

Dhaka won't allow

FROM PAGE 1
months.
Bangladesh shares 243km land border with Myanmar along the strategic Naaf river that divides the two countries near the shore of the Bay of Bengal.

The foreign secretary said Myanmar expects Bangladesh to be the first country to obtain membership of the ARF. "We unequivocally support your membership in the ARF", the foreign secretary quoted the Myanmar FM as saying.

The meeting between the two foreign ministers made progress in thrashing out various details for the construction of the Dhaka-Yangon road. Communications Minister Nazmul Huda's presence during the bilateral talks proves that the stalled Dhaka-Yangon road link issue might become very active in coming days.

The issue gathered dust for a while as India proposed a different route to connect India's remote North-East region through the proposed Asian highway.

On the question of political instability and human rights abuses in Myanmar, the foreign secretary said, "We want no foreign interference in Myanmar. We want stability, development, cooperation and wish Myanmar well."

Despite a spate of visits and counter visits between senior officials of the two governments, Bangladesh-Myanmar bilateral trade is one of the lowest in the world. During FY 2001-02, Bangladesh imported US\$ 18 million worth of goods from Myanmar while export to Myanmar fetched Dhaka only \$ 2.40 million.

Yet, this snail-paced bilateral trading did not diminish the strategic importance of Myanmar to Bangladesh. Dhaka even hastened to prove the magnitude of the importance it attaches to Myanmar by sending its senior most diplomat to Rangoon (now Yangon) after Bangladesh achieved independence in 1971.

Dhaka is also mindful that Myanmar was supportive of Bangladesh's liberation war and was one of the first countries to recognise Bangladesh in 1972. "Our relationship is historical, the foreign secretary reiterated.

The current Bangladesh stand not to allow any outside power to use it as a launching pad to harm Myanmar stems from the historic cordiality that the two nations have built over decades.

The high water mark of this relationship dates back to the 1961 signing of a non-aggression pact between then Pakistan and Burma.

A sense of complicity has also

gripped the two peoples ever since they negotiated over the common borders in 1980. The 1980 border agreement supplanted the old agreement signed in 1966.

Dhaka is hopeful that the final delineation of the maritime boundary between the two nations will take place pursuant to the principle of equity as was enunciated by the International Court of Justice (ICJ) in the North Sea Continental Shelf case (1969).

According to the foreign secretary, the Myanmar FM assured Dhaka that the 20,000 or so stranded Rohingya refugees would be repatriated soon. "We're working with Myanmar and the UNHCR to finalise this issue," he confirmed.

The repatriation will take place as a follow-up to the already existing repatriation treaty that became effective on August 31, 1978.

The visit highlights the difficulties that the Myanmar military regime is facing amid diplomatic pressures and insinuated military threats from the US. The courting of Dhaka's friendship at this critical hour seems too important to Myanmar.

"Of course we want democracy in Myanmar", said the foreign secretary in response to a question. "But we oppose any kind of external intervention in Myanmar's internal affairs", he emphasised.

The Myanmar FM arrived in Dhaka on Saturday and left yesterday for Delhi. He is expected to carry the support for non-interference in his country's internal affairs from another of Myanmar's closest neighbours, India.

Robbers loot

FROM PAGE 12
ments worth about Tk 11.47 lakh, Tk 7.22 lakh in cash, three wrist-watches valued Tk 8 lakh and two mobile sets.

Mannan lodged a case with the Shyampur Police Station, but police could arrest no-one till last night.

In a separate robbery, dacoits looted cash and gold ornaments said to be worth about Tk 3.84 lakh from a Basabo residence in daylight. The victims said a band of four barged in their second floor apartment at 11:30am when a maid opened the gate on hearing the calling bell.

The robbers whipped up firearms, bound and gagged the four inmates and stripped the house of valuables including 45 tola of gold ornaments, Tk 6,000 in cash and two mobile sets.

