work for drilling the well has already begun.

It will take at least five weeks to finish the preparatory work there, involving an expenditure amounting about Tk 15 crore, the source said, adding that shifting of the drilling rig from Bibiana will be completed within 10 to 15 days.

5 pro-govt militants killed in Kashmir mine blast

of police.

No group has so far claimed responsibility for the blast. But Baid blamed pro-Pakistan militant groups for the land-mine explosion.

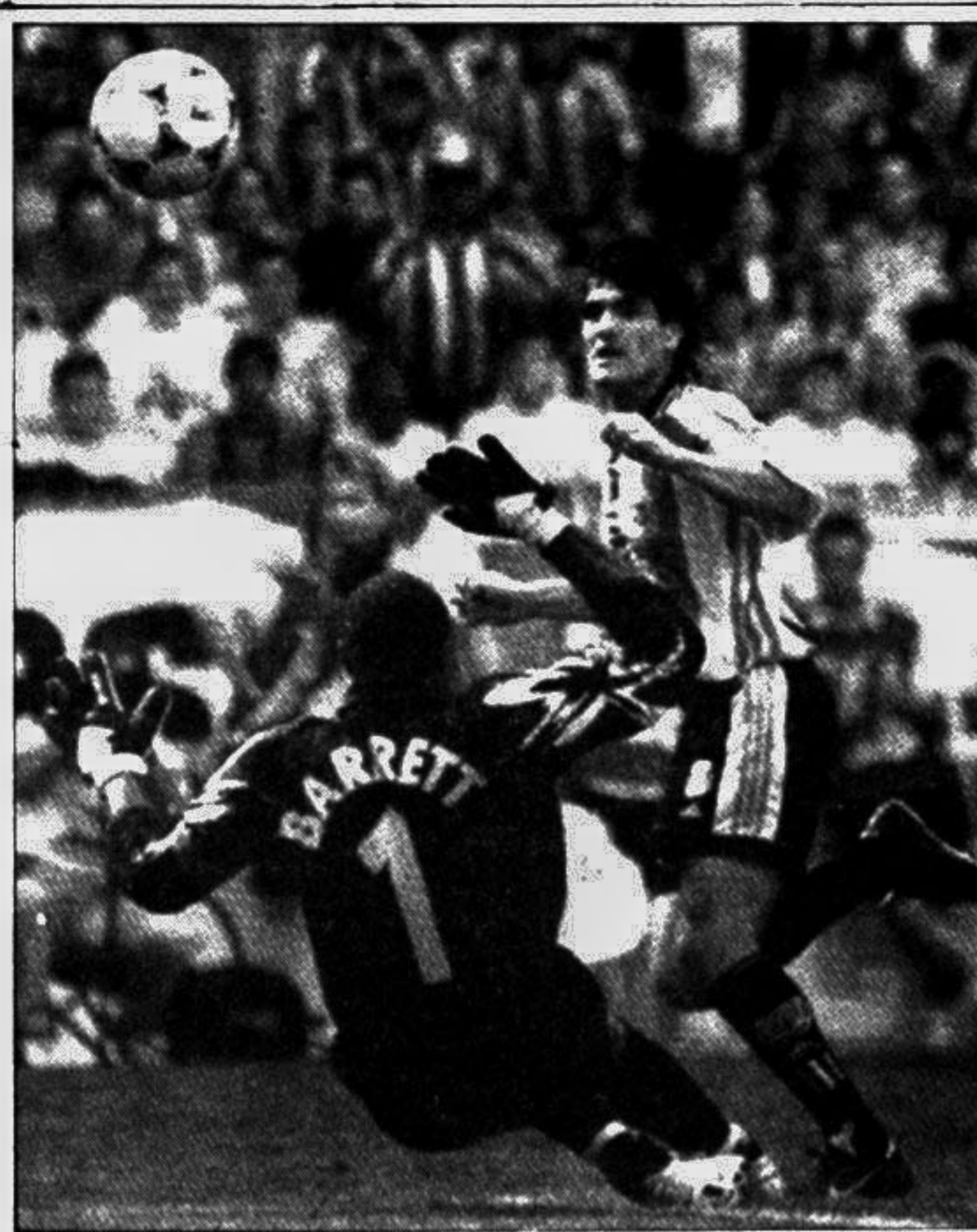
Several pro-government militants broke ranks with the separatists in the past three years and began helping Indian authorities to combat militancy in the northern Himalayan territory, India's only Muslim-majority state.

Also today four militants and one government soldier were killed during a five-hour encounter in Lolab area, 100 kilometers (65 miles) northwest of Srinagar, Bajd said.

Meanwhile, the bodies of 25 Hindu massacred by suspected Muslim militants were cremated today in their mountainous village in the state.

South Korean coach fired

PARIS, June 21: South Korean coach Cha Bum Kun was sacked today after his side were thrashed 5-0 by the Netherlands and eliminated from the World Cup finals, reports Reuters.



Ariel Ortega of Argentina chips the ball over Jamaica's Warren Barrett to score the opening goal during their soccer World Cup Group H match yesterday. Argentina won 5-0. —AP/UNB photo

Hat trick by Batistuta

From Page 1

already tough task became even more difficult and although they put together some well-worked moves and threatened to score once or twice, the South Americans were never in any danger of surrendering the points.

Argentina went ahead after 32 minutes with a goal created by Juan Veron who provided the through pass for Ortega whose right-foot shot gave goalkeeper

Warren Barrett no chance. Ortega then showed what damage he could do with his left foot 10 minutes into the second-half when he made it 2-0.

Claudio Lopez sent Ortega on his way and he darted through the gap between defenders Christopher Dawes and Peter Cargill before drawing Barrett and scoring with his left foot.

Gabriel Batistuta scored Argentina's winner in their 1-0 victory over Japan in their opening match.