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Inside Today

International



President Bush has renewed his calls for Saddam's overthrow saying, "it's only terror that keeping him in power"

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Article

The Punjab press is divided and confused, and there is safety in keeping mum... Prakash Chandra writes from New Delhi

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Business



Third World gets \$ 23b World Bank loan a year. The WB President Barber Conable said the bank should examine how much a Third World nation spends on arms when considering making a loan to that country

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Metropolitan

Dhaka Day by Day To this day I am not sure if the pleasure it was the monstrous insects biting my feet were mosquitoes or spiders that found on the bathroom walls

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NEWS BRIEFS

France calls UNSC meet

PARIS, Apr 27: France called today for a meeting of the five permanent members of the UN Security Council to study the situation in Iraq following talks between the Baghdad government and Kurdish leaders, the Foreign Ministry announced, reports AFP.

Rok interior minister fired

SEOUL, Apr 27: South Korean President Roh Tae-Woo sacked his Interior Minister today in a bid to assuage national furor caused by a student's death at the hands of police, reports Reuters.

Victor Banerjee won't join Cong-I

CALCUTTA, Apr 27: The renowned actor, Victor Banerjee, who is contesting the forthcoming Lok Sabha poll as a BJP candidate, today said that he had rejected the Congress (I) proposal of joining on various national issues in line with that of the BJP, reports PTT.

Narcotics Control Board

Prime Minister Begum Khaleda Zia has been made Chairman of the National Narcotics Control Board under clause 4 (2) (k) of Narcotics Control Ordinance 1990, an official handout said in Dhaka on Saturday, reports BSS.

State Minister for Finance tells House

Tk 1045 crore bad debts

Star Economic Report

Total bad debts of five nationalised banks and two development financing institutions amounted to Taka 1045.68 crores on December 31, 1989.

Classification of bad debts for 1990 is not yet complete.

This was stated by State Minister for Finance Mujibur Rahman in the Jatiya Sangsad on Saturday in reply to a question by Sardar Shakhawat Hossain Bakul (Narsingdi-4).

The State Minister gave the break-up of bad debts. The position on December 31, 1989 was as follows: Sonali - Bank Taka 363.68 crores, Janata Bank - Taka 153.00 crores, Agrani Bank - Taka

148.87 crores, Rupali Bank - Taka 165.53, Bangladesh Shilpa Bank - Taka 201.35 crores, Bangladesh Shilpa Rin Sangstha - Taka 89.08 crores and Bangladesh Krishi Bank - Taka 4.34 crores.

The State Minister informed the House during the question hour that total outstanding agricultural credits at the end of March, 1991 stood at Taka 5662.72 crores. He was answering a question by Mosharraf Hossain (Mymensingh-Netrokona).

Replying to another question by the same members, Mujibur Rahman said that unsettled certificate cases against defaulters in repayments of

agricultural credits numbered 4,26,539 in January, 1991. The claims relating to such certificate cases amounted to Taka 416.33 crores, he added.

The State Minister told the House that, the employees of Sonali Bank embezzled Taka 12.48 crores during 1982-90 and that the recovered amount of such embezzled funds till now stood at Taka 5.25 crores.

Replying to a question by A.T.M. Alamgir (Comilla-10), Mujibur Rahman gave the position of fund embezzlement during 1982-90 and recovery thereof in other nationalised commercial banks as follows: Janata Bank - embezzlement - Taka 19.47 crores and re-

covery - Taka 5.12 crore, Agrani Bank - embezzlement - Taka 8.53 crores and recovery - Taka 2.35 crores, and Rupali Bank - embezzlement - Taka 1.64 crores and recovery - Taka 4.73 crores.

Answering a question by Hajj Rashed Mosharraf (Jamalpur-2), the State Minister for Finance told the House that smuggled gold, weighing 823.476 kilograms (Kgs), was seized from June 1982 to March 1991.

Punitive measures have been taken against he smugglers, he said.

The culprits have been handed over to the police for See Page 10 Col. 1

PM addresses home ministry officials Take steps to ensure law and order

Prime Minister Begum Khaleda Zia on Saturday expressed her belief that her government would be able to improve the law and order situation in the country with the help of all concerned, reports BSS.

Addressing the officials of the Home Ministry at the Secretariat, the Prime Minister hoped that the officials of the Home Ministry would work with sincerity and honesty for the welfare of the people.

Home Secretary Lutfulhul-Majid and senior officials of the ministry also spoke on the occasion, assuring the Prime Minister of their all cooperation.

