

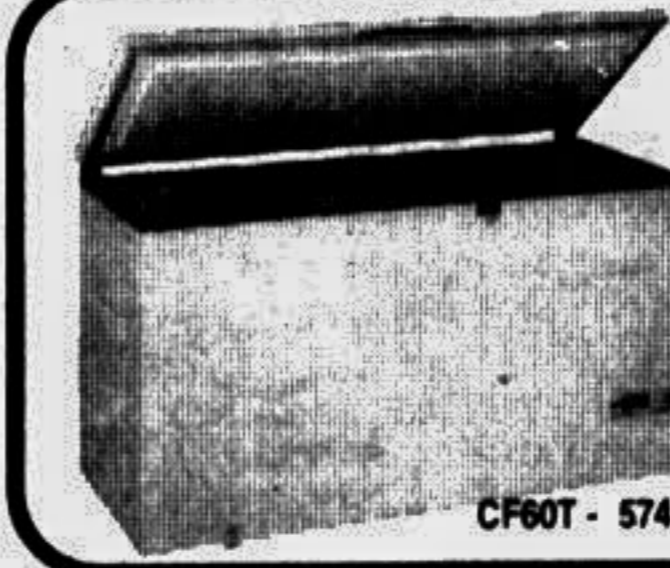


Bangladesh Air Express International Limited

PLEASE CONTACT:
Head Office Tel : 9565114, Logistics Office Tel : 9884851, Fax : (880-2) 9886531, E-mail : dac@aeilogis.com
Chittagong Office Tel : (031) 721085, Fax : (880-31) 710106, Internet : fedcgp@spcnet.com.smtp.
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ART290 - 265 Litres

A well-off farmer's cry for help 'Crops, cattle, saving...I now have nothing'

By Gobinda Bar, back from Ashuganj, Brahmanbaria

With the flood water receding fast, people in Ashuganj under Brahmanbaria sadar thana now face a new challenge repairing their damaged houses, cultivating lands and finding new employment.

A well off farmer, Abdur Rashid (52) of badly affected Lalpur area, is now in distress as his house and standing crops on 10 acres land were damaged.

"I have no saving and nothing else to support my family and go for cultivating lands again after the flood water recedes," he said.

