

World leaders mourn Assad

LONDON, June 11: Allies and adversaries of Syrian President Hafez al-Assad mourned his death, some pledging to press forwards for Middle East peace, some voicing concern for the future of the volatile region, reports Reuters.

Assad died on Saturday at the age of 69. The Syrian parliament immediately amended the constitution to make it possible for his 34-year-old son Bashar to succeed him.

Israel, long-time adversary of the wily leader once dubbed the "Mr No" of Middle East diplomacy, struck a conciliatory note.

"The government of Israel understands the grief of the Syrian people following the death of President Assad," said a statement issued by Prime Minister Ehud Barak's office.

"Israel worked in the past for a peace deal with Syria and will continue to work for this in the future with all future leadership," it said.

US President Bill Clinton, for whom final settlement would crown his last year in office, said he regretted there had been no overall deal during Assad's lifetime.

China mourned the death of Syrian President Hafez al-Assad, calling him a "respected friend" and expressing confidence that relations between the nations would continue to advance.

"President Assad was the outstanding leader of Syria who has contributed all his life to the development of the country and the happiness of the Syrian people," Xinhua news agency quoted Foreign Ministry spokesman Zhu Bangzao as saying today.

Russian President Vladimir Putin described Assad as a friend of Russia. He was also quoted as saying the Syrian leaders' death caused him concern for the future of the Middle East peace process.

French Prime Minister Lionel Jospin said France's concerns about Syria had been increased. He expressed the hope Syria would not face a period of instability and that a political team wanting peace would emerge.

The Arab world mourned Assad. Saudi Arabia said it would "continue to stand by the Syrian people and whoever they choose to succeed the departed president."

Chemical plant explosion kills four in Japan

TOKYO, June 11: Investigations began today into a massive explosion which ripped through a chemical plant in Japan Saturday, killing four people and injuring at least 27 others, a police spokesman said, reports AFP.

The blast gutted the plant, run by Nishin Chemical Co. Ltd. in a residential area in Gunma some 100 km north of Tokyo, and destroyed or damaged at least 80 houses.

A huge fire raged for six hours before being extinguished.

Police said a total of 151 officers and investigators had begun an on-the-spot inspection at the plant, where workers had been refining chemicals to be used semiconductor production.

"We started investigations this morning, mainly trying to find the cause of the explosion," said a spokesman for the Gunma Police Department.

The four killed were employees of the plant, while the injured included local residents.

Early revival of Israeli-Syrian peace talks unlikely

JERUSALEM, June 11: The death of Syrian President Hafez al-Assad has sounded the knell for a rapid resumption of the stalled Israeli-Syrian peace process as Damascus focuses its efforts on ensuring a smooth transfer of power, Israeli newspapers said today, reports AFP.

"It doesn't matter whether the power struggle in Damascus culminates in Assad's son Bashar or anyone else in power -- the peace process between Israel and Syria will be frozen now for an indefinite length of time," wrote the respected analyst Zeev Schiff in a front-page commentary in the Haaretz newspaper.

The death of Syria's autocratic ruler was splashed across the front pages of all Israeli newspapers, with columns of analysis and commentary inside.

Peace talks between the long-time foes resumed in December in the United States after an impasse of almost four years, but they broke down only weeks later in dispute over the fate of the occupied Golan Heights plateau, which Syria demands back as the price of peace.

Assad's son and designated heir Bashar, who is expected to be chosen by parliament later this month to become president, is unlikely to make concessions to win a deal with Israel.

"He will have to focus efforts at the start towards consolidating his rule and ousting domestic opponents and under the circumstances it is doubtful that he will take chances by pursuing a compromise agreement with Israel," Schiff added.

"He's sure to fear that such a move would be highly dangerous for him right now."

The best-selling Yediot Aharonot newspaper, quoting senior officials, said that Assad's death may accelerate the resumption of the negotiations in the long-run even though no progress can be expected in the near future as Syria tries to ensure a smooth transition.

"It is hard to believe that whoever receives the leadership, probably Bashar, will find time now to deal with the peace process," it quoted a senior political source as saying.

