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158 garment units set up with help of Agrani Bank shut so far

By Staff Correspondent. As many as 158 garment factories set up with financial help of Agrani Bank closed down over the years, sources said.

The issue came up during a discussion between the bank officials and a delegation of Bangladesh Garments Manufacturers' and Exporters' Association yesterday.

The bank officials agreed to cooperate in reviving operation of the closed factories. There will be two meetings every month between the BGMEA and the bank officials to discuss the problems of the factories, meeting sources said.

Anisul Haq, BGMEA vice-president, and M. A. Yousuf, managing director of Agrani Bank, led their respective delegations, according to a BGMEA press release.

The BGMEA delegation urged the bank officials to arrange working capital with soft term for some factories that have been facing closure for long.

The factories that have been closed down will be able to repay their liabilities with the bank once they resume operation, said the BGMEA vice-president.

The Agrani Bank MD said the bank would take necessary steps to revive the factories.

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Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina addressing officers and soldiers at Dhaka Cantonment yesterday. The event marked the 30th anniversary of the Bangladesh Army. —PID photo

Govt firm to keep armed forces above politics: PM

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina said her government was determined to keep the armed forces above politics and increase their institutional prestige, report agencies.

"Many undesirable incidents took place in the armed forces during the time of grabbing power through killings, coups and conspiracies after the killing of the father of the nation," she said while addressing the 30th founding day of army headquarters at Senakunja in the city yesterday morning.

She said it is important for members of the armed forces to earn the people's confidence to safeguard the nation's sovereignty.

"The armed forces have already earned the people's faith and confidence by the steps taken by the government, which has also closed the distance between the armed forces and the people," she said.

The Army Headquarters was established in Mujibnagar under the leadership of Commander-in-Chief of the Liberation War Col M A G Osmani on April 12, 1971.

Hasina said that after the brutal killing of the father of the nation on August 15, 1975, the armed forces became victims of unwanted incidents.

As the politics of killing, coup and conspiracy were introduced in the post-75 era, the armed forces were used for political purpose that created a gap between the people and the army, said Hasina.

During that time, hundreds of officials and jawans were killed indiscriminately while thousands were sacked unnecessarily.

"After assuming power, we took steps to close the gap between the people and members of the armed forces, and regain the people's confidence in the army."

Hasina said through their involvement in various welfare-oriented activities, the country's armed forces have earned the trust and confidence of the people, which is certainly encouraging.

The present government has been continuing its efforts to build a modern and skilled armed forces, a symbol of pride, independence and sovereignty of the country.

To strengthen the overall defence strategy and the armed forces, the government has formed an infantry battalion for the Bangabandhu Bridge, as well as an air defence regiment and a riverine engineering battalion.

Hasina said the government has completed the formalities to procure a modern frigate for the navy and has bought two gunboats and the latest 'action speed tactical trainer'.

The formalities to procure another ship for the navy are in the final stages. The Khulna Shipyard has also been handed over to navy.

For the air force, modern equipment and fighters, including Mig-29 and C-130 carrier aircraft, have been bought.

She said the Armed Forces War College will open in 2001. An Armed Forces Medical College and a Military Institute of Science and Technology have also been set up.

Despite resource constraints, the government has increased the salaries and allowances of government officials and employees. It has decided to introduce a time-scale for the armed forces in the next budget.

Hasina said the Trust Bank has opened in different cantonments. "The government has also introduced health insurance for the army."

"We have approved a new DOH in Mirpur for the private housing of army officials," she said. "Almost 30 hectares has been set aside for the project."

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Delhi seeks to form 'united front' to fight drought

NEW DELHI, Apr 25: The Indian government sought to present a united political front after an all-party crisis meeting today to address the drought affecting 50 million people across the country, reports AFP.

However, clear signs of dissent remained among opposition groups and even within the ruling coalition on how best to combat the worsening drought in the states of Gujarat, Rajasthan, Madhya Pradesh, Orissa and Andhra Pradesh.