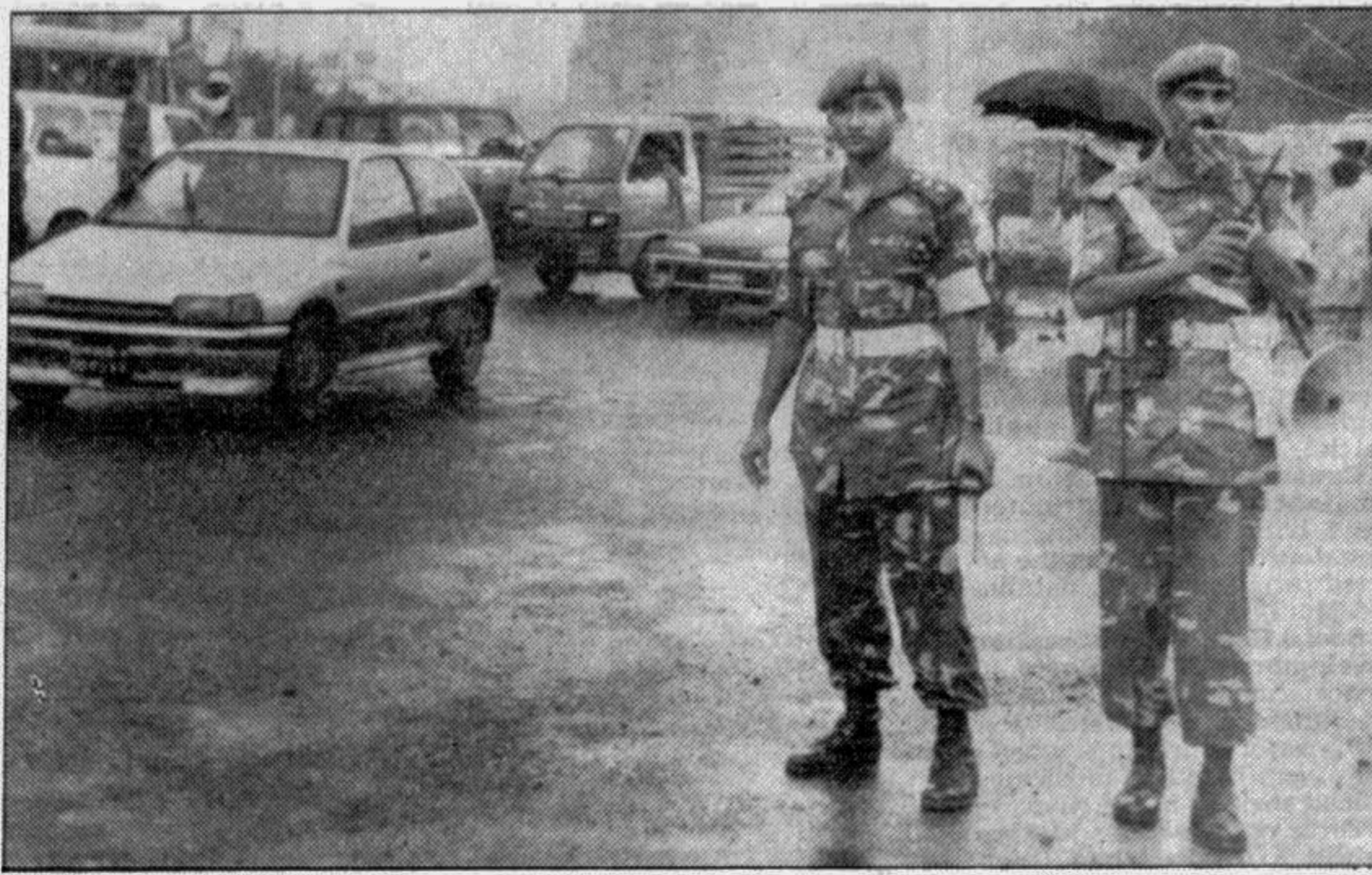
"I don't know how I would buy fertiliser, seeds and cultivate my land as I lost everything including cattle. I had to sell the cattle at an extremely low price only to support my family. I am not getting any relief though I am not less helpless than anyone else now. None wants to understand that the flood has thrown all irrespective of the poor and the rich into distress," Rashid added.

Talking with this correspondent a number of flood affected people at Ashuganj Bazar Thursday alleged that they had hardly got any relief either from the government or the NGOs. Relief seekers at a Royal Danish Embassy and Impact Foundation sponsored relief operation centre at Ashuganj Ferry ghat on the day said none of them had got relief more than three times so far and the total quantity being about 20 kgs per family.

The deluge damaged at least 10,600 houses and almost all the standing crops in Brahmanbaria Sadar thana. Around four lakh people out of the seven lakh in the thana were directly affected by the flood, an official estimate said.

People of different occupations and varying economic conditions including rickshawpullers, rice mill workers and fertiliser traders were exposed to joblessness during the flood. Many of them took to fishing and ferrying people for survival. But they now feel all the more helpless. Rice mill workers at Ashuganj, one of the biggest rice mill centres in the country, are yet to regain their jobs as almost all the 98 rice mills affected by the flood have not resumed operation.

TNO of Brahmanbaria Sadar thana Shaha Kamal told this correspondent Tk 6.26 lakh has already been allocated to support cultivation of Aman paddy and to help farmers buy fertiliser and seeds. Distribution of more loans will begin shortly, he added.



Army personnel were deployed at some important points of the city roads yesterday to ease traffic congestion. — Star photo

Army deployed to ease traffic jam in city

Army personnel have been deployed on the city's New Airport Road to ease huge traffic congestion, reports UNB.

They were posted at various points from the Cantonment third gate to Mohakhali, Gulshan I to Tejgaon-Nabisco, and Banani Amtal to Kakoli, officials said.

Army personnel went into action as congestion became intolerable with the entire vehicular traffic taking to the high-way avoiding the flood-damaged bypass roads.

Regular traffic police were also on duty to control the movement of vehicles, witnesses said.

Earlier, the army authorities sent a letter to the Police Headquarters about their deployment.