But the source added that Bashar was expected to have a combination of "Assad's toughness in terms of regime and a willingness in principle for peace and openness and an attempt to bring Syria into the 21st century."

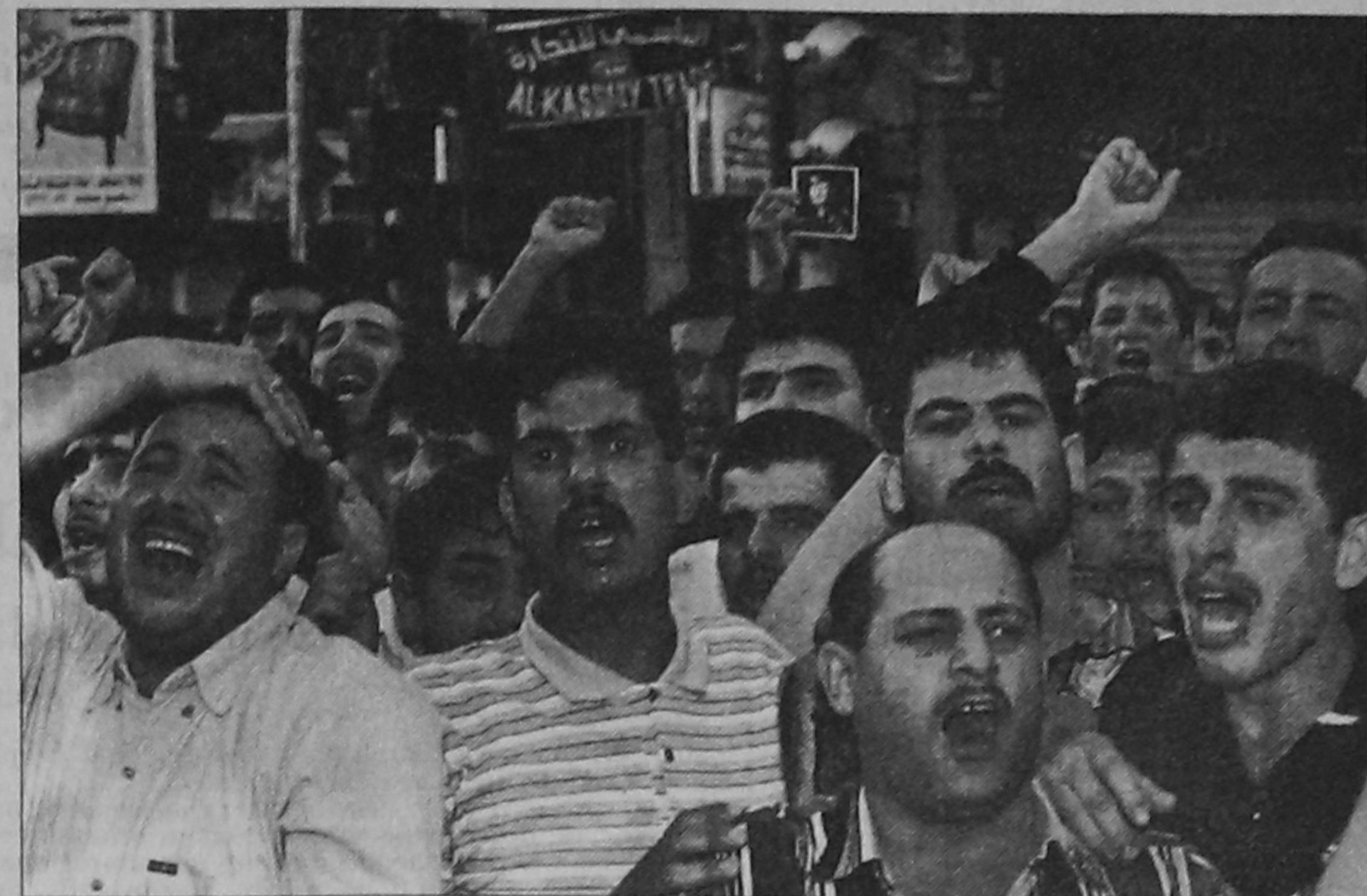
Yediot's columnist Nahum Barnea said Israelis had no reason to shed tears for Assad.

