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NEWS BRIEFS

PM returns today
 Prime Minister Begum Khaleda Zia returns home today (Thursday) after attending the 6th OIC summit in Dakar, Senegal. The Prime Minister led the country's delegation to the 4-day conference being attended by heads of state and government from 45 member countries. UNB.

Sino-Bangladesh cultural ties
 The China-Bangladesh cultural agreement is likely to be renewed for the next three years, during the visit by State Minister for Cultural Affairs Prof Jahanara Begum. Jahanara Begum leading a two member delegation left for Beijing Tuesday, said a PID handout Wednesday. reports UNB.

Bangladesh-UAE meet Dec 21
 A four-day meeting of Bangladesh-United Arab Emirates (UAE) Ministerial Joint Commission will begin in the city December 21, foreign office sources said Wednesday. Foreign Secretary Reza Rahman and Head of the Economic Department of International Relations of the UAE, Khalid Al Yusuf will lead their respective sides to the meeting. The sources said that the moot will review the entire gamut of bilateral relations and devise ways to boost it further. reports UNB.

Recession will subside, says Saifur

No hasty disinvestment

By Staff Correspondent

Finance Minister M Saifur Rahman on Wednesday said that the recession would gradually subside as development programmes were being geared up in all sectors.

Speaking at an informal meeting with newsmen at the Dhaka Sheraton, he conceded that the government efforts to achieve operational efficiency of the public sector and ensure financial discipline were yet to meet with success.

He said that the government would disinvest the nationalized industries only after making them economically viable through the active cooperation of all parties involved including the workers, banks and owners.

"This time there will not be any hasty action of disinvestment... there is no chance of selling out of at least any jute mill within one-and-a-half year", he said.

"Nobody will put money in losing ventures, many disinvested units were closed earlier because of the policy of selling out losing units... we don't want to repeat the same mistake," the Finance Minister said.

The Minister said that the recession was caused by a number of factors including national disasters which affected the progress of the Annual Development Programme (ADP) so far.

He mentioned that the business community became inactive after the fall of the government of former President Ershad to watch the economic environment. The business community wanted to watch the policy and stability of the new government and this stalled the economic activities, he added.

Piling up of unapproved projects at the National Economic Council during the rule of former President Ershad also contributed to delays in the start of development activities. Under the autocratic regime, projects having the President's mandate were implemented. The present government took two months to approve and streamline hundreds of such projects, the Minister added.

The minister said that comprehensive development programmes are being started in every district and upazila in sectors like energy, food for work, communications, health, education and agriculture. He said that the agricultural output this year would be a satisfactory 19.5 to 20 million tonnes.

The Minister said that unlike the autocratic regime the present democratic government was accountable and had to take time in making decisions. In the past few months adjustment of the new government with the administration also took sometime. However, disbursement of funds for development activities has started now and the minister hoped by the middle of January the situation would show signs of change.

The Minister said that the jute and textile mills need to be stabilized first for disinvestment by curtailing the surplus labour force and reducing capacity of the mills. He said the surplus workers would be compensated adequately under a package. The Minister mentioned that there are now about 32,000 surplus workers in the jute mills, and 20,000 each in Railway and the Bangladesh Agricultural Development Corporation.

Commenting on the textiles sector the Minister said this

OIC summit ends ahead of schedule

DAKAR, Dec 11: An Islamic summit shunned by feuding Arab leaders prepared to close ahead of schedule Wednesday after passing controversial resolutions, reports AP.

Participants were unable to agree on a united stand toward the US-brokered Middle East peace talks that resumed in Washington on Tuesday.

Only five of the 22 Arab states in the organization of the Islamic Conference sent their leaders to the summit that began Monday. By Wednesday morning, all had left except Lebanese President Elias Hrawi.

Also still present was Yasser Arafat, leader of the Palestine Liberation Organization, which is counted as one of the 46 member states.

Conference sources said Arab leaders were avoiding Arafat. The PLO leader has been seeking a summit with Jordan, Lebanon, Egypt and Syria to coordinate positions on the US sponsored peace talks.

The anti-Iraq coalition has not yet forgiven Arafat for sympathizing with Baghdad in

Ten-hour SAARC summit

The aborted sixth summit of the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC) scheduled in Colombo December 21 will be a 10-hour conference, reports UNB.

Diplomatic sources said yesterday the summit, according to the schedule, will begin at 9 am and will conclude at 6 pm.

The "mini Summit" will have its inaugural and concluding sessions to be followed by signing of the "Colombo Declaration."

Besides, delegates will go

Talks start to ward off shutdown

By Nurul Kabir

In a desperate bid to settle scores before December 22 when different trade bodies begin work stoppage, the government began talks yesterday to appease workers.

Jute Minister Brig Hannan Shah (Retd) and the leaders of the Patkal Sramik Karmachari Sangram Parishad held behind-the-scenes discussions yesterday. The parishad is demanding implementation of its six-point demand.

