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VOL. 1 NO. 222 REGD. NO. DA 781 BHADRA 19, 1398 BS, DHAKA WEDNESDAY SEPTEMBER 4, 1991 SAFAR 23, 1412 HIJRI 12 PAGES : PRICE TAKA 3.00

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China's situation not comparable to that in USSR : Li

Beijing rejects Major's human rights concerns

BEIJING, Sept 3: British Prime Minister John Major strongly urged China on Tuesday to improve its human rights record and pressed Prime Minister Li Peng for information about several jailed dissidents, reports AP.

Major made a "strong and detailed" appeal on human rights during his talks with Li, said a British official who spoke on condition of anonymity in keeping with official practice.

Li rejected the British leader's human rights concerns. Instead, he delivered a rebuke to Britain and other foreign countries that encroached on Chinese territory in the 19th and early 20th centuries.

Li said a Chinese historian had asked him in a letter "not to forget the history of China being bullied and humiliated in the past more than 100 years. In this more than 100-year period, foreign powers totally disregarded the human rights of the Chinese people."

Li's comments were relayed by Foreign Ministry spokesman Wu Jianmin at a news conference.

The two leaders also signed an agreement Tuesday to build a new airport in Hong Kong, ending a long dispute that demonstrated China's clout in the colony even before Britain returns it in 1997.

Later Tuesday, Major met with President Yang Shangkun, who called the British leader's visit of "great significance."

Major gave Li a letter from the international human rights group Amnesty International that expressed concern over the treatment of several jailed dissidents, including two who See Page 12 Col. 7

By-elections overshadow campaign for referendum

The country's two major political parties — Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP) and Awami League (AL) — are yet to draw any effective campaign plan for making the September 15 referendum a remarkable success. Both the parties are now locked in a fresh test of popularity keeping their eyes on the ensuing by-elections in 11 parliament seats, scheduled for September 11.

The leaders of smaller political parties have expressed concern over the indifference, shown by the two big parties, in making people enthusiastic about the referendum. So far, indications suggest that the turnout in the referendum, seeking people's mandate in ratifying the Constitution 12th Amendment Bill for switching over to parliamentary form of government, may be low. "Poor turnout in such a vital referendum, third of its kind in the country, will undermine the importance of the system of seeking people's verdict in making basic changes in the Constitution," said a senior leader of the Opposition.

This correspondent during his visit to greater Chittagong district recently found the people indifferent to the referendum. No one even talked of the issue which is so important in our national life. The referendum will decide the fate of the 12th Amendment Bill.

If the present scenario persists and the voters' turnout is low, Awami League may find a justification of its amendment move to drop Article 142 IA, 1B and 1C of the Constitution providing for holding referendum.

The Chief Election Commissioner is so far the lone campaigner in favour of the referendum. An Election Commission source told The Daily Star that unless the political parties, particularly BNP and Awami League, took initiatives to tell the people about the importance of the 'vote' on September 15, the turnout might cause disappointment. There is no effective campaign against the 12th Amendment Bill either except the lone opposition by Freedom Party, having weak organisational base, may not be able to influence the people to vote against the change.

The leaders of smaller parliamentary groups in the Jatiya Sangsad are planning to initiate a dialogue soon to intensify the referendum campaign. An opposition leader in parliament told this correspondent that they would meet the leaders of BNP and Awami League within a couple of days to bring them together for the campaign.

The ruling party will be requested to convene an all party meeting to bring back the atmosphere of amity and cooperation among the supporters of the 12th Amendment Bill, which was passed unanimously in Parliament, in the first week of last month. See Page 12 Col. 8

'I've already been given 25-year jail term' Ershad, three others in the dock for ATP deal

The curtain rose yesterday in the case of the controversial purchase of three ATP aircraft with deposited President H M Ershad and three of his associates in the dock of the Senior Special Judge Court.

The case is the third against the ousted President while the second case against him for amassing wealth is nearing completion.

The case on the ATP (Advanced Turbo Prop) deal is also being held at the Old Jail Warden's Barracks where the Senior Special Judge Court of District and Sessions Judge Mohammad Habibullah who sentenced Ershad to a ten year rigorous term in the 'arms case' has been set up.