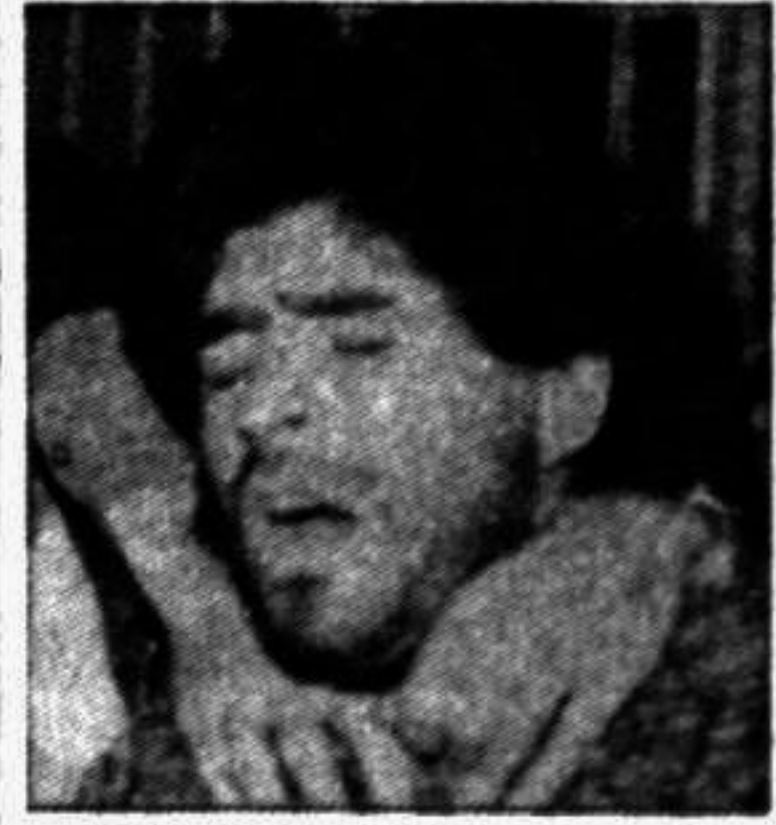
Begum Zia underlined the

need for maintaining law and order for consolidating democratic base of the country and said, "We want to strengthen democracy so that it could save the nation from the attack of autocracy".

The Prime Minister said, a new era had ushered in with the united efforts of the political forces and the government officials and employees. She called for coordinating the efforts of all to establish an honest and democratic government and thanked the government officials and employees for their role in ousting the autocracy and holding a free and fair election after its fall.

Begum Zia said peaceful law See Page 10 Col. 6

Maradona's misery



BUENOS AIRES, Apr 27: International football star Diego Maradona and two friends were using cocaine when police arrested them in a suburban Buenos Aires apartment, Interior Minister Julio Mera Figueroa said today, reports AFP.

Mr Mera Figueroa stressed See Page 10 Col. 3

Li invites Khaleda to China

BEIJING, Apr 27: Premier Li Peng told Bangladesh's visiting Army Chief Saturday he hoped the new government in Dhaka would continue to work for friendly relations with China, reports AFP.

Li told Gen Muhammad Noor Uddin Khan he hoped the government of Prime Minister Khaleda Zia would continue to enhance the friendly relations between the two countries, the Xinhua news agency reported.

The Premier asked Lt Gen Noor Uddin to convey greetings to Begum Zia and invited her to visit China at a convenient time.

The Army Chief of Staff told Li that Bangladesh held his November 1989 visit in high esteem and said the new government "treasures its friendship with China".

55 pc rural people live under poverty level

Fiftyfive per cent of the country's rural population and 66 per cent of the urban residents lived under the poverty level, according to statistics collected during the 1986-89 and 1985-86 fiscal years respectively, reports BSS.

This was stated by the State Minister for Finance, Mujibur Rahman, in reply to a question from Nurul Islam Moni (Ind-Barguna) during the question hour at the Jatiya Sangsad Saturday afternoon.

The Minister, admitted that there were no up-to-date figures available on the population living under the poverty level See Page 10 Col. 2

Re-investigation into gold haul at ZIA ordered

Prime Minister and Leader of the House Begum Khaleda Zia Saturday informed the Jatiya Sangsad that the government had ordered re-investigation into the gold haul at the Zia International Airport in which two foreign nationals and some officials including the airport manager were arrested for their alleged involvement, reports BSS.

Begum Khaleda Zia intervened the proceedings and gave the information to the House during the question-answer session Saturday afternoon.

Donors to provide \$435m for fourth population, health project

WASHINGTON, Apr 27: A consortium of 10 donors will provide Bangladesh with 435 million US dollars for implementing its fourth population and health project, reports BSS.

Negotiations to this effect ended here Friday. Of the total, the IDA has agreed to provide 180 million US dollars. The total outlay of the project is 800 million US dollars.