The house owner filed a case with the Sabujbagh Police Station, but none was arrested till last night.

Netrokona-3 by-polls August 21

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The Election Commission (EC) has fixed the by-elections date for Netrokona-3 constituency on August 21.

Announcing the date yesterday the EC set July 21 as the last date to submit nomination papers. Nomination papers will be scrutinised on July 22 and the last date for withdrawal of candidature is July 30.

Meanwhile, Abdul Jalil, general secretary of the main opposition Awami League (AL), last night told The Daily Star the AL will not nominate any candidate for the poll. However, any party man is at liberty to run the race individually, he added.

The deputy commissioner of Netrokona has been made returning officer and upazila nirbahi officers of Atpara and Kendua assistant returning officers for the by-elections.

The seat fell vacant after ruling Bangladesh Nationalist Party lawmaker Nurul Amin Talukder died on June 4.

AL relief

FROM PAGE 1

Quoting police information, he added the truck with the munitions and explosives reached Khalu travelling a long route inside the country.

"What did the law enforcing and intelligence agencies do during the time?" he queried.

Rejecting the claims of failure of the law enforcing agencies, Jalil said, "As the ammo deal was conducted by the government high-ups, the law enforcing agencies were helpless to perform their duties."

He alleged the government is using the border security forces to humiliate innocent people instead of securing borders.

He also demanded of the government to dig out the truth behind the ammo haul for the sake of the country's independence, sovereignty and defence.

The AL leader reiterated his party's demand for formation of three-member judicial committee and parliamentary body with lawmakers from all parties to investigate the matter.

Trade barriers

FROM PAGE 12

The recent indications that serious trade liberalisation is resuming appear to exclude agriculture. State trading monopolies still control the import and export of most agricultural commodities," the report said.

India's un-weighted average agriculture tariffs were exceeded by only South Korea, Turkey, and Morocco.

Imports of 133 products in India, which are mainly food ingredients, powdered milk, cement, steel tubes, home appliances, gas cylinders, dry batteries and steel products, need a mandatory certification of Indian quality standard, which is a trade barrier, the WB report pointed out.

As far as anti-dumping duty is concerned, the WB's report said, India is one of the active users of it in the world. The most targeted country by far has been China, followed by European Union (EU), South Korea, Japan, US, Taiwan, Singapore, Russia, Thailand, Indonesia and Brazil.

India has been particularly active since 1993 in initiating anti-dumping cases, 300 of which have been completed so far, the report said.

Gross disparity

FROM PAGE 1

than the allocation for each student of a public university and over three times higher than that for a teacher on training.

The sum spent on a student is Tk 36,381 at public universities while that for a teacher is Tk 17,377 at teachers' training colleges or institutes.

The allocation was about 55 times that on each student of government primary schools. Tk 1,031 was allocated for a government primary school student.

In the same year, the spending on a student of government madrasah was Tk 6,259 against Tk 1,146 for a non-government madrasah student.

In fiscal 1990-91, the allocation for each student of non-government secondary school was Tk 706 and for government secondary school it was Tk 1,940.

In the same fiscal, allocation for a student of cadet college was Tk 40,367 about 21 times higher than for a student of government college, in fiscal 1994-95 it was about 17 times.

Educational Prof Serajul Islam Chowdhury noted that the constitution enshrines universal education but it is not reflected in reality. "The widening difference between cadet colleges and primary schools shows the increasing inequality in society," he said.

Prof Anu Muhammad of economics department at Jahangirnagar University said, "It is the reflection of social power and disparity in access to resource."

The country is yet to have a secular and universal education system after three decades of independence, he observed.



A procession of Mahila Jubo League, brought out to mark its founding anniversary, comes to a halt as police obstruct the way.

Flood: Cry for food, water

FROM PAGE 1

Yesterday directed all ministries concerned to closely monitor the country's river positions and take full preparations to face any situation that may arise.

