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Inside Today

Article

At least 1000 Panamanian citizens were estimated killed when United States forces invaded in 1990. The prize for the US was the capture of military ruler General Manuel Noriega, who was taken to Miami to face drug smuggling charges. The trial has just opened
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Metropolitan

Dhaka Day By Day



Fiona Thompson, a British free lance journalist, has not only fascinating stories of parachute jumping and rickshaw driving to tell but also has passion for life to infect anybody around with. She is in the city
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International



Soviet Union now keen to dump Najibullah
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Institution needed to invest small savings
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Feature

Development

In general, Asian and Pacific countries are seeking a decline in annual population growth rates. But the region's population continues to expand by about 55 million each year
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NEWS BRIEFS

BNPPP meet tomorrow

A meeting of the Parliamentary Party of BNP will be held tomorrow (Sunday) at 4 pm at No. One Committee Room of Jatiya Sangsad, according to a BNP press release Friday, reports BSS.

AL public meeting today

By Staff Correspondent
Awami League will hold a public meeting today (Saturday) at 4 pm in front of the party central office at 23, Bangabandhu Avenue in the city in protest against 'conspiracy to assassinate AL chief Sheikh Hasina' and demand for repealing the Indemnity Act.

Erosion hampers ferry service

ARICHA, Oct 4: Ferry services between Aricha-Daulatdia and Maona-Baghabari routes have been hampered seriously due to continued erosion caused by recession of water in the rivers Jamuna and Padma. The situation worsened with the emergence of shoals along the riverine routes, BIWTA officials said, reports UNB.

Hearing of 'stay part' of writ petitions today

Open voting system in parliament is nothing new: Experts

By Staff Correspondent

Repeal of the Election of President (Amendment) Ordinance is expected to be published in an official gazette today.

Law Minister Mirza Golam Hafiz arrived in Dhaka from Panchagarh on Friday afternoon to take necessary actions for repeal of the Ordinance. He had a meeting with Prime Minister Begum Khaleda Zia at her Sugandha office at night.

Meanwhile, the Single Bench of the Supreme Court will hear the writ petitions against the Election of President Act and the

Ordinance today at 3 pm. Barrister Amirul Islam who along with other lawyers moved the writ petitions on behalf of Awami League leader Abdus Samad Azad and others told The Daily Star last night that although the Ordinance was being repealed, "its ghost is already in existence within the Act itself."

He said that the whole object of filing the writ petitions was "to protest the policing part of the mechanism under which everybody is going to know who is voting for whom. It's not election but selection."

Another writ petition on the same Act and the same Ordinance filed by Barrister Abdur Razzak and others on behalf of Jamaat-e-Islami leader Sheikh Ansar Ali will be heard by the Single Bench simultaneously.

The government side maintains that the Election of President Act was very much in accordance with the Constitution 12th Amendment Act passed unanimously by the parliament and endorsed in a referendum.

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Transport strike called off

By Staff Correspondent

The transport workers' strike in the northern districts and the countrywide transport strike called from Sunday have been withdrawn.

The leaders of Bangladesh Road Transport Workers Federation announced the decision Friday night to withdraw the strike following understanding reached with the government and the transport owners after fruitful talks.

The road transport workers of northern districts went on strike on September 27 to realise their seven-point demand that included issuance of appointment letters by the owners. In support of the demand, the Workers Federation also called the countrywide indefinite transport strike from Sunday.

The leaders of Workers Federation and the owners' representatives from Bangladesh Road Transport Association, Bus Truck Owners Association and Truck Owners Association met the Communication Minister Col (Retd) Oli Ahmed at his residence Friday night. Some transport owners from Naogaon, MPs, Chairman of Bangladesh Road Transport Association and officials of

Labour Directorate were present at the meeting.

The situation prevailing in the road transport system in North Bengal was discussed in detail in the meeting. The Communication Minister appealed to both the owners and federation leaders to come to an understanding considering the suffering of the people after the flood. Both sides responded positively and reached the understanding. The owners agreed to provide appointment letters to the workers and as a token of their gesture, they issued some appointment letters at the meeting and promised to issue all other letters immediately.

