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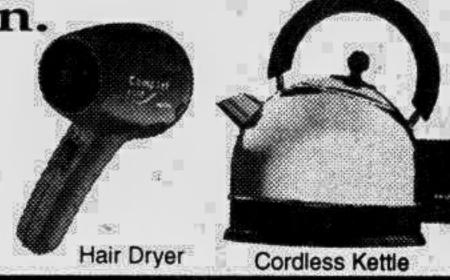
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could not be estimated imme-

Fire Brigade sources quoting the local people said the fire originated from a burning mosquito coil at a shanty and soon engulfed the entire slum, leaving 42 families shelterless.

## J transit accord

## BNP allowed Indian carriers, which we didn't: Hasina

BAGHABARI (Sirajganj), Aug 3: Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina has criticised the opposition for calling hartal against the proposed transshipment of Indian goods through Bangladesh, saying they are out to block development and wel-

have decided to give transshipment (facility) by protecting country's interest, they are calling hartals to hinder development," she said at a huge public meeting at Baghabari High School ground today.

"What's the justification of calling hartal against a matter that BNP had earlier given to India? What is the justification of calling hartal to cause sufferings to the people?" she asked. The prime minister said BNP had created a scope for In-

dia to transport Indian goods by its carriers through Bangladesh by making transit agreement in 1989 and through singing SAI A in 1993. e said the present govent is going to strike a deal India that its goods will be

carried through Bangladesh by

Bangladeshi transports, which will benefit the country's economy and protect its interest. Through this transshipment, the government would be benefited economically. This will create jobs for the local people, she said adding BNP is opposing this because this will protect the interest of the coun-

agreements with India.' She said BNP's hartal is not for the people, not for upholding the demands or hopes and aspiration of the people, but for

leader of spreading "lies" against the ruling party. "She said that from the CHT region up to Feni will be part of India

after signing of the peace agreement, which was not true." "She said water will not come after the Ganges Water Sharing Treaty and sounds of Azan will not be heard from mosques, if AL government comes to the power, which were also not true," Hasina told the

She said the government has taken up a programme to set up community health clinic throughout the country. Under the programme, community health clinics will be set up for

every 6,000 people.

Referring to the local demand, she said her government has undertaken special programme for the development of North Bengal, which was ne-

Sirajganj, special programme' will be taken up for the development, she added.

The meeting, presided over by Sirajganj district AL presi-dent Motahar Hossain Talukder, was also addressed, by AL presidium member Abdul Jalil, State Minister for Information Abu Sayeed, AL leaders Abdul Mannan, Dr Mostafa Jalal Mohiuddin, Deputy Minister for Water Resources Hasibur Rahman Swapan, Abdul Latif Mirza MP, district AL general secretary Abu Yusuf Surja and former Chhatra League leaders Sahhe Alam, Iqbalur Rahim and Mahabubul Huq Shakeel

joined the meeting ignoring the scorching summer heat.

At least 275 people were

killed and 460 injured in Mon-

day's head-on train collision

and rescue operations were

continuing, AFP quoting PTI

collision said the death toll

rise in the toll as bodies are be-

trate Prashant as saying.

(2025 MGT on Sunday).

shoes and bedrolls.

paramilitaries.

vesterday.

mands.

from their lands.

of twisted metal and leaving a

trail of broken glass, suitcases.

had been a bomb, but Prashant

told Reuters signal failure was

to blame for India's worst train

disaster since a collision

claimed 350 lives four years

victims abroad the Brahmapu-

tra Mail were soldiers and

Aborigines lay

siege to TNO's

office in Naogaon

From Our Correspondent

hundred people under the ban-

ner of Jatiya Adibashi

for Aborigines) laid a siege to

Mohadevpur TNO's office in

Naogaon for about six hours

arrest and withdrawal of what

they said, illegal occupants

procession at the thana head-

quarters chanting various slo-

gans in favour of their de-

of the TNO's office, the leaders

of the association alleged that

they were being tortured by

Moejuddin Moina, Safijuddin,

Rafiquddin and Sirajuddin who

'illegally' occupied their lands.

Addressing a rally in front

Earlier, they brought out a

They demanded immediate

Parishad (National Association

RAJSHAHI, Aug 3: Several

Officials said many of the

Early reports suggested there

Officials at the site of the

"There will be a substantial

West Bengal train crash

275 bodies recovered;

rly minister quits

said today.

could cross 400.

