

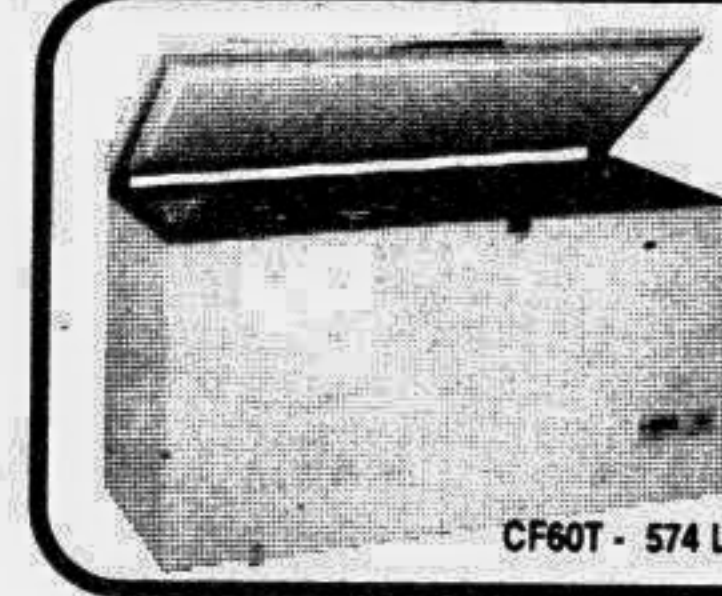
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Debate in JS body over distribution of housing plots

Parliamentarians both from opposition and ruling parties yesterday criticised the way city housing plots were allegedly handed but mainly to Awami Leaguers, reports UNB.

You have let us down. We can't show our face... Akhtaruzzaman MP, Chairman of the Parliamentary Standing Committee on Housing and Public Works Ministry, was learnt to have told the RAJUK officials in the JS body meeting.

"If you think nothing unfair took place in this regard, please make clear your position to the public through press conference or press release," the ruling party MP reportedly told them.

As soon as the standing committee session began at Sangsad Bhaban at 3pm, BNP lawmaker Abdul Mannan Talukdar brought the issue to notice of the meeting.

He, in this regard, showed some press reports, especially from Daily Janakantha, and said: "Even the Awami League-supported newspaper has said the plots had been allocated to ruling party men."

However, the meeting decided to talk the issue of allotment of 301 plots in posh Gulshan, Banani and Uttara areas after discussing other agenda scheduled earlier, meeting sources said.

As the plot allocation came up for discussion under miscellaneous issues, RAJUK Chairman Azizul Haq told the meeting that nothing unfair took place in sanctioning the land pieces.

"We maintained the procedures followed earlier in allotting the plots to people under various categories," he told the ruling and opposition lawmakers.

Housing and Public Works Minister Engineer Mosharraf Hossain, who also got a plot, said he didn't take it as a minister or MP. I have been given a plot under freedom fighter category.

The JS body decided to hold a meeting between the Standing Committee and the Rajshahi Unnayan Kartipakkha (RAJUK) on July 28 to find out whether there had been any irregularities in allotting the plots.

The meeting was informed that the names of 3,000 people who would be given plots in Uttara would be announced within next six weeks. Applications were sought for the allocation earlier.

Ctg flood

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east country to divert to Dhaka though it was scheduled to land here, airport sources said.

Normal life in the hill districts was paralysed due to downpour.

Administration sources said about 1,000 tribal people were evacuated from Baghaichhari area under Rangamati hill district today as flood water inundated over 100 dwelling houses.

Sharif

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pealed to the international community to bring New Delhi to the negotiating table to help prevent recurrence of Kargil-like situation.

"Now the dialogue phase should begin. We need to get back to the negotiating table as this situation (Kargil-like) is bound to recur," Pakistani Foreign Ministry spokesman Farid Atiq told reporters.

"This (Kargil) was only a small episode. The larger issue (Kashmir problem) is very much on the horizon and it would be a gross mistake not to pay attention to this issue," he cautioned.

Nothing that as long as Kashmir problem remained unresolved there might be more such crises, the spokesman said the "international community should now tell India to come to the negotiating table."

"The ball is in the court of international community" to help resolve the Kashmir issue, the spokesman said.

Earlier India today halted its military offensives in Kashmir and set a deadline for the pullout of all Islamic infiltrators from the disputed territory.

