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National body soon to make tax collection system 'participatory'

The government will soon form a national committee to make the tax collection system more efficient and participatory. Chairman of National Board of Revenue (NBR) Abdul Mueyed Chowdhury said here yesterday, reports UNB.

The committee will comprise NBR officials and representatives of the business community, he said at a meeting with the Federation of Bangladesh Chambers of Commerce and Industry (FBCCI).

It will deal with all VAT related issues, including the problems faced by the VAT payers and collectors.

The new NBR Chairman later told journalists that the committee will have a working group to be formed with the private sector people.

Earlier, addressing the gathering of the VAT officials and business representatives at the FBCCI conference centre, FBCCI President Yusuf Abdullah

Harun demanded formation of a national committee for a participatory tax system.

He said as a taxpayer "we are victims of many irregularities. We want to get rid of this faulty system."

Praising the government for taking some of the budget related steps discussing with the businessmen, the FBCCI president said, "It was never done before."

He said for sustainable relationship between the government and the businessmen, the tax system should be participatory.

Former NBR Chairman and ERD Secretary Dr Moshir Rahman said that the government was stressing on the participatory approach of the tax collection system.

He said there are some limitations to do something unilaterally. "The VAT administration could easily do many things if they do it discussing with the trade bodies."

Abdul Mueyed Chowdhury proposed for a three-member local level committee comprising a tax commissioner, chamber representative and representative of shop owner.

He also proposed for meeting of those committees in every district. "We can complete these meetings within six months," he added.

He said all the existing problems could be solved through coordination.

NBR member Saiful Islam Khan said that they have taken steps to remove all problems related to VAT collection.

He said the government was thinking to exempt the production level from VAT network and to expand it to retail and wholesale level.

Among others who took part in the discussion was Sarif Afzal Hossain, Razzab Sarif, Abu Motalib, Amir Hossain Khan, Abdur Razzak and M A Kamal.



Flood-hit people in the city's low-lying Golapbagh area collecting drinking water from a tubewell installed on Biswa Road. This picture was taken yesterday. — Star photo

Fresh fighting in Jaffna: 144 killed

COLOMBO, Aug 13: Some 144 people have been killed after fresh fighting erupted between Tamil Tiger guerrillas and troops, in northern Sri Lanka, the defence ministry said today, reports AFP.

Troops backed by artillery mounted an offensive against the separatist Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) near the town of Kilinochchi on Wednesday and killed 110 rebels, a ministry spokesman said.

He said 26 soldiers were killed in another 22 wounded in the limited offensive aimed at destroying rebel positions eight kilometres (five miles) west of Kilinochchi.

The rebels have destroyed the terrorist group and used artillery on two of their reinforcement columns," the spokesman said.

adding that the fighting had died down by today.

He said troops had killed five more Tigers near the rebel-held town of Mankulam while three children were killed when suspected Tiger rebels lobbed grenades at them.

The children were speaking with three soldiers when they came under attack in the Kachchi area of the Jaffna peninsula on Wednesday, the spokesman said.

There was no immediate word from the LTTE about the military claims.

The government has imposed military censorship on both the foreign and local media since June.

Five killed in road accidents

At least five people were killed in road accidents in Jessore and Mymensingh yesterday, reports UNB.

Four people were killed when their car collided with a passenger bus on Jessore-Madura highway yesterday.

The victims were identified as Afzal Hossain, 45, Manager of Bangladesh Oxygen Ltd and his brother Shaiful Islam, 48, Omar Farooque, 45 and car driver Saidur Rahman, 38. Two of them died on the spot and two others at a hospital.

Police and witnesses said the accident took place at Jagla at 10 am when the bus driver lost control over his vehicle and hit a private car coming from opposite direction.

In Mymensingh, motor cycle rider was killed on the spot and another injured seriously as their vehicle skidded off the road early yesterday morning near Chandpur in Fulpur thana on Mymensingh-Sherpur road.

The victim was identified as Ratan, 25.

2 flood-hit city areas Epidemic of skin diseases feared

By Staff Correspondent

A large number of flood affected people in Sabujbagh and Motijheel thanas in the city are exposed to skin diseases because of the contaminated water.

"We are worried about outbreak of skin diseases in an epidemic form as the flood water recedes," said State Minister for Shipping Saber Hossain Chowdhury, while visiting the area yesterday.

A member of Parliament from Sabujbagh and Motijheel constituency, Saber told this correspondent "About half of the eight lakh people in the area have been affected by flood."

Dhaka City Corporation's Zonal Executive Officer Rafiqur Rahman who accompanied the state minister, said, "Twelve doctors are working round the clock in Sabujbagh area, examining patients. The number of doctors has to be increased to handle greater number of patients."