### 25 shanties gutted in N'ganj From Our Correspondent

NARAYANGANJ, Aug 3: At

least 15 people were injured and 23 shanties gutted in a fire at a slum at Dhakkhin Para under Rupganj thana in Narayanganj in the early hours of today.

The injured were admitted to different hospitals of the district. The extent of damage

fare of the people, reports UNB.
"BNP signed transit agreements with India, but when we

Hasina, who arrived here to open the third private level barge-mounted power plant, said that the government has taken steps to solve the power problem and supply electricity throughout the country.

glected in the past.

Industrial park will be set at weavers, and other demands of the locality will be met for early

Huge number of people

Cops in riot gear stand vigil in front of the BNP office in the city during hartal hours yesterday.

- Star photo by Amran Hossain

## Impact of '98 flood on city's environment

By Special Correspondent

Floods in 1998 had a number of impacts on the environment of Dhaka city where water stayed above danger level for 65 days, leaving some bizarre examples and lessons for the future on how best to cope with the deluge, an assessment of environmental impacts of the 1998 flood on Dhaka city said.

The Department of Environment (DoE) conducted the assessment in the wake of the century's worst floods last year. The summary and the reports were presented at a two-day workshop which began at the LGED Bhaban in the city yesterday.

Finance Minister SAMS Kibria opened the workshop while Forests and Environment Minister Begum Sajeda Choudhury chaired the opening session. Dr Ainun Nishat, country representative of International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN), presented the

summary. The findings revealed that while the flood embankments and polders kept the water off on three sides, barring 'gaps' on western front, the faulty 'unblocked culverts and unclosed regulator and drainage congestion' left the posh villas on the eastern side of the city at the mercy of Balu river which swelled above 1988 level.

Some highlights of the summary and reports are as fol-

\*The WASA pumps worked full-time at Rampura to flush out water on the other side of the road, but did not at all have any impact as the sluice gate below remained wide open.

ing slowly extricated from one of the four telescoped coaches," PTI quoted local district magis-\*The Titas Gas company had an unwanted gift for its engineers -- 1500 bubbles in the Bodies were being pulled out submerged city areas pinfrom the mangled engines and pointed hitherto unknown

13 carriages at Gaisal station, leaks for plugging. 400 km north of Calcutta. \*Fish farmers found two or Rescue workers had yet to three of their stock swimming access three of the carriages, away while thieves stole 16 per which each had at least 70 pascent. The escapees from fish sengers on board, reports said. farms included predators like The Awadh-Assam Express, Tilapia, African Cat Fish and bound for Guwahati in the Grass Carp who could decimate northeastern state of Assam, other varieties in the flood ploughed into the Delhi-bound plains. The impact could be Brahmaputra Mail at 1:55 am

known in few years. \*City's water was fouled, Six carriages of one train contaminated with sewage and tore into seven of the other, rubbish. trapping passengers in a jumble

\*A majority of 31 per cent took it as a curse while 14 per cent blamed excessive rainfall for the deluge. Moreover, 10 per cent thought it was the water from India and five per cent believed it was the Farakka Barrage that caused the floods. \*The poor helped each other,

the middle-class did not, (found themselves in the most disadvantageous situation) while the rich helped themselves. About two million people were affected, nearly 90 per cent of the homes in the affected areas went under water, 61 out of 90 DC wards were affected, 25 severely; electric lines, gas connections and telephones did not

\*Two-hundred-ninety-six relief camps including 229 school, coslege, madrassah and 20 residential buildings, 10 community centres, provided shelters to 236,000 people. mostly poor who moved after losing their jhupris and failing to cope with the floods that left them lobless.

\*All relief camps did not get equal amount of relief materials, those with "better communication" received more supply while food supply was erratic. Water supply and sanitation provisions were not sufficient in most camps.

\*Those who did not move to camps had to do without power and gas and faced problems in cooking, availing water for drinking and sanitation, suffered loss of household assets. lack of privacy, from polluted atmosphere and foul air. Political parties, groups and NGOs were active in the camps.

\* Some 1.15,790 diarrhoeal patients reported for treatment and 178 died.

\*Collection of solid wastes and garbage was non-functional in a city which generates about 3500-4000 tons of solid waste every day (0.5 kg per capita daily). Toxic and hazardous wastes were also produced from industries (mainly tanneries, pharmaceuticals and clinics) within the city.