"The man who missed so many trains and through his intransigence and hesitation stopped all of the processes has concluded his role in Middle Eastern history."

He said however that once the situation in Damascus stabilises, either with Bashar or another leader, "there may be a real chance to reach an arrangement with Syria and have Syria open up to the west."

Former Israeli ambassador to the United States, Itamar Rabinovich, who was involved in previous negotiations with Syria, spoke of the "mixed legacy" left by Assad in an article in the Hebrew newspaper Maariv: "The idea of peace with Israel but at a high price."

The Maariv said Assad's death moves the peace negotiations "into second or even third place."



Syrian citizens mourn the death of President Hafez al-Assad in the streets of Damascus on Saturday. His son Bashar, 34, is widely expected to succeed him after parliament amended the constitution which stipulated that a candidate to be head of state must be at least 40. — AFP photo

Korean summit delayed by one day

SEOUL, June 11: The first-ever summit between leaders of North Korea and South Korea has been delayed by one day and will start Tuesday, the South Korean government announced today, reports AP.

North Korea requested the delay in a telephone call Saturday night, citing "unavoidable technical reasons," said Park June-Young, chief spokesman for South Korean President Kim Dae-jung.

South Korea "accepted the delay in consideration of the position of the host country," Park said in a statement. The three-day summit will end Thursday, instead of Wednesday, he said. No further details were released.

North Korean media have not yet reported the delay, South Korean officials said.

Unification Minister Park Jae-kyu said the delay does not mean in any way that the summit would be in jeopardy.

"The North side requested the delay to make thorough preparations, so there will be no problems with President Kim's visit to and stay in Pyongyang," the national Yonhap news agency quoted Park as saying.

Yonhap also quoted the unification minister as saying that a 30-member South Korean advance team was now staying in Pyongyang after finishing all preparations for the summit with North Korea, including President Kim's itinerary and press coverage.

The South Korean president had planned to fly Monday to Pyongyang to meet his North Korean counterpart, Kim Jong Il, in a summit that offers hopes for gradual reconciliation on the Korean Peninsula after decades of bitter conflict.

The two are expected to discuss the dispatch of economic aid from the rich South to the impoverished North, as well as

the reunion of separated families. Among the most contentious issues that might be raised are the US military presence in South Korea, and North Korea's missile and nuclear programmes.

North Korea's agreement to host a summit is a notable compromise because it previously disclaimed most attempts at dialogue by Seoul, a government it considered illegitimate.

The two countries agreed to a summit in 1994. But North Korean leader Kim Il Sung died at age 82 only weeks before he was to meet his South Korean counterpart, Kim Young-sam.

His son and successor, Kim Jong Il, consolidated his power in the years that followed.

The peninsula was divided at the end of World War II in 1945 into the communist North and the pro-Western South. A heavily militarised border separates the two countries.

Italian ship bound for India hijacked

AHMEDABAD, India, June 11: An Italian merchant vessel destined for India's Kandla port on the western coast has been hijacked by a group of slow-aways who have threatened to blow up the ship, a port official said today, reports Reuters.

"We received a message from the local agents of the ship that a group of 14 slowaways have taken control over the vessel," Deputy Conservator of Kandla Port Trust, Praveen Chandra Chaturvedi told Reuters from Kandla.

According to the message, the slowaways have threatened to blow up the vessel if it moved towards India," Chaturvedi said.

The captain of the 15,000-tonne MV Med Star, who flashed a message to Kandla port on Friday said the captors clandestinely boarded the vessel at the Iranian port of Bandar-e-Abbas, where the ship sailed from on Thursday, according to Pawanjit Kalra, an official from the ship's agent Pearl Shipping.

He said the ship was empty and did not make any stops along the way.

Kandla port official Chaturvedi said the vessel was located some 150 nautical miles from Indian waters and about 275 miles from Kandla port on Saturday evening.

Ruling coalition wins by-polls in Malaysia

KUALA LUMPUR, June 11: Malaysia's ruling coalition managed to eke out a victory in a weekend by-election despite recent turmoil in the ethnic Chinese party that has been one of the coalition's pillars, reports Reuters.

