



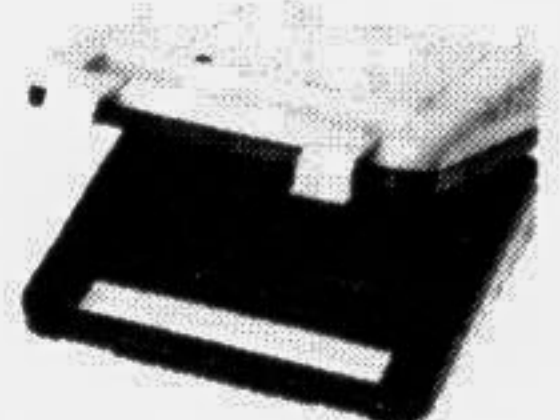
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Agreed minutes today Bangladesh, India agree to curb cross-border crimes

Bangladesh and India will sign an agreed minutes of their talks today covering border problems, particularly the issue of Indian attempts to push-in their nationals into Bangladesh, report agencies.

Home Secretary Shafiqur Rahman and his Indian counterpart B P Singh will initial the minutes on behalf of their respective governments.

The two home secretaries held talks on all cross-border crimes and worked out a plan of action to curb them.

The two officials, who had no formal talks yesterday will meet again this morning.

Earlier the Indian Home Secretary called on Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina, Foreign Minister Abdus Samad Azad and Home Minister Rafiqul Islam.

The Indian Home Secretary also met the Foreign Secretary Mustafizur Rahman.

Briefing newsmen about on his discussion with the visiting Indian Secretary, Mustafizur Rahman said that both sides

had agreed to solve all the existing border problems through mutual discussion.

"We have no major issues between our two countries," the FS said. They had also discussed the push-in issue and agreed to resolve the matter.

Mustafiz made it clear that there was no Bangladeshi illegally staying in India.

In this context, he said that Dhaka was ready to take back any Bangladeshi from India after genuine verification of their identity through our missions in that country.

Talking to the newsmen after his meeting with Foreign Minister Abdus Samad Azad, the Indian Home Secretary said, "I will not allow any immigrants from Chittagong Hill Tracts to operate from India."

He rated the CHT peace accord as one of the finest agreements and held out India's all necessary cooperation in its implementation.

Singh, who earlier had held official talks with his Bangladeshi counterpart, said

Dhaka also assured that any insurgents from India's eastern states of Assam, Tripura, Manipur and Nagaland would be severely dealt with if they try to work from Bangladeshi territory.

Asked about the issue of push-in of Bengali-speaking Indian nationals, he said: "We agreed on a system in 1991. Under that, if a court in India or Bangladesh found a person an illegal immigrant, he would be sent back to his country through concerned authorities."

Singh, however, said that even after a court verdict, "We'll have to verify it so that no authentic person is punished."

Asked if the Indian authorities have prepared any list of so-called illegal immigrants, the Indian Home Secretary replied in the negative, but said: it's a continuous process.

When his attention was drawn to Bangladesh's position that there is no illegal Bangladeshi national in India, Singh briefly said: "It's a genuine problem."

Walkout over gas price hike

BNP yesterday staged walk-out in Parliament as the Deputy Speaker disallowed discussion on a minister's statement about the gas price hike, reports UNB.

More than a dozen BNP lawmakers staged walkout in protest following M K Anwar and Mashur Rahman at 8.10 pm. They, however, returned to the House within minutes.

State Minister for Energy and Mineral Resources Prof Rafiqul Islam in a statement under Rule 300 explained the factors that led the government to increase gas price by 15 per cent from next month.

"Under the rules, there can be no debate on the minister's statement," the Deputy Speaker reminded M K Anwar and his colleagues who were on their feet protesting for the floor.

In his statement Prof Rafiqul said 15 per cent increase in gas price will come into effect from December 1 and the price would be increased further in phases to bring it to the international level.

