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Visiting EU team says

Tremendous scope for development in CHT

KHAGRACHHARI, Feb 8: A high-level delegation of the European countries gave a positive indication of providing assistance for overall development of the hill districts, reports UNB.

Exchanging views with local journalists after visiting the district today, the delegation members said the prime task is to develop the socio-economic status, establish small industries and family-income enhancement projects in the region.

LDF threatens to boycott municipal polls

By Staff Correspondent

Leaders of Left Democratic Front (LDF) yesterday threatened that the alliance would be compelled to boycott the ensuing municipal elections if a 'congenial atmosphere was not created,' says a press release.

Urging the government and the Election Commission to take effective measures for creating a healthy environment for holding a fruitful election, LDF leaders also expressed concern over the volatile political situation, the release said.

The leaders met the Chief Election Commissioner (CEC) Mohammad Abu Hena at his office yesterday.

Led by its coordinator AFM Mahbubul Haque, the LDF team met the CEC at the latter's invitation.

The leaders said that the municipal election was 'uncertain due to the prevailing situation in the country.'

Cairn winding up

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oil companies started falling fast. Cairn's multinational partner in Bangladesh Shell Oil then struck a deal to bail the ailing British company out of the situation.

Under this deal, Shell Oil took over half of Cairn's concerns in Bangladesh. Cairn was also repaid costs relating to the Sangu field. Shell had also agreed to bear 100 million dollars of Cairn's exploration costs and another 100 million dollars in development costs.

When Cairn-Shell's 50-50 partnership deal was made public by newspapers last year, Petrobangla charged Cairn with breach of contract. It cannot transfer the PSC to another company without the government's approval. In fact, the PSC does not have any such provision, said a source.

Afterwards Cairn tried to escape the situation by finding a legal loophole, obtained a partnership permission from the Ministry of Industries and sought Petrobangla's approval of the deal. Petrobangla forwarded its request to the Energy Ministry and the Law Ministry.

PM-Larma talks

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ten, to implement the treaty. The government had denied his allegations.

He had also accused a 'section within the government' of impeding the progress of the treaty and breaching the commitments to accept his nominees on the 22-member Regional Council for CHT. The government had announced an interim RC headed by Shantu Larma in October, without his three nominees from the Ban-gali quota of six.

The implementation of the treaty rests on the RC, assigned to play a pivotal role in overseeing the CHT's development, local government and law and order.

Officials declined to comment on the outcome of the meeting other than saying that it took place in a 'very cordial atmosphere' and was 'very useful' for the prime minister to know the mind of Shantu Larma.

The tribal leader described the meeting to waiting reporters as 'cordial' after he returned to the Chittagong Port Authority's rest house at Dhammandi from the PMO's office at about 5.20 pm.

He declined to comment further on the meeting, which was seen as crucial to breaking the impasse on full implementation of the peace treaty following his refusal to take charge as chairman of the interim RC.

Shantu Larma and his aides who arrived in the city on Saturday night from Khagrachhari are likely to stay a few more days in view of the hartal called by the opposition parties, the sources said.

There is possibility of follow up meetings with officials in

The delegation is visiting Rangamati and Khagrachhari districts to assess the latest situation of the Chittagong Hill Tracts following the peace accord signed in December, 1997. Led by German Ambassador in Dhaka Uwe Schramm, the delegation comprises British High Commissioner David C Walker, French Ambassador Rene Veyret, Dutch Ambassador Dick CB Heize, Swedish Ambassador Anders Johnson, Charge d'Affaires of Denmark Finn Thilsted, Political Attaché at the Italian Embassy Rosana Maseri and E Volker of the EC delegation in Dhaka.

Additional Divisional Commissioner of Chittagong Sharif Tayebur Rahman was with the delegation.

The European delegation talked with Khagrachhari Hill District Council Chairman Jatinendra Lal Tripura and government officials at the local circuit house.