The leaders of Workers Federation also reciprocated by announcing withdrawal of the ongoing strike in North Bengal and also the scheduled countrywide strike.

The federation leaders including Manjurul Ahsan Khan, Habibur Rahman Khan, Ismail Hossain, Abdur Rouf, Shahjahan Khan, Roy Ramesh and others attended the meeting.

The owners were represented at the meeting by Haji Zainul Abedin, M A Kader,

Hasan Imam, Rafiqul Hossain Kajal, Shah Alam, Rostam Ali Khan, G M Siraj, M A Gafur and others.

The road transport workers of Naogaon were on strike for 54 days till Friday in support of their seven-point demands. The strike spread to all the 16 districts of North Bengal from September 27 when the transport workers of these districts joined these in Naogaon.

The Bangladesh Road Transport Workers Federation declared on Thursday that the transport workers all over the country would go on an indefinite strike from Sunday (Oct 6) in support of the 7-point demand of federation's North Bengal unit.

Several rounds of talks between the government and the federation leaders were held since Wednesday.

Earlier, in Friday afternoon, a transport workers' rally was held in front of National Press Club. Organised by Bangladesh Road Transport Workers Federation, the rally demanded immediate issuance of appointment letters to the transport workers. The speakers at the rally also urged the

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BSB faces funds crisis

Bangladesh Shilpa Bank (BSB), faced with serious liquidity crisis, is seeking funds on emergency basis from various traditional and non-traditional sources, both internal and external, reports UNB.

Official sources said BSB has recently sought an emergency fund of Tk 100 crore from the Bangladesh Bank to weather the crisis caused mainly because of huge accumulation of overdue loans.

It also asked for fresh line of emergency credits from various traditional multilateral agencies, including the International Development Association (IDA), Asian Development Bank (ADB) and the Islamic Development Bank (IDB).

Fund has also been sought from non-traditional sources, including FMO of the Netherlands and the banking institutions in Japan.

To date, BSB's overdue

loans stood at more than Tk 350 crore while the outstanding loan amounted to about Tk 1000 crore.

The recent recovery drive of the government, BSB sources admitted, hardly yielded any result as the recovery is still going at a pace similar to that of the last 10 years.

Faced with the current liquidity crisis, BSB has been forced to become "too much" conservative in financing new projects, the sources said, and is now pursuing a "go slow" policy.

The fund crisis also put the Bank in serious trouble to meet its debt-servicing liability. According to the sources, the BSB has sought from the Ministry of Finance a five-year moratorium on debt servicing.

Although fund was asked from various sources, officials said, response might not be too positive, at least from the

two of the most prospective multilateral lending agencies — IDA and the ADB.

These two lending agencies stopped new line of credits to BSB and BSIS (Bangladesh Shilpa Rin Sangstha) in 1984 and their suspension has not yet been lifted.

They might not be responsive to the latest BSB appeal for emergency funds, sources apprehend, until their condition of privatizing the BSB and the BSIS is fulfilled.

However, the Bangladesh Bank is learnt to have agreed in principle to provide BSB with the credit it asked. BSB is also hopeful of positive response from the Jeddah-based IDB and FMO of the Netherlands.

Official cautioned that the liquidity crisis of the BSB would have an adverse impact on the overall investment situation, it being the country's only long-term lending agency.



An anti-drug procession was organised by different Dhaka-based Lions, Lioness and Leo Clubs in the city yesterday. Home Minister Abdul Matin Chowdhury led the procession. —Star photo

AL wants 'free and neutral' election to presidency

Awami League leader Abdus Samad Azad Friday made a strong plea for making a free and neutral election to the presidency through withdrawal of the Presidential Election Act, in keeping with the "politics of consensus", reports UNB.

In a statement Azad, who is also the deputy leader of the opposition in parliament, commented "The Presidential Election Act, 1991, passed on August 14, is nothing but a black law".

