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Indo-Pak dialogue resumes

COLOMBO, July 30: Top bureaucrats of India and Pakistan resumed talks at a seaside resort today, a day after their prime ministers broke a year-long stalemate and agreed to try again to resolve their territorial dispute, report agencies.

While the resumption of talks was seen as a positive step, there was no indication either side would concede ground in their seemingly irreconcilable claims to Kashmir.

It was the first meeting between the two foreign secretaries since the May nuclear tests by the two neighbours. The testing raised fears of a nuclear war over Kashmir.

Foreign secretaries Shamshad Ahmed of Pakistan and K Raghunath of India posed for pictures at Bentota, 60 kilometres south of Colombo, before starting the closed-door talks.

The two secretaries held detailed consultations to chalk-out the modalities for the resumption of the stalled dialogue.

According to a report they failed to agree to modalities for resuming formal foreign secretaries.

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Hasina, Sharif discuss business summit

COLOMBO, July 30: Pakistani Prime Minister Mohammad Nawaz Sharif tonight responded positively to a Bangladesh proposal to hold another business summit to follow up the first meeting which was held in Dhaka in February this year, reports BSS.

Sharif seconded Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina's proposal to hold such a summit later this year in Dhaka when she called on the Pakistani premier at his hotel suite at Taj Samudra here tonight.

Briefing newsmen, press secretary of the prime minister, Jawadul Karim said the two leaders held discussions for over 30 minutes on matters of mutual interest.

Bangladesh hosted the first.

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7 leaders relax at Bentota resort

COLOMBO, July 30: South Asian leaders met privately today in a seaside resort to discuss how they can increase trade among themselves and move closer toward setting up a regional common market, report agencies.

The leaders are to spend the day relaxing and holding informal talks, officials said.

"It is a working holiday for them," a government spokesman said, adding no reporters were allowed near the hotel where the leaders have been put up. However, photographers would have brief access to them.

Indian Prime Minister Atal Behari Vajpayee used an Indian air force helicopter to fly to Bentota, diplomats said.

Officials fear it may take up

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Flood waters in city, greater Dhaka continue to rise

Flood situation around the capital and in central parts of the country worsened further with 17 more deaths across the country yesterday, report agencies.

Flood forecasting centre warned that the situation may further deteriorate in greater Dhaka due to active monsoon and onrush of water from the upstream.

It said the situation is likely to remain unchanged in central parts of the country.

Of the new deaths, six were reported from Brahmanbaria. Five died in Dhaka, two in Mymensingh, one in Madaripur, two in Rajbari and one in Habiganj.

The Buriganga, Turag and the Shitalakkha rivers rose further yesterday and was flowing much above their danger levels around Dhaka, Tongi and Narayanganj.

Direct road communications between Dhaka and Sylhet remained suspended for the second day yesterday as a Bailey bridge at Sadipur over Kushiara

was washed away on Tuesday night.

Flood waters inundated a portion of Dhaka-Chittagong highway at Jangali in Narayanganj yesterday.

Some 200 metres of the highway went under one-foot water.

A Nature report says, major portions of the two main flood protection embankments have been washed away and about two km Nature-Dhaka via Bogra highway went under flood water yesterday.

Meanwhile, health directorate sources said diarrhoea claimed three more lives yesterday and affected 2,830 more people in the flood-hit districts.

Officials at the relief ministry control room said the situation deteriorated in 11 districts, improved in nine districts and remained unchanged in six districts. Situation in three more districts became normal yesterday. They are Kurigram, Naogaon and Feni.

The districts where the situation worsened further are

Dhaka, Mymensingh, Narayanganj, Narayanganj, Madaripur, Munshiganj, Shariatpur, Pabna, Chandpur, Brahmanbaria and Habiganj.

In the districts of Jamalpur, Natrakona, Rajbari, Sherpur, Gaibandha, Sirajganj, Nilphamari, Moulvibazar and Sunamganj, the flood situation is improving.

Earlier, the situation had become normal in Lalmonirhat, Rangpur, Joypurhat, Magura, Cox's Bazar, Chittagong, Bandarban and Rangamati.

The flood situation remained unchanged in Manikganj, Tangail, Faridpur, Bogra, Chapainawabganj and Comilla districts, the control room at the relief ministry said.