One of the doctors, Dr Ziauddin, said, "So far we have examined about 7000 patients. Most of them had symptoms of skin diseases and about 10 per cent of them had diarrhoea."

He said, "We have adequate supply of medicines to handle the situation but the problem is how can we reach the patients at the right time."

The daily supply of food for the flood victims at many shelters is not meeting the minimum requirements.

"We haven't had any meal since Wednesday night," Sajja

14 killed in Kashmir violence

SRINAGAR, Aug 13: Encounters between separatist guerrillas and security forces and firing by Pakistani army soldiers Thursday left 14 people dead and at least 10 others injured in Jammu-Kashmir state, officials said, reports AP.

The Indian army soldiers were killed in continued exchange of mortar and gun fire with Pakistani soldiers across their disputed cease-fire line, which has raged for two weeks.

Details were not immediately available of the incident at Karna in Kupwara sector, 130 kilometres (80 miles) northeast of state capital Srinagar.

A land mine went off in Khandroo village in Anantnag district when an army convoy was passing through, killing two soldiers, injuring six others and destroying a truck, officials said. The area is 45 kilometres (28 miles) south of Srinagar.

In other encounters, three soldiers, six militants, and a civilian were killed and four soldiers were wounded, officials said.

Hunger strike

From Page 1

BNP leaders continued to meet representatives of different professional groups with a view to involving them with the hunger strike.

The Seven-party Alliance at a meeting on August 9 decided to observe the 9 am-6 pm mass hunger strike at the city's Paltan Maidan to protest deterioration of law and order in the country.

In the meeting, BNP and Jamaat proposed two different days for the hunger strike but BNP chief Begum Khaleda Zia later selected a third date, August 18, for the programme.

Accordingly, BNP announced the Alliance programme the day after. Later, the Jamaat announced its own programme for August 18 — a public rally at the Purana Paltan crossing. However, Jamaat said it would visit the hunger strikers at Paltan Maidan.

Jamaat is unwilling to go for agitation with its partners in the Seven Party Alliance from a common dias right at the moment, party sources said, adding that it prefers a simultaneous movement on issues of common interests. On several occasions in the past, the party also rejected similar proposals of a united movement with BNP and other Alliance members.

Khaleda goes to B'baria today

BNP chairperson Begum Khaleda Zia will visit flood affected areas in Brahmanbaria district today, reports UNB.

She will also distribute relief goods among the flood stricken people, said a party press release.

Chetia

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Earlier, the court had issued an order on the government to collect his fingerprint and photograph for sending those to India. The court issued the order on an application of the prosecution side in this regard.

Anup Chetia is Secretary General of United Liberation Front of Assam. He along with his two associates, Babul Sharma and Laxmi Prasad, were arrested from a city residence on December 21 last year.

After their arrest last year, Chetia and his two associates were facing several cases, including the two for which cross examination of witnesses were held yesterday.

Of the two cases one is for possession of currencies of 16 countries and the other is for holding passports of different countries.

The witnesses could not specify the number of currencies and the names of the countries concerned. Besides, they could not also mention how many passports and of which countries were recovered from their possession.

The three witnesses are Abul Bashar Mia, M Alam, and his son Zulfikar Alam. Both Bashar and Alam are owners of the Adabar residence in the city from where Chetia was picked up.

Earlier, their evidences were recorded at the Additional Chief Metropolitan Magistrate's Court on August 9.

DU halls

From Page 1

quest for more deployment if any law and order situation arises on the campus."

Proctor of the university Dr AKM Nur-Un-Nabi said permanent deployment of police in front of the VC's residence is absolutely justified. "The so-called general students attacked the residence and office of the Vice Chancellor only a few days ago during their agitation against the authorities' decision to raise tuition fees."

About police guard in front of the residential halls, the proctor said that their duties were to prevent hoodlums from entering the dormitories.

Deployment of police permanently at different places on the university campus, including residential halls and residence of the Vice VC and the Pro-VC started in September, 1996.

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Jayalalitha's party decides to hold off for now

NEW DELHI, Aug 13: India's shaky coalition got a breather today when a recalcitrant ally, who was threatening to pull down the government, decided to hold off for now, reports AP.

Jayaram Jayalalitha, of the All Indian Anna Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam, met her supporters who include 30 lawmakers in the federal parliament. The meeting was to decide if the AIADMK, whose support is crucial to the coalition, would withdraw its ministers from the union cabinet or show its displeasure with Prime Minister Atal Behari Vajpayee by withdrawing support for his government.

After the meeting, party spokesman VK Ramamurthy told journalists they had authorised Jayalalitha to "take appropriate action at the appropriate time."

The Press Trust of India quoted him as saying, "The

question of withdrawal of support does not arise now."

