

## Tk 44 cr UNCDF, UNDP grant for local govt dev in Sirajganj

Bangladesh will receive nearly Tk 44 crore (8.92 m US\$) as grant for the Sirajganj Local Government Development Fund Project (SLGDFP), reports BSS.

The United Nations Capital Development Fund (UNCDF) and United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) will provide the said grant to Bangladesh to implement the project.

The SLGDFP which has been launched from first of this month aims at providing improved and participatory local governance for socio-economic development and poverty alleviation in the project area.

The project which will be completed in 66 months will cover 81 unions of Sirajganj district. In the first phase, the project has been launched in 18 unions of nine thanas of Sirajganj district and the remaining 63 unions would be covered during the project period.

A signing ceremony for the project document was held yesterday with the government of Bangladesh, UNDP and UNCDF at the Economic Relations Division (ERD) in this regard yesterday.

ERD Secretary Dr A K M Masihur Rahman and UNDP

Resident Representative in Dhaka, David E. Lockwood signed the agreement.

The signing agreement for implementation of a foreign assistance project is the first one under current fiscal's (1999-2000) Annual Development Programme (ADP) after its announcement.

Lockwood told BSS that the project has been developed in an intention to strengthen the Union Council (UC)'s by providing block grants. Under the project UC's will take decision about using the fund, he said adding one of the main objectives of the project is to empower the local government.

Joint Secretary of ERD Nazmul Alam Siddiqui said the chairman and members of the UC would be given training under the project to carry out the project implementation capability.

The infrastructures including construction of roads and small culverts under the project area would also be developed for creating rural employment and poverty alleviation. Out of the total grant UNCDF will provide 7.3 million US dollar while UNDP will give 1.72 million US dollar.

## DAB urges MPs to maintain decency in JS

By Staff Correspondent

Doctors Association of Bangladesh (DAB) yesterday expressed concern over use of indecent language in the parliament and urged the lawmakers to maintain decency while addressing in the parliament.

"We should be ashamed of the lawmakers using crude language in the parliament as the parliament session are broadcast live," DAB central convening at a meeting said.

The DAB accused that some lawmakers were engaged in conspiracy to tarnish the image of late president Ziaur Rahman, leader of the opposition Begum Khaleda Zia, deputy leader of the opposition Dr AQM Badruddoza Chowdhury and some family members of Begum Zia, particularly her eldest son Tareq Rahman by making false statements.

They also said a vested quarter has also been engaged in conspiracy to blame Dr Chowdhury by misinterpreting his speech during the current session of the parliament.

The DAB leaders called upon the physicians of the country to come forward to protest such move against Dr Chowdhury.

## Tk 1.03 cr EC grant for 4 NGOs

The European Commission has approved a grant worth Tk 1.03 crore for four NGOs involved in post-flood rehabilitation operation in Bangladesh, reports UNB.

Aparajeyo, BRAC, Caritas and Concern are in the post-flood activity with the support of European Community Humanitarian Office (ECHO), said an EC announcement made available in the city yesterday.

The new allocation brings the total contribution of the ECHO, the department of the EC in charge of humanitarian aid, to flood-related relief and rehabilitation to 10.45 million euro equivalent to Tk 51.68 crore.

The new grant will enable the 4 NGOs and their respective European partner NGOs Terre des Hommes (Italy), NOVIB (The Netherlands), Caritas (The Netherlands) and Concern Worldwide (Ireland) — to meet outstanding needs of vulnerable families who have not yet managed to recover the damage caused by last year's deluge.

The NGOs will repair or build 7,800 houses, assist 10,000 people in resuming their income-generating activities, repair or install another 100 tube-wells, improve sanitation by providing latrines to 3,500 families and construct 8 flood shelters on public school grounds traditionally used as shelters in flood-prone areas.