The allegation against the accused is that they purchased the ATPs from British Aerospace in an unfair deal resulting in a loss of about Taka 22.44 crore to the Bangladesh Biman authorities.

Ershad's three associates chargesheeted with him for their involvement in procuring these planes are former ministers Ziauddin Ahmed Bablu, A H M Abdul Gaffar and former secretary of the ministry of industry Mosharraf Hossain.

The case began at around 11 am and all the accused sat in the dock with Ziauddin, Gaffar and Mosharraf in line to the right side of Ershad. Because of the dock's being congested Ershad was allowed to sit just outside it. They sat for an hour in the dock and were in continuous discussion.

A list of 14 lawyers was submitted in the Court to defend the accused. The lawyers on the list were Advocate Sirajul Haque, Yousof Hossain Humayun, Kazi Shadat, Mafzur Rahman Majumdar, Mosharraf Hossain Kazal, Sudhir Kumar Hazra, A R Mollah, Sheikh Rezaul Karim, Fazle Rabbi, Shaiful Islam Babul, Mostafa Jamal Baby, Shareef Ahmed, Anisul Haque and Helaluddin. Personal lawyers of Ziauddin and Gaffar were also present.

The prosecution side was represented by the Attorney General Aminul Haque, Deputy Attorney Generals Hasan Arif and Amirul Kabir Chowdhury, PP Abdur Razzak Khan, SPP Farid Uddin Ahmed and the AG's junior Adilur Rahman Khan.

As soon as the learned Judge settled in his chair on the podium Advocate Shamsul Haque moved a bail petition on behalf of Ziauddin Ahmed Bablu pleading that Bablu should be granted bail on humanitarian grounds to see his ailing mother.

Attorney General Aminul Haque objected to it and said that the case was under a non-bailable section.

He further said that Bablu had been earlier granted parole to see his mother and now the government may consider granting him the same again if it so desires.

The learned Judge after hearing both the sides re- See Page 12 Col. 7



Prime Minister Begum Khaleda Zia offering munajat after laying the foundation stone of Meghna-Gomti bridge at Daudkandi, Comilla on Tuesday. —PID photo

Japan eager to see KAFCO materialised

Star Economic Report

Leader of the Japanese economic mission Kikuo Ikeda has said that his country would be happy to see the Karnaphuli Fertiliser Company (KAFCO) started and implemented as soon as possible.

Brushing aside reports in a section of the press in Bangladesh, Ikeda said that his mission had not put any pressure on the Bangladesh government and it was 'absolutely unaware' about the project before leaving Japan.

Describing the media reports as contrary to the correct situation, the mission chief told a crowded press conference at a local hotel on Tuesday that Japan is not the lone participant in the project. Besides Japan, there are 11 other countries involved in KAFCO, he said.

About re-negotiation of the terms of the letter of guarantee, Ikeda said they had no intention to get involved in the issue because the matter was completely up to the Japanese partners and the Bangladesh government. See Page 12 Col. 4

PM lays foundation of Meghna-Gomti bridge Network for growth of rural economy will be developed

DAUDKANDI, Sept 3: Prime Minister Begum Khaleda Zia today laid the foundation of the Taka 314 crore Meghna-Gomti bridge here on the Dhaka-Chittagong highway, reports BSS.

Construction of the 1.4 kilometer bridge, with Taka 250 crore Japanese grant would start from the ensuing dry season and is expected to be completed by 1995. This would be the second bridge, to be constructed with the Japanese grant after the Meghna bridge, which was commissioned in May last year.

Later addressing a big gathering here, Begum Zia said her government was eager to build up district headquarters as important economic centres and to ensure even development of all the regions. "With this end in view road infrastructure is being streamlined," she added.

Communication Minister Col (Retd) Oli Ahmed, State Minister for Energy and Mineral Resources, DR. Khandakar Mosharraf Hossain, State Minister for Labour and Manpower, Barrister Rafiqul Islam Mia, Secretary, Road and Road Transport Division, Nazem Ahmed Chowdhury and Charge D' Affaires of Japanese Embassy Tetsuo Ito also spoke.

