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## SOFA: US to continue talks for agreement

The United States yesterday said it would continue discussion with the Bangladesh government to reach an agreement on the Status of Force Agreement (SOFA).

"We would like to reach an agreement on SOFA with the government of Bangladesh. We continue to discuss it with them," a spokesman of the US Embassy told UNB.

The spokesman made the remarks when his comment was sought on a report that Bangladesh is unlikely to sign SOFA with the United States.

Quoting a competent source at the Foreign Office, the official news agency Monday said that the prospect of signing SOFA was bleak despite Bangladesh's close cooperation with the United States in many fields including the "area of defence."

SOFA sought entry of US  
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## Interim RC in CHT likely this month

The long awaited Interim Regional Council for the Chittagong Hill Tracts (CHT) is expected to be formed by the end of the month, authoritative sources said yesterday.

There has been controversies and suspicions, raised by different quarters in the hills, due to delay in formation of the interim RC.

The sources, however, emphasised that there was nothing controversial surrounding the formation of the interim RC. Envisaged in the CHT peace agreement, the RC is going to be the apex body in the CHT to oversee local government, law and order and development activities.

Choosing the 22-member council, to be headed by a tribesman and having representation from all the ethnic tribes and settlers, has been the bone of contention between the government and the PCJSS.

Both the sides had their own selections. Disagreements regarding some members had stalled the formation of the interim RC, which is to be composed of members initially nominated by the government.

The front organisations of the PCJSS (Parbatya Chattagram Jana Sanghati Samity) had staged protests over the delay and the PCJSS leaders also quietly expressed their dissatisfaction to the authorities.

The delay had soured moods among the PCJSS hierarchy. At least three of their top brass are now in the city, quietly lobbying to expedite the process.

The PCJSS sources said they are becoming vulnerable to their headline opponents, campaigning against them, describing the accord as a 'sale out'.

The hardliners, who had clashed with supporters of PCJSS's supreme Jyotirindria Bodhipriyo Larma alias Shantu Larma on several occasions, are trying to cash in on the delay, the PCJSS sources said. Shantu is tipped to become the chairman of the interim RC.

Recently, the PCJSS leaders  
See Page 12 Col 4

## Landslides kill 4, two drown in Ctg divn

CHITTAGONG, July 14: At least four persons, including two women and a child, were killed in landslides while two others drowned in flood waters today.

Incessant rainfall during the last few days has submerged the low-lying areas in Chittagong, Cox's Bazar and Rangamati.

The road link between Chittagong and Cox's Bazar was snapped today due to onrush of flood waters.

Two women were killed in a landslide at Bonarupa in Rangamati hill district and another unidentified person died at Kaokhal area of the same district, police and local sources said.

A two-year-old child was  
See Page 12 Col 1

## Incessant rain aggravates flood situation in 10 dists

The flood situation in the country further deteriorated yesterday as the major rivers continued to swell with incessant rain and onrush of hill waters, reports UNB.

Rising flood water affected several lakh people and standing crops on hundreds of acres of land in Mymensingh, Jamalpur, Sherpur, Habiganj, Rangpur, Sirajganj, Khagrachhari, Chittagong, Feni and Comilla districts.

Low-lying areas in Bogra, Rangpur, Gaibandha, Lalmonirhat, Nilphamari, Kurigram, Rajshahi, Natore, Pabna and Manikganj districts were flooded due to continuous rainfall, according to an official handout.

Road communications between Jamalpur and Sherpur, and Feni and Rangpur of Khagrachhari district were snapped.

Sirajganj railway ghat also went under flood water, disrupting train communication.

Disaster Management and Relief Ministry has sanctioned grants of Tk 50,000 for each affected district as relief. Tk 12 lakh in cash and 350 metric tons of rice for some districts, the handout added.

A report from Mymensingh says: About 7,000 people were marooned and standing crops on 2,500 acres of land was affected in the flood in Sadar, Gouripur and Iswarganj thanas.

The Brahmaputra rose by one feet during the last 24 hours till yesterday.

Incessant rainfall inundated Gangainarpar, Natunbazar, Naomahal, Seora, Krishtapur and Baghpara areas of the town disrupting the normal life and business activities.

In Jamalpur incessant rainfall and onrush of hill water further aggravated the flood situation, affecting 58 unions of seven thanas of the district, according to another report.

The Jamalpur ferry ghat went under water snapping the road communication between Jamalpur and Sherpur.

Road communication between Mahnudpur and Madarganj was also disrupted as a bridge on Melandah-Madarganj road had been damaged.

Official sources said, six unions of Bakshiganj thana, eight of Dewanganj, 12 of Is-lampur, seven of Madarganj, 11 of Melandah, eight of Sarishabari and six unions of Sadar thana were flooded.

A report from Habiganj adds: continuous downpour in the last two days flooded seven  
See Page 12 Col 1

## Nat'l preparatory body for D-8 summit formed

A National Preparatory Committee has been formed for the Developing-Eight (D-8) Summit to be held in Dhaka on November 28-29, reports UNB.

Foreign Minister Abdus Samad Azad was made chairman of the committee formed at an inter-ministerial meeting at the Foreign Ministry yesterday, according to official sources.