ECHO had earlier allocated 8.45 million euro (Tk 43.3 crore) to Aparajeyo, BRAC, Caritas, Concern Worldwide, the NGO Forum for Drinking Water Supply & Sanitation, Oxfam and the Red Crescent and their respective partners to provide emergency and rehabilitation assistance to the victims of the flooding throughout the country.

So far, ECHO's support has made possible the repair and construction of 17,000 houses in rural areas and the status of Dhaka, the rehabilitation and installation of 35,000 tube-wells, installation of 30,000 latrines and occupational rehabilitation activities for 150,000 vulnerable people.

## Alamgir visits Chancery bldg in Washington

State Minister for Planning Dr Mahiuddin Khan Alamgir, now in the United States, on Thursday visited the under construction Chancery building of Bangladesh in Washington, a proud project of the country on foreign soil, reports BSS.

The construction of the Bangladesh Chancery on the soil of the lone Super Power is viewed as one of the wisest steps taken by the present government led by Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina, a message received from Washington said yesterday.

The building when completed will proudly stand in the serene atmosphere of the US capital's International Drive where Chancery buildings of many other countries are located. The Bangladesh building on a foreign land will also fulfill the long-cherished aspirations of the large Bangladesh community living in the United States.

Dr Mahiuddin Khan Alamgir, who was visiting the US to attend the US-Bangladesh Business Council Roundtable held on June 29, was briefed about the design and other aspects of construction of the Chancery building and its progress of work by an architect of the renowned US Company KCF.

The building when completed will proudly stand in the serene atmosphere of the US capital's International Drive where Chancery buildings of many other countries are located. The Bangladesh building on a foreign land will also fulfill the long-cherished aspirations of the large Bangladesh community living in the United States.

## REB prize giving ceremony held

The prize giving ceremony of indoor games competition of the Rural Electrification Board (REB) was held at the Engineers Institute yesterday, reports BSS.

Chairman of REB Brig M A Malek distributed prizes among the winners and spoke on the occasion as the chief guest. The function was presided over by Member (Finance) of the board Golam Mustafa.

The function was followed by the annual drama 'Bearing Chitthi', organised by the Sports, Cultural and Welfare Council of the REB.



Filthy garbage litters three-fourth of the busy Purba Mothertek road causing inconvenience to the road users. Local residents allege that cleaners usually turn up once in 3 to 4 days.



Incessant rains for days together has caused extensive damage to the city roads. Picture shows a big pothole on the Biswa Road near Golapbagh playground.



Repair work for extensively damaged portion of the road at the Swamibagh crossing in the city going on.

## Pakistan asks Japan to help seek India's restraint in Kashmir

TOKYO, July 2: Pakistani Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif reportedly asked Japan on Friday to urge India to halt its military buildup in the disputed state of Kashmir, reports AFP.

Sharif made the request in a letter to Prime Minister Keizo Obuchi, Kyodo News said, quoting a Foreign Ministry official. It was presented by special envoy Mian Abdul Wahed to Foreign Minister Masahiko Komura in Tokyo.

In the letter, Sharif blamed

India for undermining Pakistan's efforts to seek a political solution, the official was quoted as saying.

Sharif called for Japan's help as well as UN arbitration, including sending monitors, to resolve the dispute over Kashmir in a "fair" manner, the official said.

Komura told Wahed that Japan had called on both Pakistan and India to maintain self-restraint and begin a dialogue to ease tensions in the region, the official said.

The Kashmir conflict erupted on May 9, when India launched military operations against Islamic guerrillas who crossed the Line of Control that divides the state, and set up heavily fortified mountain bunkers within Indian Kashmir.

International opinion on the conflict has so far tended to favour India, with several western countries urging Pakistan to withdraw the fighters.

## Non-Aligned Movement hails G8 debt relief decision

PRETORIA, July 2: The Non-Aligned Movement has welcomed a decision by the world's leading industrialised nations to slash the debt burden of developing countries, NAM chairman South Africa said in a statement issued here Friday, reports AFP.