Her directives came at a meeting held in view of steady rise in the water levels of some major rivers in the country. It was attended by all concerned ministers, secretaries and high officials.

Meanwhile the met office said that despite delayed arrival of monsoon, the country experienced 50 percent more rainfall than usual in June this year, which triggered floods in different areas.

The Flood Forecasting and Warning Centre said that Brahmaputra-Jamuna continued to rise at down stream points but the rate of rise slowed down. Rivers in the Ganges and Padma basins continued to rise at all points. Most of the rivers in the Meghna & the South Eastern Hill basins observed fall. Out of 85 monitoring stations, 33 points recorded rise, 33 points recorded fall, 2 stations remained unchanged and 11 points were flowing above danger level yesterday.

Our Pabna correspondent reported that low lying areas of Chatmohor, Bhanguara, Faridpur and Bera upazilas have gone under water with sharp rise in water level.

The Jamuna and the Padma were in spate and were flowing close to the danger mark at Nagbari and Harding Bridge, Water Development Board officials said.

The badly affected areas along these rivers are Handial, Nimaichara, Khanmarich, Samaj, Saikola, Austamoini, Nilpasha, Murli, Demra, Dharlarchar, Babunathpur and Nagarbari. Dozens of poor families in these areas have taken shelter on embankments.

Our Lalmonirhat correspondent reported that 40 villages in 17 unions under five upazilas in the district have been submerged as Teesta, Dharla, Malda and Ratani rivers continued to rise.

Erosion by the rivers devoured vast areas in the five upazilas, he said, quoting officials.

Our Gaibandha Correspondent said more areas in the district have gone under water from rising Teesta and Brahmaputra rivers.

Rail communication between Balashi and Bahadurabad may be snapped as land strips adjacent to the track at Balashi has been eroded, railway officials said.

Meanwhile Teesta river and its tributaries devoured vast areas and left hundreds of families homeless.

Alliance for legal action

FROM PAGE 1

ment by taking floor on point of order. We cannot allow her to violate the rules and procedures and constitutional provisions inside the House."

Turning to Bogra munitions haul, he said it would have been wise for the AL to expel its Krishak League leader immediately after the recovery of explosives and bullets from his house. But the AL chief blamed the PM and Hava Bhabhan for the haul and later claimed that the ammunition was manufactured in the local ordinance factory.

"How can a person like Sheikh Hasina, who was the prime minister of the country and now holds the position of the leader of the opposition, issue such an irresponsible statement? She wanted to destroy the image of our armed forces," Mannan Bhuiyan added.

Bhuiyan, also the LGRD and cooperatives minister, announced a programme of demonstration, protest rallies and processions in all thana headquarters on July 13 against the "conspiracy, violence, anarchy and destructive politics" of the AL.

Speaking at the gathering, Jamaat-e-Islami Secretary General and Social Welfare Minister Ali Ahsan Mohammad Mujahed said, "Now the question is whether the Awami League can do politics within the ambit of constitutional provisions."

Health and Family Welfare Minister Khandaker Mosharraf Hossain said the demand for mid-term election and the threat to paralyse the Jatiya Sangsad are part of a deep-rooted conspiracy against the people.

DCC Mayor and city BNP President Sadeque Hossain Khoka, MP said the AL is playing a dangerous game to destabilise the country and warned the party that it would be given a befitting reply with the support of the people.

Khoka, who chaired the meeting, said the BNP and the alliance are very much united and it will not be "difficult for us to foil any evil design of the AL".

BNP Joint Secretary General Gaiyeshwar Chandra Roy said the destructive politics of the AL couldn't be stopped as long as the AL supporters occupy top positions in the administration. He criticised the government for not removing them.

"You have retained known AL supporters and Sheikh Hasina's men in vital administrative positions at home and abroad and are allowing the AL men to get big business opportunities, and then asking the BNP men to fight against the AL. It is simply not possible," he told the meeting.