\*All types of liquid wastes including human excreta and industrial waste got mixed with flood water. Large amount of See page 11 Col 7

## Bangladesh-Myanmar border trade

# up jetty at Teknaf

set up a jetty on the river Naf at export and import of goods to bilateral border trade agreement between Bangladesh and Myanmar signed in 1994, reports BSS.

an inter-ministerial meeting in the city with Commerce and Industries Minister Tofail Ahmed in the chair.

improve the infrastructure and services for speedy and uninterrupted movement of goods by roadway and waterway between the two countries.

install a pontoon at the jetty point, construct a display-cumsales centre in the proposed jetty area, a culvert at Ghumdhum on the river Naf, and arrange visa and service facilities for passengers and business-

A five-member committee has been formed with the commerce secretary as the convenor to monitor the implementation of the decisions. Other members are: Land secretary, shipping secretary, chairman and vice-

# to go by 2001,

BAGHABARI, Sirajganj, Aug 3: Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina today inaugurated the 130 MW barge mounted power plant giving an assurance that the country's power shortage would go by 2001, reports BSS.

Bijoyer Alo, the combined cycle barge mounted power plant in the private sector will generate at present 90 MW electricity in the 'simple cycle' and another barge with steam turbine will arrive shortly from Malaysia which will generate 40 megawatt.

# Government has decided to

Teknaf to facilitate and expand and from Myanmar under the It was decided yesterday at

The meeting also decided to

The government will also

## Baghabari plant opens Power shortage assures PM

Westmont Group of Companies of Malaysia installed this modern power plant at a cost of 100 million US dollars.

# Govt decides to set

chairman of Bangladesh-Myanmar Business Promotion Council. The meeting also decided to

take initiative to accomplish Bangladesh-Myanmar Coastal Shipping Agreement. This will be an alternative arrangement for the movement of goods through waterway to and from Cox's Bazar and Sittwe of Myanmar until the construction of Teknaf-Sittwe road which is under construction in Myanmar side.

 A team will go to Myanmar soon to discuss and settle the issue with its government.

Stressing the need for full functioning of the border trade between the two countries the minister asked the concerned agencies to complete the work as soon as possible. He said the aim of the government is to increase bilateral border trade especially Bangladesh's export to Myanmar as "we have wider scope to expand export." He informed the meeting that his Myanmar counterpart would visit Bangladesh within a month where both sides would discuss the issues with a view to increasing bilateral trade.

Through this border trade, Bangladesh exported fertilizer, cement, MS rod, medicine, fabrics. PVC pipes, crushed tobacco, etc. worth 1.60 lakh dollars to Myanmar while imported rice, paddy, wheat, shrimp, turmeric, ginger, dal, red pepper, bamboo, cane, umbrella, dried fish, etc. worth 1.30 lakh dollars.

The border trade was better in 1997-98 and previous two years as total average annual trade was 12 lakh dollars due to communication problem, mainly, the trade was coming down where the government is trying to reinvigorate the border trade through improving infrastructure and other facili-

## Dilip Kumar joins Cong campaign

From Pallab Bhattacharya

NEW DELHI, Aug 3: Thespian actor Dilip Kumar has joined the campaign of India's main opposition party Congress for the coming general elections raising hopes in party circles about wooing minorities' votes.

The septuagenarian legend of Hindi cinema has already addressed two election meetings organised by Congress in the central Indian state of Madhya Pradesh ruled by the party.

During his speeches, he said the stability of coalition governments cannot be relied upon and the Congress was the only party that could provide stabil-

Dilip Kumar defended the candidature of Congress President Sonia Gandhi to become India's Prime Minister and termed as "unreasonable" the raking up of her "foreign origin" issue by the ruling BJP, its allies and some major opposition parties.

The actor said Sharad Pawar, who quit Congress who formed a separate party was his origin.

between India and Pakistan should not be made an issue in the elections because there were "more important issues" to be raised.

tention to either join politics or contest the coming hustings. Dilip Kumar is in a 17-member panel set up by the Congress seeking to swing minority vot-

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# They don't know what stuff I'm made of'

## Sonia replies to BJP during TV talks From Pallab Bhattacharya

away from it. NEW DELHI, Aug 3: Congress

Chief Sonia Gandhi will contest the coming general elections, she herself confirmed it last On the other hand, former prime minister Inder Kumar

Gujral announced that he would not contest the poll. Sonia Gandhi not only confirmed her electoral intentions but told her political opponents during an interview with a television network that "they do not know what stuff I am

Asked what she thought of reports that the BJP is unlikely to make her foreign origin an election issue, Sonia Gandhi said she is not convinced.

made of."

