

Joint survey on CHT from today Dev needs, risks to project workers to be assessed

UNB, Dhaka

A government-UNDP joint mission begins a nine-day survey of development needs as well as risks to project workers in the Chittagong Hill Tracts today.

An official announcement yesterday said Bangladesh and UNDP would participate in the Joint Risk Assessment Mission to assess the likely risks related to physical safety and security, if any of development workers and personnel who may be stationed there.

The UN agency, as coordinator of the Local Consultative Sub-group of donor countries and agencies, will also make an assessment of the requirement of development assistance for the people of the hill tracts area.

The mission is composed of members drawn from the UNDP, Danish Embassy and ADB offices in Dhaka and senior government officials.

"The government is committed to the overall development of the people of CHT and ensuring peace and stability while UNDP development assistance for the CHT will supplement government-funded projects already underway there," said the official statement.

It said the projects that might be funded through the UNDP (United Nations Development Programme) would aim at employment and income generation and addressing community development as a whole.

It is expected that the development assistance by the UNDP and donor agencies will contribute towards an improvement of economic condition of the people of the rugged CHT region.

The team will visit various parts of the hill districts of Rangamati, Bandarban and Khagrachhari and hold discussions with a cross-section of people focusing on how to improve cooperation and partnership between the donor agencies and beneficiaries.

On completion of the trip, the mission will submit a report to the government.

Incidentally, the assessment of security risks to development workers is apparently prompted by the abduction of one British and two Danish engineers by tribal gunmen in the CHT last year.

They were working in development projects undertaken in the hill districts following the signing of CHT peace treaty to end a long-running tribal insurgency.

Old man stabbed to death in Noakhali

UNB, Noakhali

A sexagenarian 'Moulana' was stabbed to death by miscreants in Chatkhil upazila yesterday.

Moulana Atiqullah, 60, hailed from Megha village, came under attack at Bhaorkhara village while returning home from his sister's residence in the morning.

Family sources alleged that the Moulana was stabbed by some miscreants led by Henja Patwari of Ramganj upazila. Atiqullah had a land dispute with Henja Patwari.

Chatkhil police recovered the body from a paddy field and sent it to hospital for autopsy. Victim's brother Moulana Mohibullah filed a case.

FM urges Ottawa

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Bangladesh. He also elaborated the economic reforms initiated by the government including the adoption of export-led growth strategy to achieve higher economic growth rate through trade and direct foreign investment.

Commending Canada's initiative for hosting the forthcoming G-8 Summit in Kananaski, Alberta in June next, the Bangladesh foreign minister referred to the concerns of LDCs for marginalisation in the globalisation process, burden of debt, impediment of market access and decrease of ODA.

But, he highly appreciated the Canadian prime minister's announcement of increasing the annual ODA by 8 per cent at the Monterrey Summit held in March last and also for opening of Canada's market to the LDCs.

Describing Bangladeshis as resilient people, Jean Chretien assured that Canada would do its utmost to grant market access to the LDCs, including Bangladesh. He sincerely thanked Khaleda Zia for her thoughtfulness in sending the special envoy in the person of Foreign Minister M Morshed Khan to brief him on LDC issues to make the G-8 Summit fruitful.

He also assured that market access issue would be discussed in the forthcoming G-8 Summit.

The foreign minister also met Robert Fowler, personal representative of the Prime Minister for G-8 Summit, and briefed him on various measures undertaken by the government of Khaleda Zia in Bangladesh.

Besides, the foreign minister took part in a high-level roundtable on Bangladesh, chaired by Aileen Carroll, MP and Parliamentary Secretary to the Foreign Minister of Canada. The roundtable was largely participated by the representatives of various ministries, government agencies as well as eminent academics, representatives from important think-tank and NGOs in Canada.



PHOTO STAR

Football fans flock to the front of an electronic appliances sales centre at the Bangabandhu Stadium Market in the city yesterday to watch on television the first match of the World Cup-2002 between Senegal and France.

SUST teachers call indefinite strike from tomorrow

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Sylhet

Situation in the Shahjalal University of Science & Technology (SUST) is again turning tense with the Teachers' Association calling an indefinite strike from tomorrow and a section of students threatening an agitation programme as a sequel to an untoward incident involving faculty members and students.

However, the authorities, sensing the upcoming trouble, have announced the summer vacation from tomorrow.

Since 1996, the university has remained closed for a period of over 14 and a half months for one reason or another, causing serious session jams, sources said.

The latest trouble erupted following a clash over a trifling matter on May 17 at an area near the varsity that left about 30 people injured including a proctor, two assistant proctors, policemen and students.

