

Donors to take stock of Dhaka's deeds

Crucial BDF meet opens in city today

NAZMUL AHSAN

A two-day Bangladesh Development Forum (BDF) meeting opens in Dhaka today to initiate a process in which the development community will evaluate the government's actions and chart out their lending programmes.

Prime Minister Khaleda Zia will inaugurate the meeting likely to be attended by delegations from 16 countries and representatives of donors.

During the consultations, the development partners will evaluate the progress of implementation

of the pledges made by the government in the previous BDF meeting held in Paris in May 2002, sources said.

They will also assess the government's future reform programmes to be presented at the meeting, but make no commitment to extending development assistance immediately, sources said.

Critiquing the success in reforms and other relevant issues, the development partners will work out their 'extent of support' to Bangladesh, they added.

The government will present a

brief, listing the implementation of reforms and future course of action and strategies.

Bangladesh pledged to implement 57 commitments in different sectors, including governance and public administration, fiscal management, privatisation, banking, energy, education, health, environment, information technology and poverty reduction at the last meeting.

The government delivered the pledges on the banking, fiscal management and environment fronts, but reneged on governance and public administration, education and energy.

On governance and public administration, the government committed to setting up a national human-rights commission, appointing an ombudsman, establishing an independent anti-corruption commission and recommending actions to cut corruption.

Besides, separation of the judiciary from the executive, separation of audit and accounting functions, creation of a central procurement policy unit at the planning commission and holding elections to various tiers of local government figured high on the list of promises.

The government has so far been able to create a central procurement policy unit and issue an office order to separate audit and accounting, sources said.

On education, it could not fulfil the pledges of establishing teaching service commission, reforming the SSC and HSC examinations, t a k i n g

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PHOTO: STAR

Finance Minister M Saifur Rahman and WB Vice-President for South Asia Meiko Nishumizu attend a meeting at the National Economic Council yesterday.

Hope runs downhill

Implementation of CHT peace treaty seeing no light in tricky world of politics

PINAKI ROY, back from CHT

Uncertainty over the implementation of the Peace Agreement on the Chittagong Hill Tracts (CHT) that ended two decades of insurgency in the hilly terrain has frustrated the hills people.

They believe that complete actualisation of the landmark deal will erase their woes caused by decades of 'enforced underdevelopment and neglect' of the hilly land.

The pact, signed between the Jana Sanghati Samiti (JSS) and the past Awami League government on December 2, 1997, now virtually lies on the ice.

Jotirindra Bodhipriya Larma, better known as Shantu Larma, who inked the agreement on behalf of the JSS, said all the fundamental clauses of the pact remained unimplemented.

"The government is dragging its feet on it," he said at a press conference in Dhaka recently.

Utter frustration is also rife in the higher echelon of the organisation.

"We fought more than two decades for the hills people, but could not change their fate. They are worried as the pact goes unimplemented and their economy continues to suffer," says Ushatun Talukdar, former commander of the JSS's armed wing.

"If the government does not

want to implement the agreement, we will have no option but to launch a movement," Rupayan Dewan, another frontline JSS leader, told The Daily Star.

Although the CHT Regional

Council and the Ministry for CHT Affairs were formed in line with the agreement which was attended with high hopes at home and abroad, legal rights have not yet been transferred to the council.

However, some leaders and members of the outfit or their family members have been given jobs as per the pact. A land commission has been constituted, but it is still in the cold.

The JSS leaders are now demanding a separate voters' list, an end to settlement problems, withdrawal of army camps, strengthening of the land commission and launch of primary education in their mother tongue as guaranteed in the agreement.

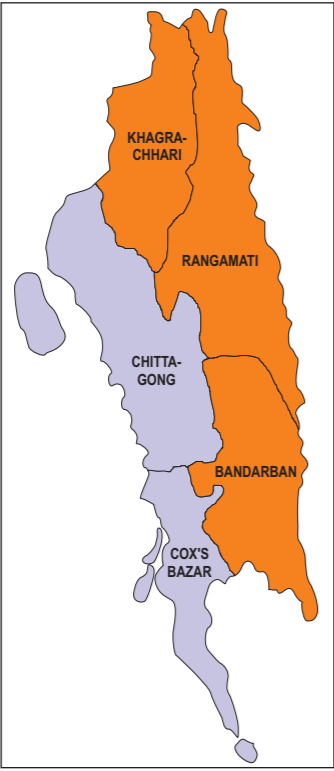
In the run-up to the signing of the deal, the BNP and the Jamaat-e-Islami, key constituents of the current coalition government, vehemently opposed it, terming it a serious threat to Bangladesh's independence and sovereignty.

As the anti-pact political parties are now at the helm of the nation, scepticism about its fate has permeated the whole political sphere.

"If the JSS leaders think the alliance government will implement the pact, they are living in a fool's paradise," said Dipankar Talukder, former Awami League lawmaker from Rangamati.

But CHT Affairs Minister Moni Swapan Dewan shrugged off the

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Seven major problems hamper development

AL sees anarchy everywhere

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The Awami League (AL) has observed that the country is passing through a "deep crisis" as a result of the wrong policies adopted by the government.

"There is anarchy everywhere," former finance minister and AL advisor Shah AMS Kibria told a press conference, ahead of the Bangladesh Development Forum (BDF) meeting, yesterday at the National Press Club.