"Everybody agreed ... that this terrible drought should be treated as a national calamity, and all political parties should rise above narrow considerations to fight the crisis," Parliamentary Affairs Minister Pramod Mahajan told reporters after the meeting of 40 MPs from 21 parties.

"Everyone stressed the need for long-term planning and a long term solution for drinking water, as well as fodder for cattle and adequate foodgrains."

Pressed for details of the meeting, Mahajan admitted that opposition leader Sonia Gandhi had complained that the affected states were being treated differently according to their political hue.

Mahajan said Prime Minister Atal Behari Vajpayee, who had called the crisis meeting, responded by pledging that the government would "never consider the (political) colour of the state" when it came to providing relief aid.

Earlier Tuesday, the central government had announced the provision of 9.5 billion rupees (220 million dollars) in drought relief for the worst-hit states.

"The prime minister made it clear that no relief work would be hampered due to lack of money," Mahajan said.

However, a senior leader of the ruling BJP party in Andhra Pradesh, Yerra Naidu, who attended the crisis meeting, complained that the level of federal assistance was insufficient.

"We have requested assistance of 7.3 billion rupees, but the government of India has only given 750 million," said Naidu, whose party is a key ally of Vajpayee's ruling coalition.

Meanwhile, Orissa Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik said his state was still trying to cope with the aftermath of a devastating cyclone that hit the eastern coastal state last year.

"I've just come out from the horrors of the super cyclone five months ago and I'm facing an acute water crisis," he said.

India's main communist party issued a statement slammng the government's "lackadaisical attitude" in dealing with the drought.

Vajpayee, in an address to the nation late Sunday, had called for public donations to help tide affected states over the drought.

"The all-party meeting agreed that all MPs should donate one month's salary to the prime minister's relief fund."

Preparation of new voters' list begins May 15

The Election Commission (EC) will begin preparation of new voters' list on May 15, reports BSS.

The EC urged the citizens yesterday to cooperate with the staff who will go home-to-home from the date to collect information about the eligible voters.

According to EC rules, any Bangladeshi who has reached the age of 18 years on January 1, 2000 is eligible to be a voter. One person will be a voter usually at the place where he or she lives in.

A person will not be allowed to be a voter or cast his or her vote in more than one place. A person will have to be present, provide personal details on a prescribed form and sign or put thumb impression on it during the information collection, the EC said.

Any voter, who has been listed previously, will have to enroll his name on the new list.

One shot dead in city

Unidentified assailants shot a young man to death at city's Mirpur area on Monday night, reports UNB.

Hospital sources said the miscreants attacked Sirajul Haq Shaheed, 25, of Mirpur Section 6, on his way home from Block C of the same area at about 10 pm.

They stabbed him indiscriminately and shot in his chest prior to leave the spot safely. Shaheed died on way to Dhaka Medical College Hospital, the sources said.

6 HC judges take oath

Six new judges took oath as judges of the High Court Division of the Supreme Court yesterday, reports UNB.

Muhammad Latifur Rahman, Md Abdul Qudus, Md Abdul Aziz, Bijon Kumar Das, ABM Khairul Huq and Md Mozammel Hossain took oath as permanent judges of the High Court Division.

All the six judges, earlier, worked as Additional Judges in the High Court division.

APAC observes hartal in Sylhet

SYLHET, Apr 25: A dawn-to-dusk hartal called by All Party Action Committee (opposition) was observed in the district peacefully today, reports UNB.

Lok Sabha told 3846 Bangladeshis held along Indo-Pak border

NEW DELHI, Apr 25: Indian Minister of State for Home Affairs I D Swami today told parliament that about 3,846 Bangladeshis were apprehended along the Indo-Pakistan border during the period between 1997 and March 2000, reports BSS.

Replying to a question in the Lok Sabha, he said quoting "available reports" that some Bangladeshi immigrants crossed over to Pakistan in search of better livelihood.