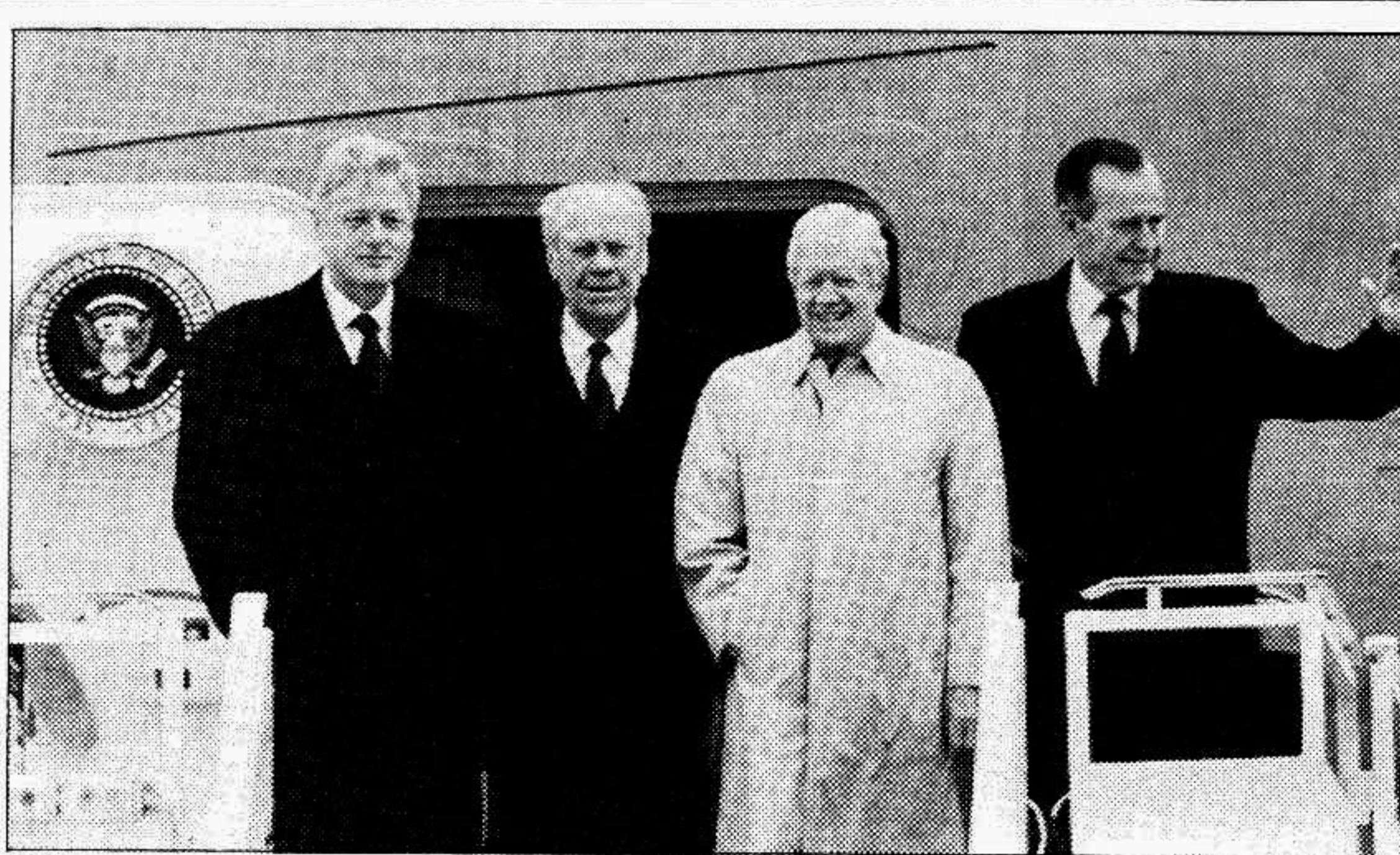
Later, they met with Rupayan Dewan, a top leader of the Parbatya Chittagong Jana Sanghati Samity.

The delegation also held talks with President of Junma Refugees Welfare Association Upendra Lal Chakma at Dighinala after visiting the villages where the repatriated refugees were rehabilitated.

The delegation said they were identifying and evaluating the areas of the districts which need to be developed.

They said a tremendous scope for development has been created in the hill districts following the CHT accord.

Replying to a query, the delegation members expressed their satisfaction seeing the normalcy returned to the hill districts.



US President Bill Clinton (L) and three of his predecessors, Gerald Ford (2nd L), Jimmy Carter (2nd R) and George Bush (R) arrive in Amman yesterday to attend the state funeral of King Hussein.

— AFP photo

King Hussein

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central to the US led effort to end the Arab-Israeli conflict.

"You can't replace him but you can build on the foundations he laid," British Prime Minister Tony Blair told Reuters. "One of the legacies of King Hussein is to leave for Jordan and for his successor that sense of goodwill."

Clinton called King Hussein, his closest Middle East ally, a partner and friend. "When peace finally comes to the Middle East, his name will be inscribed upon it," Clinton said in a statement before leaving Washington on Sunday.

Abdullah, a Major-General with strong backing by an army still key to Jordan's stability, was named heir in place of his long-serving uncle Hassan two weeks ago and is the first of a new generation of leaders in a region of ageing rulers.