"All Pakistani forces must withdraw well north of the LOC (Line of Control border) in Kashmir by July 16 morning," external affairs ministry spokesman R. Jassal said in New Delhi.

He said Pakistan's Director General of Military Operations (DGMO) in meeting Sunday with his Indian counterpart had agreed to comply.

"Any Pakistani intruders found after the deadline will be treated as hostile and dealt with accordingly," he said, but insisted the four-day grace period did not amount to the granting of safe passage.

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Road mishaps kill 5000 a year in Bangladesh

Involvement of private sector in World Bank road safety scheme being planned

Bangladesh incurs a loss of over Tk 1000 crore because of traffic jam while several thousand lives are lost due to road accidents a year, reports UNB.

This was revealed by former Bangladesh Road Transport Authority (BRTA) Chairman Nazmul Hossain yesterday in a meeting between the World Bank and the Federation of Bangladesh Chambers of Commerce and Industry held at the FBCCI office. It was aimed at involving the private sector with a WB scheme on road safety.

He said that last year over 5000 people were killed in road accidents.

In Bangladesh, out of 10000 vehicles, 70 meet fatal accident while in India and Europe the rate is 35 and 1 to 2 respectively.

Considering the grave situation, the World Bank is currently preparing Community Road Safety Initiative Project (CRSIP) as part of global programme against road accidents.

The main objectives of the project are reduction of road accidents as a major cause of

death and injury in Bangladesh and also to improve road safety in the communities through local community participation in the design, as well as the implementation of road-safety programmes.

World Bank private Sector Consultant Jude de Vera who led the bank at the talks said the Bangladesh government and the World Bank, together with various stakeholders, had expressed grave concern over the rate of traffic accidents and fatalities in the country.

Rate of traffic accidents in

Bangladesh is one of the highest in South Asia," he said.

In response to this immediate need for action on road safety, the World Bank consultant underscored implementation of the WB programme.

Narrating success story of such a project in the Philippines, he told the meeting that traffic problems could best be solved by a combination of proper enforcement of traffic rules and regulation, adequate traffic rules and regulation, adequate traffic engineering and driver/pedestrian awareness of

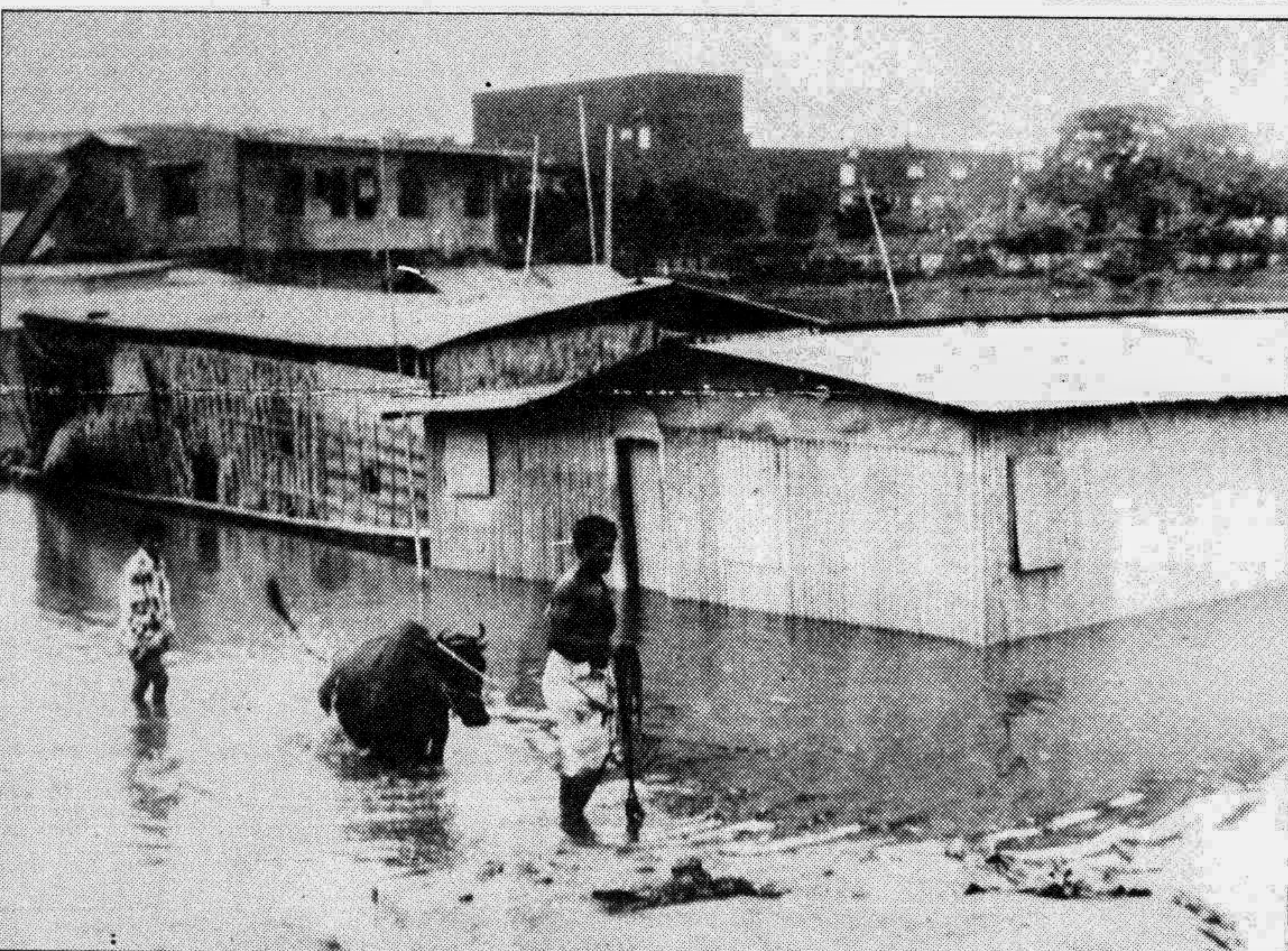
good driving habits and road courtesy.