The southern leader is angry with Vajpayee's government over its handling of a dispute over sharing of the waters of the Cauvery River which has been in dispute for more than 30 years.

The Cauvery originates in the state of Karnataka and flows into Tamil Nadu, which insists on a certain share of the water. Karnataka says the demand will mean it will have to scale back future irrigation projects. It also rejects a quota, saying a poor monsoon could affect its own needs.

A tribunal in 1991 ordered Karnataka to release 5.8 billion cubic meters of water to downstream Tamil Nadu. Karnataka refused to accept the decision and the dispute went to the Supreme Court, which is still hearing the case.

The court asked the federal government to notify the tri-

bunal's decision by this week. Vajpayee then got all four southern states — two of them also fall in the river basin — to agree to set up an authority to decide how to share the river's waters.

Jayalalitha, who is leader of the opposition in Tamil Nadu, described the decision as a sellout to her political foe in her state. She then announced that she would pull out of the government.

But after today's meeting, it appears that members of her party and her regional allies differ on the issue of toppling the government.

Jayalalitha has been in touch with opposition leaders, including Sonia Gandhi, leader of the main opposition Congress Party, to form another coalition. But media reports suggest that Gandhi is not keen to upset the current arrangement.

AL programmes on Mourning Day

Bangladesh Awami League has drawn up elaborate programmes to mark the National Mourning Day tomorrow, reports UNB.

The programmes include hoisting of black flag and national and party flags at half mast at all party offices including the central office in the morning. Placing of wreaths at the portrait of father of the nation at Bangabandhu Museum, offering of feteah and special manajat at Banani graveyard, special prayers at the mosques and other places of worship, milad mahfil and distribution of food among the destitute.

A central mourning procession will be brought out from Suhrawardy Uddyan at 4 pm. Besides, leaders and workers of the party will start for Tungipara at 6 am today to place wreaths at the major of Bangabandhu and to offer feteah there, said a party press release.

Flood situation

From Page 1

Water Development Board is trying hard to protect the embankment, but gushing water already caused erosion rendering 1,500 families homeless at Dakhalpara of Dimla thana, the district relief and rehabilitation officer told the agency.

In Feni, torrential rains coupled with onrush of waters from across the border submerged different parts of the district again.

The village home of the leader of the Opposition Begum Khaleda Zia and Thana Bhaban in Phulgaj went under four to five feet of water.

Eight unions of Parshuram thana have also been affected by the flood water. The waters entered into the area through different breaches in the embankments of Muhuri and other rivers at Sripur, Aloka, Satkuchia and Srichandrapur.

Another report says: The government has adequate food

stock, relief goods and administrative preparation to face any eventuality caused by flood with greater intensity.

Prime Minister's Press Secretary told newsmen yesterday that Inter-ministerial Disaster Management Coordinated Committee met to undertake a concerted action plan in the flood-hit areas.

He said nearly 1.75 crore people have been hit by flooding in 37 districts. The death toll, caused by flood-related diseases, rose to 280 but "none has died of hunger or half-fed."

The government has so far distributed Tk 60 crore as gratuitous relief for the flood affected districts. Besides, 10,30,500 hundred maunds of rice were distributed.

The Press Secretary said the government machinery, army, NGOs, Awami League and its front wings are engaged in relief operation.

Asked if the government would need any international help, he said, "at the moment, he don't require any foreign relief nor we did make any appeal for it."

BTV to telecast live Aug 15 programme

Bangladesh Television will telecast live the main programme of the national mourning day from Bangabandhu Memorial Museum at Dhanmondi tomorrow, reports UNB.

The live telecast will begin at 5:15 am, said an official hand-out yesterday.

This is for the first time BTV is going to telecast the programme live from the venue, the handout said.

Miseries

From Page 1

their rounds in heavy rains.

And loushredding, cutting power supplies to already struggling pumps, only added to the miseries of the citizens drawing water from WASA.

Mosquitoes, appearing a month early, bred in the brackish stagnant waters, also contributed to the woes of the people.

The shanties already under water in the low-lying areas of Sabujbagh, Motijheel, Ramna, Lalbagh, Dhanmondi, Mohammdpur, Mirpur, Demra and Uttara thanas, recorded further rise in water level.

Rain water flooded parts of central Dhaka including the Outer Circular Road, parts of Motijheel commercial area, Rajarbagh, Moghbazar, Fakirpur, Shantiganagar, Malibagh and Faridabad.

Many of roads in these areas went under knee-deep water, making it difficult for vehicles to move freely and resulting in huge traffic jams.

As the water level rose further, the situation forced a shutdown of the WASA pumps trying to flush out the excess water at Fakirpur.