Agri loan, relief, VGF No foul play will be tolerated: PM

SHARIATPUR, Sept 21: Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina yesterday said that no foul play in disbursement of agricultural loan, distribution of relief goods and issuance of VGF cards would be tolerated, report agencies.

The prime minister directed the authorities concerned to make the best efforts for successful implementation of the massive post-flood rehabilitation programmes and for redressing the sufferings of the flood-hit people through ensuring necessary succour till the next harvest.

The prime minister was addressing a number of spontaneous gatherings of the flood-affected people at various places of Shariatpur, Gopalganj and Faridpur districts. She went to those places to the latest flood situation and distribute relief.

"We'll have to overcome our losses, re-build the ravaged Bangladesh... all of us will have to join the massive post-flood rehabilitation and reconstruction works," she said addressing a big gathering at the Kutapara BSCIC Maidan here.

Now the only work before the nation is to recoup the losses, she said and urged the people to go for massive agricultural production.

The Prime Minister requested all to utilise every inch of land with the recession of waters.

Hasina said the government has already decided not to re-allocate the agricultural loans up to Tk 15,000 for a year.

Rather, the government will distribute fresh loan to the flood affected farmers, she said.

She said the government is starting the Test Relief, Food for Work and some other programmes to provide work and food to the people.

About the jobless youths, Hasina said she is going to open the 'Employment Bank' today, the youths will get loans for their self-employment from the bank, she added.

She said the government will continue the vulnerable group feeding (VGF) cards for the distressed people until the next harvest.

Slum people attack PDB officials at Ctg: 6 injured

CHITTAGONG, Sept 21: Angry people attacked some employees of the Power Development Board when they went to disconnect unauthorised power lines at a city slum at Patenga today, reports APB.

The incident left six PDB officials, including a magistrate, injured.

Defence Counsel tells court Videotape of Farooq's interview not an acceptable evidence

Defence lawyer for accused Lt Col (dismissed) Syed Farooq Rahman in the Bangabandhu murder case, Khan Saifur Rahman yesterday told the court that the videotape containing an interview of Farooq cannot be accepted as an evidence, reports UNB.

"For the lack of primary evidence, the corroborative evidence has become non-corroborative," the lawyer observed while arguing in the District and Sessions Judge's Court.

The prosecution earlier, exhibited the videotape containing an interview of two principal accused — Lt Col Farooq and Lt Col Rashid — with UK-based Granada Independent Television in 1976, where they admitted their involvement in the August 15, 1975 killing.

Neither John Hopkins, the UK notary who authenticated the tape, nor Anthony Masaranus, the interviewer, were produced as witness in the case by the prosecution to authenticate the interview. Therefore, argued Khan Saifur, it is not acceptable as a document.

Further, the lawyer submitted, neither the voice of his client in the cassette was testified nor any witness was produced to testify the voice of Col Farooq.

Referring to another cassette which was seized by the investigator from a city video shop, the counsel said the owner of the shop during cross-examination admitted he made a copy of a cassette taken to him by a man who asked for it. A copy from another copy cannot be authentic, he maintained.

He said sophisticated technology can super impose voice had photographs. High technology made it possible to show live documentary on Bangabandhu although he is dead.

He said the witness, owner of the video shop, said he has the film Gandhi in his shop which has live documentary on Gandhi and Jimmah. But, at that time there was no audio-video system. Col Farooq was superimposed in the cassette exhibited in the court, contended the defence counsel.

Turning to the charge of 'common intention', the counsel told the court that different witnesses said Col Farooq was seen near Bangabandhu's house in the morning after the last victim Sheikh Russel was killed.

Farooq was not seen in the place of occurrence when the incident took place. So, the charge under section 34 with section 302 of penal code cannot be brought against him.

"Farooq was not physically present when the killing took place," the counsel contended. It was claimed in the FIR that the accused, for their individual interest, conducted the killing in a conspiracy. Individual interest does not fall under section 34 of the penal code, which talks about 'common intention or common interest', he added.

"The charge framed against Farooq under section 34 with 302 is not lawful and not tenable," he argued.