"It has curbed the fundamental rights blocking the process of electing the President in a democratic way", he said. He also described a certain part of the Act as repugnant to the constitution.

The Awami League leader went on to say that the Act passed in parliament unilaterally after a walkout by the opposition was not acceptable. Azad also remarked that the withdrawal of the "undemocratic ordinance" in the face of opposition from the people, the political parties, lawyers and professionals had

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Badrul seeks Golam Azam's blessings

By Moinuddin Naser

Presidential candidate former Chief Justice Badrul Haider Chowdhury last night met Jamaat leader Professor Golam Azam at the latter's residence at Maghbazar.

Justice Chowdhury went to meet Golam Azam alone at around 9 pm and had a sitting for about an hour.

Jamaat leader Sheikh Ansar Ali MP and former MP Professor Mujibur Rahman were also present during the meeting.

When contacted Jamaat Secretary General Moulana Mattur Rahman Nizami confirmed it and said that Justice Chowdhury sought blessings of Professor Golam Azam for his election as President of the republic.

When asked Jamaat leader Sheikh Ansar Ali told this correspondent that Justice Chowdhury explained to Golam Azam, the background of his being a candidate in the presidential election.

Justice Chowdhury had been promoted by the Awami League as a candidate in the presidential election. But he claimed that he was an independent candidate and con-

testing the election as a candidate of all opposition parties and groups. However, no political party except the Awami League has yet committed support to Badrul Haider Chowdhury in the election.

Sheikh Ansar Ali further said that the Jamaat had not yet decided anything about its role in the coming presidential election and added that the Majlis-e-Sura of the party would take decision regarding this.

Earlier when contacted, Jamaat Leader Moulana Mattur Rahman Nizami had told this correspondent that this time Jamaat would not be a junior partner of any big party.

On Thursday last, the Awami League leaders also met the Jamaat leaders to discuss the issue of presidential election. The Awami League leaders also tried to convince the Jamaat to support Justice Chowdhury in the presidential election.

When contacted at around 11 o'clock over telephone at the residence of Justice Chowdhury, his family source said that he was sleeping.

CPB central body report under fire

"Star Report"

Three distinct political currents in the Communist Party of Bangladesh (CPB) surfaced yesterday when the party leaders started debate on the central committee proposal for unity with the nationalist, democratic and patriotic forces in the country.

The CPB started its fifth conference in the city on Thursday.

The central committee of the CPB had abandoned the idea of class struggle much earlier with the initiation of 'Glasnost' and 'Perestroika' in the Soviet Union by President Gorbachev. But a very strong section of CPB leaders are still trying to pursue the line of 'class struggle' complying with the Marxist and Leninism.

After the placement of the central committee report which suggested alliance with the patriotic democratic forces on national issues, four central committee leaders participated in the discussion yesterday.

The CPB secretariat member Mujahidul Islam Selim dif-

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JP, JCD clash, situation tense in Chittagong

From Our Staff Correspondent

CHITTAGONG, Oct 4: At least 10 persons were injured and a number of shops damaged when Jatiyatabadi Chhatra Dal (JCD) and Jatiya Party (JP) activists clashed at Andarkilla in the city this evening amid tension over holding of a public meeting tomorrow.

Both the BNP-backed JCD and the JP have called public meetings at Lalight maidan tomorrow afternoon.

The JP has called the meeting to demand release of the party Chairman and deposed president H M Ershad, a programme that precedes its countrywide observance of 'Ershad release day' on October 10. Its Lalight meeting will be preceded by the

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Y'slav forces bomb Croatian positions

BELGRADE, Oct 4: Federal forces bombed and battled Croatian positions Friday, while the Defence Minister pledged to halt the offensive, reports AP.

The fighting, which threatened the ancient Adriatic port of Dubrovnik, came before Federal Defence Minister Gen. Veljko Kadijevic promised that his troops would cease hostilities. The promise came in a deal arranged in a meeting chaired by the Dutch Foreign Minister in the Hague, the Netherlands in which Croatia agreed to halt its blockade of federal army garrisons.

