

Purchase of Chinese submarines won't affect int'l relations

PM tells Jatiya Sangsad

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina yesterday told parliament that the purchase of 12 submarines from China would not elicit "negative reactions" from the international political arena, as it was an issue of Bangladesh's national interest.

On March 12, PM included two submarines -- BN Nabijatra and BN Joyjatra -- into the Navy fleet for the first time in history with a view to further intensifying the monitoring of the Bay and enhancing the force's combat capability.

The submarines were purchased from China, one of the important development partners of the country, to modernise the defence system by upgrading the Naval force to a three-dimensional one, Hasina said in a speech to lawmakers' queries.

The two submarines have strengthened our defence system much more compared to its previous situation, and that has improved Bangladesh's position in national and international politics, the leader of the

House said.

Both the submarines are 76 metres in length and 7.6 metres in width and are equipped with torpedoes and mines capable of attacking enemy warships and submarines.

In response to another query, the PM informed the House that her government had a plan to form a separate force to combat militancy and different other crimes.

On the issue of exporting manpower, she said that as many as 46,79 lakh people got jobs abroad since 2009.

Regarding the government's action to ensure human rights, Hasina in a scripted answer said her government had reconstituted the National Human Rights Commission to make it independent and neutral.

In line with the Paris Principal of the United Nations, the government reconstituted the NHRC by appointing a chairman and six members in June 2010. The government is pledge-bound to develop and protect human rights in the country by strengthening the commission, the PM added.

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The appalling state of Mirpur Road near Technical intersection of the capital yesterday. The puddles are actually large potholes and vehicles crawl to get past this stretch of the road.

PHOTO: PALASH KHAN

EC sends letters to 40 parties

Asks for names to prepare for next month's dialogue

MOHAMMAD AL-MASUM MOULLA

The Election Commission has asked all the registered political parties to send the name of a person each within seven working days so that it can contact them for an electoral dialogue and other related issues.

The commission is likely to open the dialogue next month which might continue through October.

Copies of a letter signed by EC Secretary Muhammad Abdulah were sent to 40 political parties on Tuesday.

According to the letter, each political party should send the name of a focal person, his phone and fax number, e-mail and mailing address to the EC secretary.

"We requested the political parties to send the name for smooth communication. We sent the letters as we will have more engagement with the political parties in the coming months. The addresses of many party offices might have changed," the EC secretary told *The Daily Star* yesterday.

The commission earlier decided to hold talks with the political parties to discuss various important issues.

It will also organise a dialogue with some civil society members at the EC secretariat at 3:00pm on July 31.

Abdullah said the commission primarily decided to invite 50 civil society members, including educationists, intellectuals and forward-thinking members of the other government, to join the talks.

He however said the meeting agenda and its modus operandi were yet to be finalised.

The EC recently finalised a roadmap for the next parliamentary polls putting emphasis on seven issues.

The issues are ensuring a

Rain worsens northern flood

FROM PAGE 1

Floodwater has been affecting more and more localities of Sarakandi, Sonatola and Dhunat upazila, adding to the sufferings of the flood victims.

District Relief Officer source said the low-lying areas on the Jamuna basin -- 57 villages of nine unions in Sarakandi, 21 villages in three unions in Sonatola and 14 villages under two unions in Dhunat -- were inundated, affecting at least 70,000 people of 14,355 families.

Mohosin Ali, deputy assistant agriculture officer of the Department

of Agriculture Extension, said 4,935 hectares of cropland was inundated that affected 23,554 farmers in the three upazilas. Aush on 1,710 hectares, lute on 3,070 hectares, seedling on 48 hectares and vegetables on 107 hectares were flooded, he added.

KURIGRAM

Around 1,53,000 people of around

38,000 flood-hit families of 41 unions under seven upazilas have been marooned, official sources said.

Around 4,216 families have fallen victim to river erosion in recent floods. The government has so far distributed

300 tonnes of rice, Tk 8.25 lakh and 2,000 packets of dry food among the affected families, the officials added.

GAIBANDHHA

The Jamuna and the Ghagor rivers yesterday swelled further following onrush of upstream water, flooding vast tracts of four upazilas.