City Mayor Mohammad Hanif visited some of the worst affected areas in Maniknagar, Fakirpur, Narinda, Shantiganagar, Bangladesh Bank, Notre Dame College and Motijheel.

He asked the WASA engineers to try their best to mitigate the sufferings of the people, using 70 pumps in their disposal.

He urged the engineers to press all the pumps into operation. Only 25 pumps are operative in Maniknagar, a Dhaka City Corporation press release said yesterday.

PAC discusses 37 audit objections

A meeting of the Parliamentary Standing Committee on Public Accounts was held at the Sangsad Bhaban yesterday with its chairman S M Akram Husain in the chair, reports BSS.

The meeting discussed 37 audit objections of different departments under the LGRD and Cooperatives Ministry from fiscal 1971-72 to fiscal 1979-80 and took some specific decisions in this regard.

Members of the committee Col (ret) Shawkat Ali, M K Anwar, Whip, Abdu Shahid, Abul Kalam Azad, Mustafizur Fahman and A H M Mustafa Kamal attended the meeting.

Secretary of the local government division A H M Abdul Hai and officials concerned were also present in the meeting.

Janmastami

From Page 1

Chandra Bhattacharya and Dr Durgadas Bhattacharya will be the special guests.

In separate messages on the occasion, President Shabbiruddin Ahmed and Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina conveyed their good wishes to the members of the Hindu community.

Islamic varsity

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Chhatra Shibir in his bid to restore peace and congenial academic atmosphere on the campus.

Both the organisations reportedly submitted several demands to the VC as he sought their co-operation in restoring peace.

Rubel murder

From Page 1

Officials of the jail administration and the CID yesterday said that no showcase notice has been served on the officials of these two organisations by the home ministry as claimed in some newspaper reports.

When contacted last night, the home minister refused to comment on the matter.

CID had interrogated Akram for six hours before his admission to the hospital on the second day of his three-day remand.

Officials admitted that Akram remained in the prison cell of the PG Hospital that night under CID protection and with the knowledge of the jail authorities. There was no valid permission from the court for his stay at the prison cell, they added.

"It was in the knowledge of the jail authorities that Akram was taken to the prison cell," said a home ministry official, adding that no written permission was given on behalf of the jail authorities for the purpose as there was no court order.

White spot

From Page 1

the virus and that the disease still existed in other areas of the country where shrimp is cultivated. According to official figures, Bangladesh earned more than Tk 1,077 crore from shrimp export during the period July 1996 to May last year.



Next Mir space station crew: Flight Commander Sergei Avdeyev, right, Yuri Baturin, center, former presidential adviser, and Flight Engineer Gennady Padalka, left, wave in front of the Soyuz TM-28 ship before launching on Baikonur cosmodrome Kazakstan yesterday. — AP/UNB photo

HANA: Specific period

From Page 1

whose initiative the team came. Samad Azad said, "The initiative came from those who offer assistance. It is a universal practice."

When his attention was drawn to reports claiming that the prime minister was not aware of the signing of the accord on HANA, Samad Azad replied: "There are all types of media speculation. Did the prime minister say it in a press conference?"

Regarding SOFA, he said, "As of now this is a closed chapter. But do not say we rejected the proposal. I myself said for a long time that it was under consideration. We actually studied the SOFA proposal in detail and later expressed our position to the US. The US Assistant Secretary of State Karl Inderfurth in a communication said they understand our position."

Regarding remarks made by some intellectuals that SOFA would be good for the country, the foreign minister remarked, "We took the decision after all sorts of examinations. Had they made the suggestions earlier, we may have pondered over the matter."

Samad Azad said that relations between Bangladesh and the US were very cordial and would not be affected by not signing SOFA.

UNB adds: The foreign minister told a questioner that the

Prime Ministers of India and Pakistan may have bilateral meetings in Dhaka which is planning to host the second business summit of Bangladesh, India and Pakistan early next year.

When a correspondent drew his attention to BNP Chairman Begum Khaleda Zia's remarks that current flooding is the consequence of the Ganges water sharing treaty with India, Samad Azad said there is no link between this treaty and the flood which is a natural phenomenon.

"Many of her (Begum Zia) statements are not based on facts," he said, adding when the whole world acclaimed the CHT peace accord, Begum Zia came up with ludicrous argument that the CHT would be taken over by India.

He said after the peace accord, neither CHT nor Feni (Begum Zia's home town) became part of India. Rather, Tribal refugees returned to the CHT and Shantibahini men surrendered their arms.

The foreign minister criticised the BNP chairperson for her public statement about the staging of a second 15th August and asked her whether she and her people had staged the first 15th August.

"Zia is responsible for this killing (on August 15) and cleared his way to capture power," he alleged.

Editor: Mahfuz Anam

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