It was attended, among others, by Finance Minister M. Saifur Rahman, Commerce Minister M.K. Anwar, State Minister for Establishment Osman Ghani Khan, State Minister for Water Development and Flood Control, Ansar Ali Siddiqui, members of parliament and senior officials.

The Prime Minister said the government would also take initiatives to connect the important growth centres in See Page 12 Col. 3

Khaleda's comment an attempt to influence court, says Mizan

By Staff Reporter

Jatiya Party leader Mizanur Rahman Chowdhury Tuesday said Begum Zia's comment that Ershad would remain rest of his life in jail was an "attempt to influence the court."

Addressing by-election meetings at Padganj and Ranipukur at Rangpur he said no responsible person could make such utterances while trial of Ershad was going on in court. He called for refrain- See Page 12 Col. 3

JCD leader dies in Pabna: One arrested

PABNA, Sept 3: An activist of the Jatiyatadbadi Chhatra Dal (JCD) succumbed to his injuries at Sadar Hospital in the early hours today, reports UNB.

Md Harunur Rashed (25) of Dilalpur area of the town was arrested in this connection.

Merajul Hossain Shaheen (24), President of Jatiyatadbadi Chhatra Dal (JCD) City Committee was allegedly See Page 12 Col. 1

BNP shifting failure on others: Hasina

BHOLA, Sept 3: Awami League President Sheikh Hasina today said Prime Minister Begum Khaleda Zia is now talking about "conspiracy" to hoodwink the people about her government's failure in running the country, reports UNB.

The BNP government has demonstrated its inefficiency and ineptitude in dealing with the prevailing situation and is now trying to shift its failure on others, she told a big public meeting at Borhanuddin High School ground this afternoon.

The Awami League chief and Leader of the Opposition in Parliament came here on a two-day campaign for by-election in Borhanuddin-Daulatkhana (Bhola-2) constituency wherein her party nominee Anwar Hossain Bhuiyan is contesting.

Referring to Begum Zia's allegation of conspiracy against her government, Hasina sought clarification from the Prime Minister on her allegation made at the public meeting at Manik Mia Avenue in Dhaka on Sunday.

"Let people know clearly where the conspiracy is, who is involved in it," Hasina told Khaleda.

"You will have no escape by shifting your failure on others," she warned.

Expressing her fears about rigging by the ruling party in the September 11 bye-elections, she asked the administration to remain neutral for free and impartial voting. "Any fraud or rigging will not be tolerated."

BNP bluffed the people by not fulfilling its election pledges, Hasina said and added being in the opposition Awami League had forced the government. See Page 12 Col. 6

Young man held with explosives from Khaleda's meeting venue

By Staff Correspondent

A young man allegedly carrying explosives was arrested from the venue of Prime Minister Begum Khaleda Zia's public meeting in Mohammadpur Tuesday.

Mohammadpur police picked up the man in his early twenties from the venue and recovered a Molotov cocktail from his possession. Police found his movements suspicious and challenged him before making the arrest.

The arrest was made at around 5:45 pm when the Prime Minister was present at the meeting in the Mohammadpur Town Hall in See Page 12 Col. 1

UAE President likely to visit Dhaka soon

United Arab Emirates (UAE) President Zaid Bin Sultan Al Nahyan is expected to visit Bangladesh shortly, reports UNB.

Foreign Ministry officials said Tuesday he visit would take place at the invitation extended by Prime Minister Begum Khaleda Zia when she visited the UAE in May.

Acceptance of the invitation came in reply to Begum Zia's message of greetings sent on the occasion of Nahyan's 25th coronation ceremony. "We hope that we will be in a position in future to meet Your Excellency once again on the beautiful land of your hospitable country."

Nahyan paid a state visit to Bangladesh in early 80s.

The UAE President's next visit may be linked with the affairs of Bank of Credit and Commerce International (BCCI) the operation of which were suspended in early August, observers here believe.

Nahyan owns 70 per cent shares of BCCI, one of the largest banks of the world.

