

Manmohan, Hasina to meet soon

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Indian and Bangladeshi prime ministers are soon going to hold a summit to settle different issues, including the Teesta deal and land boundary demarcation.

Having attended the Asian Development Bank's annual meeting in New Delhi between May 1 and 6, Bangladeshi Finance Minister AMA Muhith said this at a press briefing in his Secretariat office yesterday.

Muhith was informed about the summit by his Indian counterpart Chidambaram during his stay in India.

Muhith said international news agency AP misquoted him on the Savar tragedy, adding that he has already written to the news agency in protest.

He went on, "As for the collapse of the structure [Rana Plaza], I think it is a huge tragedy. After visiting the spot, I realised the immensity of the loss."

"Such accidents tarnish the country's image and the importers tend to switch to other markets," Muhith maintained. "But I don't think it will create a serious problem."

Talking about the steps taken by the government after the collapse, Muhith said the possibility of the market growing smaller is low.

"It will not have any negative impact on the country's garment export," Muhith said. "However, there may be some temporary problems."

Cyclone brews in Bay

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Met office special bulletin reported, "The deep depression over the Southeast Bay and its adjoining area has moved north-westwards over the same area and intensified into a cyclonic storm 'Mahasen'."

"At 9:00am today [Saturday], it was centred about 1,700km south-southwest of Chittagong Port, 1,610km south southwest of Cox's Bazar Port and 1,705km south southeast of Mongla Port.

"It is likely to intensify further and move in the north-north-westerly direction."

The report added that the sea would remain rough, and the cyclone could head towards Bangladesh and Myanmar. All fishing boats and trawlers over the North Bay were advised to remain close to the coast.

Press note useless

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information that they wanted to know about police atrocities on the Islamist men from the press note," claimed Shamsuzzaman Dudu, BNP chief Khaleda Zia's adviser, while addressing a press conference at the party's Nayapaltan central office in the capital.

The government, in a press note, on Friday said 11 people, including a policeman and three passers-by, were killed in the capital in violence during the Hefajat-e Islam's Dhaka siege programme on May 5.

The press note termed the rumour of loss of thousands of lives" in the Motijheel area during the joint operation by law enforcers to drive away the Hefajat men completely baseless, fabricated and ill-motivated.

At the press conference, the BNP leader said the press note carried the same information that the prime minister and ministers were giving about the Shapla Chattar incident over the past few days.

"We wanted to know the number of bullets used in the operation, but the press note did not mention it. We also wanted to know the names of police and Rab officers who led the operation," he said, adding that the press note did not have any information on this.

Dudu said his party also

demanded an international probe into the incident. "But the government did not even form a domestic committee to probe the incident."

Pointing at the media coverage of the Shapla Chattar incident, the BNP leader said it was internationally alleged that Bangladesh's media "bowed down to the will or instruction of government" while reporting the much-talked-about incident.

"Various quarters abroad are saying our media cannot reveal the truth at present due to government pressure. Why we will have to hear such allegations against our media," Dudu asked.

Strong Iran quake kills child, causes damage

AFP, Tehran

A strong earthquake of 6.2 magnitude hit southern Iran early yesterday, killing one child and injuring at least 20 others in remote, mountainous villages, state television reported.

The US Geological Survey registered the quake at 0208 GMT, measured at 85 kilometres (52 miles) southeast of the town of Minab, located in the southern Hormuzgan province and off the Strait of Hormuz.

Workers

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Since then, thousands of Bangladeshis in the oil-rich Arab nation had become irregular workers failing to get new jobs or were forced to return home.

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina, Foreign Minister Dipu Moni and expatriates' welfare minister visited Saudi ministers and officials several times to break the impasse as Saudi Arabia is the largest overseas labour market for Bangladesh.

When contacted, Emdadul Haque, labour minister at Bangladesh embassy in Riyadh, yesterday told The Daily Star over the phone, "If any irregular worker returns home during the amnesty period, he can again go back to Saudi Arabia with a new work visa."

Emdadul Haque, however, said the grace period seemed short and suggested that it should be extended.

The new policy, declared by the Saudi labour and interior ministries on Friday, also allowed the foreigners, who overstayed their Umrah or Haji visas before July 3, 2008, to work as domestic workers or in private companies.

Fakhrul Basher, who returned home from Saudi Arabia last year, said this particular provision was a great opportunity for Bangladeshis. "Earlier, many irregular Bangladeshis did not want to return to Bangladesh, fearing that they would not be able to go back to Saudi Arabia again, but the new guideline will allow it," he told The Daily Star.