'Whether they would raise it or not does not worry me. The people will decide. They (the BJP) don't know what stuff I am made of," she told the "Star News.

The Congress chief said her party would be able to mobilise votes of the minority community in the coming elections. "From all accounts I have

from workers and institutions. the Muslim community is coming back to us and placing its trust with us," she said claiming that this was largely at the expense of Samajwadi Party led by Mulayam Singh Yadav. Yadav dismisses as "disin-

formation" campaign by the Congress the contention that Muslims are disenchanted with Samajwodi Party and moving

Sonia Gandhi said she was yet to decide on the Constituency she would seek election from and asserted that the very decision of hers to be in the fray would enthuse Congress workers in Uttar Pradesh, politically and electorally the

most crucial state which sends the highest number (85) of members to Lok Sabha. Observers say this remark by Sonia Gandhi is indicative of the possibility of her contesting the poll from Amethi, the

Sonia Canlli

and former prime minister Rajiv Gandhi had held, or from Rae Bareily, the constituency once held by her mother-in-law Indira Gandhi. Amethi and Rae Bareily are in Uttar Pradesh. Meanwhile, Inder Kumar Gujral, in a statement yesterday, said he was opting out of the elections because of the split in his Janata Dal Party. "Since the unfortunate split in the Janata Dal, I have decided not to join either side and

constituency her late husband

with this in mind. I am not contesting the forthcoming elections to the Parliament," he Gujral had comested the previous general elections from Jalandhar constituency in Punjab after the ruling Akali Dal there, an ally of BJP, agreed not

there despite murmurs of protest from BJP. But his hopes of a repeat of 1998 this time were dashed when Akali Dal announced that it would field its nominee from

to put up its candidate from

The Congress also does not appear to be in a mood to help Gujral's electoral aspirations. The party's Punjab unit chief Amarinder Singh made it clear yesterday that Congress had its own candidates for Jalandhar. Since Janata Dal is virtually

non-existent in Punjab, it is highly unlikely if Congress would oblige Gujral who had quit Congress in the eighties.

Jalandar.

### 'good friend' but he should not have opposed Sonia Gandhi's projection as Prime Ministerial candidate because of her Italian He said the Kargil standoff

Despite his election speeches, Dilip Kumar has made it clear that he has no in-

ers in its favour. The only non-Muslim member of the panel is actor-turned-politician Sunil Dutt.

Grey BAT/CORA 1.99

# try. "BNP should recall their obstructing development. She accused the opposition

### NEW DELHI, Aug 3: India's railway minister. Nitish Kumar, resigned today following the train collision which killed and injured hundreds of people, reports Reuters. "Railway Minister Nitish Kumar resigned from the union

cabinet, owning moral respon-

sibility for yesterday's train accident at Gaisal near New Jalpaiguri in West Bengal," the UNI news agency said. Kumar, speaking to UNI in the eastern city of Patna, said the accident was probably due to human failure. Kumar said he had sent a letter of resigna-

### hari Vajpayee, whom he would meet in New Delhi later in the **BEXIM** Bank

tion to Prime Minister Atal Be-

opens By Staff Correspondent Finance Minister Shah AMS Kibria yesterday opened a new private bank, Bengal Export Import Bank Limited (BEXIM

Speaking at the launching ceremony as chief guest at a city hotel, the finance minister blamed the opposition BNP for maintaining a double standard regarding the transhipments. "While in power BNP signed

an agreement approving transit

to India and today, it is observ-

ing hartals which is self-con-

tradictory and can not be justified for the economic development of the country," he said. Pointing to the country's banking sector, Kibria reiterated that the government would take stern actions against loan defaulters and said the Bangladesh Bank was rightly using its regulatory power to

fight indiscipline in the banking system. "The country has to emerge from the default culture. The future of the nation depends on the restoration of discipline in the financial sector," he said. The whole nation will suffer if the financial sector is destroyed." "Those days are gone when one could play foul with

the depositors' money. Bangladesh Bank Governor Dr Mohammed Farashuddin attended the inaugural function as special guest while it was addressed, among others, by Shahjahan Kabir and Mohammad Lokiattullah, chairman and managing director of BEXIM Bank respectively. BEXIM Bank is the 21st private bank of the country Details on page 6

Editor: Mahfuz Anam

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