The meeting was addressed, among others, by BNP leaders Mirza Abbas, Selima Rahman, Nazrul Islam Khan, Amanullah Aman, Barkatullah Bulu and Abdus Salam, Jamaat leaders Mohammad Kamaruzzaman, Abdus Sobhan and Momtillul Islam Patwari, Bangladesh Jatiyo Party leaders Kazi Firoz Rashid and Saifur Rahman, Islami Oikyo Jote leaders ARM Abdul Matin, Abdur Rab Yusufi and Shaikh Golam Akbar.

The meeting over, thousands of leaders and activists of the alliance paraded different city streets ending up in front of the BNP central office.

Federer wins

FROM PAGE 12

status as a new dominant force in men's tennis.

Federer edged the first set on a tiebreak after big-serving Philippoussis, who also lost in the 1998 US Open final, double-faulted at a decisive moment.

The stylish Swiss player raced through the second set and took the third after running away with the tiebreak 7-3, greeting his triumph with tears of joy.

Our Netrokona correspondent reported that the flood situation in the district improved yesterday as their rivers started falling. But the situation in the inundated areas remained static.

According to agricultural officials, the standing crops on hundreds of acres have been destroyed already and there will be an acute crisis of seedlings this year, as transplantation of aman seedlings could not be done in due time i.e. the second week of June.

Our Lalmonirhat correspondent reported that 40 villages in 17 unions under five upazilas in the district have been submerged as Teesta, Dharla, Malda and Ratani rivers continued to rise.

Erosion by the rivers devoured vast areas in the five upazilas, he said, quoting officials.

Our Gaibandha Correspondent said more areas in the district have gone under water from rising Teesta and Brahmaputra rivers.

Rail communication between Balashi and Bahadurabad may be snapped as land strips adjacent to the track at Balashi has been eroded, railway officials said.

Meanwhile Teesta river and its tributaries devoured vast areas and left hundreds of families homeless.

Our Pabna correspondent reported that low lying areas of Chatmohor, Bhanguara, Faridpur and Bera upazilas have gone under

water with sharp rise in water level.

The Jamuna and the Padma were in spate and were flowing close to the danger mark at Nagbari and Harding Bridge, Water Development Board officials said.

The badly affected areas along these rivers are Handial, Nimaichara, Khanmarich, Samaj, Saikola, Austamoini, Nilpasha, Murli, Demra, Dharlarchar, Babunathpur and Nagarbari. Dozens of poor families in these areas have taken shelter on embankments.

Our Lalmonirhat correspondent reported that 40 villages in 17 unions under five upazilas in the district have been submerged as Teesta, Dharla, Malda and Ratani rivers continued to rise.

Erosion by the rivers devoured vast areas in the five upazilas, he said, quoting officials.

Our Gaibandha Correspondent said more areas in the district have gone under water from rising Teesta and Brahmaputra rivers.

Rail communication between Balashi and Bahadurabad may be snapped as land strips adjacent to the track at Balashi has been eroded, railway officials said.

Meanwhile Teesta river and its tributaries devoured vast areas and left hundreds of families homeless.

Our Pabna correspondent reported that low lying areas of Chatmohor, Bhanguara, Faridpur and Bera upazilas have gone under

water with sharp rise in water level.

The Jamuna and the Padma were in spate and were flowing close to the danger mark at Nagbari and Harding Bridge, Water Development Board officials said.

The badly affected areas along these rivers are Handial, Nimaichara, Khanmarich, Samaj, Saikola, Austamoini, Nilpasha, Murli, Demra, Dharlarchar, Babunathpur and Nagarbari. Dozens of poor families in these areas have taken shelter on embankments.

Our Lalmonirhat correspondent reported that 40 villages in 17 unions under five upazilas in the district have been submerged as Teesta, Dharla, Malda and Ratani rivers continued to rise.

