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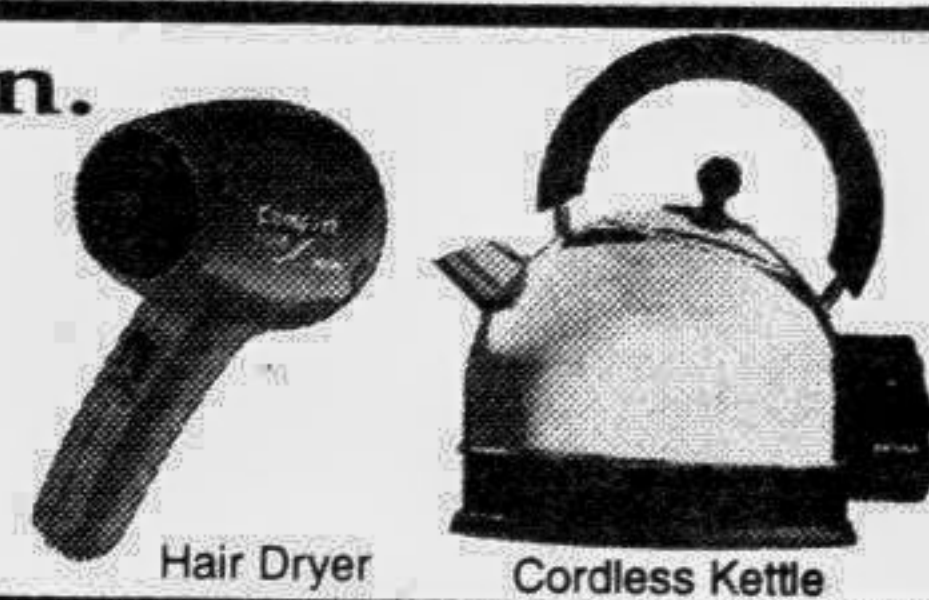
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PM tells British MPs AL govt struggling to establish democracy

LONDON, July 13: Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina said here Monday that her government is struggling for establishing peace and democracy in the country, reports UNB.

"Peace is a prerequisite for sustaining democracy and development," she said at a meeting with All-Party British Parliamentary Group on Bangladesh at Palace of Westminster. Lord Peter Shore MP chaired the meeting.

During the meeting, they exchanged views on British-Bangladesh relationship, the PM's Press Secretary Jawadul Karim told newsmen after the meeting.

Hasina recalled the struggle against military dictatorship and said she launched the movement from London with the support and good wishes from the British Parliament.

"We have been able to establish people's right, which was absent for over two decades when power was confined to the barracks," she said, adding that through a long struggle she established people's rights to franchise.

"Now we are engaged in a movement for achieving people's economic well being and poverty alleviation."

She said education is also a great factor for development and mentioned her government's steps for spread of education and increase of literacy rate in the country.

The Prime Minister said her government had signed the Chittagong Hill Tracts peace agreement and restored peace in the region after solving a long-standing ethnic problem.

Hasina said with the effort of all sections of people her government could tackle the flood and distributed foodgrains among 2.10 crore people during and after the flood through VGF cards.

Responding to a question, she said, "We have made our parliament effective, transparent and accountable. The parliamentary committees are being headed by MPs instead of ministers and PM's question time has been introduced."

Replying to another question, Hasina said her government has empowered the women through holding local government elections. Over 14,000 women representatives were elected directly in the first tier of the local body.

About the trial of the murder of Bangabandhu, she said the trial was held in a normal court, no special tribunal was formed.

Replying to queries about the dispute between India and Pakistan on Kashmir issue, she said, "We firmly believe in peace and any dispute can be solved through discussion." She said their bilateral problem should be solved bilaterally.

Lord Steel MP, Baroness Pauline MP, Lord Wahid MP, Lord Patel MP, Wona King MP, Lord Tim Filtz Patrick MP of Britain and state minister for foreign affairs Abul Hasan Chowdhury, AL joint secretary Azizur Rahman, central leaders advocate Shahara Khatun, Prof Fazlul Haq, PM's principal secretary Dr S A Samad and foreign secretary C M Shahi Sami of Bangladesh were present at the meeting.



Trek to safety

The breach in the River Gumti's embankment has drowned the highways in the region. A shot from the Comilla Sylhet road.

Erosion in nine districts 11 rivers flow above danger marks

By Special Correspondent

The flood situation in Comilla and Feni worsened yesterday with water rushing down the hills in Tripura and continued downpour, report sources and agencies.

Erosion in the south, north-east and northwest regions of the country turned serious as major rivers continued rising, they added.

Officials of the Bangladesh Water Development Board (BWDB) and the Flood Forecasting and Warning Centre (FFWC) said that despite a little recession in shower across the country, most rivers barring the Brahmaputra continued to rise.

It accelerated erosion and chewed up the embankments of the Gumti and Teesta at three places, Brahmaputra at Sariakandi in Bogra and in Gaibandha, and Kaziur in Sirajganj, Bhuaipur in Tangail, Harirampur in Manikganj and in Feni, where breaches and damages were reported.

