

JS team goes to Tipai July 29

Assessment report after 6-day visit; JRC meeting if any negative sign found; names of 2 BNP MPs sought again

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The parliamentary delegation for visiting Tipaimukh dam site in India will leave Dhaka on July 29 to make a preliminary assessment of the impacts the proposed dam may have on Bangladesh.

"We are going to visit the dam site and submit a report to the government upon returning from the six-day visit," said Abdur Razzaq, chief of the parliamentary standing committee on water resources ministry who will lead the 10-member delegation.

"The government and experts will analyse information in the report and decide the next course of actions," he said

at a press briefing at the Jatiya Sangsad media centre yesterday.

Water Resources Minister Ramesh Chandra Sen meanwhile said yesterday if the parliamentary delegation sees any possibility that the dam may have negative impacts on Bangladesh, the government will call a meeting of the Joint River Commission (JRC) to solve the issue.

He said Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina and her Indian counterpart Manmohan Singh will be present at that JRC meeting.

"We will resist construction of the dam with the support of the people of the country if the parliamentary delegation's findings show the dam would be harmful for Bangladesh," Ramesh said at a discus-

sion meeting in the capital.

The delegation includes six lawmakers, three government officials and one water expert from Bangladesh University of Engineering and Technology (Buet).

The main opposition BNP is yet to send the names of its lawmakers for the delegation. Razzaq again urged Opposition Leader Khaleda Zia yesterday to send names of two of her party lawmakers.

A lawmaker of Jamaat-e-Islami, a component of the BNP-led four-party alliance, has been included in the team. He is also a member of the parliamentary body on water resources ministry.

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BNP seeks time till Jan 31 for council

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

BNP sought time extension, up to January 31, from the Election Commission yesterday to ratify the provisional changes to its constitution and submit it to the EC.

The party needs to hold a national council to have the provisional changes ratified.

The main opposition party in a letter seeking time extension said it has started the process for holding its national council and for this purpose it was completing elections to all its committees from BNP central to grassroots level.

It is not possible to complete the massive task by July 25, the deadline stipulated in the Representation of the People Order (RPO), the BNP letter argued.

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I resigned May 31

Insists Soheli Taj from US, tells *The Daily Star* he opted for 'dignity, principles'

HASAN JAHID TUSHER

Awami League lawmaker Tanjim Ahmad Soheli Taj yesterday said he stood down as the state minister for home affairs on May 31 so that his dignity and principles could survive intact.

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina's Adviser HT Imam said the prime minister did not accept the resignation. Instead, she asked him to go on leave for as long as it should take to resolve whatever problems he had.

Told that Soheli Taj had confirmed his resignation, the adviser said he would communicate the information to the prime minister.

Earlier, talking to *The Daily Star* by phone from his Maryland residence in the United States at 11:30am, Soheli said, "I submitted my resignation to the prime minister on May 31 for forwarding it to the president."

"Article 58 (1) of the constitution says a minister or a state minister's resignation takes



effect immediately."

Asked why he chose to resign, he said, "I can't tell you why. All I can say is things did not work out the way I wanted. Now I don't want to embarrass anyone. I would rather wish everyone best of luck."

"I tried to work sincerely to implement our charter for change even though it required me to stay away from my family in the US. But I couldn't continue as I didn't want to compromise my principles, dignity

and family values."

Meanwhile, sources in the administration said Soheli got frustrated after some government high-ups blasted him for some of his actions.

He was also under pressure from influential party leaders to serve their interests. His nerves began to fray with lobbying for posts, promotions and undue privileges for police officials getting intense.

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SQ CHY's MP STATUS SCRAPPING

Ball back to EC

Speaker's letter says it's none of JS business

SHAKHAWAT LITON

Speaker Abdul Hamid has finally placed the onus back on the Election Commission to strip BNP lawmaker Salauddin Quader Chowdhury of his parliament membership for violating electoral laws.

In a letter dated July 16, the Parliament Secretariat told the EC that scrapping Salauddin's parliament membership on grounds of being disqualified for continuing as an MP does not fall under the jurisdiction of the speaker, officials concerned said.

Salauddin concealed educational information in the affidavit he had submitted to the EC at the time of seeking candidacy in the December 29 parliamentary polls, which should disqualify him as a lawmaker.

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CLIMATE CHANGE BATTLE

\$1,149m sought from donors

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The government yesterday sought \$1,149 million global assistance for mitigating the impact of natural disasters on a long-term basis, especially in the coastal districts which are most vulnerable to the effects of climate change.

"We appealed for assistance from the international community mainly for construction of embankments, cyclone shelters and cluster villages for the landless people," Food and Disaster Management Minister Abdur Razzaque said while briefing newsmen at his ministry.

Foreign Minister Dipu Moni also spoke at the briefing following a meeting with the diplomats of various countries including the US, UK, European Union, South Korea and Saudi Arabia, and representatives of the World Bank, IMF, UN missions and global NGOs.

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A low, flat land inside Cox's Bazar hotel-motel zone is being filled with earth moved from hills.

PHOTO: STAR

Hills vanishing in Cox's Bazar

Earth from hills used to fill up beach side motel plots; govt ban goes ignored

A CORRESPONDENT, Cox's Bazar

Open spaces in the hotel motel zone of Cox's Bazar beach are being filled with earth from hills, violating the government's order.

Sources said workers are carrying earth by digging into hills in broad daylight to fill in the open spaces in absence of an effective monitoring system of the local administration.

Hill cutting, one of the key factors responsible for harming the environment and biodiversity of the hilly areas, is prohibited by law.

Besides, the government in a recent order issued a ban on the transfer, sale and purchase of plots allotted in the Hotel Motel Zone and construction of any structure there.

Principal Sharmin Reshmin, chief of Cox's Bazar Paribesh Bachao Andolon, said hill cutting is going on at different places of Cox's Bazar town from Saturday morning and earth is being taken to fill up five to six plots in the hotel motel zone. But the administration is not taking any action in this regard, she alleged.

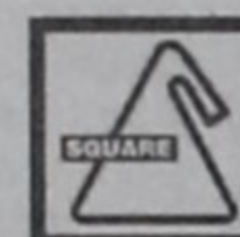
The deputy commissioner (DC) has been informed about the issues of hill cutting and filling of earth in hotel motel zone

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