After issuing an ultimatum last Monday, teachers of the university observed a half-day strike for three days from May 27 till May 29 in protest against the untoward incident and demanding punitive measures against seven students allegedly responsible for the vandal-

ism on May 17. Moreover, the teachers held a daylong strike on Thursday.

Police filed a case accusing about 300 students in connection with the vandalism, which sparked off agitation among general students. The students accused some teachers of inciting trouble that led to the incident. The teachers in turn accused some students of attacking them and spreading the clash in the campus and nearby areas on that day.

The students, most of whom belong to the JCD (Jatiyatabadi Chhatra Dal), have announced that they would start agitation if any punitive or disciplinary measure is taken against their activists. They held rallies and brought out processions in the campus during the last few days protesting against the teachers' ultimatum for punishment of the students responsible for the vandalism.

Meanwhile, the university syndicate in an emergency meeting on May 28 with vice-chancellor Professor Shafiqur Rahman in chair decided to announce the 23-day summer vacation from June 2 in place of June 23 as scheduled earlier. A high-powered probe body

headed by the treasurer Professor Abdul Aziz was also formed. It took testimony of many including the 10 JCD men alleged to be involved in the vandalism.

Some teachers have threatened to continue their strike even after the vacation if no action is taken against the culprits.

JCD activist

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Local people said a faction of the party led allegedly by Panju swooped on the supporters of Sohrah at about 4:00 pm and opened fire on them. The victims were gossiping at a tea stall there.

Rabiul village Mohabbatpur succumbed to his injuries on way to hospital. The rest two were rushed to Jhenidah Sadar Hospital in a critical condition.

Local people and eyewitnesses said members of both the factions were carrying firearms and other lethal weapons. The feud followed use of abusive language by some JCD men against the other faction on Thursday, they informed.

Senegal singing

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around 300-1, frustrated a French side containing eight of the team which beat Brazil in the 1998 World Cup final, by giving the world champions little space in midfield. The French missed the inspiration of injured playmaker Zinedine Zidane

In his absence it was left to Senegal's El Hadji Diouf to claim the starring role.

Diouf repeatedly harassed the French defence into mistakes and was instrumental in Boubou Diop's goal.

After all the hype and build-up and a spectacular opening ceremony, the first match of the tournament lived up to expectations - even if France did not.

Roger Lemerre's team were patient to the extent of being pedestrian at times, and in an open game their probing play was often predictable.

Senegal captain Aliou Cisse shone at the back, sitting in front of his defence, marshalling his men and snuffing out any signs of danger.

The Hamza could not be anchored due to strong current in the river and rocky bottom of the Baleswar. The sunken launch is about 110 feet under water.

Navy and BIWTA divers searched all the cabins and decks of the sunken launch that went down with over 100 passengers, but didn't find any body.

Unofficial death toll remained steady at 40 and official toll at 31 as no body was found floating yesterday.

The ageing Leboeuf had been pinpointed as the Achilles' heel of the French line-up and was unable to cope with Diouf's pace.

Diouf, playing as a lone striker, took on the 34-year old, and raced clear on the half-hour mark before crossing to the centre from the by-line.

His Lens club teammate Boubou Diop was on hand to steal in and make the most of a misunderstanding between Emmanuel Petit and Fabien Barthez to score.

Barthez and Petit's misjudgement at the near post was symptomatic of France's play.

The goal failed to ignite 'Les Bleus'. Despite enjoying the majority of possession they lacked the inspiration and imagination that Zidane provides.

Trezeguet and Thierry Henry had chances which they failed to convert and Patrick Vieira's free header from a corner went straight to goalkeeper Tony Sylva.

Instead it was Senegal who were to go closest, Khalilou Fadiga skimming the crossbar having twisted and turned Leboeuf to a standstill in the build-up.

Fadiga's effort stung France into action and moments later, after latching on to a Christophe Dugary flick-on, Henry stabbed a shot onto Sylva's crossbar.

But France were unable to

sustain their efforts over the remaining 25 minutes but a last-ditch Henry effort that Sylva saved at the second attempt.

The glory of their 1998 campaign now seems a distant memory after Senegal's sensational World Cup debut four years on.

TEAMS

FRANCE: Desailly, Barthez, Thuram, Leboeuf, Bessy, Lizarazu, Wiltord (Cisse 81), Petit, Djorkaeff (Dugary 60), Vieira, Henry, Trezeguet.

Booked: Petit.