However, the 114-nation body said it believed a complete cancellation of debt would be the only real solution for the poorest nations.

"NAM wishes to reiterate that only an outright debt cancellation for the heavily-indebted poor countries without due conditionalities is the surest way to secure the sustainability of the development prospects in these countries," the statement said.

The G8 — the world's seven most industrialised nations and Russia — agreed in Cologne last month to cut some 70 billion dollars in nominal terms off the 214 billion dollar debt

burden of the world's 40 poorest nations.

They emphasized that the relief was conditional on better government and financial management.

NAM said plans by countries to sell their gold reserves to help finance the debt relief should not prejudice the interests of gold-producing developing countries.

South African Finance Minister Trevor Manuel has warned that financing the debt relief package though gold sales could have dire consequences for gold producers.

The gold price has been hovering at a 20-year low following an announcement by the Bank of England in May that it planned to sell off more than half of its gold stocks.

As a result South Africa's pressured gold mining industry plans to retrench some 8,000 workers.

## Speculation over snap polls in Lanka

COLOMBO, July 2: Sri Lankan President Chandrika Kumaratunga's decision to appoint several ministers to handle her party's election campaign has sparked speculation that she plans to call a snap general election or early presidential polls, reports Reuters.

"Govt prepares for early polls," read the independent island newspaper's frontpage headline today.

"CBK (Chandrika Kumaratunga) rings poll bells," said the Daily Mirror.

On Wednesday, Kumaratunga appointed 10 government ministers, two chief ministers and two deputy ministers to handle her People's Alliance party's poll campaign throughout the Indian Ocean island.

These organisers have been told to submit reports within two months, after which a decision is likely to be made on the timing of the elections," the Mirror reported.

Government officials were not immediately available for comment on the newspaper reports.

General and presidential elections are not due until late next year, but political analysts have said Kumaratunga could call early polls to catch the opposition off guard.

## Anti-terrorism squad arrests 7 Tamil Tigers

KATHMANDU, July 2: Nepal's anti-terrorism squad has rounded up seven suspected Tamil Tiger activists ahead of the arrival Monday of Sri Lankan President Chandrika Kumaratunga for a four-day state visit, sources said Friday, reports AFP.

"At least seven Tamils have been arrested on suspicion of their having connection with the LTTE (Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam) while they were roaming near the Kathmandu bus terminal on Thursday," a Home Ministry spokesman said.

A police source said the identity of the seven suspects was being investigated, although they claimed they were Indian tourists.

They had been staying at a succession of guest houses in the capital.

"The Tamil LTTE suspects have entered Kathmandu via India and they have been moving from one hotel to another almost every day," the police source said.

The newspapers said Kumaratunga's order to her ministers and government lawmakers not to travel out of the country without permission from her until the end of the year added to the likelihood of early polls.

Kumaratunga's coalition came into power in August 1994, ending 17 years of rule by the United National Party. Kumaratunga won a presidential poll for a six-year term in November that year.

## Anwar to pursue Cambridge degree from jail

KUALA LUMPUR, July 2: Former Malaysian Deputy Prime Minister Anwar Ibrahim will spend his time in prison studying economics and working on a Cambridge University degree, a news report said, reports AP.

The former deputy to Prime Minister Mahathir Mohamad hoped to study economics as an external student of the prestigious British school, the national news agency Bernama quoted a source in London as saying.

According to the source, which Bernama did not name, Anwar's representative had visited the university recently to explore the possibility. Anwar, 51, would most probably do research work to obtain a doctorate in economics.

## Japanese police raid Aum factories

TOKYO, July 2: Japanese police today raided the Aum Supreme Truth sect's computer factories believed to be a leading source of funds for the doomsday cult, police said, reports AFP.

Police swooped on more than 20 computer assembly factories and shops across the nation, arresting one person.