The Flood Forecasting and Warning Centre said flood situation in the Brahmaputra basin, as a whole, is likely to improve. The basin covers areas in Rangpur, Bogra, Pabna, Mymensingh, Jamalpur, Tan

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Reform committee suggests Retrench 23000 excess employees in NCBs

The high powered Bank Reform Committee (BRC) has suggested that the government should take immediate steps to retrench excess employees in the Nationalised Commercial Banks (NCBs) to make them profitable.

The number of excess manpower in the NCBs is 23,000 in total, a BRC estimate said.

The BRC has also suggested the government to form task forces in the NCBs to identify corrupt employees and officials and take action against them.

Corruption, according to it, has increased to such a level that without effectively curbing it, the banks cannot function.

The suggestions were contained in BRC's latest report submitted to the finance ministry on July 26. Dr Wahiduddin Mahmud heads the committee.

BRC said lack of competent officials is becoming acute at all levels in NCBs. The small number of capable officials in NCBs are increasingly leaving their jobs to join private and

foreign banks.

On the other hand, the restriction on lateral appointment in NCBs have resulted in the gradual promotion of lower level employees and officials to higher posts. This has drastically reduced the quality of work in NCBs, the report said.

It pointed out that 70 per cent of the officials in NCBs are promotees from employees. If this continues, the banks will suffer from lack of quality management.

The BRC report also pointed out that NCBs have 23,000 excess employees which is 36 per cent of their total workforce. According to the latest statistics, NCBs have a total of 65,000 employees and officials. In the private banks, the deposit per employee is Tk 78 lakh but in the NCBs, it is only Tk 50 lakh. Based on this estimate, BRC has determined the number of excess employees in NCBs.

"It is not possible to graduate the NCBs to a profitable position keeping this excess man-

power," the BRC report observed. It has suggested immediate reduction of the excess manpower through golden handshake programme.

The report noted that corruption in the NCBs has become pervasive and yet there is hardly any example of taking the corrupt people to task.

The BRC suggested that a task force should be formed to identify corrupt officials. The task force will identify the 'sources of corruption' and will recommend ways of dealing with the situation. It also said action has to be taken against those employees and officials against whom charges of corruption have been proved or will be proved. But at the same time, honest officials will have to be rewarded for commendable jobs, it said.

The report also said NCBs have 1300 unprofitable branches which should either be closed down or merged with other branches. A task force

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Star Report

Rubel murder: HC trial suggested

The Rubel murder case should be tried by the High Court Division of the Supreme Court as the 'court of first instance', some top officials of the Law Ministry told The Daily Star yesterday.

Since the one-man inquiry committee has been formed with a retired judge of the High Court, it will necessitate the trial to be conducted by a judge of the same court.

"Besides, Article 110 of the Constitution also allows the High Court Division to withdraw a pending case of a subordinate court on a point of general public importance and dispose of the case itself," an official explained.

The post of a High Court judge is a constitutional one while a district court judge holds a statutory post.

The Law Ministry officials noted that the death of university student Shamim Reza Rubel in the custody of Detective Branch of Police is special in nature and, therefore, trial of the case is of immense public importance.

According to them, the case should be tried by the High Court also to avoid the delay in dispensation of justice.

If the trial of Rubel murder case is conducted by any judge of the district court — a sessions judge or additional sessions judge — it would be against the spirit of natural justice, they maintained.

"The statutory provisions as well as constitutional provisions allow the High Court to try the Rubel murder case as the court of first instance," said an official, requesting anonymity.

Article 110 of the Constitution says, "If the High Court Division is satisfied that a case pending in a subordinate court involves a substantial question of law as to the interpretation of the Constitution, or on a point of general public importance the determination of which is necessary for disposal of the case, it shall withdraw the case from that court and may, (a) either dispose of the case itself or (b) determine the question of law and return the case to the court from which it has been so withdrawn for

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6 DB men remanded

By Staff Correspondent

Six of the arrested members of the DB team, allegedly involved in the murder of Shamim Reza Rubel in custody, were placed on remand for further interrogation yesterday.

Inspector Aminul Islam, who allegedly accompanied the team that picked and beat up Rubel, was placed on four days' remand while the five other DB personnel, arrested earlier, were placed on a further three-day remand by the CMM's Court yesterday.