Prime Minister Mahathir Mohamad's Barisan Nasional (BN) coalition, as expected, retained the Teluk Kemang parliamentary constituency in southwestern Negeri Sembilan state in Saturday's by-election.

Tamil refugees a problem for India: Minister

NEW DELHI, June 11: Sri Lanka's lingering and bloody civil war must be resolved politically, an Indian federal minister said today, stressing that a huge influx of Tamil refugees was a severe problem for India, reports AFP.

Commerce and Industry Minister Murali Manan from the southern Indian state of Tamil Nadu told the Hindustan Times daily that lasting peace in the neighbouring war-torn Sri Lanka island could only be reached through a political settlement, preferably within Sri Lanka itself, but did not rule out any foreign involvement.

"There has to be a political solution," he said. The opposition and the ruling party there may come together in Lanka but we do not know what the Buddhist clergy is thinking."

The Buddhist clergy has

been a predominant force in Sri Lanka, where the government has been trying to get them involved in stopping the bloody civil war between Sri Lankan troops and the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) in the island's north.

The minister said a major hurdle to a settlement was the fact that nobody was talking to the Tamil rebel group LTTE or its supreme Velupillai Prabhakaran.

"They say they are talking to the LTTE but nobody has met Prabhakaran. Nobody knows what his views are, what he wants."

Maran's uncle, Muthuvel Karunanidhi, the head of the regional DMK party and chief minister of the southern Indian state of Tamil Nadu recently stirred up controversy by suggesting that Sri Lanka could

end the "unhappy marriage" between the Tamil rebels and the government with a partition similar to the former Czechoslovakia.

Following this comment, Indian Prime Minister Atal Behari Vajpayee called an emergency meeting last week with members of the Indian ruling coalition to forge a national political consensus on the Sri Lankan crisis.

In the meeting, Maran backed New Delhi's policy of supporting Sri Lanka's territorial integrity and the island's unity.

Maran said in remarks published Sunday that Tamil refugees were posing a major problem in Tamil Nadu, home to a growing number of ethnic Tamils and separated from Sri Lanka by a narrow stretch of water.

New rebel group seizes western capital in Solomon Islands

HONIARA, June 10: A third rebel group has seized control of Gizo, capital of the Solomon Islands' western province, in a sudden escalation of the conflict in the strife-torn country, reports said today, says AFP.

Local radio and the Australian Broadcasting Corp. (ABC) reported that a new ethnic militia linked to the Bougainville Revolutionary Army (BRA) raided the Gizo police station and telecommunications facilities.

The development came as a Commonwealth delegation returned to Australia on Sunday after talks with representatives of the Solomon Islands government and of the two militia groups struggling for domination on the main island of Guadalcanal.

Regular telecommunications to Gizo, Munda and other parts of the western province which

border the neighbouring war-ravaged Papua New Guinea province of Bougainville were cut, the ABC reported.

Shortly before the telephone links went down, the Solomon provincial police commander for the western province, Aloysius Ora, said 45 heavily armed men, some apparently from Bougainville, had taken control of Gizo.

He said some of the men were armed with M-16 assault rifles and added they claimed to be protecting the western province against the Malaita Eagles Force (MEF) which launched a coup last Monday, seizing control of Honiara and kidnapping Prime Minister Bartholomew Uliafa.

Ulifafu, who was released on Friday, took part in the talks with the Commonwealth delega-

tion, which included Australian Foreign Minister Alexander Downer, New Zealand Foreign Minister Phil Goff and officials from Botswana and Malaysia.

Goff said after the talks that the Commonwealth Ministers had warned it was "utterly unacceptable" to the international community that a democratically-elected government should be ousted by violence.

"And any government that replaces a properly elected government through violence and not through the ballot box is unlikely to get respect and recognition anywhere much around the world," he told reporters.

Ugandan troops forced out of Congo city: UN

KISANGANI, Democratic Republic of Congo, June 11: Ugandan troops have been driven out of the diamond-rich city of Kisangani, in northeastern Democratic Republic of Congo, according to Rwandan and UN sources, reports AFP.

"We have pushed the Ugandans back to the north side of the Tshopo bridge after six days of fighting," said a Rwandan Patriotic Army (RPA) officer, who asked to remain anonymous.