Masahiro Itatani, 32, manager of an Aum computer shop in Tokyo, was suspected of falsifying documents to rent a warehouse in Kawaguchi, north of Tokyo.

The computer business is believed to be the biggest financial source for the Aum sect, accused of the March 1995 fatal Sarin gas attack on Tokyo subways that killed 12 people and made thousands ill.

The sect enjoys annual sales of more than seven billion yen (58 million dollars) in computer-related businesses.

## BKL launches tree plantation programme

TUNGIPARA, July 2: Bangladesh Krishak League (BKL) formally launched its countrywide tree plantation drive from Tungipara today. LGRD and Cooperatives Minister Zillur Rahman inaugurated the three-week campaign by planting a coconut sapling in front of the office of the Thana Nirbahi Officer here, reports BSS.

Awami League Presidium Member Amir Hossain Amu, Water Resources Minister Abdur Razzak, Commerce and Industries Minister Tofail Ahmed, AL Presidium Member Abdul Jalil, Joint Secretary Mozaffar Hossain Paltu, Jubo League Chairman Sheikh Fazlul Karim Selim, MP, who were present on the occasion, also planted saplings.

Krishak League central leaders including Harun-ar-Rashid Howlader, Gautam Banarjee, M Aminul Islam, Samir Chandra, AFM Bahauddin Nasim, Abdul Halim Kanchan, Sheikh Faruque Ahmed, Samyukta Singha Roy and Sankar-Goswami were also present.

BKL sources said that during the campaign each Krishak League member will plant at least two trees in response to a call by Prime Minister and Awami League Chief Sheikh Hasina to plant trees in the country in a massive scale. The tree plantation drive of BKL will cover all the 460 upazilas of the country.

## Zillur asks engns Make proper use of tech to face challenges of 21st century

LGPD and Cooperatives Minister Zillur Rahman called upon the engineers to play pioneering role in proper utilisation and amelioration of modern science and technology in the country to face the challenges of the 21st century, reports UNB.

"The government has given topmost priority on expansion of science and technology-oriented education and taken up steps to establish 12 more technical universities in this regard," he said while addressing the Silver Jubilee celebration of Bangladesh Institute of Technology (BIT), Khulna.

Presided over by former president of BIT Khulna Students Association Engineer Syed Mahbubur Rahman, the function was also addressed by LGED Chief Engineer Monwar Hossain Chowdhury, Director of BIT, Khulna Dr Abdus Samad and former Principal of Khulna Engineering College AK Azad.

Stressing on the need for improving the engineering and professional education and innovating new appropriate technologies to solve the natural and environmental problems, he said the engineers should work with sincerity to speed up socio-economic development of the country.

The government has taken up steps for expansion and improvement of madrasah education side by side with general education, Zillur said adding that a section of people, including a few fundamentalist organisations, are trying to politicise madrasah education to mislead the people.

## JS body on Ministry of Law meets

The Parliamentary Standing Committee on the Ministry of Law, Justice and Parliamentary Affairs yesterday scrutinised two bills relating to remuneration and privileges of the Speaker and Deputy Speaker and the MPs, reports UNB.

Committee chairman Surajit Sengupta presided over the meeting held at the Sangsad Bhaban.

The bills are: The Speaker and Deputy Speaker (Remuneration and Privileges) (Amendment) Bill, 1999 and the Members of Parliament (Remuneration and Allowances) (Amendment) Bill, 1999.

The bills were placed in the Sangsad in the current session and sent to the committee for scrutiny.

Committee members — Law, Justice and Parliamentary Affairs Minister Abdul Matin Khasru, Advocate Rahmat Ali, Mohammad Shahjahan Mia, Shah Alam, Barrister Rabeya Bhuiyan, Barrister Muhammad Zamir Uddin Sircar, Barrister M. Aminul Haq and Mohammad Khalequzzaman — attended the meeting.

Whip Mizanur Rahman attended the meeting on special invitation.