He said the price of natural gas in Bangladesh is the lowest compared to international price and it is also cheaper compared with other fuels.

Justifying the increase, the State Minister said the step was taken in accordance with a condition set by donor agencies in 1994, when the price of gas was last increased by 10 per cent.

He said if the agreement signed by the previous BNP government with the donor agencies is not fulfilled, the ADB and the World Bank will not provide funds for the gas development projects.

He further pleaded that the local MP, in addition to giving advice, should also act in making budget and development plan of the Upazila Parishad.

The BNP members demanded that the elected council must be free from government control and the powers to dissolve it.

In his note of dissent, Dr Farazi said chairmen of pourasava and union parishad cannot be ex-officio members of the Upazila Parishad.

Farazi also agreed with the BNP members on holding election to the redesigned UZ Parishad under a caretaker government for a free and fair election.

Bill placed

Parliament elections under a caretaker government to ensure fair voting.

The BNP members proposed that rules regarding the election of chairmen and members of the Parishad be framed by the Election Commission, instead of the government.

They further pleaded that the local MP, in addition to giving advice, should also act in making budget and development plan of the Upazila Parishad.

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Lack of quorum

Awami League were present in the House at that time.

At 4.45 pm, Gazi Mohammad Shahjahan and Shah Mohammad Abul Hossain were the first two BNP lawmakers who entered the House. They were the first two whose starred questions were selected for the day.

Tasmina Hossain was the first JP member to enter the House almost the same time.

With the bell ringing across the parliament building, Abdus Shahid, a Treasury Bench Whip, was seen driving the AL members into the House.

At 5 pm, an hour behind the scheduled time, 51 MPs were at the House. The partywise breakup was: AL-39, BNP-six (including Dr. Alauddin, State Minister for Water Resources, sitting in the Treasury Bench), JP-five, IOJ-one and none from the Jamaat and JSD.

The number rose to 73 when the sitting started at 5.04 pm.

The House was adjourned for the Magreb prayers only 11 minutes after the day's business began. But the quorum problem surfaced once again. The 20-minute Magreb break lasted for 50 minutes due to lack of quorum.

Taslina granted bail

interview with the Statesman newspaper of Calcutta, India. She denied all the charges against her.

Eminent lawyer Dr. Kamal Hossain rose to seek her bail at 11-20 a.m. After a brief hearing, the court granted her bail at 11-40 a.m. Deputy attorney general K.M. Faruq opposed it.

Nasreen is facing the charges after a Keraniganj resident, Zaimal Abedin Babul, filed the case in 1994. Babul accused her of hurting his religious feelings through her writings in her Selected Columns.

But the case was revived following a petition by Babul after press reports that she had returned home with her mother, terminally ill with cancer, from New York.

Nasreen, wearing a white kamiz and salwar dotted with violet boutique prints, stood behind Dr Hossain during the hearing, her face still covered.

A lanky securityman stood away from her on the window side covering her when three men in robes and beards appeared to have a glimpse of her.

A curious crowd apparently made her tense and nervous. As soon as the hearing was over, she strode out with her brothers holding her.

She moved in a hurry across the long corridor on the first floor of the court building towards a small staircase while her escorts scuffled with a Daily Star photographer and this correspondent, trying to prevent her being photographed.

Shazneen

Latifur Rahman told the court that on April 23 night he was attending a party on the first floor of his Gulshan residence. The guests had been invited earlier through invitation cards.

At around 10 pm, he heard a maid shouting from downstairs: "Come here and see what has happened to Chhoto Baby."

Latifur Rahman then rushed to Shazneen's room and found her lying on the floor in a pool of blood with several stab wounds in her body. "Watching this, I became absolutely dumbfounded," the father told the court.

In a state of shock, Latifur Rahman said, he checked Shazneen's pulse and found her dead. He then inquired where the other inmates of the house were at that time.