The inspector and the five others — SI Hayatul Islam Thakur, ASI Abdul Karim, Havilder Nuruzzaman, constables Parvez and Faruk — were produced before the CMM's Court at about 8 last night.

In separate petitions, the CID sought five days remand for Aminul and also five days for the five others for further interrogation. Metropolitan Magistrate Maksudur Rahman Patwari granted a four-day remand for Aminul and a three-day remand for the five, court sources said.

Separate bail petitions and cancellation of the remand petitions were submitted by the lawyers of Aminul and the others.

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Mouchak crossing in the city during hartal hours yesterday.

— Star photo

50 hurt, 17 arrested, vehicles damaged Sporadic violence marks hartal

By Staff Correspondent

At least 50 people including one ruling party MP and five policemen were injured in sporadic incidents of violence during the dawn-to-dusk hartal in the city yesterday.

The hartal was called by the BNP-led seven-party alliance to protest the death of university student Shamim Reza Rubel in police custody.

Jatiya Party had also called an eight-hour hartal in the city from 6:00 am on the day to protest the incident.

About 50 motor vehicles including an autorickshaw of The Daily Star and two police vehicles were damaged in different areas of the city during the hartal period.

Seventeen people were arrested on charge of picketing on the day, police sources said.

Large contingents of police and BDR were deployed at various strategic points in the city.

Awami League MP Habibur Rahman Mollah, who was leading an anti-hartal procession at Sayedabad, suffered minor injuries in a clash between the processionists and pro-hartal activists there.

Of the 50 injured people, 13 were admitted to Dhaka Medical College Hospital while the five policemen were admitted to Razarbagh Police Hospital. The MP was given first aid, said family members.

Minister of State for Local Government and Rural Development Mofazzal Hossain Chowdhury Maya was seen leading a procession towards the Jatiya Press Club at around 11:00 am. Jatiya Party activists were picketing there at the same time.

Tension ran high when the two groups faced each other. Some people were seen brandishing their guns that led to a panic. Two persons were injured during the chase and counter-chase between the activists of ruling Awami League and those of JP, Jatiya Party activists were eventually driven away.

Three home-made bombs were hurled at the Dhanmondi residence of BNP MP Salahuddin Quader Chowdhury at about 1:30 pm yesterday.

The rear windshield of a vehicle was damaged in the incident but none was hurt. The bombs were thrown by unknown people, his family members said.

During the hartal hours, motorised vehicles remained off the city roads, but rickshaws and pushcarts were seen plying in some areas. Their number was, however, very small. Movement of inter-district buses to and from Dhaka remained suspended.

Most of the business houses, private offices, shops and educational institutions remained closed.

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'Decision to hand over Huda rests solely with Thai courts'

By Staff Correspondent

The decision to extradite Major (ret) Bazul Huda from Thailand rests solely with the Thai Courts and neither the Thai government nor the embassy can intercede, said a press release issued by the Thai embassy in Dhaka yesterday.

"The Royal Thai embassy wishes to emphatically state that the decision pertaining to the extradition of Major Huda

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New terminal

TU seek support of parties to stop installation

From Staff Correspondent

CHITTAGONG, July 30: Leaders of the coalition of 22 trade union bodies of Chittagong Port launched a campaign to drum up support of the political parties for their movement against the installation of a private container terminal at Patenga.

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Health for all by 2000 a far cry

By Naimul Haq

"Bangladesh will not be able to reach the target of Health For All by the year 2000 (HFA), even by 2005," a top official of the health ministry has said.

"It is quite impossible to reach the target by 2000 with the existing facilities," he told this correspondent.

Bangladesh accepted the declaration of HFA by 2000 made at the International Conference on Primary Healthcare in Alma-Ata in 1978 and made commitment to achieve the goals basing on its primary healthcare strategy.

"A state of anarchy exists in the healthcare system," says a health ministry report. "Lack of equipment and trained technicians, inadequacy of doctors and nurses, lack of well defined guidelines, indiscipline, mismanagement and frequent thefts in government hospitals and lack of accountability are the reasons for this sad state of affairs," the report said. The report, prepared recently, was available to The Daily Star yesterday.

It identified "population boom and increase in diseases and the number of patients" as the reasons for the "crisis" in the healthcare system. "Due to political reasons, several policies formulated in the past were not coordinated and they lacked direction too," the report said.