Vera said that the Philippine experience clearly showed that a partnership between the private and public sector was workable in a win-win situation for both parties.

He appealed to the Bangladesh business community for its immediate involvement with this community road-safety project with government of Bangladesh and the World Bank as equal partners.

FBCCI President Abdul Awal Minto suggested that in order to develop a sustainable Road Safety and surface transport management the concerned Ministry should be restructured. Motor vehicle licensing function and regulatory work should be separated.

Abdul Haque, Director, FBCCI, Syed Shamsul Kaunain Kutub, Director, FBCCI SM Al-Hussainy, Advisor, FBCCI, Alhaj Abdul Salam Amir, Hussain Khan and MH Rahman also spoke on the occasion.



Low-lying areas in the city have gone under flood water. Photo shows habitats around the BTV station at Rampura. —Star photo

Breach in embankment

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tration said. Vast areas under Muradnagar and Daudkandi thanas are also under threat of inundation as the Gumti embankment has developed leaks at Alirchar, according to Ersahd Mia, Chairman of a Union Parishad in Muradnagar.

People and livestock were being evacuated to high lands on the embankment and on roads with the help of the army. Earlier people were alerted about the danger through public address system.

Relief camps have been opened at different places and they are being given dry food by the administration. Water Resources and Flood Control Minister Abdur Razzak visited the Gumti embankment yesterday.

The breach occurred about 4 kilometre away from Comilla Cantonment.

There are allegations that the embankment became vulnerable at least three days ago but the Deputy Commissioner of Comilla did not call Army

until 7 a.m. yesterday.

When troops were summoned to repair the breach, it was too late. They had very little to do in repairing the damage in strong current and incessant rain, some district officials said. They said a spinning mill, built at a cost of Tk 35 crore, has also been affected by the flood water.

Feni Our correspondent reported that the situation in the Feni district also deteriorated with heavy rains and rush of water from the Tripura hills.

The Muhuri was flowing above danger level and flood control embankments of Selenia and Kohua rivers developed cracks at four points.

Six unions of Fulgazi, Parshuram and Chagalnaya thanas have been inundated in the last 24 hours. Road links between Parshuram and Belonia and between Chagalnaya and Muhuri were disrupted. Water was overflowing the Feni-Parshuram road.

Rajshahi The embankment-cum-road at Gargazi union in Bagha thana may collapse any time, with the rains mauling the portions damaged by last year's flood. The rapidly swelling Padma is threatening the embankment, our correspondent reported.

He said the embankment has already been breached at three points near Khairhat High School.

Kushtia Our correspondent reported that the normal life has been paralysed in Kushtia town and different areas of the district due to rains in the last three days. Waterlogging in Kushtia town has compounded the problem.