Identifying at least seven major problems that hamper development and good governance, Kibria said, "No development will be possible as long as those problems remain."

corruption by the ruling party men, politicisation of police and the judiciary, rise of fundamentalism and political extremism are among the problems identified by the AL.

Kibria hoped that the BDF meeting would play an effective role in directing the country towards a just social order. "The forum would fail to meet people's expectations if it ignores the ground reality," he added.

Earlier, the AL presented its observations on the latest law and order situation, human rights, reforms and other issues to the international donors.

In its memorandum to the donors, the AL addressed the issue

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Four Jamaatul Mujahideen activists held at Panchagarh

UNB, Panchagarh

Police on Thursday arrested four members of Jamaatul Mujahideen Bangladesh, a radical Islamic organisation, from a rented house in the district town.

The law enforcers also recovered six cocktails, empty tin cans that can be used for making bombs, leaflets and notebooks containing telephone numbers of a number of people, including Jamaat-Shibir activists.

The arrestees are Saidul Islam, 25, M Hamidul Islam, 20, M Jahurul Islam, 21, and M Firoz, 15,

Of them, Saidul Islam was injured in the February 13 bomb

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Tidal surge

Thousands marooned in islands, chars

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Cox's Bazar

At least 50,000 people have been marooned as offshore islands and chars of Cox's Bazar district were inundated following tidal surges caused by the full moon and two days of continuous downpour, sources said.

Kutubdia, Dhalghata, Moheshkhali, Sonadia and Saint Martin's Islands went under 4-5 feet of waters in the early hours of yesterday.

At least 10,000 people of Dhalghat Union of Moheshkhali Upazila were marooned yesterday due to the sudden tidal surges, Maulana Mokbul Ahmed, chairman of Dhalghat Union Parishad told this correspondent.

He said 450 people of 50 families took shelter in the five cyclone shelters at Dhalghat yesterday as the entire union went under four feet of water, adding that shrimp enclosures and salt beds were also washed away.

The chairman appealed to the district commissioner and the

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Gas supply sends alarm

STAR REPORT

The gas supply situation has become critical for the last nine days, as the Bianibazar gas field has been shut down for emergency maintenance.

The gas pressure has already fallen to a critical level and sources in Petrobangla said if the pressure falls further, the supply would be completely shut down.

"The Bianibazar gas field would not come back to operation in the next two weeks. We are running the risk for these two weeks," said a source.

The projected gas demand has exceeded 1250 million cubic feet per day (mmcf) for the last few weeks. But Petrobangla is now supplying a maximum of 1235 mmcf.

"Constant demand pressure has started affecting the gas flow pressure," said a source in the Gas Transmission Company Ltd (GTCL).

He said the Ashuganj Manifold Station of the GTCL, which acts as a hub of distributing gas to the northwestern part of the country, D h a k a

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PHOTO: STAR

Wife, second left, of slain sub-inspector Alamgir Hossain breaks down and wife and two children, right, Thursday grieve over the death of inspector Nurul Alam Shikdar. The two detectives were shot dead at a hotel in Malibagh on Wednesday night.

Detectives' killers at large, clues elusive



Nurul Alam Shikder



Alamgir Hossain

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The mastermind behind the murder of two police detectives at a city hotel on Wednesday night is still at large, raising a lot of questions about the incident.

Although police have arrested 39 people suspecting their involvement in the killings, the main culprit and his accomplices are still to be nabbed, sources said.

Detective Branch (DB) Inspector Nurul Alam Shikder and Sub-inspector Alamgir Hossain were killed in a shootout at Hotel

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Corruption in jails climbs an extra notch

Visitors, prisoners and promotion-seeking officials follow a 'bribe code'

ZAYADUL AHSAN

Resentment has surfaced in the jail administration, as the highest tier of the jail directorate got mired in the abuse of power, irregularities and corruption.

The directorate's high command has recently increased the rate of illegal 'tolls' from different jails -- a practice that has continued for decades, alleged sources.

The demand for more tolls has

set in motion a chain of corrupt practices among the subordinates.

Jail staffers now collect more bribes from visitors and prisoners. Besides, jail officials ensure the steady flow of 'extra income' by manipulating prisoners' ration and construction and giving prisoners privileges, say the sources.

To see prisoners in the Dhaka Central Jail, visitors have to pay up to Tk 80 each in bribes, up from Tk 40 a few weeks ago. The official fee for such a visit is only Tk 2.

A jail employee demanded Tk 250 from the correspondent who went to the central jail on the pretext of visiting a prisoner. The rate went high, as the correspondent failed to give details of the person he wanted to see.

"Previously, only mid-ranking officials used to take tolls. Now higher officials also want a share. They have fixed a monthly rate of Tk

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ZIA plunges into darkness for glitch in transformer

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Activities at Zia International Airport (ZIA) were hobbled by a 30-hour power cut from Thursday.

As two of the airport's transformers went out of order at 10:00am on the day, the authorities switched off most air-conditions and lights. Power connection was restored at 6:30pm yesterday.

The authorities resorted to generators to run necessary equipment including scanners and outdoors signals.

No flights were rescheduled for the power cut, ZIA officials said.

A top official of the Civil Aviation Authority, however, claimed that no transformer went out of order and the glitch was corrected immediately.