A cook told Latifur Rahman that everyone was inside the house except Shahid. Besides, the cook said that one kitchen knife from a set of four was missing.

Latifur Rahman said he became sure at this stage that Shahid had killed his daughter. Considering the physique of Shahid and Shazneen, the informant also suspected that Shahid alone could not have killed her, and that others must have been involved.

As the deposition of Latifur Rahman was not completed, he will continue tomorrow and then the defence lawyers will cross examine the informant.

CID submitted the charge sheet of the Shazneen murder case in the Chief Metropolitan Magistrate's Court on October 17 accusing the seven persons of the rape and killing of the daughter of the chairman of Transcom Group.

The case was lodged by the victim's father with Gulshan thana accusing domestic help Shahid of the murder and suspecting the involvement of some others on April 24.

Drugs

the purchase committee, I am not aware of it."

When this correspondent wanted to see some samples of drugs stored in the CMSD, the deputy director refused saying, "It will require permission of the director."

When the director was contacted again through his secretary to allow this correspondent to see the drug samples, he again refused.

US to provide another 3 lakh MT of wheat

The US government will provide an additional 300,000 metric tonnes of wheat to Bangladesh, reports BSS.

The allocation worth US dollar 48 million will bring the total pledge of the US government to 700,000 metric tonnes of foodgrains as flood relief to Bangladesh, a USIS press release said in Dhaka yesterday.

With this announcement, the US flood assistance to Bangladesh stands at Tk 573 crore 53 lakh equivalent to US dollar 120,782,500.

Interns on strike at Osmany Medical College Hospital

From Staff Correspondent SYLHET, Nov 22: The interns in the Sylhet M A G Osmany Medical College Hospital have begun a three-day strike from this morning protesting 'assault' on a hospital employee by a relative of a patient.

Hospital sources said M A Salam, Assistant Registrar in the Surgery Unit-3, was assaulted by a patient's relative over admission of a patient at about 10.00 in the morning today. The relative, a UP chairman of Chhatra thana, was later handed over to police by the hospital authorities. An FIR has also been lodged with the Kotwali thana.

Khas land

UNB adds: Some 800 acres of non-cultivable khas lands are there at Savar and 1200 acres in Gazipur.

Divisional commissioners and deputy commissioners have also been asked to report by December 15 the areas of government land saleable through tender.

Utara thana has the highest 184 acres of unused government land, followed by 95 acres in Tejgaon, 50 in Gulshan, 28 in Demra, 26 in Mohammadpur, 25 in Sutrapur, 14 in Mirpur, 12 in Ramna and 10 acres in Lalbagh thanas.

Motijheel, Dhanmondi and Kotwali thanas also have some areas of costly state land.

Divisional Commissioner of Dhaka Naizam Uddin told the press conference although many of the government lands in Dhaka had gone out of possession through forgery of documents, the government still has the ownership as it has all genuine records and documents in hand.

He mentioned some housing projects grabbed khas lands, and cited that one such project occupied 80-82 acres and a case regarding this was still lying with the law court.

And the Opposition members were all smiles.

Rangamati bill passed amid Opposition walkout

By Staff Correspondent

A bill redefining a voter from among the "non-tribal" people of Rangamati district was passed in parliament by voice vote yesterday, with the BNP lawmakers staging walk-out "in protest against the legislation."

With the passage of the bill - "Rangamati Hill District Local Government Council (amendment) Bill, 1998" - the non-tribals who have been owning lands "and" living in the district permanently will be eligible for voting rights in local government elections.

Before the amendment, the non-tribals who have either been living in the area permanently "or" owning a piece land were eligible for voting rights.

The amendment changed "or" with "and".

The BNP members found the legislation ultra vires the Constitution.

They argued that the law had clearly violated the constitutional provision that grants voting rights to all citizens, irrespective of whether s/he owns a piece of land or not. They said that what was important in this

regard is to see whether the citizen in question lives in a particular area permanently or not.