Erosion River erosion continued unabated along the banks of the Brahmaputra, Padma, Meghna and Jamuna.

Water Development Board (WDB) officials said that erosion in Bhupur, Sariakandi, Fulchari, Rajshahi, Munshiganj, Chandpur, Luxipur, Manikganj, Pabna, Kurigram, Lamonirhat and, Sunamganj continued with heavy rains and strong currents in the rivers, leaving many homeless.

BSS quoting WDB officials said that they were reinforcing the flood protection embankments with sandbags in different parts.

The FFWC said the monsoon continued to remain active over the country. It forecast light to moderately heavy rainfall at most places and very heavy downpour at one or two places over the Brahmaputra and Ganges basins.

Dilip Kumar decides to retain Pak award

From Pallab Bhattacharya

NEW DELHI, July 12: Dilip Kumar, the living legend of Hindi cinema, has said he would not return the "Nishan-e-Imtiaz" award, Pakistan's second highest civilian award conferred on him last year.

The thespian actor made this decision known to newsmen after a 30-minute meeting with Indian Prime Minister Atal Behari Vajpayee at the latter's official residence here yesterday evening.

Dilip Kumar has been at the centre of a controversy following the demand by Shiv Sena that he return the award in the wake of the Pakistani incursion in Kargil in India's Jammu and Kashmir state.

"Nobody should doubt your patriotism and your commitment to the nation," Vajpayee told the actor and said it is for Dilip Kumar to decide whether to return or retain the award, official sources here said.

Dilip Kumar said the Prime Minister told him that "it is your award. Do whatever you want to do with it. The government has no objection."

The actor, when asked if he would retain the award, replied "of course, I will."

Vajpayee said nobody should pressurise Dilip Kumar who had served the nation through his long film career.

Shiv Sena activists had recently staged a demonstration outside the actor's residence in Mumbai demanding that the part with the "Nishan-e-Imtiaz."

Following the incident, Dilip Kumar had written a letter to Vajpayee saying if returning the award would serve national interests, he would definitely do so.

Dilip Kumar had rushed to Delhi on Friday last and sought an appointment with the Prime Minister following pressure mounted by Shiv Sena and some other groups to return the award.

The demand to return the award has come in for criticism from India's main opposition parties, noted film director Mrinal Sen, eminent actress Shabana Azmi and her lyricist husband Javed Akhtar.

Agrani Bank Transfer order of 76 kept in abeyance

Star report

Agrani Bank yesterday kept in abeyance the transfer of 76 mid-level officers that raised controversy over the motive of the order.

At the same time, the managing director (MD) of the bank, AKM Nazmul Huq, also served a notice for retirement. Sources said he is likely to join a private bank soon.

The banking circle was taken aback when the MD ordered the transfer of 76 executives including 21 deputy general managers, 46 assistant general managers and nine senior principle officers.

It has been alleged that this transfer order was passed at the instigation of the bank's Collective Bargaining Agent (CBA) and officers' association for the interest of a vested group.

Through this order, a number of officers who had been posted outside for corrupt practices, many of them chargesheeted, were brought to Dhaka and other important branches.

Later the issue was even taken up with the finance ministry which after some preliminary checks found that service rules had been flouted in many transfer cases.

Meanwhile sources close to the MD said the transfer was done to reactivate the zonal offices of the bank, which suffered Tk 12 or loss in the first six months of the current year as against a profit of Tk 30 or during the same period last year.

Death of constable

Another placed on remand

By Staff Correspondent

The CMM's Court yesterday placed one person, who was shown arrested as a suspect in the constable Farhad murder case, on a four-day remand.

The suspect, identified as Shamim, was arrested by Detective Branch (DB) on July 7 from the city's Kamalapur area with a revolver licensed in the name of a UP chairman of Sirazdikhon in Munshiganj. But DB officially showed him arrested on Sunday in the Farhad murder case, reports our court correspondent.

With the arrest of Shamim, DB has so far arrested three persons in the Farhad murder case. DB was interrogating the two others — Shamsuddin and Babul, commissioner of DCC Ward No. 24, now on remand.

Human Development Index Bangladesh goes down to 150th position due to fall in GDP

By Staff Correspondent

Bangladesh has fallen into 150th position from last year's 146th among 174 countries in the Human Development Index (HDI) despite marked increase in the literacy and life expectancy factors.