The existing picture of healthcare system is very disappointing. One doctor is available for 4,572 people and one nurse for 9,530 people. The ratio in the rural areas is much higher, the report added.

The total number of hospital beds available in the country is little over 37,000, this means, one hospital bed is available for 3151 people, the report said.

HFA by 2000 targets protection of public health and environment and treatment of diseases.

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Obuchi PM, Miyazawa new finance minister

TOKYO, July 30: Ruling party candidate Keizo Obuchi was declared Japan's next prime minister after a vote in Parliament today, defeating a challenge from a popular opposition leader and taking the helm as Japan struggles with its deepest recession in decades, reports AP.

Obuchi, 61, a soft-spoken consensus-builder, served as foreign minister under his predecessor, Ryutaro Hashimoto, who was forced to quit after voter outrage over the stumpling economy dealt the ruling party a painful defeat in July 12 upper house elections.

Obuchi grinned in satisfaction during the Parliament vote and bowed when the results were announced. He made the rounds for traditional greetings at the offices of political parties, and was to present himself and his Cabinet before Emperor Akihito today.

The longtime Liberal Democratic Party stalwart takes over a country suffering its worst recession since the end of World War II. Obuchi also faces divisions in his own party and the growing threat of an increasingly popular opposition.

In a decisive victory in the powerful lower house, Obuchi snared 268 votes of the 497 ballots caste in the ruling party-controlled chamber, a comfortable margin above the 249 vote majority. Opposition leader Naoto Kan was the runner-up with 164 votes.

Signaling the political divisions in Japan's government, Obuchi's cabinet includes...

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Crab export banned until policy guideline framed

By Shehab Ahmed

The government has banned the export of crabs amidst concern about the dwindling population of the crustaceans in the coastal districts, particularly in the Sundarbans.

The ban will continue till the framing of a guideline on their export, Forest and Environment Ministry sources said.

It came into effect after issuance of permit to export 100,000 kg of mud crabs, known as scylla serrata, stopped in June, the sources added.

But it triggered protests from crab farmers in Khulna, where they staged demonstrations last week, and exporters petitioned the government to bail out the

seven million dollar export business.

The mud crabs, going abroad live in bamboo baskets with their claws tied in nylon harnesses, found their worth in gourmet dishes in the Far and Near East since the early Eighties.

It gained a firm footing in the non-traditional exports from 1993, with help from Taiwanese importers.

Taiwanese technology helped a switchover to rearing the crabs in ponds after catching them from the wild, which soon found popularity among shrimp farmers in the south western and other coastal districts.

They took it up as a profitable business after European Union slapped restrictions on shrimp exports.

The industry mainly developed on the fringes of the Sundarbans, whose brackish-saline water supports the mud crabs.

But rapid harnessing of the nature's bounty by the poor farmer's, who could earn Tk 100 for a kg, usually seven to eight crabs, saw the decline in their number, environmentalists say.

Alarmed by reports that farmers were indiscriminately

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Urgent Notice Regarding Change in VAT Registration Number

Subject : Regarding effectiveness of new 10-digit VAT registration number instead of old 8-digit VAT registration number from 1st January, 1999.

This is for information of interested valued individual and organisation for registration of Value Added Tax (VAT), Turnover Tax and enlistment of cottage industries that new form "Mushok-6" has been prepared for VAT registration, turnover tax and enlistment in cottage industries for 1998-99 fiscal year. These forms will be required only for new application.

- In the light of new form subscribers will be given new 10-digit VAT registration number instead of old 8-digit VAT registration number.
- Administrative measures have been taken to change the number of those who have the old 8-digit VAT registration number into new 10-digit number automatically from 1st July 1998. Both new and old VAT registration numbers will remain in force simultaneously till 31-12-98. From 1st January 1999, only the new number will be effective and the old number will not remain in force from that date.
- Those who have 8-digit VAT registration numbers are requested to contact respective commissioner/division/circle in order to collect 10-digit new VAT registration from October '98. Contact may be made with the nearby Value Added Tax office or the following address or phone number for further details in this regard.

First Secretary
Phone : 9333954
838120-6, Ex-226

Second Secretary
Phone : 406416, 412212
838120-6, Ex (248, 339)

DFP-16127/26-7-98
C-1717

National Board of Revenue.