Bangladesh authorities, meanwhile, conveyed to the owners of the bank that they wanted to see the resumption of the services of BCCI.

Fresh talks with Shantibahini likely soon

From Staff Correspondent

CHITTAGONG, Sept 3: A fresh round of talks between the authorities and the Shantibahini is likely to be held soon to resolve the crisis of Chittagong Hill Tracts, a tribal leader said today.

The sources said that Hangshadoz Chakma, head of the liaison committee, recently sent a letter to the Shantibahini calling for preparing modalities for the talks. See Page 12 Col. 3

NEWS BRIEFS

105 workers bailed out
NARAYANGANJ, Sept 3: A total of 105 workers of Adanjee Jute Mills were set free on bail today, court sources said, reports UNB.
About 500 workers applied en masse for bail. Police earlier issued warrants against them in connection with several incidents of trouble in the jute mills since 1987.
Of those who were granted bail today, 63 are supporters of labour leader Rehan while the rest of Siddique Sarder.

Frank Capra dead
LA QUINTA (California), Sept 3: Frank Capra, the Stellan immigrant whose classic movies reflected the hope, vigour and individualism of the American spirit, died Tuesday at his home in California. He was 94, reports AP.

Two killed in Karachi blast

KARACHI, Sept 3: A powerful bomb blast killed two men and wounded four others near Karachi airport tonight. No one claimed responsibility for the explosion at Pahawan village, the police said, reports Reuter.

Archbishop murdered

YAOUNDE (Cameroon), Sept 3: French Archbishop Yves Plumey, the first Roman Catholic bishop sent to Cameroon, was found murdered in his bed Tuesday and police were blaming robbers, state radio reported Tuesday. It said Plumey, 79, was found tied to his bed in his retirement home in Ngaoundere, reports AP.

Soviet republics to prevent collapse of economy

MOSCOW, Sept 3: Nearly all of the Soviet Union's 15 republics are prepared to sign an economic agreement to prevent the paralysis of the country's economy, Russian President Boris Yeltsin said today, report agencies.

"Practically all 15 republics are ready to reach an accord on economic union," Yeltsin said.

Speaking to the Congress of People's Deputies, the Russian President said the agreement would prevent the country's production system from breaking down.

Yeltsin called for a future union to become a "free alliance of sovereign states," but insisted that all the states involved be "part of some single system."

The Russian leader insisted that the Soviet nuclear arsenal must remain under "total central control," and approved the maintenance of national armed forces.

The alliance would be based on the co-existence of different form of inter-state relations and could group independent states either on confederative, or federative basis, as well as those who want an associate membership.

Soviet Leader Mikhail Gorbachev today withdrew a controversial proposal to set up a small transitional parliament of republics in a reconstructed Soviet Union.

Instead, he agreed to keep the old legislature, the Supreme Soviet, but in a new form that would have one chamber nominated by the republican parliaments and one directly elected.

Gorbachev said the leaders of the 10 republics, who on Monday jointly proposed the transitional council of representatives with him, had agreed to drop it.

A draft resolution distributed to members of the Soviet legislature today proposed recognising declarations of independence by all Soviet republics which have made them.

If approved in its present form, the resolutions would apparently amount to recognition of the independence of Lithuania, Latvia and Estonia and other republics which have declared their intention to secede from the Soviet Union.

Several of the non-Baltic republics wanting to leave the Soviet Union have also indicated their wish to form a new, looser union with Moscow.

The resolution and any amendments were expected to be debated tomorrow by the Congress of People's Deputies, the supreme law-making body.

The draft called for the Congress to recognise acts on state sovereignty adopted by the republics which are members of the USSR, recognise their territorial integrity and existing borders between them.

Yeltsin declared that Russia would never dominate a proposed new union of Soviet republics and threw his enhanced political weight behind President Mikhail Gorbachev.

"The Russian state, which has chosen democracy and freedom, will never be an empire, neither a younger nor an elder brother. It will be an equal among equals," Yeltsin said.

Gorbachev's hesitation in conducting resolute democratic reforms had created favourable grounds for the coup against him last month, but he was "another man" now, Yeltsin said.

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