SENEGAL: Sylva, Daf, Coly, Dia, Diouf, Papa Bouba Diop, Cisse, Diatta, Pape Malick Diop, Moussa N'diaye, Fadiga.

Booked: Cisse.

Goals: Papa Bouba Diop 30 min. Attendance: 62,561 Referee: A Bujssaim (United Arab Emirates).

BNP men

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his house to arrest his younger brother, he added.

The BDR raided different areas of Sonargaon upazila on Thursday but failed to arrest any listed criminal.

Failing to arrest Shamim, the BDR arrested his elder brother and handed him over to the Sonargaon Police Station.

Thursday's raid was the third by the BDR in Narayanganj last week, in which 24 people were arrested.

Indo-Pak tension Delhi launches diplomatic offensive

PALLAB BHATTACHARYA, New Delhi

As part of India's diplomatic campaign on its military stand-off with Pakistan, Foreign Secretary Chokila Iyer met Bangladesh High Commissioner to India Tofael Karim Haider and Nepalese Ambassador to explain New Delhi's view on cross-border terrorism.

Ms Iyer also had a meeting with Chinese Ambassador to India. The interaction with the Chinese envoy is considered significant in view of Beijing's recent assertion that it would be neutral in the event of a war between India and Pakistan.

Besides, Prime Minister Atal Behari Vajpayee will travel to the Kazakhstan capital of Almaty to attend a conference on security in Central Asia where Chinese President Jiang Zemin will also be present.

The meetings with ambassadors of Bangladesh, Nepal and China are important as India expects calm to prevail on its border with these countries if a war with Pakistan breaks out.

Special Secretary (East) R M Abhayankar undertook a similar exercise with envoys of South East Asian countries while Foreign Secretary designate Kanwal Sibal had been dispatched to Spain for consultations with the European Union. Spain is the current President of EU.

Diplomatic efforts by the European Union to defuse Indo-Pak tensions continued Thursday also when French Foreign Minister Dominique de Villepin spoke to Indian External Affairs Minister Jaswant Singh who told him that the international community must ensure that Pakistan translates into action its promise to stop export of terrorism from its territory.

The possibilities of an Indo-Pak conflict at least in the next ten days

appear lessened as Vajpayee will be attending the conference in Almaty in the first week of June and Defence Minister George Fernandes left last night for a four-day tour of Singapore to attend an important meeting on security scenario in Asia organized by London-based International Institute of Strategic Studies.

Besides, US Deputy Secretary of State Richard Armitage and Defence Secretary Donald Rumsfeld are visiting India and Pakistan between June 6 and 10 with the sole mission of trying to persuade the two countries to step back from the brink.

Officials here reckon that the US ability to persuade Musharraf to implement its promise would be put to test by the visits of Armitage and Rumsfeld in quick succession. In fact, India may allow some time to see the effect of the visits on Islamabad.

Meanwhile, Fernandes said Thursday that British Foreign Secretary Jack Straw, who visited Islamabad and New Delhi on Tuesday and Wednesday, has conveyed to Vajpayee that Musharraf was promised to stop cross-border terrorism "within a certain period".

Musharraf conveyed this Straw who in turn relayed this to Vajpayee, Fernandes said adding "the difficulty is how to believe Musharraf?"

Keya Chy

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At one stage, Keya allegedly assaulted the wife of the DB official.

The DB official filed a case with Mohammadpur police station. Police later arrested her from her residence.

Keya was produced before court yesterday. The court sent her to Dhaka Central Jail.

WC opens

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Prince Takamado, a cousin of Japan's Emperor Akihito, and his wife Princess Hisako, the first members of the Imperial family to make an official visit since the end of four harsh decades of Japanese colonial rule on the Korean peninsula in 1945.

Animosities stemming from a century of bitterness and rivalries over the organisation of the World Cup dogged the build-up to the tournament, but both countries have said they hope the feast of soccer will foster better ties.

In a symbol of reconciliation and understanding, two giant flags of South Korea and Japan were brought together in the centre of the stadium. Both anthems were played to sustained applause.

Outside the ground, a festival atmosphere more reminiscent of an Olympics than a soccer World Cup prevailed as fans in a range of national costumes and coloured wigs headed to the game in a party spirit past local bands and child dance groups.

Some South Korean trade unionists walked around outside the stadium wearing jackets with slogans protesting job losses, but they seemed outnumbered by Korean Christians carrying crosses with messages in several languages proclaiming "Jesus Loves You".

South Korea and Japan have laid on massive security to guard against the twin threats of football hooliganism and terrorism, but there was no sign of any trouble on Friday.