"The law is going to deprive the Bangalis living in the hill district of their constitutional right to vote. They are being downgraded to second class citizens in the areas," said M K Anwar of BNP.

Termining the bill violative of the fundamental rights of the citizens, BNP legislator Abdul Mannan said: "What would happen to the family members of a Bangali who owns a land and has permanently been living in the area? If the amendment is adopted by the House, the head of the family would enjoy the voting right, but his family members wouldn't."

Three out of four Jatiya Party members who spoke on the occasion were also seen opposing the amendment vigorously.

"With the passage of the amendment bill, a large number of the people living in the area will be deprived of their fundamental right to vote," said Golam Mohammad Kader of the

JP.

Rustam Ali Farazi and M K Alam Chudhury, two other JP legislators, echoed Kader, while Zulfikar Ali Bhutto of the party found "no problem" with the amendment.

Kalparanjjan Chakma, Minister for Chittagong Hill Tracts Affairs, told the House: "The amendment was necessary to make the legislation consistent with the CHT Treaty as well as two other laws relating to the local bodies of Khagrachhari and Bandarban hill districts."

Before the Chair put the proposed amendment to vote, Leader of the Opposition in Parliament Prof. A Q M Badruddoza Chowdhury led the BNP walkout, saying: "The entire bill is ultra vires the constitution and subversive of the state. We strongly protest the law."

Earlier, some 18 MPs belonging to the BNP and JP opposed various contents of the proposed legislation.

When the bill was passed by voice vote, no JP lawmaker except Bhutto was present in the House.

Power purchase Indian team to visit Pakistan tomorrow

From Pallab Bhattacharya NEW DELHI, Nov 22: India and Pakistan begin a serious exercise next week for cooperation in the power sector.

A seven-member Indian team travels to Pakistan Tuesday to work out technical details of India's import of electricity from that country which has an estimated surplus power of about 4,000 MW.

India's Power Minister P R Kumaramangalam said Pakistan wants to sell its surplus power to India and the Indian team going to Islamabad would look into all issues, including the quantum and cost of power to be supplied to India.

He said the surplus power from Pakistan could be utilised to meet the shortage in northern Indian states of Punjab, Rajasthan and Haryana.

The Chairman and Managing Director of India's power

grid R P Singh, who is a member of the team scheduled to visit Pakistan, said the team would examine if the surplus power from Pakistan could be used as a "long term" source or only as a short-term measure.

This was necessary to find out the type of infrastructure to be built to draw electricity from Pakistan, he said.

Another team from India would visit Pakistan from December 1-4 to hold talks for finalising an accord as also commercial and operational details for a direct bus service between Delhi and Lahore.

The decision to launch bus service between Delhi and Lahore was taken by Indian Prime Minister Atal Behari Vajpayee and his Pakistani counterpart Nawaz Sharif when they met in New York in September.

Pakistan's willingness to sell surplus power to India, which came up for discussion between officials of the two countries during a composite dialogue on Indo-Pak economic cooperation in New Delhi recently, is being soon here as a major stride towards promoting trade ties between the two neighbours.

Signal drama

From Page 1 signal was lowered to 6 from 9."

A housewife said, "We got frightened hearing signal number 9 over BT, but later felt relieved."

However, a Met Office sources here said the signal was immediately lowered from 9 to 6 when the hurricane packing a wind speed of 120 km to 165 km per hour weakened into a cyclonic storm with a speed of 100 km to 115 km due to heavy rainfall at the storm centre in the sea.

Signal 9 was announced on the basis of observation at 10 am and it was lowered to 6 as per the observation at noon and there was no error in observation, they said

BNPPP meets today

A meeting of the Bangladesh Nationalist Party Parliamentary Party (BNPPP) will be held today at 3 pm at the Jatiya Sangsad Bhaban, reports BSS.

The meeting will be chaired by Leader of the Opposition in Parliament Begum Khaleda Zia, said a press release.

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