Erosion by the rivers devoured vast areas in the five upazilas, he said, quoting officials.

Our Gaibandha Correspondent said more areas in the district have gone under water from rising Teesta and Brahmaputra rivers.

Rail communication between Balashi and Bahadurabad may be snapped as land strips adjacent to the track at Balashi has been eroded, railway officials said.

Meanwhile Teesta river and its tributaries devoured vast areas and left hundreds of families homeless.

Our Pabna correspondent reported that low lying areas of Chatmohor, Bhanguara, Faridpur and Bera upazilas have gone under

water with sharp rise in water level.

Lost in blame game

FROM PAGE 1

Udichi function on March 6, 1999 and eight more were bombed to death at a Kadiyani Mosque in Khulna on October 8 in the same year.

Seven people were killed in near-simultaneous bomb blast at the CPB rally and near the Awami League (AL) office on January 20, 2001. Before the wounds of the scars could heal, the Ramna Batamul bloodbath claimed 10 innocent lives on April 14, 2001.

Then came the mindless killing of 10 people in a Banyachar Church bomb attack on June 3, 2001. Barely 12 days later, an explosion at a Saikhira cinema explosion on September 28, 2001.

Eight people were killed in an attack on Bagerhat AL rally on September 23, 2001 and three in a Saikhira cinema explosion on September 28, 2002.

Twenty-one moviegoers were blown up in bomb explosions in four Mymensingh cinemas on December 6, 2002.

In the most recent Bogra ammunition and explosive haul, police seized nearly 1,00,000 bullets and 200kg explosives.

In addition, there were a number of disturbing incidents. These include recovery of 76kg explosives and bombs from Gopalganj where former prime minister Sheikh Hasina was supposed to address a rally and recovery of bombs from the Janakantha premises, a Kadiyani mosque in Dhaka, a mosque in Mirpur and from other places.

In each of these incidents, the then AL government blamed the 'fundamentalist forces' that joined hands with the main opposition party, the Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP) for the crimes.

And when such incidents surfaced under the present government, the government took no time to shift the blame onto the AL.

The opposition dismissed the charges in all cases and held the government responsible for failing to avert the incidents. They also demanded a judicial inquiry.

Bogra munition hauls also saw confusing directions. On the first day of the cache seizure, the home minister told the Jatiya Sangsad that the AL was scheming to destabilise the government.

The police headquarters in a statement echoed the home minister on Friday in which it named an AL

activist for possessing the huge stash of bullets, but refrained from naming a BNP activist who also possessed the ammunition.

Following the Udichi incident, then prime minister Sheikh Hasina had called upon the opposition saying, "Give up the politics of bomb explosion and come to parliament." In response, the BNP had demanded a judicial inquiry into the blast.

Later then leader of the opposition Khaleda Zia said, "The incident was done by the Awami League and it is now framing the BNP."

Following the CPB incident, Khaleda held the government responsible for the blast and then home minister Mohammad Nasim accused the BNP and Jamaat of the killings.

In the wake of the Mymensingh cinema explosions last year, the government became hyperactive to arrest AL stalwarts and intellectuals within four hours. They were released upon the High Court intervention and no charges have been pressed against anyone of them so far.

In the Narayanganj incident that took place during the AL regime, cases were filed against a number of BNP activists. When the BNP took office, the police filed the final report saying the allegations against the accused could not be proved. But in a strange twist, a new case was filed accusing a number of AL activists.

The practice shifted the focus of investigators to nowhere and destroyed the cases one after another.

Investigators believe that none of the incidents actually had anything to do with the internal politics of the AL and BNP. There are indications that some other forces succeeded to remain invisible because of the general lack of political will to uncover the truth, punish the real criminals and take effective measures to protect the nation from such brutal acts.

Man knifed

FROM PAGE 12
noon and advised him not to disturb his sister-in-law.