The other members of the consortium are: Australia, Belgium, Canada, Sweden, Germany, Japan, the Netherlands, Norway and the United Kingdom.

The project will strengthen family planning and health service delivery and women's nutrition programmes in Bangladesh.

Cases filed against Shah Moazzem, Chand

The Bureau of Anti-Corruption has filed a case with Ramna Thana against former Deputy Prime Minister Shah Moazzem Hossain and former State Minister for Food Nurunnabi Chand for causing financial loss to the government by their illegal order through abuse of power, an official handout said on Saturday, reports BSS.

According to the handout, the Directorate of Food in 1989 bought nine lakh pieces of jute sacks through tender to meet its demand. But afterwards, Shah Moazzem Hossain who was in charge of the Food Ministry then, passed an illegal order on the Food Directorate to buy nine lakh more pieces of jute sacks although there was no demand for those. The government thus suffered a loss of Taka 2.15 crore, the handout said.

Ershad's lawyer Advocate Strajul Haque submitted in the Tribunal a list of five Defence See Page 10 Col. 6



A smiling mother dons multi-coloured glass bangles from a vendor at the Baishakhi Mela in the city while a little girl looks on perhaps with the thought of when her turn will come to have a few pieces of the attractive ornament. — Star photo

Accused should be allowed to sing his last song, Defence tells Tribunal Ershad terms charges false

By Staff Correspondent

Preparations to shift tribunal near jail

Star Report

Renovation of a room near the Dhaka Central Jail has started from Thursday to shift the tribunal trying deposed president H. M. Ershad.

Reliable sources said the Home Ministry proposed to shift the tribunal on security ground from House No. 9, Road No. 50, Gulshan to a suitable place near the Central Jail where the former president is now detained.

"A sizeable room adjacent to the jail armory is now under more renovation," a jail official told The Daily Star.

Deposed President Ershad, facing trial at the Special Tribunal for illegally possessing arms said yesterday that his representative had deposited the arms to the Deputy Police Commissioner (North) within the period of the general amnesty declared by the interim government for the surrendering of illegal arms.

In his statement under Section 342 in reply to the depositions of Prosecution witnesses Ershad also named five defence witnesses including former Army chief Lt Gen Atiqur Rahman.

Earlier the Prosecution declared the Deputy Police Commissioner (North) Shamsheer Alam as gained over by the Defence.

Standing in the dock to re-

ply to the depositions of the Prosecution witnesses General Ershad termed the charges against him as false, baseless, concocted, politically motivated and aimed at undermining him.

Earlier Judge Mohammed Habibullah read out the depositions before Ershad.

General Ershad also produced in the Tribunal a certificate dated April 21, 1991, from the Iraqi Ambassador in Dhaka about three pistols (included as subject matters of the case) which were said to have been given as gifts from Iraq when he visited that country.

Ershad's lawyer Advocate Strajul Haque submitted in the Tribunal a list of five Defence See Page 10 Col. 6

Indian Muslims search for a saviour

NEW DELHI, Apr 27: India's Muslims, shaken by an unprecedented rise in Hindu fundamentalism, are searching for a saviour premier as the country inches towards the second general election in two years, reports AFP.

Over 100-million strong community appears to be in a dilemma as political parties queue up before their leaders to seek Muslim votes for balloting to the federal parliament next month.

Muslims say their choice is tough since no party looks set to win at the moment, while determined onslaughts by

Hindu revivalists on traditional secular values have instilled a fear in them unseen before any previous election.

Added to their worries are recurring Hindu-Muslim riots across India.

"Minorities, particularly Muslims, have begun to feel threatened," said Ahmed Bukhari, deputy priest of the historic Juma Masjid (Mosque) here. There seems to be none who can protect us.

"Every government has made promises but failed to protect our lives and property," he said, "and now politi-

cians are again coming to us (asking for support)".

Muslims are the largest religious minority in Hindu-dominated India and popular opinion holds that they usually vote en bloc, giving them a power that can make or unmake contestants in scores of constituencies.

Many say this is a myth, but the belief is widespread.


As a result, all major political parties are wooing Muslim religious and community leaders in a bid to brighten their chances in what is widely expected to be an evenly fought

election.

Bukhari said representatives of both ex-Premier Rajiv Gandhi's Congress (I) Party and his successor Vishwanath Pratap Singh's centrist Janata Dal (People's Party) had met his father-cum-chief priest Abdullah Bukhari.

The widely publicised meetings drew the immediate ire of the Hindu revivalist

Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP or Indian People's Party), which while making no bones about its Hindu platform accused the Congress and Janata Dal of pampering Muslims.



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