Pointing to an evidence which said a conspiracy was hatched at Khandaker Mustaque's village home where accused Taheruddin Thakur was present, the counsel said PW-34 Prof Korshed Alam said among those present Shah Moazzem was highly critical of the government.

But Shah Moazzem was not prosecuted. Taheruddin Thakur who was said to have spoken out nothing against the government was made an accused.

Khan Saifur will continue his argument when the court will resume at 10 am today.

Murder of young man sparks protest in city

By Staff Correspondent

A bus was torched and a number of vehicles were damaged when processionists went on rampage on the Biswa Road near Shonir Akhra in the city yesterday protesting the killing of Ferdous Ahmed, a resident of Kajla, police said.

Ferdous Ahmed, 24, was stabbed to death at Kajla Sunday night.

The processionists also chanted various slogans demanding punishment of killers of Ferdous.

Fire fighters put out the fire. None was arrested and no case was filed in connection with the incident, Demra police said.

Police so far arrested two persons, Sahid and Akbar, in connection with the killing of Ferdous. The arrested two were produced before the CMM's Court yesterday.

Nasir Uddin, brother of Ferdous, filed a murder case with Demra thana accusing 14 persons, including the arrested two.

Videotape

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and C-Span — said they would air the unedited testimony lasting more than four hours in its entirety.

Congress released the videotape as debate raged over whether Clinton should face impeachment for alleged offenses including lying under oath about his affair with former White House intern Monica Lewinsky.

Reuters adds: The White House said today Clinton's videotaped testimony showed that his conduct "does not rise to the level of an impeachable offense."

Matia clarifies

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Matia's clarification: "My attention has been drawn to the news item bearing the headline 'Relief Quota, Matia influencing dist. admn. alleges Sherpur AL MP'" published in 'The Daily Star' today.

"The allocation of relief materials are made by the govt. not on constituency basis but against affected districts on the basis of the extent of damages and losses. Similarly thana wise relief allocation are also made on the basis of losses.

"The two thanas of the hon'ble MP's constituency are situated in upland and as such less affected by flood. So the relief materials against those two thanas were allocated accordingly. The three thanas belonging to the other two constituencies of the district are badly affected and allocations were made in conformity with the extent of damages and losses.

"The inhabitants of Nalitabari thana were enjoying 3000 VGD cards till 1996. Later in 1997-98 the responsibility of allocation of VGD card was transferred from the Ministry of Relief to the Ministry of Women and Children Affairs. At that time by omission the said Ministry while keeping the district quota same, allocated only 2000 VGD cards to Nalitabari thana instead of previous 3000 and rest 1000 cards were allocated to other thanas. Later the Deputy Commissioner of Sherpur made correspondence with the Ministry of Women and Children Affairs and restored those 1000 VGD cards to Nalitabari.

"So the question of 'Shifting' of VGD cards from his constituency to Nakla and Nalitabari thana does not arise."

FAO seeds

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visory services for production of vegetables, he said.

"The UN has appealed to the international community to provide 36 million dollars for agricultural rehabilitation in flood-hit Bangladesh. The response is prompt and positive," he added.

FAO expert KG Pillai told the press conference that at least 2.08 million hectares of land have been damaged by the flood. Bangladesh's normal food shortage is 2.3 million tons a year, he added.

FAO National Professional Officer Subash Dasgupta and specialists RN Mallick and OP Dutta were also present.

Downpour

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nagar, Saidabad, North Jatrahari, parts of Gulshan and Baridhara, Khilkhet, Joar Sahara, Faridabad, Gendaria, Juarain, Lalbag, Bashabo, Khilgaon, Mugga, and Goran where the flood waters are receding. The heavy showers left many roads in Dhanmandi, Azimpur, Kalabagan, Motijheel and Sangsad Bhaban areas unusable till evening due to water-logging.

The Met office forecast that in the next 24 hours beginning from 6 am today, light to moderate rain or thundershower accompanied by gusty wind may take place in many areas of Dhaka, Chittagong, Barisal and Sylhet divisions. Some areas of Rajshahi and Khulna divisions may also experience rain.

There are chances of 'moderately heavy' rainfall in some places of Dhaka, Rajshahi and Sylhet division, it said.