Foreign workers who entered the country illegally would not benefit from the new policy, reported Arab News, a daily published from Riyadh.

As per the new guideline, irregular workers who will not return home or legalise their status will be jailed and fined after the grace period.

Anyone transporting or sheltering illegal workers would also face two-year jail term and up to 1 lakh Saudi Riyal for each violator, it reported.

Saudi businessmen and economists welcomed the new guideline, saying it would help the continuity and development of businesses.

Police arrested the building owner, Rana, to "save him", she alleged, adding she believed Rana would be released in a few days.

Family members of the missing ones demanded that the government and Bangladesh Garment Manufacturers and Exporters Association pay off the salaries of the victims quickly.

Immediately after the collapse, rescuers used light and small equipment to retrieve victims alive but employed heavy equipment and technology from April 28 when the possibility of finding someone alive faded.

An army control room official told The Daily Star

CORRUPTION SCANDAL

Manmohan asked to step down

OUR CORRESPONDENT, New Delhi

India's main opposition BJP demanded the resignation of Prime Minister Manmohan Singh yesterday, after two cabinet ministers had quit over corruption scandals.

"The government is facing serious corruption allegations," said Rajnath Singh, president of Bharatiya Janata Party [BJP].

He told reporters, "If the prime minister honestly considers what should be done to strengthen the faith of the people in the government, he will find he has no other option but to resign."

His calls came after Law Minister Ashwani Kumar resigned over government interference in a police probe while Railway Minister Pawan Kumar Bansal over a bribe allegation involving his nephew.

Kumar and Bansal separately met the prime minister at his residence and submitted their resignations on Friday night.

The resignations are the latest blow to the scandal-battered Congress-led UPA government.

India's ruling Congress party struggled to contain the fallout of the resignations, insisting that the resignations showed it had zero tolerance for graft.

Kumar insisted that he was innocent and had quit as a "loyal foot soldier" to end "unnecessary controversy".

PADMA BRIDGE

Tk 5,000cr in next budget

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The government will allocate Tk 5,000 crore for the Padma bridge project in the upcoming budget, Finance Minister AMA Muhith said yesterday.

In his budget speech next month, the minister will present a plan for mobilising funds for the Tk 22,500 crore project.

Muhith made the comments at a dialogue on "Budget 2013-14: Our Expectations." Metropolitan Chamber of Commerce and Industry (MCCI) and private TV channel Maasranga Television jointly hosted the event at the capital's Hotel Sonargaon.

A portion of the project fund would come from the country's forex reserves, he mentioned.

Jamaat's

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component of the BNP-led 18-party alliance, announced the hartal in a statement on Thursday evening rejecting the verdict.

ICT-2 founder Kamaruzzaman, one of the key organisers of the infamous Al Badr force, guilty of committing crimes against humanity during the Liberation War, and sentenced him to death.

The 61-year-old senior assistant secretary general of Jamaat was found guilty of mass killing, murder, abduction, torture, rape and persecution in greater Mymensingh in 1971.

The two-day country-wide hartal called by the 18-party, protesting the killings of Hefajat activists during and after their Dhaka siege programme, ended on Thursday.

Hefajat also called a hartal on the same issue for today, but withdrew on Thursday.

Then Jamaat called the hartal nearly an hour after Hefajat withdrew.

Feni, Noakhali and Laxmipur districts would remain out of the purview of hartal for the Hindu religious festivals, reports our correspondent of Noakhali quoting Noakhali district Jamaat secretary Alauddin.

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জালালাবাদ গ্যাস টি এ্যান্ড ডি সিস্টেম লিঃ

(পেট্রোবাল্লার একটি কোম্পানী)

গ্যাস ভবন, মেন্দিবাগ, সিলেট।

তারিখ ০৯-০৫-২০১৩

গ্যাস ব্যবহারে সামগ্রী হোন এবং

সম্বৰ্ধিত গ্যাস বিল পরিশোধ করুন।

সিলেট-পৰ্বত ও বালাইয়াবাজার আবিকাহুত বিভিন্ন এলাকায় ২০১৩-১৪ অর্থ বছরের রাইজার নির্মাণ, সার্ভিস লাইন, ব্যালচাপ ও উচ্চচাপ (১৫০ পিএসআইপি পর্যন্ত) গ্যাস পাইপলাইন নির্মাণ এবং পাইপলাইন জরুরী মেরামত/পৰ্বতৰ্বাসন ও রক্ষণাবেক্ষণ সংস্কৃত কাজ (প্রেপ-“ক”)

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