According to the Water Development Board (WDB), the Jamuna was flowing 55cm and Ghagor 41cm above the danger mark. Around 95,000 people in four upazilas have been marooned.

JAMALPUR

Flood situation has deteriorated badly

as the Jamuna was flowing 81cm above the danger level at Bahadurabad Ghat point at 3:00pm yesterday, according to WDB.

Around 1,76,000 people of 320 villages under 27 unions in Islampur, Dewanganj, Madarganj and Sharishabari upazilas have been badly affected, said district administration sources.

Around 75,000 people of 12 villages in Islampur and around 42,000 people at 110 villages in Dewanganj have been marooned, the sources added.

WATER TRANSPORT Workers could go on strike on July 23

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Water transport workers yesterday threatened to go for countrywide indefinite strike from midnight July 23 unless their 21-point demands are met.

Shah Alam Bhuiyan, president of Bangladesh Nujran Samik Federation, declared this ultimatum from a rally in front of the Jatiya Press Club yesterday.

Later, they brought out a procession and started their way to the Prime Minister's Office to submit a memorandum there. However, police intervened to prevent the procession near Kadam Fenaq beside the Jatiya Eidgah.

A delegation from the federation later submitted the memorandum to the prime minister.

The federation's demands include repatriation of eight transport workers who are in an Indian jail since March 22, and immediate release of eight other workers who were convicted in a case filed for the capsizing of MV Koko-4.

Chowdhury Ashiqul Alam, general secretary of the federation, said the eight workers were arrested from near Haldia port in Kollata, when they went to buy daily supplies. A case has been filed against them and they are now in jail, he said.

On April 25, the Marine Court in Dhaka punished Koko company and nine of its staff as it found them guilty of causing MV Koko-4 to capsized that left 81 people killed and many more

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9 Sitakunda kids die in 4 days

FROM PAGE 1

Rupali Tripathi, youngest daughter of Suman Kumar Tripathi, died yesterday morning at her home. Three-year-old Rupali was having fever and rash all over her body for three days, said her under Pradip Kumar Tripathi.

"We took her to a man who practices homeopathy. He lives some kilometres away. He had given Rupali some medicines."

Asked why they did not take the child to a hospital, Pradip said the upazila health complex was 15 kilometres away from their home. Besides,

they did not have money to buy medicines which would have been prescribed by doctors.

Shimal Tripathi was among the children who died yesterday. His father, Bimal Tripathi said the two-year-old boy had been suffering from fever for six days. Shimal was also taken to a local man who practices homeopathy.

Contacted, Nasir Uddin, a member of ward-4 of Sonaihatri Union Parishad, said he came to know about the disease after the death of the four children yesterday.

"I have visited the area and

informed the upazila nirbahi officer about the incident," he said, adding that many parents of the children suffering from the disease were "reluctant" to go to the hospital.

Civil Surgeon Azizur said a medical team visited the hilly area and conducted medical checkups of the children there.

Initially, six children were taken to the health complex in Sitakunda and then to the hospital in Fouzderhat. The others were taken to hospitals later.

"The disease could not be identified immediately," he said, adding, "The

sick children are aged between one and 12. Their symptoms include fever, body rash, breathing problem, vomiting, blood in stool and fainting."

Asked whether the disease could be transmitted by mosquitoes, he said, "It does not seem so. If it was, then why only children were being affected?"

Another medical team from the Institute of Epidemiology, Disease Control and Research in Dhaka was dispatched for Sitakunda, he said, adding that the local primary school was shut down to prevent the spread of the disease.

The medical team from the

Floating island in the making

FROM PAGE 16

solution for accommodating housing, ports, farms or parks.

It had 87 floating triangles of different sizes, the huge, flexible island made of concrete or steel would eventually stretch 1.5 to two kilometres (one to 1.2 miles), or a total of three square kilometres.

Squeezed for space in this tiny northern European country, "some cities are starting to look into floating solutions, like a floating park on the river for example, where they want to

have an area for recreation close by the city centre," Olaf Waals from the Maritime Research Institute of the Netherlands (MARIN) told AFP.

"I hope that floating islands get used as a tool to increase living space in this low-lying country, much of which down the centuries has been reclaimed from the sea and which is protected from the waves and which is

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