Acting Secretary to the Law, Justice and Parliamentary Affairs Ministry Muhammad Sohel Hossain and officials concerned were present.

## Samajtantrik Buddhijibi Sangha formed

By Staff Correspondent

A 16-member Coordination Committee and a 85-member organising council of Samajtantrik Buddhijibi Sangha (Socialist Intellectuals' Association) was formed at a meeting of left leaning intellectuals at the residence of late Dr Ahmed Sharif yesterday.

Formation of the organisation was a continuation of efforts initiated by Dr Ahmed Sharif to bring socialist and progressive intellectuals to a single platform. Fayed Ahmed and Prof Serajul Islam Chowdhury were made joint convenors, Bashir Al Helal Treasurer and Dr SM Kabir was made coordinator of the 85-member organising council.

The 16-member Coordination Committee comprises joint convenors Fayed Ahmed and Dr Serajul Islam Chowdhury, Treasurer Bashir Al Helal, coordinator, Dr SM Kabir and members Shaokat Ali, Mohsin Shastrapani, Anu Mohammad, Mesbah Kamal, Abu Sayeed Khan, Mostafa Faruk, Mohammad Shahidullah, Nehal Karim, Ruhin Hossain Prince, Kamrul Haq Mithu, Altaf Parvez and Bina Shikder.

The meeting jointly convened by Fayed Ahmed, Prof Serajul Islam Chowdhury and Bashir Al Helal approved the programmes of the organisation. Prof Serajul Islam Chowdhury who chaired the meeting said that it was a must for the socialist intellectuals to be united now. "The humanity has just been reduced to commodity in this profit-oriented society and capitalistic system," Prof Chowdhury said.



Non-Violent Conflict Resolution training was held in ADSCO, Banani, in the city, organised by ANANDO recently. Participants are seen during the training.

## Flood death toll in China rises to 150

BEIJING, July 2: Severe floods caused by violent rains swept across farmland and villages in eastern province of Anhui leaving dozens dead and raising the death toll to about 150 so far this summer, officials said today.

"There have been 38 deaths in flooding in Anhui," provincial spokesman Zhang Zhongliang told AFP by telephone.

The southern part of the province has been continually hit by torrential rain between June 16 and yesterday," Zhang said.

He said a total of 5.76 million people were affected by the floods, which had caused 2.5 billion yuan (300 million dollars) worth of damage.

Around 1.5 million people have been mobilised to fight the floods, which had hit Xuancheng district, Huangshan city, Wuhu, Anqing and Chaoahu, he said. Torrential rains had dumped as much as 1,000 millimetres of rain in the worst-affected areas, he added.

Migrant workers from the area working in the capital said the rice harvest had been wiped out in the disaster.

"The whole rice paddy has been drowned. That's it — no money this season," said one woman who had just spoken to relatives in the area. Rainstorms, hailstorms and

mud-slides across central and eastern China in the past week have put the country on high-level alert as the flooding season begins in earnest.

Official media have reported 49 deaths in southwestern Sichuan province, 29 deaths in central Hubei, and 28 dead in northwestern Qinghai.