The Sramik Karmachari Oikya Parishad has also called a 48-hour strike beginning the same day to press for its five-point demand.

The Cotton and Textile Sramik Karmachari Federation is also scheduled to start a 72-hour barricade programme from December 22 to realise its eight-point demand.

The Five-party alliance, sources say, will discuss the issues with the Federation of Chambers of Commerce and Industries (FBCCI) on December 19. The FBCCI opposes government's talks with the trade unions.

As part of government attempts to cool down the workers, Labour and Manpower Minister Abdul Mannan Bhuiyan will hold talks with the SKOP leaders today at 10 am at his office, and the Textile Minister Major Abdul Mannan (retd) will sit with the leaders of the Cotton and Textile Sramik Karmachari Federation on December 14.

The Jute Minister who had talks with the leaders of the jute mills workers told The Daily Star that the government would announce the wage commission on any day before

Parties urged to help resolve jute, textile sector problems

Finance Minister M. Saifur Rahman Wednesday sought all-out cooperation of the political parties, trade unions and owners of the industries to help solve the problems of jute and textiles sectors to build a self-reliant economy, reports BSS.

Addressing a crowded press conference at a hotel here Wednesday afternoon, the Finance Minister said, the government was taking a massive programme for the country's economic stabilisation and to revitalise and restructure the losing enterprises, to turn them into profit-earning concerns.

Pointing out inefficiency, mismanagement, corruption



Prime Minister Begum Khaleda Zia addressing the OIC summit Tuesday. She is the first woman to address an Islamic summit. —AFP photo

Khaleda first woman to address OIC summit

DAKAR, Dec 11: The Prime Minister of Bangladesh Begum Khaleda Zia, on Tuesday became the first woman to address a summit of the Organisation of the Islamic Conference (OIC). She urged "concerted Islamic action... to enhance the role and status of women and their education in the mainstream of development," reports BSS.

Islamic leaders Monday adopted 26 resolutions on political, economic and social issues, including a pledge to promote the role of women, notably through the education of girls.

An observer from the UN Children's Fund, Djibril Diallo, described the resolution as a "landmark achievement" adding that women were responsible for 80 per cent of total food production in Africa.

The OIC summit has also called for a conference of ministers and a symposium of experts to develop a proper mechanism for ensuring active participation of women in the fields of social development.

A dozen women delegates have taken part in the summit and ministerial sessions that have preceded the gathering.

There have been no women delegates from the Arab Gulf states or Iran.

'Check smuggling to save textile'

By Staff Correspondent

Several thousand weavers, traders, mill owners and workers in the textile sector on Wednesday paraded the city streets demanding stern anti-smuggling drives especially against Indian sarees.

Later, they submitted a memorandum to the Prime Minister.

They urged the authorities to launch anti-smuggling drive by December 17 or face their action programme from December 20.

At a huge rally at Purana Paltan square, the leaders of 'Sammilita Deshi Bastra Shilpa Sangram Parishad' (combined indigenous textile industry action committee) said that con-

Press Note Police jeep did not hit BCL procession

The Home Ministry Wednesday issued a Press Note to remove confusion that was created out of publication of a news item in a section of the press on "hitting a procession by a police vehicle," reports BSS.

The Press Note said a rally of 200 to 250 supporters of Chhatra League was held in front of the Jatiya Press Club on Tuesday at the call of Chhatra League to press home the demand for the release of Md Masum Ahmed alias

Blasts, arson during BCL hartal in Ctg

CHITTAGONG, Dec 11: The half-day hartal observed in the port city and its surrounding areas today was marked by acts of violence including sporadic blasts of cocktails, arson and massive picketing that left at least ten persons injured.

Chhatra League, Chittagong unit gave the call for today's hartal from 6 am to 12 noon in protest against the killing of its three activists allegedly by Shibir members aided by NDP supporters on Sunday afternoon at Forhadabad football maidan under Hathazari thana.

Cocktails were exploded in different parts of the city and its surrounding areas including Anderkilla, city corporation office premises, Jamal Khan Road, New Market crossing, Lalkhan Bazar, Chawkbazar, Agrabad Badamtoli, Moghailoti port crossing and Hathazari road.

BCL activists started massive picketing from early morning at various points of the city and six rickshaws were set ablaze in addition to the damaging of over a dozen.

'Mukhter was killed by bullet from own gun'

By Staff Correspondent

The bullet found in Mukhter's head was from the same revolver that was recovered by police from the victim's hand, CID report said Wednesday.

Tejgaon police received the reports on recovered revolver, the used bullet and its pellet which were sent to CID for examinations in connection of the mysterious death of Hafez Mukhter Narayanjan Sadar Upazila. Mukhter was found dead in a car parked near Holy Cross College at Tejgaonpara



Textile owners, weavers and traders brought out a procession demanding anti-smuggling drive in the city yesterday. —Star photo

All parties in Pabna agree on code of conduct

PABNA, Dec 11: All major political parties, including BNP, Awami League, Jatiya Party and Jamaat-e-Islami Wednesday agreed on a 12-point code of conduct to eradicate violence from the district, reports UNB.