He said the RPA had not pursued the Ugandans over the bridge, adding "The operation took us six days, and there remain a few pockets of resistance which we are in the process of clearing out, but we will stay on the south side in order

to permit a MONUC deployment between the lines."

The Ugandan retreat was confirmed by the United Nations observation mission to DRC (MONUC) which has deployed observers in the city.

Uganda, while not confirming any military withdrawal, accused its erstwhile ally Rwanda of launching a "massive all-out attack" on its positions in the northeastern Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) city of Kisangani.

At 5:00 a.m. (0800 BST), the RPA made a massive all-out attack on our positions at Tshopo river and bridge, but we successfully repulsed them as usual," Ugandan army spokesman Major Phineas Katirima said.

RHD Notice Inviting Tender

1. Tender Notice No : 194/Mkg of 1999-2000.
2. Name of work : Tender for construction of ticket counter-cum-labour shed east side and west side of Kaliganga River on 10th KM of Shingair-Horirampur via Balirack Road under Manikganj Road Division during the year 1999-2000 in 2 (two) groups.
3. Estimated cost : Group No I Tk 2,75,146/- & Group No II Tk 2,75,146/-
4. Earnest money : Group No-I Tk 5,503 & Group No-II Tk 5,503/- in favour of EE (RHD), Manikganj Road Division in BD/TC/Protirakhyia Sanchaya Patra and Bonus Sanchaya Patra etc in any scheduled bank of Bangladesh.
5. Time allowed : 45 (Forty-five) days each group from the date of issue of work order.
6. Eligibility of contractors : 'A' to 'E' class general category of RHD contractors.
7. Name of offices of availability of tender documents : Office of the EE (RHD) Manikganj/ Dhaka Division, Dhaka/Narsingdi/ Narayanganj/Munshiganj/Gazipur/ Planning & Design Division, Dhaka Zone, Dhaka and SDE (RHD) Manikganj/Nayerhat under Manikganj Road Division.
8. Name of offices to receive tender bids : Superintending Engineer (RHD), Dhaka Road Circle, Dhaka/Planning, Monitoring & Evaluation Circle, Dhaka/EE (RHD) Manikganj Road Division and SDE (RHD) Manikganj/Nayerhat under Manikganj Road Division.
9. Last date and time of selling of tender bids : Up to 19-6-2000 during office hours.
10. Last date and time of receipt of tender bids : At 12.30 PM on 20-6-2000.
11. Date and time of opening of the tender bids : At 1.00 PM on 22-6-2000 in the office of the EE (RHD) Manikganj Road Division.
12. Chargeable head : 168-RBF/266-Dev.
13. Date and time of lottery : At 3.00 PM on 26-6-2000.
14. Authority of estimate approved : Estimate submitted to SDE (RHD) DRC, Dhaka for favour of his kind approval.

Md Helal Uddin
Executive Engineer (RHD)
Manikganj Road Division Manikganj



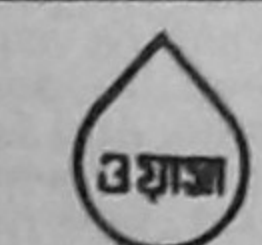
BCIC Tender Notice

বিসিআইসি'র পণ্য শিল্পায়নে জাতীয় অগ্রদ্বিত প্রতীক

The Managing Director, Zia Fertiliser Company Limited, Ashuganj, Brahmanbaria invites sealed tender in two envelope system for procurement of 50M Tons Soda Ash (Light) against Tender No CM/MPIC/153/2000. Tender schedule may be purchased on payment of Tk 400/- only from (i) ZFCL, Ashuganj, (ii) BCIC, 30-31, Dilkusha C/A, Dhaka and (iii) BCIC Branch Office, 6, Agrabad C/A, Chittagong. The tender should be dropped within 19-6-2000 up to 11.30 AM at ZFCL & BCIC Head Office and will be opened just after closing the tender. No tender document shall be sold on the date of opening.

BCIC-445-1/6/2000
DFF-14169-6/6
G-1119

Khairul Anam
General Manager (Commercial)
for Managing Director.