Besides, flood control drainage projects in Chittagong and Cox's Bazar, polders at Monpara, Bhola, the Meghna-Dhanagoda project at Chandpur and riverbanks along Kaikhali in Satkhira were breached. Erosion was also reported at Rajshahi, Munshiganj, Fulchari, Kurigram, Chandpur, Laxmipur, Pabna, Lalmonirhat

and Sunamganj.

Eleven rivers in the Ganges, Brahmaputra, Meghna and Southeastern Hill basins were flowing above danger marks at 12 points yesterday, inundating fresh areas and affecting 10 percent of the country's landmass, BSS news agency quoting FFWC officials reported.

The officials feared that the rivers at all the four basins may swell further and some of them might cross danger marks at some more points, the agency added.

The rivers in spate and above their red mark are Dharla at Kurigram, Korotoa at Panchagarh, Punarbhava at Dinajpur and Padma at Bhagyakul in Munshiganj, Surma at Kanaighat in Sylhet and in Sunamganj, Kushiara at Amalshid in Sylhet, Monu at Monu railway bridge, Khowai at Habiganj, Gumti at Comilla and Muhuri at Parshuram and Haldia at Naryanhat in Chittagong.

BWDB said they are protecting the embankments by dumping sandbags.

Meteorological Department forecast moderate to heavy downpour in the southern region and light to moderate rain in northern region in the next 24 hours beginning 6 p.m. yesterday.

Met Office said that the highest rainfall of 87 mm yesterday was recorded in Majdi followed by Mymensingh with 47 mm, Cox's Bazar 35 mm, Khulna 33 mm, Satkhira 27 mm, Bhola 23 mm, Barisal 25 mm, Khepupara 21 mm, Tangail 20 mm, Bogra 5 mm and Rangpur 2 mm.

Our correspondent from Feni said that situation in the district deteriorated further with heavy rainfall and onrush of water down the hills in Tripura. Officials said that fresh areas have been flooded yesterday at Feni sadar thana and Chhagalnaiya thana.

Road communication was also widely disrupted in the district as the Feni and Matamuhuri rivers were flowing above danger level. Flood control embankments of Muhuri, Selonia and Mohua rivers developed breaches at 15 points. At least 400 feet of the embankments were washed away.

Our Kushiara correspondent quoting local people reported that a 13-year old boy, Zahidul, drowned in floodwater at Bazumara village in Chilmari union. The overall flood situation in the district deteriorated yesterday with inundation of fresh areas due to heavy rain and continued rise of the Padma and Goral.

Khaleda protests seizure of property

By Staff Correspondent

BNP Chairperson and Leader of the Opposition in Parliament Begum Khaleda Zia has strongly protested seizure of moveable property from the residences of three DCC ward commissioners, who are also her party leaders.

In a statement yesterday, she said the government has not only filed false cases against an unspecified number of BNP leaders and workers, but has also started confiscating property without any investigation into the July 7 bomb explosion that left a policeman killed and eight others injured.

Begum Zia directly charged the government with the killing saying that secret killers belonging to the ruling Awami League had committed the crime to instigate the police against BNP as well as to destroy the image of the party.

Quoting press report, the BNP Chairperson said the duty of police team that was following the BNP procession had ended near Golap Shah Mazar. But later, the police team was brought to the Zero Point in a pre-planned way.

Begum Zia reiterated her demand for formation of a judicial inquiry committee into the July 7 incident. She also demanded immediate release of all arrested leaders and activists, return of seized goods and withdrawal of the 'false cases'.

Mongla Port workers postpone strike

BAGERHAT, July 13: Workers of the Mongla Port have postponed the strike till Friday (July 16) after an assurance given by the State Minister for Relief and the Port Chairman of looking into their grievances reports UNB.

Banda Sramik Sangha, a labour body of some 5,000 workers, went on an indefinite strike from Monday to press their 12-point demand.

The demands include payment of arrears wages, wage hike and medical facilities.

Rashidpur Gasfield Drilling of third well begins today

From Iqbal Siddiquee

SYLHET, July 13: Drilling of a new well in Rashidpur Gasfield in Habiganj district will begin tomorrow.

All set for the drilling. The rig has been erected, an official told The Daily Star last night.

The well, named 'Rashidpur-6', is the last of three wells being drilled in the same structure under the project — 'Gas Infrastructure Development Programme (GIDP)' financed by the World Bank and IDA, the official said.

Drilling of the first well — Rashidpur-5 — began January 5 this year and was completed in the first week of April while drilling of Rashidpur-7 began April 22 and was completed in

Agrani MD says

Agrani Bank managing director AKM Nazmul Huq yesterday defended his action in transferring 76 officials outside the capital, saying it was the only option he had to reshuffle the state-run bank, reports UNB.

"It was not a major shake up I had a plan to transfer some more officials," he told newsmen at his chamber.

"I couldn't sit idle in a river without any stream. I had to take step to revamp the bank," said Huq, who took over on June 6 this year.

Transfer of 76 senior officials, ordered just in one month of his joining the bank sparked protests which ultimately led him to seek voluntary retirement Monday.

The MD, however, said he sought retirement not under any pressure.

