

News

Man-made flood

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Congress, blamed his rival CPM leaders in West Bengal for the recent flood which, he said, claimed over 1,000 lives and affected more than 25 million people in West Bengal.

West Bengal's Deputy Chief Minister B. B. D. H. D. S. Bhattacharya, talking to the Bangladesh delegation in Calcutta on October 14, called the flooding a natural calamity.

Panja said there was a similar flooding in 1977, just six months before the election, and this time also flood took place six months before the polls.

He rejected the claim of the West Bengal government about heavy rain.

Panja said his Trinamul Congress has demanded early election in February instead of May.

Talking at length about some 'trifling' issues that pose as irritant to the Indo-Bangla relations, he said he has taken personal initiative for ratification to implement the Mujib-Indira agreement of 1974, border demarcation and solution to the slaves' problem.

He said the joint commission meeting must take place immediately so that all issues could be discussed and a peaceful solution found.

About Dhaka-Agartala bus service and rail communications between Bangladesh and West Bengal, Panja said the union government has agreed in principle on both the issues and is now awaiting a reply from the Bangladeshi side.

Top priority has been given to these issues, he said, adding: "We want to remove all barriers that come in the way of our friendly relations."

Immediate solution to these

issues would help both countries to concentrate on economic development, he said.

"About gas, he said the Indian market is ready to take gas from Bangladesh, whenever Bangladesh agrees."

He, however, denied an allegation that the gas issue would be tagged with other issues.

"We've great demand for gas in India, but we also want that Bangladesh should export gas after fulfilling its own demand," he added.

Replying to a question, Panja said the present Indian government upholds the principle of secularism.

He said the government spent Rs 1,380 million for Hajj pilgrims.

This year, 1.20 lakh Muslims would go to Saudi Arabia to perform holy Hajj and of them, 90,000 would go under government arrangement.

Responding to another question, Panja said Bangladesh Prime Minister's remark in the UN Millennium Summit as regards military intervention was a bold one. "India will never support grabbing of power in undemocratic way."

About arrest of a killer of Bangabandhu reportedly hiding in India, he said he does not have any information, but added "we will do everything, whatever Bangladesh wants in nabbing the killer of Mujib."

Later in the afternoon, Water Resources Minister Arjun Charan Shetti told the Bangladesh journalists that the recent flood in Bangladesh was due to unprecedented rainfall within a short time. Similar type of flood took place in Orissa last year, he said.

About the Joint River Commission (JRC) meeting, he said it might take place in Dhaka in the first or second week of January next.

He said after the Ganges Water Sharing Treaty in 1996 everything was functioning smoothly.

The Indian Water Resources Minister said his country is ready and prepared to provide any type of assistance to Bangladesh for constructing the proposed Gan-



The residence of Kamal Uddin Fakir, Vice President of Ward No 5 of Mirpur BNP, was ransacked early yesterday by miscreants allegedly backed by one Nannu, brother of Kochi, a local influential leader of the ruling Bangladesh Awami League.

-- Star photo

JS team leaves

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The parliamentary delegation will hold talks with the Indian water resources minister, said the sources and added that management of water in different rivers by various dams would feature in the talks.

Members of the standing committee and officials from the ministry and parliament secretariat would be included in the delegation. But the water resources minister and the chairman of the standing committee may not accompany the delegation due to their involvement in other such talks in the United States, sources said.

The Water Development Board earlier submitted a report to the committee stating the partial losses and damages in the recent flooding. Floodwaters in the affected areas are receding, the WDB report said.

M A Baree of Awami League, Dr Habibur Rahman and Golam Mohammad of BNP and Sarifuddin Ahmed of Jatiya Party attended the meeting. Water Resources Ministry Secretary

Ruhul Amin and other high officials were present.

In another meeting, the Standing Committee on the Ministry of Livestock and Fisheries asked the finance minister to disburse fresh loans among the flood victims in the affected areas.

The meeting also assured government support for rehabilitation and recouping losses by the prolonged flooding that swept the south-western areas for the first time in last 100 years.

Chaired by A. S. M. Feroz, the meeting was attended, among others, by Sayed Rasiqu Haque, A. K. Fazlul Haque, Begum Dilara Harun and Kamrul Nahar Putul of ruling AL, Mohammad Fazlul Haque and Mohammad Shamsuzzoha Khan of BNP and Motahar Hossain of JP.

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina in an interview with BBC on October 10 said that Bangladesh would soon discuss with India the current state of floods in its south-western region caused by man-made dams and barrages on rivers.

Make SAARC vibrant

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The main objectives of the conference are to examine the present shape of regional cooperation, look beyond SAARC at different levels including extra-regional, sub-regional and civil society levels and draw on the experiences of other regional groupings like the ASEAN and the EU.

German scholars expected to participate in the conference are Prof Wolfgang Zingel of the South-Asia Institute of Heidelberg University, Dr Hein Kiessling of the Hans-Seidel-Foundation, Manfred Haack of Friedrich-Ebert-Foundation and Siegfried Herzog of Friedrich-Naumann-Foundation. The German Federal Government is Berlin will be represented by its Ambassador in Dhaka Lhatu Wangchuk.

Spl Myanmar envoy arrives today

Deputy Foreign Minister of Myanmar Khin Maung Win arrives in the city today on a two-day visit as the special envoy of Myanmar Prime Minister Than Shwe.

Foreign Office sources told BSS yesterday that Win will hold talks with Foreign Minister Abdus Samad Azad and hand over a letter from the Myanmar Prime Minister during the visit. Win will depart on October 22.

3 Sharfuls

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ing overnight his argument contended that Moslem did not take part in the killing as he had no ambition or ill motive.

The counsel said none of the prosecution witnesses told of seeing Moslem at the place of occurrence. So, the question of his involvement in the killing does not arise, argued the lawyer.

Defence counsel appointed by the state for Major (dismissed) Mohiuddin and Captain (dismissed) Kismat Hashem failed to appear causing annoyance of the court.

Deputy Attorney General Shamsuddin Chowdhury told the court that advocate Khandokar Gulzar could not come due to illness while advocate Hafizur Rahman will appear when the hearing resumes Sunday.

Khulna Madrassah

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He has purchased landed property in fictitious names and also in the names of his wife and ten children, Yusuf Sheikh mentioned in his petition.

Meanwhile, Khulna Zila Ainjibi

has demanded an impartial judicial inquiry into the corruption by the principal of Alia Madrassah.

It would act as an impetus to expand and enhance trade and commercial opportunities for US companies in telecommunications, agro-business and information technology. It would also pave the way for increased Bangladeshi exports to the US, she hoped.

A congenial atmosphere for investment is prevailing in Bangladesh, she said and invited US business to visit Bangladesh. "I am sure, you would find Bangladesh attractive and an ideal place for safe and profitable investment."

The meeting directed the livestock and fisheries ministry to investigate and prepare a report on irregular promotion and wastage of government's fund at the fourth fisheries project of fisheries directorate.

The opposition leader said four-party alliance would protect the country and change the lot of common people, establishing a patriotic government removing the failed, inefficient and subservient government.

He said such incidents would affect the confidence of depositors in banks and asked the bankers to quicken the process of remittance to thwart kerb market operations.

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