Other members of the committee are: Finance Minister, Commerce and Industries Minister, Home Minister, State Minister for Cultural Affairs, State Minister for Information, and State Minister for Foreign Affairs.

The meeting, chaired by the Foreign Minister, also constituted four sub-committees — security and traffic, media, finance and cultural affairs — for  
See Page 12 Col 7

## Young man hacked to death in city

Two persons were killed in separate incidents in Shabubagh thana area in the city yesterday.

Rajab Ali, 23, a resident of Shajahanpur Railway Colony, was hacked to death by a gang of unidentified assailants at Mugdapara in the afternoon, police said.

Police said, a gang of about five youngmen called Rajab from near his house at about 2 pm. The killers took Rajab to Jhilpar in north Mugdapara where they were locked in an altercation. At one stage, they attacked Rajab with machetes and hacked him indiscriminately.

In a fatally wounded condition Rajab was sent to Dhaka Medical College Hospital (DMCH) where the on-duty doctors declared him dead.

In another incident at Goran Nuruzzaman alias Nuru, 45, son of Asgar Ali and owner of an autorickshaw garage, was found dead inside his garage at north Goran last morning.

Nuruzzaman was found dead with stab wounds in different parts of his body inside his garage at about 6:30 am.

Quoting Nuru's relatives, police said he went to sleep in his garage at about 11 pm on Monday. Early in the morning, Ra-  
See Page 12 Col 7



Some city roads went under water following yesterday's downpour. — Star photo

## AL violating code of conduct, alleges Khaleda

BNP chief and Leader of the Opposition in Parliament Begum Khaleda Zia has brought charges of 'gross violation' of the election code of conduct against the ministers and other leaders of the ruling Awami League in the Barisal-5 Jatiya Sangsad constituency by-election.

She also expressed concern over what she said the Election Commission's (EC) indifference to such practices.

"If the by-poll is not held in a free and fair manner due to conspiracy and indifference by the government and the Com-  
See Page 12 Col 7

## Five-member team meets CEC BNP demands free, fair by-polls in Barisal-5

Opposition BNP has placed a number of demands before the Chief Election Commissioner to ensure a free, fair and impartial by-election in Barisal-5 Constituency on July 20, reports UNB.

A five-member delegation of BNP met with CEC Mohammed Abu Hena at his office yesterday afternoon.

The delegation members were Prof AQM Badruddoza Chowdhury, Abdul Mannan Bhuiyan, MK Anwar, Shamsul Islam and Abdul Mannan.

Two election commission-  
See Page 12 Col 7

## Reception to Hasina today

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina will address a grand rally at Paltan Maidan at 3 pm today, reports UNB.

The grand rally was organised by the National Committee for Peace and Friendship to accord a reception to Sheikh Hasina, the architect of the Chittagong Hill Tracts peace treaty.

The 1001-member National Committee was formed with prominent personalities from all walks of life. They include Begum Sofia Kamal, Debesh Chandra Bhattacharya, Dr Nileema Ibrahim, Prof Kabir Chowdhury, KM Sobhan, Kalim Showafi and Dr Abdullah Al-Muti.

A number of sub-committees were also formed to make the grand rally a success.  
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## Three alternative designs to refix BJMB gas pipeline

Contractors of Bangabandhu Jamuna Multipurpose Bridge (BJMB) have worked out three alternative designs to refix the gas pipeline that collapsed during load testing on June 11, according to sources in JMBA.

The designs are still at a preliminary stage and the pipeline will be refixed after government approval, the sources said.

The contractors would bear the cost of refixing the gas pipeline. Measures would be taken so that traffic movement over the bridge is not affected when the pipeline is refixed.

Asked about the inquiry committee report on the collapse of the pipeline, a high official of JMBA said, "Investigation is progressing. We are studying the matter from academic point of view."

The 4.8 km gas pipeline fixed underneath the bridge collapsed in the early morning of June 11, when water was run through it for load testing.

Local experts termed the collapse of the gas pipeline an "engineering failure." They also raised questions regarding the design and approval process of the gas pipeline.  
See Page 12 Col 7

## Speakers tell seminar in city Workers in EPZs deprived of fundamental rights

Fundamental rights of the workers in the Export Processing Zones (EPZ) are being violated as they are prohibited from forming trade unions and from seeking redress from any court for any injustice done to them.

Article 11(A) of the BEPZA Act allows the authority to exempt the EPZs from all or many provisions of a number of important laws relating to labour and industrial relations.

This was stated by participants at the four-day national tripartite seminar on 'Globalisation and its Impact on Industrial Relations' at a city hotel yesterday.

Three working sessions were held with former director of Personnel of BTC Monowerrud-din Ahmed, secretary BEPZA Md Kamal Akhter and president of Bangladesh Jatiya Samik League Abdus Salam Khan in the chair respectively.

At the first session, General Manager of BOC Ali Afzal Faroque presented the key note paper on 'Cross Cultural Management Issues — Human Resource Policies, Strategies in the Face of Globalisation' while president of Karmajibi Nari Shirin Akhter and Dr Debapriya Bhattacharya discussed on 'Employment Relations at the EPZs' at the second session.