Before submitting his application to the Finance Secretary, Huq suspended transfer orders he issued on July 8.

Earlier in a memorandum submitted to Dr S A Malek, political adviser, to the Prime Minister on July 10, disgruntled officials served with transfer orders demanded suspension of the transfer and removal of the MD.

mid-June. Prospective gas zones were struck within the desired depths in both the wells, the source informed, adding, these are now ready for production.

The location of well-6 is about seven kilometres off the well-7. The rig used in the drilling of well-7 will be used in the well-6 also.

The project is being implemented by the Sylhet Gasfields Limited, a unit of Petrobangla under its GIDP. Oil and Natural Gas Corporation of India (ONGC) was given the work of drilling under a contract signed on May 27 last year. Japan Oil Engineering Company Limited is working as consultant for the project.

Under the project, drilling of three exploration wells would cost about Tk 124 crore including a foreign component of the 83.4 crore.

After completion of drilling of the wells, about 90 mmcf of gas, 72 barrels of motor spirit and condensate will be produced everyday. After processing, the dry gas would be supplied to the national grid, the official said.

With a view to processing the raw gas two silica-gel plants of 45 mmcf capacity each are also being installed at a nearby location at a cost of Tk 117 crore, provided by the World Bank and IDA.

Sex workers

From Page 1

ing, weaving, sewing, etc. Earlier, Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina had declared a grant of Tk two crore for the rehabilitation programme of the women and children in the brothels.

The UNDP is also scheduled to begin a Tk 10 crore rehabilitation programme from tomorrow (Wednesday) for the four red-light areas of the country including Tanbazar and Nimtali brothels. UNDP will work along with the government.

Contractor shot dead by extortionists

By Staff Correspondent

A young contractor was shot dead by a group of extortionists in the city's Faridabad area yesterday afternoon.

The dead was identified as Mohammed Wasim, 22, son of Nor Hossain and a resident of Dhalkanagar in Shyampur area.

According to police, the incident took place at about 2pm while he was supervising repair work of a sewerage pipeline at Faridabad.

The gang demanded toll from Wasim which he refused to pay.

Contractor

From Page 1

notified the DC's office about four days ago that the inlet point was dangerous. But none took the warnings seriously. One source quoted the DC as telling him, "We are compiling reports about the inlet".

Some WDB engineers at the spot said they had checked the inlet even four hours before it gave in. Shafiqul Alam Sarkar, the WDB engineer in charge of the embankment said one of the engineers had left the spot at midnight, about four hours before it gave in.

There was also an allegation that the Army was mobilised too late.

WDB's Chief Engineer, Abu Taher Chowdhury claimed that the inlet collapsed due to unusual rise in water level of the Gumti. He said heavy rainfall in the upstream caused the river to swell and create pressure on its banks.

The DC however denied the allegations and said all efforts were made to keep the inlet intact.

Parents of Azad appeal for justice

By Staff Correspondent

Parents of Azad who was gunned down outside the district court premises in the old part of the city recently appealed for justice and proper investigation into the killing.

The appeal was made by Hazi Md. Muklesur Rahman and Shahabuddin Begum, parents of Azad, at a press conference at the Jatiya Press Club yesterday. Ataur Rahman Azad, 30, was gunned down outside the district court premises moments after he emerged from the Court of the Third Additional Sessions' Judge after hearing of a case on June 29 morning.

The parents alleged that as the criminals were maintaining relations with high-ups, so police are very much reluctant to arrest them.

Azad was accused in 15 cases, most of which were political. He got bail in 12 cases. Three police officers implicated Azad in charge sheet of several cases to take revenge, the father alleged.

The parents also said that when they had gone to their native village at Comilla to bury Azad, police tried to brand Azad and his brother Kochi as terrorists.

"If Azad was a terrorist, how did he get bail in twelve cases," he asked.

Rahman also said that Kafilur thana police have failed to arrest any of the accused. Rather, they are now trying to prove that Kochi is a terrorist. He also said Kochi is doing business in the area and he was attacked by the terrorists several times. They had attacked Kochi and Azad to kill them on December 16 last year.

Kashmir militants to 'change positions' on Kargil front

ISLAMABAD, July 13: Kashmiri militants, in what appeared to be a face-saving formula, today rejected government appeals to withdraw from India's Kargil sector of Kashmir but said they would, for now, "change positions", reports Reuters.

"For the time being, the mujahideen have formulated a new strategy to carry out their operations by changing their positions on the present Kargil front," the United Jihad Council umbrella group said in a

statement. But the guerilla alliance maintained its public posture of rejecting Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif's agreement with US President Bill Clinton.

"A withdrawal from Kargil

See also page 9

as a consequence of any international agreement or appeal is out of the question", the 15-group alliance said in a statement after leaders of key guerilla groups reviewed the

government appeal.

The statement gave no indication as to where guerilla forces, now reported to be leaving Kargil under a weekend deal between India and Pakistan, might move to next.

Western defence officials said that the insurgents had no choice but to swallow pride and go along with the government strategy after Sharif met several of the alliance's leaders and asked for their 'help' in solving the two-month crisis.



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