He said in view of the long and porous border with Bangladesh and also on account of various push and pull factors, many Bangladeshis had managed to sneak into various parts of India.

"Due to ethnic and linguistic similarities, they are able to mingle easily with the local population," he added.

Answering another question as to what step the Indian government had taken to stop "rising cases of prostitution and other crimes committed by the infiltrators," Swami said instructions had been issued to the state governments and union territory administrations to deal firmly with those found violating law of the land.

JRC survey 132 students

Officials of the Sylhet-Assam Sector of the joint river commission began their first joint survey last July. They met four times in two months to discuss developments. The officials agreed to complete the survey by the next dry season. Officials of both the countries agreed to complete the works of the joint commission in a year.

The students and their guardians were surprised to know that they would not be able to sit for the examination, submitted the lawyer and made a plea that the students should be allowed to appear at the examination.

Earlier, Additional Attorney General Mahbubul Alam said the government is not responsible for the lapses for which 132 students of the college would not be able to appear at the examination.

Cops beaten up

From Page 1. The police officers were flogged and asked him to accompany them to the Minto Road DB office. Khosru agreed.

But when they reached near the Kakrail Church, they stopped their bike, intimidated him and took away the dollars, Khosru alleged.

Students expelled

From Page 1. The decision was taken at a meeting of the university with DU vice Chancellor Prof AK Azad Chowdhury in the chair. The meeting was attended by DU pro-VC Prof M Shahadat Ali, Treasurer Prof Abul Hashem and Provosts of Zahurul Huq Hall, Mohsin Hall and Ziaur Rahman Hall.

The DU authorities also formed a three-member body to investigate the snatching incident. Headed by Pro-VC M Shahadat Ali, the other member of the committee are Provost of Zahurul Huq Hall Prof Abdul Mannan and University Proctor Dr AKM Nurun Nabi.

APAC observes hartal in Sylhet

SYLHET, Apr 25: A dawn-to-dusk hartal called by All Party Action Committee (opposition) was observed in the district peacefully today, reports UNB.

APAC called the hartal to protest filing of case against a Khelafat Majlis leader Maulana Habibur Rahman.

Shops, offices, banks and insurance offices remained closed and traffic movement came to a halt in the town during hartal.

However, vehicles outside the town were seen plying as usual and two trains left the Sylhet station two hours behind the schedule in the morning.

APAC leaders at a meeting in the afternoon at Court Point demanded withdrawal of cases filed against its leaders and workers, immediate release of the jailed leaders and workers and cancellation of naming of halls and buildings.

The meeting was addressed by Dr Shafiqur Rahman of Janmaat, MA Haque of BNP, Giasuddin of JP, Maksud Hossain of JAGPA.

Meanwhile, some 12 leaders and workers of APAC were released from jail today. They were granted bail by the court on Monday.

Rubel murder Proceedings adjourned till May 2

By Court Correspondent. The Third Additional Metropolitan Sessions Judge's Court, Dhaka yesterday adjourned the proceedings of the sensational Rubel murder case following a prayer for extension of time by the prosecution lawyers till May 2.

The Judge Mollah Mostafa Kamal adjourned the proceedings of the case as the prosecution witnesses in the case did not appear at the court yesterday.

Shamim Reza Rubel, 24, a BBA student of the Independent University, was picked up by a team of Detective Branch of Police from near his residence on July 23, 1998 and was tortured to death in the custody the same day.

All the accused, including AC Akran and Mukuli Begum were produced before the court during proceedings.

HC notices

From Page 1. sion asking them to reply why the 13th amendment to the Constitution should not be declared Ultra Vires of the Constitution. Those notices had already been replied.

As hearing of the writ began yesterday the Division Bench of the High Court comprising Justice Gholam Rabbani and Mohammad Latifur Rahman issued similar notices on the General Secretary of AL and Secretary General of BNP.

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