Associate Professor of Economics in Dhaka University Nasreen Khandker discussed on 'Issues Faced by Women Workers in the Wake of Globalisation' at the third session. Debapriya Bhattacharya alleged that the labour code proposed in 1992 is silent on the workers' right to freedom of organisation.

"Due to higher labour productivity in the EPZs, female workers, despite facing various problems, earn higher pay than those employed in comparable garment manufacturing factories outside the zones as well as in the textile industry where the national minimum wage rates prescribed by law are applied," he said.

Nasreen Khandker said globalisation has increased opportunities for female employment and 90 per cent of the 1.2 million workers employed in garments industries are women.

Women workers in garments factories suffer from lack of safety at work, lack of canteen and other facilities, non-pay-  
See Page 12 Col 3

## BJP govt fails to push women's quota bill

NEW DELHI, July 14: India's parliament today was forced to abandon attempts to hold a debate on a bill reserving a third of seats for women after two days of uproar in the lower house, reports agency.

Speaker G M C Balayogi postponed the debate on the long pending proposals after opponents forced six adjournments by provoking scuffles and a series of slanging matches.

Balayogi said: "In these circumstances I propose that introduction of the bill be postponed for the time being."

"Consensus has so far not been possible," Balayogi said. He had met earlier in the day with leaders of political parties to try to find a way to push the bill forward.

The announcement was greeted with loud protests by women members. Balayogi quickly adjourned the house for lunch.

"Introduce the Women's Bill," read a sign lawmaker Mamtta Banerjee, whose party is an ally of the governing coalition, waved in parliament.

On Monday, the bill's critics staged rowdy protests in parliament, at one point snatching a copy of the draft legislation from the hands of the law minister and ripping it to pieces.

The bill, meant to increase women's participation in India's democracy, was first introduced in 1996 by a previous government, but met with similar opposition and never came to a vote. Religious practice and tradition often keep women in the shadows in India.

Members of parties who rely on the votes of Muslims and lower class Hindus say they won't let the bill be considered unless it includes quotas within the quota for the groups they represent. Women's groups say the quota-within-a-quota demand may be a tactic to stall the bill, rather than a legitimate attempt to help minorities.  
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## International

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## Business

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## US govt seeks authority to waive sanctions

WASHINGTON, July 14: The Clinton administration asked Congress on Monday for authority to waive the economic sanctions just imposed on India and Pakistan, saying it would give the United States more leverage in slowing the arms race in South Asia, reports AP.

"Our purpose is not to punish for punishment's sake, but to influence the behaviour of both governments," Karl F Inderfurth, Assistant Secretary of State for South Asian Affairs, told a Senate hearing. "We do not wish for unnecessary harm to fall on the civilian populations of either country ... or on US businesses."

Inderfurth said that the sanctions, required by law, are too rigid and that the United States would have more leverage if it also had the power to waive them.

Still, he told the Senate Foreign Relations subcommittee on Near Eastern and South Asian Affairs, the sanctions won't be waived unless "substantial progress" is made by India and Pakistan toward nuclear non-proliferation goals.

The Senate last week voted 98-0 to exempt wheat and other agricultural exports from the sanctions imposed on India and Pakistan in May after they conducted nuclear tests.

It is expected to take up related legislation, perhaps later this week, that would waive all the current sanctions for nine months, followed by a graduated waiver based on presidential certification that India and Pakistan were making progress in reducing nuclear tensions.

Senator Sam Brownback, the Republican chairman of the subcommittee and a sponsor of that legislation, agreed with the administration that the sanctions could bring harm to the economies of both Asian nations in the midst of the current Asian financial crisis.

"The economic situation there was not very good before we imposed sanctions, particularly in Pakistan, and now it is even worse," Brownback said.

"The administration would like to see both India and Pakistan agree to conduct no further tests, sign the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty, refrain from attaching their nuclear weapons to missiles they do have, halt the production of weapons material and seek peace in the disputed territory of Kashmir."

But Inderfurth said specific goals such as these shouldn't be dictated by Congress. "These are steps we want to see both governments take. They are not demands ... Countries don't like to be dictated to."

"We need to engage both India and Pakistan," Inderfurth said. He said leaders of both countries had signaled a willingness to talk about the situation. "We will not let our current momentum slip," he said.

In related testimony, Robert J Einhorn, Deputy Assistant Secretary of State for Non-proliferation, told the subcommittee that, at least until recently, China had been providing Pakistan with missile technology. "This a continuing source of disagreement between US and China," he said.

Despite efforts by President Bill Clinton to persuade China's leaders during his recent visit to China against providing Pakistan with additional missile technology, "We do not believe this has been resolved," Einhorn said.

Brownback suggested China's position is complicating efforts to cool the India-Pakistan arms race. "We have to get those sorts of issues resolved. We cannot look past the role of China in this dispute," he said.

China agreed in October 1994 to stop sending complete missiles to its Pakistani allies. But since then, it has continued to ship components.

"We do believe that China has certainly, until recently continued to be supportive of Pakistani missile programmes," he said.

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**Chairman**  
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