Dhaka WASA Tender Notice

পানির অপচয় রোধে কাজ শেষে কলের মুখ বন্ধ করুন

Tenders are invited from Dhaka WASA enlisted 1st, 2nd & 3rd class civil contractors for HBB work with single layer brick flat soling at the office building premises (south side) of the Meter Division. Amount of estimated cost of the work is Taka 52,014/-.

Tenders will be received up to 12:00 Noon of 26/6/2000 and will be opened on the same day at 2:00 PM in presence of the tenderers or their representatives (if any).

Schedule of tender will be available at the office of the Chief Accounts Officer of Dhaka WASA, WASA Bhaban, 98, Kazi Nazrul Islam Avenue, Dhaka and all MODS Zone Offices of Dhaka WASA. Other details will be available at the office of the undersigned.

Address:
Segunbagicha Road
Dhaka.
WASA-PI-199/2000
DFF-14334-6/6
G-1130

Md Sadek Patwari
Executive Engineer
Meter Division
Dhaka WASA.

BRIEFLY

Reza Khatami second deputy speaker:

Leading reformist Mohammad Reza Khatami, brother of Iran's President Mohammad Khatami, was elected early Sunday to the post of second deputy speaker of the Majlis, or parliament, AFP reports from Tehran.

Mohammad-Reza, head of the Islamic Iran Participation Front (IIPF), won 135 votes out of 248 deputies present while Behzad Nabavi, a secular left-wing leader, won 155 votes and was made first deputy speaker. The vote confirms the IIPF's dominant position within the parliament's reformist coalition, which holds some 80 per cent of the seats.

Mob burns 5 robbers to death:

An angry mob beat up five men caught robbing passengers on board a public minibus in the Indonesian capital on Saturday and then burnt them to death, AFP reports from Jakarta.

A passenger being robbed by the five on board a minibus near East Jakarta's Kampung Rambutan bus terminal shouted for help, alerting people mulling around waiting for public transport, the Kompas daily said. The five robbers changed minibuses but the vehicle was blocked by a growing crowd who forced the five to come out. The men were set upon, beaten up and then set on fire, the daily said.

180 nations adopt plan to step up campaign for women's equality

UNITED NATIONS, June 11: Five years after a landmark UN conference set women's equality as an achievable goal, more than 180 nations have adopted new measures to accelerate the international campaign to reach it, reports AP.

But women's rights activists and several countries including the United States, South Africa and Norway said the new initiatives didn't go far enough to speed implementation of the 150-page platform of action adopted in Beijing in 1995.

Despite fears that delegates would chip away at the Beijing platform, the weeklong UN Women's Conference ended Saturday with no backtracking — which was welcomed by Secretary-General Kofi Annan who had urged delegates earlier in

the week to protect and advance the gains made by women five years ago.

Delegates on Saturday approved the new plan to implement the Beijing platform, as well as an accompanying political declaration, following all-night negotiations that delayed the wrap-up of the conference by a day.

Before General Assembly President Theo-Ben Gurirab called for a decision, two dozen nations expressed reservations on specific points in the new document. A dozen more commented after consensus was approved.

Gurirab, who is Namibia's foreign minister, declared that the documents moved the global agenda for women forward. "If governments demonstrate

the necessary political will and allocate the human and financial resources required, I am convinced that the goals of gender equality, development and peace will become a reality very early in the 21st century," he said before gaveling the conference to an end.

The new action document includes tougher measures to combat domestic violence and sex trafficking, and to tackle the impact of HIV/AIDS and globalisation on women.

But despite an all-night session, virtually no progress was made on the most contentious issues — including access to safe abortion, sexual rights, sexual orientation, and equal rights of inheritance.

That disappointed grassroots groups, which had been

lobbying for more specific goals and stronger action, especially on issues regarding sexuality and reproductive health.

"We regret that there was not enough political will on the part of some governments and the UN system to agree on a stronger document with more concrete benchmarks, numerical goals, time-bound targets, indicators, and resources aimed at implementing the Beijing platform," said a statement by the Center for Women's Global Leadership at Rutgers University and the Women's Environment and Development Organisation.

The United States expressed regret that the conference did not move forward on several reproductive and sexual issues.