Federal jets bombed Dubrovnik airport and the Adriatic coastal highway, and federal forces and armed Serbs appeared to be closing in on the Croatian capital, Zagreb.

Air Force jets hit a TV tower just five miles (eight kilometers) outside Zagreb, Croatia's capital, as air raid sirens wailed in the city, sending residents scurrying to shelters. Croatian TV went off the air for a few minutes, resuming transmission with poor quality.

The jets destroyed a strategic bridge near the port of Zadar, the Croatian Defence Minister said.

Croatian forces had virtually abandoned the strategic Banja region just south of Zagreb, the defence ministry confirmed. And hundreds of refugees, army clutching just plastic bags of belongings, were fleeing.

The Yugoslav military warned Friday that Croatian forces had retreated into the

medieval walled town of Dubrovnik and were "holding it hostage together with all of its people."

"The army will do everything to spare Dubrovnik, a city of infinite historical and cultural value," said the army's statement carried by Tanjug news agency.

"But we have undisputable proof that Croatian units hiding there, and particularly the foreign mercenaries to whom Dubrovnik means nothing, are preparing its destruction in order to blame the Yugoslav army for that act of vandalism," it said.

The statement appealed to the "citizens of Dubrovnik and the international public to prevent this criminal act."

The Croatian Defence Ministry denied its forces had

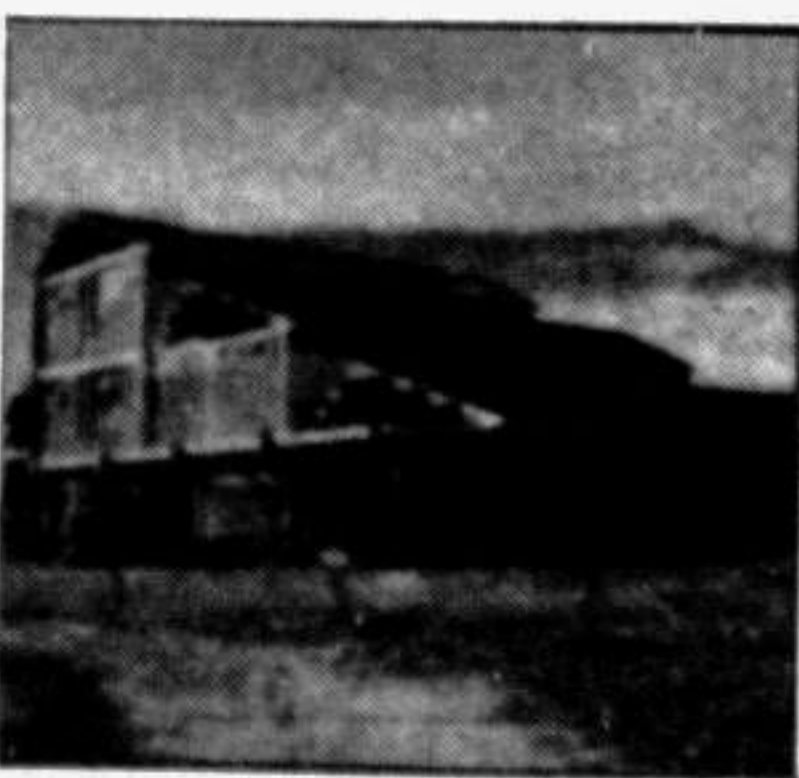
retreated into the city. It said reinforcements were being rushed to the area, without power, water and communications for a fourth day.

Earlier report said, Yugoslavia's federal army agreed Friday to halt its air, land and sea offensive against Croatia in exchange for Croatia lifting its blockade of federal garrisons, reports AP.

The agreement, which included federal acknowledgement of the republic's right to secede, was announced at a press conference after more than two hours of consultations between Serbian President Slobodan Milosevic, Croatian President Franjo Tudjman and federal Defence Minister Gen. Veljko Kadijevic here.

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