Having failed to convince Beul, Kalam along with some other local youths beat him up seriously. In retaliation, Beul stabbed Kalam who died on way to the hospital.

A case was filed in this connection.

The DORP identified some problems, including lack of employment opportunities, sanitation and infrastructure and put them forward to Wallich for scrutiny.

According to SDF Manager Shajahan Montu, problems are divided into two categories -- infrastructural and social. He pointed to the lack of culverts facing the village and said 15 per cent of the funds for construction would be raised from the villagers and the rest from the project money.

Separate NGOs will be appointed to work out the social problems like unemployment, illiteracy, lack of health service and dowry.

The women will be trained in job creation and be provided with funds for small entrepreneurship, he said.

SDF Managing Director and former advisor of the caretaker government M Hafizuddin Khan and SDF Member Binayek Sen accompanied Wallich.

A workshop was organised at the Jamalpur Shilpakala Academy on the project the same day. Prime Minister's Principal Secretary Kamal Uddin Siddiqui inaugurated the workshop as chief guest.

SI Enamul

FROM PAGE 12
Investigation Department (CID) submitted the FIR (First Information Report) of the rape case prepared by Assistant Superintendent of the CID Mojiur Rahman, the complainant. It was submitted to the officer-in-charge of the Gulshan Police Station.

Meanwhile, lawyers of the accused Hasan once again cross-examined Shazreh Huq Shehri, the fourth prosecution witness in the case.

She had earlier been cross-examined by the lawyers of all the accused. But following a recall petition by the lawyer of the accused Hasan, the tribunal granted further cross-examination.

Replying to a question, Shehri said at about 5:00pm on April 23, 1998, she along with Shazneen went upstairs of their father's Gulshan residence to see the preparations for the party, arranged for 25 to 30 guests, and saw Hasan on the verandah. Later, Shazneen became excited and was shouting at Hasan. "I calmed her down and brought her to the ground floor," the witness said.

The tribunal then adjourned the hearing till tomorrow and ordered for issuance of summons upon the rest of the witnesses, including the investigation officer of the case, to appear on that day.

Shazneen Tasnim Rahman, 15, the youngest daughter of Latifur Rahman, Chairman of Transcom Ltd., was raped and murdered at their Gulshan residence on April 23, 1998.

Special Public Prosecutors ABM Sharfuddin Khan Mukul, Mahbub Ahmed and Arfan Uddin Khan appeared for the state, while advocates Mosharraf Hossain Kajol and MA Kamal Hasan Khan Aslam for the accused.

Teenaged girl raped in city

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Three hoodlums confined a mother inside a room and raped her teenage daughter at their residence at Kalyanpur in the city yesterday.

Monir, Mamun and Babu, three local youths who are known to the family, allegedly went to the residence at around 3:00am. When they were let in, the three confined the victim's mother to a room and raped the girl, police said.

They also looted cash and valuables said to be worth Tk 20,000.

The victim's father lives in Saudi Arabia.

The victim's mother filed a case with the Mirpur Police Station accusing the three. Police could not arrest any of the accused till 8:30 last night.

Road accident

FROM PAGE 12

microbus. Seven of the injured -- Sohel, 30, Saleha Akhter, 25, Anowara, 10, Ayesha Begum, 50, Salma, 25, Abul Kashem, 56, and a 55-year-old unidentified male -- were sent to the DMCH in critical condition while the rest were admitted to a local health complex.

Traffic movement on the Dhaka-Chittagong Highway remained suspended for about one and a half hours following the accident.

The bus driver fled the spot. Police seized the bus and the badly damaged microbus. A case was filed with Sonargaon thana.

Our correspondent from Feni reports: Two minor girls were killed and a young girl was injured when a truck ran them over at Fazilpur in the Dhaka-Chittagong highway, about 15 km from Feni town at around 9:30am yesterday, police said.

The victims Asma, 10, daughter of Mortuza, died on the spot, while Zaheda,