"It couldn't be more perfect," one security officer at the stadium said. "Our team is confident it will stay that way."

Gas tariff may go up

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(subsidy Tk 0.73) and commercial consumer tariff Tk 6 per unit (subsidy Tk 0.82).

Earlier, Petrobangla sent the energy ministry a proposal for formulating a gas pricing policy. It suggested that the policy should make the issue of subsidy in gas pricing a transparent one, sources said.

The pricing should be rationalised customer wise. For instance, industrial, power and fertiliser sector consumers should be offered the same rate, the proposal said.

The government should also decrease the level of excise and duty from the present 55 per cent and thereby help Petrobangla lower the subsidy level and keep the prices within the purchasing power of the people, it went on.

One source said that in other countries, industrial consumers are offered the lowest tariff while domestic users pay the highest price. This helps industries to maintain the 'economic dynamics' of their products as the cost of production goes down.

"But sadly, most of our industrial consumers have developed the tendency to tamper with the metres in any way and evade the actual gas bills," said the source. "We are not sure if lowering gas rate for industrial

consumers would reduce pilferage."

He pointed out that gas theft mainly takes place among industrial consumers. Only a small number of 2450 industrial consumers deprive the Titas Gas company of Tk 200 crore a year. "This is an issue of lack of management, the main fault lies with the government but still the tariff needs to be restructured."

Regarding subsidy, the source said that considering the purchasing power of the people, the government would continue to subsidise gas price. "But it should be transparent. In India, gas producers get the actual price of their gas. The government directly subsidises power or fertiliser production. This way performance of gas producers can be monitored properly and companies can function in a healthy way."

But in Bangladesh, Petrobangla--owner of different gas distribution and transmission companies--bears all the subsidies in gas sector. It pays 55 per cent excise and duty on its gas production and sale and additionally gives the government nearly all its dividend. Therefore, it cannot spend its profits for maintenance of gas field and it is compelled to depend on government budgetary allocation.

267 Maoists killed in battle, says Nepal

AFP, Kathmandu

Over 260 Maoist rebels were killed in a clash with security forces in southwestern Nepal yesterday, the day a state of emergency was extended by three months to tackle the insurgency, the defence ministry said.

"At least 267 Maoist rebels have been killed in a fierce battle with security personnel in southwestern Nepal on Monday night," a defence ministry press release said today.

Earlier the army had said 200 guerrillas had been killed in the fighting in Khara village in the Rukum district, some 320 kilometres (198 miles) southwest of the capital Kathmandu.

"So far the bodies of 182 terror-

ists have been recovered while another 85 were taken to nearby districts by concerned personnel," the press release said.

The clash happened as King Gyanendra Monday extended by three months a state of emergency imposed in November to combat the rebels.

The extension of the emergency has split the ruling Nepali Congress party, with caretaker prime minister Sher Bahadur Deuba Sunday expelled for recommending the king dissolve parliament and call elections two years early. According to official estimates, more than 4,200 people have died in Nepal since the Maoists launched their "people's war" in 1996 to topple the constitutional monarchy.

Bali meet turns down

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objection to accreditation of the NGO to the WSSD and its preparatory process, because it was "a separatist organisation that is same in nature as International Campaign for Tibet" and "Tibet Justice Center" whose applications for accreditation were resolutely rejected" by the Preparatory Committee.

At the outset of the committee's consideration, the US representative said it was his position that legitimate NGOs applying for accreditation, such as the one in question, could and should be approved.

He said all well-established and widely recognised NGOs could make positive contributions to the Summit saying that The NGO in question was well qualified to be accredited and to participate. He proposed that the plenary grant the request for accreditation.

The representative of Spain, for the European Union and associated States, then said the Union welcomed the participation of NGOs and other major groups at the Summit as they had an important part to play in the discussions.

He said a large number of such NGOs would be present at Johannesburg representing a broad range of different views that would help lead to a fruitful exchange of views.

The Union believed that the NGO in question should be able to participate in Johannesburg and supported its accreditation, said the Spanish representative.

However this didn't mean it supported its views, he added, and said the Union supported the call for

a vote made by the US delegation. The representative of China reaffirmed his delegation's objection to the accreditation of the TCHRD. He moved to take "no action" on the US proposal and requested an immediate vote by roll call.

He said the Chinese government had consistently supported participation in the Summit of NGOs operating in the spirit of the United Nations Charter, but the NGO in question however was a political organisation aiming to split China's territory.

It had never carried out any activities to help the socio-economic situation of Tibet, he noted. He strongly appealed to vote yes to China's no action motion and reject the NGO's application for accreditation.