Untested politically, he inherits a kingdom sandwiched strategically between Israel and Iraq, a troubled economy and an undercurrent of dissent over peace with Israel among his subjects, many of whom are Palestinians.

Pledges of economic aid and of support for the new monarch, who has vowed to follow Hussein's path of peace, have accompanied the eulogies for his late father.

Syria's president Assad, who had refused to see Hussein in recent years, embraced Assad and kissed him on both cheeks following King Hussein's burial.

The world, too, was coming to terms with a loss of a man

Strike protesting price hike shuts Calcutta

CALCUTTA, Feb 8: Normally bustling Calcutta was closed today by a general strike over commodity prices called by powerful leftist unions, reports AP.

Flights in and out of Calcutta's international airport were closed by the strike, which also affected other parts of West Bengal state. With commuter trains and buses also affected, few businesses and schools could operate because workers, teachers and students were stuck at home.

School children took advantage of the 24-hour strike to play cricket in the streets and in local parks, celebrating a victory of India's national cricket team over arch-rival Pakistan the day before.

The police ministry said no violence was reported during the strike, and added that work was uninterrupted in the tea-growing areas in the state's north.

Calcutta is India's second largest city and a center for tea and other industries.

Unions allied with Communist Party that governs West Bengal and with Congress party called the strike to protest price increases ordered by the federal

EU delegation heard views of the PCJSS leaders on different development programmes for the CHT.

Upendra Lal Chakma, leader of the refugee welfare association, handed a memorandum to the delegation, where he sought more financial assistance for the returnees, including continuation of ration for one more year. He also sought support for the displaced persons who are yet to return to their homes and assistance for Bengalis who want to go out of CHT.

Abdul Awal, leader of the Guchchhigram Bengali Krishak Sramik Kalyan Parishad also met the delegation and discussed various problems. He sought the delegation's assistance in continuation of ration for the 'cluster village' inhabitants and their rehabilitation in their respective areas.

The delegation's views were not immediately available. It returned to Chittagong yesterday on way to Dhaka. Besides the German ambassador, the delegation included representatives from the UK, France, Italy, Denmark and Sweden.

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their 'confrontational attitudes' leading to hartals, that mainly affect businesses.

The Federation of Bangladesh Chambers of Commerce and Industry (FBCCI) summoned the meeting, attended by leading chamber and association leaders and representatives from some district chambers. FBCCI president Abdul Awal Mintoo chaired the meeting.

Former MCCB president Lila Rahman Kabir, who attended meeting, told the news agency over telephone that the 'business community agreed across the board to go for a visible action' to keep their business unhindered and uninterrupted.

The action programme is likely to be announced before the opposition's possible series of hartals later this month, she said.

Bangladesh Chamber of Industries (BCI) president Sharif Alizal Hossain told UNB after the meeting that they had a detailed discussion over the economy and trade, and talked about ways on how to stand against the hartals. 'FBCCI president has been given full authority to finalise our action

saying.

Many business leaders also

spoke against the two-day weekend and urged making it one-day. In this month that has 28 days, they will have only 14 workdays, excluding hartals and weekends. Besides, four Sundays will be excluded as these are international holida

days.

How much more cost they

(opposition) do want the country to pay for their political confrontations?" the leaders asked.

move into deliberations, probably behind closed doors, with the vote on the two articles expected Thursday or Friday.

Even with acquittal on both charges, the Senate would still be left with the question of whether to censure Clinton for his affair with the former White House intern and his attempts to conceal it.

The impeachment drama is likely to be over by week's end.

White House lawyers also planned to wrap up their case today by reiterating that while Clinton misled the nation in denying his affair with Monica Lewinsky, he committed no crime warranting expulsion.

With 67 votes, a two-thirds majority of senators, needed for conviction, it was a foregone conclusion the president's side would prevail.

One of the few elements of suspense left was whether those supporting conviction would even reach the symbolic level of a simple majority.

Democrats interview on the Sunday talk shows predicted that both counts would fail to win a majority. Republicans said the perjury charge might fall short but that a majority would vote to convict on the obstruction charge.

After a day of final arguments today the 100 senators

because we've proven perjury and obstruction of justice, that he did engage in all of this in order to defeat the claims of Paula Jones in her civil suit" charging Clinton with sexual harassment.

But the House managers were all but acknowledging defeat.

"I think the legacy of this trial was the fact that the Democrats took the hard line of ignoring the criminal activity of one of their own rather than viewing the evidence objectively," another prosecutor, Rep. Jim Sensenbrenner of Wisconsin, said on "Fox News Sunday."