Bangladesh's Gross Domestic Product (GDP) per capita went down compared to other countries during the last year, which contributed to the four-point downward shift in the country's position, according to the Human Development Report of the United Nations' Development Programme (UNDP). The HDI is calculated on the basis of three indices: life expectancy, literacy and per capita GDP.

Andre Klap, UNDP country director, released the report at a press conference in the city as part of global circulation, yesterday.

"Shifting of Bangladesh's position from 150th to 146th does not mean that human development suffered a setback in Bangladesh, rather it has done well in life expectancy and literacy," Klap said. "Position of 43 countries improved and 48 countries dropped in the HDI report" Klap said, adding that the cause of the shift might be

the adoption of a new methodology for incorporating data about income and purchasing power by the World Bank. Regarding problem of globalisation in the Bangladesh context, Klap said Bangladesh should proceed towards globalisation in a systematic way and the government should have an integrated policy on the issue.

Among others, acting UN resident coordinator Klene Wiener, and UNDP's Ismet Zerin Khan, Kazi Ali Reza, Shams Mustafa and Shamim Hamid were present at the press conference.

The report says Bangladesh's GDP per capita was 218 US Dollars in 1997, higher than 179 dollars in 1990, 165 dollars in 1985, 145 dollars in 1980 and 134 dollars in 1975. All values are in 1987 US dollars.

The HDI value rose to 0.440 in 1997 from 0.318 in 1975, 0.336 in 1980, 0.369 in 1985 and 0.400 in 1990, the report said.

Life expectancy in Bangladesh rose to 58.1 years in 1997 from 44.2 in 1970, the report said.

Among south and south-east Asian countries, Malaysia at See page 11 Col 8

SC bars 5 directors

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tioners for unnecessarily harassing the respondents for no fault" and ordered payment of Tk 5000 to each respondent.

The whole thing concerning the four began after a Bangladesh Bank special inspection team revealed benami (fictitious) loans taken by four companies — Sakhira Fisheries, Pharmatek Chemicals Ltd, Mittika and Khulna Fisheries — and against 36 other fictitious accounts which were later owned by Beximco in 1994. It also provided corporate and personal guarantee for an amount of Tk 98.10 crore.

As they failed to repay the loans, it was rescheduled many times and finally a notice was served in February, 1998 to repay the loans or vacate the office of director within two months.

A Division Bench of the HC comprising Justice Kazi Ebadul Huq and M Muzzammel Hossain began hearing the writs four months after those were filed.

The HC Bench in its judgment said, in 1995 the entire loan was rescheduled and Beximco delayed making the required down payment.

They made a four and a half months' delay in paying the first instalment, two months' delay in paying the second instalment, half month's delay in paying the third instalment and the fourth instalment was due on December 31, 1997.

After the delay in paying the fourth instalment, the notice for removal was issued by the bank on the directive from the central bank.

AB Bank rescheduled the loans again when the proceedings were going on but Beximco lawyers said they could not repay the money due to fund constraint, the HC said.

The High Court verdict also said that the petitioners were more interested in filing cases and less interested in repaying loans.

They wasted precious time of the court, causing problems in other cases, the judgment observed.

It also said that the Managing Director of AB Bank had lawfully served notices and that he had authority to serve the notices on the defaulting directors without requiring prior approval from the board.

The board never raised any question regarding notices served by the MD. It also did not ask the MD to withdraw the notices at later stage which proved that the board had consented to the act of the MD. Besides, the two Beximco directors could not show any documents that the board disagreed to the act of the MD, the High Court judgment said.

While the court proceedings were on, the AB Bank June 9,

1999 approved rescheduling of Tk 191.39 crore Beximco loans. Payment of the instalments is to be completed in the year 2007.

With the Supreme Court upholding the verdict of the High Court, the directors will remain disqualified till the expiry of one year from the date of completion of repayment.

Immediately after the SC judgment, Sohel Rahman and Salman F Rahman could not be reached as they were in London as members of the Prime Minister's entourage.

Barrister Rokunuddin Mahmud appeared for AB Bank's while Barrister Tanja Amir for the central bank.

K Z Alam appeared as lawyer for Salman F Rahman and Sohel Rahman while Barrister Nazmul Huda appeared for MA Quasem and Iqbal Ahmed.

Saiful Alam alias Masudul Islam of Al Arafat Islami Bank lost his directorship as he signed a promissory note for a loan from United Commercial Bank Limited. The loan also remained overdue.