Following China's request, both Pakistan and Cuba spoke in favour of the motion. The United States and Spain, for the European Union, spoke against the motion. The motion was then carried by a vote of 90 in favour to 37 against with 10 abstentions.

Also yesterday, the committee decided to accredit two intergovernmental organisations, the Pacific Centre for Environment and Sustainable Development and the Center for International Forestry Research, to the current meeting as well as to the WSSD.

Khaleda Zia

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Bangladesh Consulate General, Bangladesh Biman and Sonali Exchange in New York also called on the prime minister separately.

The prime minister asked them to provide necessary service to the Bangladeshi expatriates living in New York and encourage them to invest more in Bangladesh for rapid development of the country.

Representatives of various organisations also met Khaleda Zia at her hotel suite Thursday.

Khaleda Zia also had talks with senior ministers, MPs, secretaries and party leaders over phone Thursday, and gave decisions on some important government matters. She also checked some important files.

Two physicians from the Hospital for Special Surgery where the PM underwent her knee surgery examined her health at the hotel suite Thursday and expressed satisfaction over her quick recovery.

The prime minister is expected to return home Monday.

Eminent persons and leaders of various organisations sent bouquets and cards to the prime minister from home and abroad wishing her early recovery. Bangladesh Biman also sent a bouquet for her from Dhaka.

MV Subha

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vage ships would be back and resume the operation.

Visiting the spot, UNB Pirojpur correspondent found the salvage ships - three of Navy and three of BIWTA departing the spot, giving back speedboats of the district administration, which they took for conducting the search.

As the Navy team did not allow journalists into their vessels yesterday, they could not be contacted to know about the latest state of the operation.

The district administration said they were told that "if needed, the rescuers would take the speedboats again."

Earlier in the morning, Navy ships Teesta, Shahjalal and P313 and BIWTA salvage ships Samia, Agrodoot and Hamza resumed the rescue operation.

The Hamza could not be anchored due to strong current in the river and rocky bottom of the Baleswar. The sunken launch is about 110 feet under water.

Navy and BIWTA divers searched all the cabins and decks of the sunken launch that went down with over 100 passengers, but didn't find any body.

Unofficial death toll remained steady at 40 and official toll at 31 as no body was found floating yesterday.

Camel race

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sponsored English language laboratory at the government's Bureau of Manpower Employment and Training (BMET).

The director-general also discussed various issues related to safe immigration and migration with some ministers, top government officials and civil society members.

Asked, he said the IOM was also working in Bangladesh to strengthen the labour migration process and capacity-building of law-enforcement officials to prevent trafficking in women and children.

Shahidul Haq, regional representative of the IOM and Anne-Marie Bushman-Petti, special assistant to the IOM director-general, were also present at the conference at its regional office in Gulshan.

After Bangladesh became a member of the IOM in the late 1990s, the UN body helped around 63,000 Bangladeshi migrant workers - trapped in Kuwait following the Gulf War - to return home.

Before his visit to Bangladesh, McKinley went to Bhutan, India, Nepal and Sri Lanka. He is scheduled to leave Dhaka for Geneva tomorrow.

"I don't think we believe in exhor-

tion alone," Wolfowitz said yesterday in Singapore, where he was meeting with other defense officials at a conference on terrorism and security. "It will be along with carrots and sticks."

India regularly informs the United States through diplomatic channels that it intends to go to war over Kashmir if attacks by extremists are not curtailed, a senior US official told the AP. But India has not advised the Bush administration how it would conduct such a conflict, the official said on condition of anonymity.

As Pakistan withdrew more troops from the Afghan border yesterday, possibly to move them to the Kashmir frontier for a faceoff with India, the United States stepped up efforts to avert war on the subcontinent.

A war between nuclear rivals India and Pakistan would be "somehow between terrible and catastrophic" and would destroy hard-earned improvements in US relations with both nations, US Deputy Defense Secretary Paul Wolfowitz said.

Wolfowitz said the US efforts to prevent war include both promises of incentives and warnings of punishments.

Wolfowitz said yesterday in Singapore, where he was meeting with other defense officials at a conference on terrorism and security. "It will be along with carrots and sticks."

Indian Defense Minister George Fernandes, also in Singapore for the conference, played down the concerns.

"There isn't any change on the ground," Fernandes told The Associated Press. "The situation is stable."

Fernandes met with six members of the US Congress, who said he expressed strong emotions about the conflict. Fernandes explained India's "deep distrust" of Pakistan's president, Gen Pervez Musharraf, said US Sen. Jack Reed of Rhode Island.