One conservative Republican senator, Richard Shelby of Alabama, said on ABC's "This Week" that he had concerns that both counts against Clinton were "porous in nature," and guessed that 10 to 15 of the 55 Republican senators might vote to acquit on the perjury charge.

All 45 Democrats could vote to acquit on both counts. Possibly the only two doubtfuls are Sen. Russ Feingold of Wisconsin, the only Democrat to vote against an earlier Democratic motion to dismiss the charges, and Sen. Robert Byrd of West Virginia, a staunch defender of the Constitution and Senate traditions.

AL mass contact

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Group 3: Abdul Mannan, A Momin, Shamsur Rahman Khan, Abul Hasan Chowdhury, Matiur Rahman Talukder, Dr. Amanullah, Fazlur Rahman Khan, Ahmed Hossain and Shafiq Ahmed have been asked to visit Sherpur, Jamalpur, Mymensingh, Netrokona, Kishoreganj and Tangail.

Group 4: Kamruzzaman, M Yunus Ali, Mirza Sultan Raza, Rashed Mosharraf, Mainuddin Hasan Chowdhury and Mahbubul Haq Shakil will visit Panchagarah, Thakurgaon, Dinajpur and Nilphamari.

Group 5: Syeda Sajeda Chowdhury, Mukul Bose, Imam Uddin, Sheikh Fazlul Karim, Nurul Majid Humayun, Mainuddin Majnum Chunnu, Sharif Rumi and AFM Bauddin Nasim will visit Rajbari, Faridpur, Madaripur and Gopalganj.

Group 6: Amin Hossain Amu, Shudonghu Shekhar Halder, Abul Hasnat Abdullah, KM Jalal, Ahsanul Kabir Nanak and Shahidul Alam have been asked to conduct mass contact in Bholia, Pirojpur, Patuakhali, Barisal and Jhalakata.

Group 7: Abdur Razzak, Abdur Rahim, Ashikur Rahman, Siddiq Hossain, Kamruzzaman Ansari and Enamul Haq Shamim will visit Rangpur, Kurigram, Lalmonirhat and Magura.

Group 8: Tofail Ahmed, Dr Mostafa Jalal Mohiuddin, Munnujan Sufian, SM Kamal Hossain and Abdul Majid will visit Khulna (district), Satkhira, Bagerhat, Jessor and Magura.

Group 9: Dr Mohammad Selim, Abu Sayeed, Fulbari, Manjurul Haq Layla and Ishaq Ali Khan Panna will carry out mass contact in Sirajganj, Pabna and Natore.

Group 10: Abdul Jalil, Abdul Mannan, Mahmudur Rahman Manna, Habibur Rahman Khan and Abu Syed Al Mahmud Swa-

Benazir denied permission to attend funeral

ISLAMABAD, Feb 8: Former prime minister Benazir Bhutto says she was denied permission to leave Pakistan to attend the funeral of Jordan's King Hussein, reports AP.

"She made an effort to attend his funeral and waited for permission from the government until the last minute, but the government did not give her permission to leave the country," said her party spokesman Farhatullah Baber.

"Ms. Bhutto had close relations with King Hussein and has been deeply moved by his death," he said.

Benazir's name is on Pakistan's exit control list, a long list of people whom the government says cannot leave the country without permission.

Her name is on the list because of several corruption cases against her.

Misuse of funds

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the highest amount of money was spent for salaries and other benefits of employees. The amount was Tk 6,276,190 against Tk 4,781,715 in the previous year. Expenditure for seminars and conferences rose to Tk 661,296.

The report also revealed that ICMAB authorities spent Tk 2,667,077 as general and administration expenses.

According to the report, the loss on disposal of obsolete inventories was Tk 762,852 against no expense in the earlier year.

The authorities spent a total of Tk 4,007,990 as 'over expenditure' against an income of Tk 12,466,959 during the period under review.

The report also revealed that the authorities increased the admission fees by about Tk 2,000 in the last 14 years.

It is also learnt that a student of ICMAB pays more charges in almost every section than a student of the Institute of Cost Accountants of Bangladesh (ICAB).

A student of ICMAB pays Tk 6,300 for admission while a student of ICAB pays Tk 1,765 only for the same. As regards examination fees, an ICMAB student pays Tk 2,460 for 12 subjects while a student of ICAB pays Tk 300 for six subjects.

Moreover, a student of ICMAB does not pay for library and identity cards. But a student of ICAB pays Tk 50 and Tk 40 respectively for those. There is no annual charge at ICAB for students but it is Tk 220 at ICMAB.