The day temperature may rise by one to two degree Celsius today.

The maximum temperature recorded in Dhaka yesterday was 32.5 degree Celsius and the minimum was 25.9 degree. The country's highest temperature of 34.6 degree was recorded in Cox's Bazar and the lowest 23.5 in Sylhet.

The sun sets today at 5.55 pm and rises tomorrow at 5.56 am tomorrow.



With the recession of flood waters, some are cleaning the households, some bringing their cattlehead home. The photo was taken from Meradia in the city yesterday. — Star photo

Vajpayee leaves for US today Delhi may put forward fresh proposal on CTBT at UN

From Pallab Bhattacharya

NEW DELHI, Sept 21: Prime Minister Atal Behari Vajpayee leaves for United States tomorrow on a crucial visit during which he may be called upon to use his best diplomatic skill to ward off likely pressure from western countries for conducting the nuclear tests in May this year and to prevent reference to Kashmir by the United Nations.

Vajpayee faces 'tough negotiations' on both the issues in the face of a hard stand adopted by the United States and its allies, diplomatic sources here said.

Used to turn the tide when confronted with a rough ride, Vajpayee's diplomacy would have to be at its best in garnering support of the member-nations of the UN to the security concerns that prompted India to carry out the tests, condemned by the five recognised nuclear power states and the Group of Eight industrialised countries and also by UN Secretary General Kofi Annan.

Seeking to counter the Western pressure, Vajpayee is likely to articulate India's concern over the dual policy on disarmament pursued by the international nuclear regime, especially the hurdles created by industrialised countries on technology transfer, the sources said.

Indian External Affairs Ministry officials do not rule out the possibility of Vajpayee's putting forward a new formulation of the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty (CTBT) issue during his speech at the UN General Assembly.

They also do not dismiss prospects of a resolution at the General Assembly session on the nuclear tests by India and Pakistan but say the tone and tenor of the resolution would depend to a great extent on the outcome of fifth round of talks between Vajpayee's special emissary Jaswant Singh and US Deputy Secretary of State Strobe Talbott, both of whom are now in Washington.

India, under pressure from Western countries to sign CTBT unconditionally, maintains that the treaty is a partial test ban document that allows states possessing nuclear weapons to press ahead with improving their arsenals.

The Vajpayee government argues that it has already complied with the spirit of CTBT by announcing a moratorium on further nuclear tests.

Jaswant Singh, on the eve of his departure for Washington on Sunday, said differences between India and United States on CTBT persisted but efforts would be made to bridge the gap in the next round of discussions.

Young man shot dead in city

By Staff Correspondent

One person was shot dead by an unidentified gang of assassins in Khilgaon area of the city yesterday.

The victim was Abdul Matin, 30, assistant of a contractor and a resident of Tilapara in Khilgaon area, Dhaka Medical College Hospital sources said.

Relatives of the victim suspected that he was killed following a quarrel with a gang of phensidyl traders of the locality.

Police, however, could not confirm it last night.

When contacted the duty officer at Shabubagh thana said they heard about the incident and their men were on the spot.

The killers shot Matin four times and fled away. He fell down on the road still submerged by flood water.

Matin was rushed to the DMCH where he succumbed to his injuries shortly afterwards, hospital sources added.

The body was sent to DMCH morgue for autopsy. No case, however, was filed and none was arrested in this regard till filing of this report last night.

Retirement of Biman director Oqba illegal: HC

By Staff Correspondent

A Division Bench of the High Court yesterday declared the compulsory retirement of Director (Stores and Purchase) of Bangladesh Biman Capt (Rtd) ANM Oqba illegal and directed the government and the Biman authorities to reinstate him in his post with full benefits.

Captain Oqba, who was retired by the government on April 2 this year under the Public Servants' Retirement Act, 1974, filed a writ petition with the HC challenging the government action.

675 leaks

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gas was leaking from the joint as well from the extended pipe," the official said, blaming the owner for not take any precautionary measures.

"GI pipe was for the extended portion instead of the MS pipe," he said. "The extended portion went through his wall where leakage might have caused gas to accumulate beneath the floor of that house. After recession of the flood water gas might have come in touch with atmospheric pressure and created the explosion."