The agreement of the district units was announced at a joint press conference at the local Bar Library auditorium in the afternoon.

According to the code of conduct, all the parties agreed that they would refrain from involving themselves in violence, making any defamatory comments against leaders of rival parties and filing false cases against each other.

Police fight protesters as Li Peng in India

NEW DELHI, Dec 11: Indian police, under orders to brook no disruptions of a visit by Chinese Premier Li Peng, quickly squelched pro-Tibet demonstrations Wednesday and hauled away more than 230 protesters, reports AP.

At least 100 other people were arrested earlier in the week in a security operation that pumped more than 10,000 police and paramilitary troops into the streets of the Indian capital.

Li sped from the airport to his formal reception at the presidential palace along a 20-kilometer (12-mile) route sealed to other traffic.

Most of the people arrested were Tibetans, part of a 110,000-member refugee community that fled to India to escape Chinese troops who invaded their Himalayan homeland in 1950.

Five hours before Li arrived, scores of Indians and Tibetans gathered on the lawns around India Gate, a towering stone arch in front of the presidential palace. But as soon as they cried "Li Peng go back" or "long live Tibetan independence," police wrestled them in to jeeps and drove them away.

At least two dozen demonstrators were arrested at India Gate. None remained by the

JCD, BCL clash in city

By DU Correspondent

Vehicular movement was disrupted for about an hour through the Mirpur Road adjacent to Dhaka College due to a clash between students and police Wednesday afternoon.

Police lobbed several tear-gas shells to disperse the violent students.

Several shots were fired and cocktails blasted during the clash.

No injury was reported. None was arrested.

The clash originated from a misunderstanding caused by the sudden arrival of a group of Jatayabadi Chhatra Dal (JCD) activists in the Dhaka College compound during a function organised by the Chhatra League (S-A).

The Chhatra League activists suspecting the presence of the outsiders at that moment as a bid to foil its function organised to accord reception to the freshers, chased the JCD activists who on being attacked took shelter in a nearby police van.

Police immediately went into action and fired several teargas shells at the BCL workers intensifying their agitation leading to a series of chases and counter chases.

The incident spread panic among the passersby and the shopkeepers in the area closed their shops.

Burmese junta closes all universities to put down movement

BANGKOK Dec 11: Burma's ruling military junta today shut down all of the nation's universities after two days of campus demonstrations in Rangoon demanding freedom for Nobel Peace Prize laureate Aung San Suu Kyi, radio Rangoon said.

The official state broadcast said all of Burma's colleges, universities and technical schools would be shut down on Thursday. High schools would remain open.

Radio Rangoon said the action was taken by the Education Ministry and the Health Ministry "because of the disturbances and unscrupulous elements and some political parties."

Thirty-five institutions were to close their doors, the broadcast said, including three medical schools and one dental school.

AFP says, demonstrations resumed at Rangoon university early today, according to western residents in the Burmese capital.

Security forces entered the campus and made arrests, they said in telephone interviews from here.

It was not immediately clear how many people were involved in the protest and how many were arrested.

Troops were deployed today around Rangoon University following a pro-democracy rally a day earlier, according to eyewitnesses.

Police were checking identification documents of students, who were turning up for classes in reduced numbers, said by telephone the sources, who asked not to be identified.

Some roads were close today. That included the portion of nearby university avenue where Aung San Suu Kyi has been held under house arrest.

AP says, the protests began Tuesday and were the first outbreak of demonstrations against the ruling junta since the military crushed a nationwide pro-democracy movement in September 1988, killing thousands of people.

In Bangkok, the outlawed dissident National Coalition Government of the Union of Burma said in a statement it supported the students' demands that Mrs Suu Kyi be freed from house arrest.

Mrs Suu Kyi has been detained at the family home on University Avenue since July 1989 because of her non-violent opposition to the ruling junta. Her husband, Briton Michael Aris, and their teenage sons accepted the Nobel Peace Prize for her Tuesday in Oslo, Norway.

It called for international pressure on Burma's ruling junta, which calls itself the State Law and Order Restoration Council, to force it to release the dissident leader and turn over power to her National League for Democracy.

The league won a landslide victory in the 1990 general elections, which the junta has ignored.

"We are warning the members of the SLORC that in the post-resolution period, they are solely responsible for their deeds and the dire consequences that will follow. It is unexcusable and force are used against the people of Burma," said the statement signed by Hla Pe of the shadow government's ministry of information.

Last week, Philippine Foreign Minister Raul Manglapus said in Bangkok after visiting Rangoon that Burma's generals fear if they turn over power to civilians they will be brought before "Nuremberg-type trials."