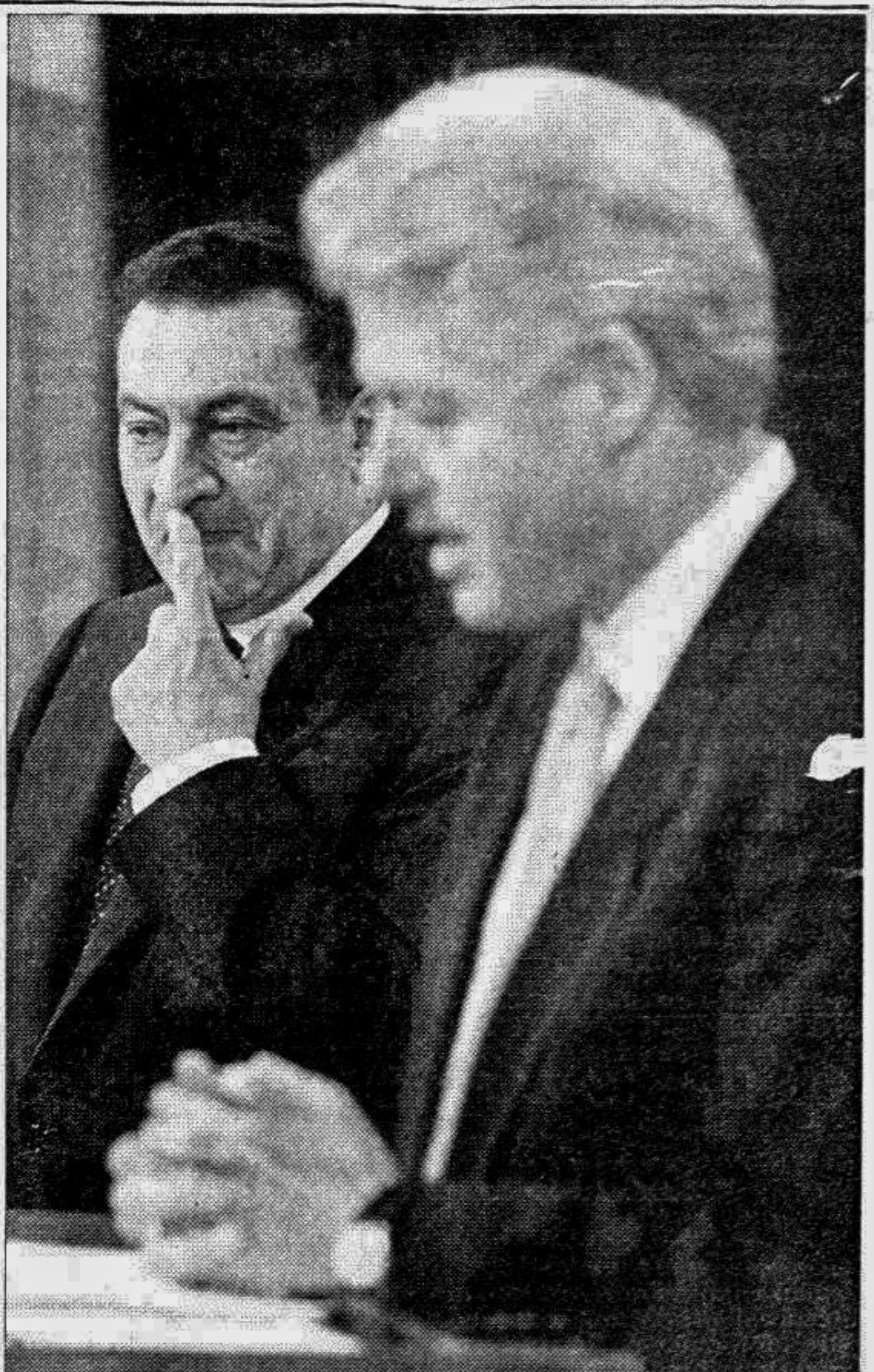
## 'NKorea ready to conduct missile test soon'

TOKYO, July 2: North Korea will finish preparations for test-firing a ballistic missile in two or three weeks, Jiji Press said Friday, quoting a source, reports AFP.

The timing of the launch is still unclear "as it would be affected by political considerations," the source, who was not further identified, was quoted as saying.

Japanese government officials earlier said they were closely monitoring developments, but did not confirm a missile test was imminent.

Japan raised concerns about a North Korean military threat following reports that the reclusive Stalinist nation was preparing to test-fire a ballistic missile in July or August.



US President Bill Clinton (R) speaks as Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak looks on during a joint press conference in Presidential Hall at the Old Executive office Building near the White House on Thursday. Clinton and Mubarak met to help revive the Middle East peace process.