Asked whether the family of the victim would receive any compensation, the official said that the incident of explosion was now under investigation by Petrobangla, of which Titus is a subsidiary.

A three-member inquiry team was formed by Petrobangla yesterday to probe into the incident with Moimul Ahsan, Managing Director of the Gas Transmission Company Ltd as its chief. The team has been asked to submit its report 'within the next 24 hours', sources said.

An FIR was lodged with Demra police thana by the family of the victim in connection with the incident. Titus filed another FIR.

"Sudden explosion of the gas pipeline, which passed underneath the building, caused its collapse," according to the FIR lodged by one Nurul Islam, neighbour and nephew of A Rab, the tenant of the collapse house.

A Rab lost his family members in the incident. None has been arrested in connection, police said.

25pc of EU aid

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the most successful programmes and other countries have a lot to emulate from the Bangladesh example," Albuquerque said.

The EU official said 480 million ECUs were put in for on-going community programmes in Bangladesh last year, of which 25 per cent was funneled through the NGOs. Bangladesh is the second largest recipient of EU assistance in Asia after India.

The NGOs, she said, could help reach essential inputs for agricultural development like seeds, tools and equipments for rural development.

"The non-government organisations can and do lot of activities that help build the rural and social infrastructure. They generally concentrate on improving the conditions of the poorer section of the population and their efforts are helping the government reduce poverty and unemployment," the head of the EU Unit looking after Bangladesh said.

"We intend to work with the smaller NGOs in the future to reach the poorest of the poor. Our intention is to expand micro-credit programmes in Bangladesh," Albuquerque said.

On the question of attracting foreign direct investment (FDI), the EU official said it was important for both the government and the NGOs to work in tandem for institution and infrastructure building. Necessary legislation and creation of a more conducive environment are required for Bangladesh to attract investment.

The EU has, meanwhile, directed that its food stocks in Bangladesh under different bodies including WFP be released for undertaking extensive 'Food for Work' activities. It has already contributed one million ECUs as urgent flood assistance to Bangladesh.

Meanwhile, Bangladesh Embassy officials in Brussels said the EU is considering providing an additional amount of 34 million US dollars as food assistance for the flood victims.

Old man beaten to death in Chittagong

From Staff Correspondent

CHITTAGONG, Sept 21: An old man was beaten to death at Fatehpur village under Hathazari thana here this morning, police said.

Abdul Motalab, 65, a mentally imbalanced man, was mercilessly beaten to death allegedly by his neighbour, Abul Kasem and his two brothers at 10:30 am today, police said.

Earlier, Motalab had a clash with Kasem when the latter teased him, police said. They believed the latest attack on Motalab might have been a sequel to the previous enmity.

In this connection a case was filed with Hathazari thana. But none was arrested, police said.

Medicines, goods worth Tk 20 lakh recovered from ZIA

By Staff Correspondent

Stowed away medicines and goods worth Taka 20 lakh were recovered from the main terminal building of Zia International Airport yesterday morning. The items were detected by Civil Aviation security aided by an intelligence agency, airport sources said.

The security officials recovered nine sealed bags from a disused lift located in the southern side of the airport terminal.

The items included medicines from Pakistan, computer hardware and other accessories.

The items were handed over to the Customs authorities.

Employment

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million and the rest Tk 250 million would be provided by local and foreign financial institutions, officials said.

Although the main target of the bank is to help unemployed, educated youth, the bank will simultaneously extend loans through those who do not have formal education but have skill to make a project viable.

Loan up to Tk 50,000 will not require any guarantor. But all the borrowers will have to deposit their academic certificates with the bank, he said.

Given the mosquito eradication 'third priority', Hanif said that the DCC had taken up a crash programme, involving 10 task forces to operate in the 10 zones of the corporation. The task forces will remove water hyacinth and clean the canals and deep drains to destroy larvae and then go for eradicating mosquito with fogging machines. A total of 500 hand machines and 40 wheel machines will be used for this.

About absence of street lights, he said the underground switch boards went under water in the flood-hit areas while at places power lines were snapped to avoid accidents.

Hanif also described the DCC drive for relief and shelters for the flood victims.