Sohel murder 6 arrested, placed on remand

By Staff Correspondent

Six people were arrested yesterday for their alleged involvement in the killing of former vice-president of the students union of Dhaka Polytechnic Institute on Sunday.

The arrested were identified as Mahmood Munna, Nupu, Mahboob, Russel and Ruffel.

Sohel Alam, former vice-president of the students union of Dhaka Polytechnic Institute was shot dead in front of a college hostel in the city's Tejgaon area Sunday evening.

The arrested were produced before the CMM's court yesterday and the court placed them on a three-day police remand for further interrogation.

Ban goes

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only if the products contain EC safety certificate.

High level of dioxin was detected in Belgian poultry and egg in June, this year. The contamination also spread to neighbouring Netherlands and France through animal feed.

The commerce ministry official said that the volume of such imports is very small. "Except for milk (from the Netherlands) most of the dairy products and poultry feed come from Australia, New Zealand and India."

Denmark keen to resolve problems of KAFCO

Denmark is interested in resolving the outstanding problems of KAFCO to make it technically and commercially viable, reports BSS.

Danish ambassador to Bangladesh Finn Thilsted conveyed his country's willingness when he called on Commerce and Industries Minister Tofail Ahmed at his office in the city yesterday.

The envoy said, the Danish Industrial Fund for Developing Countries, a shareholder of KAFCO, is waiting for the report of the International Finance Corporation (IFC) regarding rehabilitation plan of KAFCO. He also said the Danish government wants to provide financial support in some social development projects.

Welcoming the Danish government's support and assistance for the development of Bangladesh, the Minister said, IFC will submit the final report on KAFCO very soon. He said, the government, shareholders, KAFCO and other concerned want to resolve the issue once for all. He said the government has given special attention to attract foreign investment.

Opposition

From Page 1

sisting the polls if their demands are ignored and the government tries to hold the upazilla and city corporation polls unilaterally like in the recently held municipal elections.

"We had boycotted the municipal polls as our demands were not met and we didn't call to resist the elections. But this time, we will not only boycott the elections... we will resist the polls at any cost if the government attempts to hold elections unilaterally," said a top BNP leader.

Opposition leaders said their planned anti-government campaigns will take place during the months of July, August and September while a non-stop, tough anti-government agitation will start from the first week of October. There will be occasional hartal and blockade programmes before the non-stop movement in October.

"We plan to begin a massive mass contact by the senior leaders of the party from this month, but the tour may be delayed as there is a forecast for flood," said a senior BNP leader adding, "But we are determined to take our movement to the final stage by the end of the year with the objective of ousting the government by March, next year."

Another top ranking BNP leader said Begum Khaleda Zia will take up a number of road marches from the capital to different bordering places like Tamabil (Sylhet), Sakthira, Chittagong Hill Tracts, Haluaghat (Mymensingh) and the south-western regions. The marches will take place in phases.

The four opposition parties — BNP, Jatiya Party, Jamaat-e-Islami and Islamic Oikya Jote will simultaneously begin a three-day road march on different routes beginning July 25. This will be the second road march of the opposition. The first one took place on May 16-18.

Begum Zia will lead the Dhaka-Mymensingh road march while three other parties are planning to go to other corners of the country. BNP's July 25-27 march will cover Narayanganj, Narsingdi, Kishoreganj, Netrakona, Jamalpur, Sherpur and Mymensingh.

Another road march is expected next month. Simultaneously, the opposition parties are planning to launch various action programmes, including gherao of the secretariat, prime minister's office and other important offices bringing corruption charges against the concerned authorities, rail-road blockade, gherao of divisional, district and thana headquarters, mass rallies and demonstration.

Sources said BNP will soon give necessary instruction to all its district and thana units across the country to prepare for the road marches. Local leaders in consultation with headquarters will finalise the routes and possible dates of the planned marches.

Sources at the BNP's policy making body said the leader of the opposition will send all senior leaders of BNP and its front organisations for a hectic tour across the country to draw up support for the planned marches as well as to further strengthen organisational activity.

Sources said during the road marches, Begum Zia will ask the people to take preparation for "Cholo Cholo, Dhaka Cholo" and the one-point out-governance programmes.

A top leader of the BNP yesterday said that the party chief has already held a number of meetings with her senior colleagues, advisors, policy makers and front organisation leaders and discussed about the future course of action with them.

She will soon formally meet with standing committee members, MPs, concerned senior leaders and front organisations to finalise the long term programmes and the strategy of movement.