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Bazaar of Death Booms Again in the Middle East

In the wake of the Gulf war arms control was high on the agenda. Yet today the lucrative arms trade, the world's second biggest business after oil, is thriving again in the volatile Middle East
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International book fair proposed Work for cultural democracy: PM

Prime Minister Begum Khaleda Zia said Friday that establishment of cultural democracy side by side with political and economic democracy was needed to uphold the spirit and essence of all the mass movements of the nation, re-

ports BSS. Begum Zia said an integrated and healthy national culture, based on the long tradition of struggle of the people and their hopes and aspiration, would have to be built up. "Along with this we have to

remain active in resisting the aggression of the distorted foreign cultures," she said. The Prime Minister was addressing a function to mark the inauguration of the traditional month-long Amar
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Visitors at book stall in Bangla Academy premises.

— Star photo

Ekushey Book Fair: Rain ruins show

By Sabir Mustafa

A phalanx of 50 policemen in full riot gear, including bullet-proof vests and rubber-bullet launchers, stood at the entrance of the Bangla Academy premises Friday afternoon. Another 50, equally armed policemen stood across the road just a few yards away.

Impending trouble? A riot? No. Just the Prime Minister, Khaleda Zia, being present to inaugurate the 17th Ekushey Book Fair.

Inside the premises, troops from the Guard Regiment, which was set up in early 1975 to provide security to the President but now performs the same task for the Prime Minister, stood about the scholarly ground with AK-47 assault rifles with folded butts slung above their shoulders. As usual, the first day crowd was pretty thin, and it got thinner as the afternoon progressed.

It started to rain. Lucky for the Prime Minister, she managed to wind up her opening speech before the heavens really opened up, showering the Mela with the kind of blessings it could do without.

If the rain turned the opening day into a non-event, then the Prime Minister's speech lived well up to the occasion. Her delivery was surprisingly hesitant, while the content of the address was rather uninspiring.

The Prime Minister's expression of support for the Academy and its works drew polite applause, while her references to "cheap foreign novels" and "infiltration and aggression of foreign cultures" left the audience largely unmoved.

By 6 pm crowds had begun to gather at the various kabab, chatpati and footchka stalls lined up on the avenue leading from the Teachers Students Centre (TSC) to Doyel Chatter, but that was more to escape the rain than to sample the goodies on offer.

By the time bolts of lightning started to streak across the darkened sky and the drizzle turned into a virtual thunderstorm, the entire ground was empty, except for one or two wandering around, getting soaked and looking ridiculous.

Keepers of bookstalls, of which there are a record 350 this year, got the message and began to shut up shop rather
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Talks fail: Transport owners go on strike today

By Staff Correspondent

The road transport owners announced to go ahead with their planned strike from today (Saturday) after an extended negotiation with the government had failed Friday.

Buses, trucks, minibuses, petroleum tankers and the mechanised trishaws will go off the streets across the

country from 6 am today for an indefinite period to press home the 19-point charter of demands of the transport owners.

Leaders of the Bangladesh Road Transport Association said that the three-hour third round of talks held at the residence of the Communications Minister Oli Ahmed had failed as the government did not respond to their demand for fixation of fuel price at the pre-Gulf War level. Chaired by the Communications Minister, the meeting was attended by State Minister for Communications Fazlur Rahman and the Communications Secretary. The transport owners were represented among others, by Executive President of the Association Alhaj A K Joydul Abedeen, Secretary General Muhammad Ashraf Khan and Additional Secretary General M A Kader.

The previous two rounds of talks between the government and the association leaders were held on Wednesday and Thursday.
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Transports will ply normally, hopes Govt

The government has called upon all concerned to shun the path of strike (transport strike) and come forward to solve the problems through negotiations, reports BSS.

The government, in a press note issued Friday night, expressed the hope that all buses, mini buses, trucks and tanks, lorries would ply normally today (Saturday) and that owners of transport and general public would extend all-out cooperation to the authori-
See Page 12 Col 6

Lanka for additional SAARC summit

COLOMBO, Feb 7: President Ranasinghe Premadasa has said that it would be useful for the SAARC heads of state or government to hold an additional one-day business meeting in between summits in order to clear, outstanding issues, a mechanism used by some regional groups, reports BSS.

This was stated by cabinet spokesman Ranil Wickremasinghe in his weekly Thursday morning news briefing in Colombo.

Wickremasinghe said that cabinet had also noted at its meeting Wednesday that there will be no difficulty in obtaining UN funding for the work of the independent South Asian Commission on Poverty Alleviation.

That the strengthening of SAARC must have as its ultimate goal, the making of regional cooperation meaningful to the people of South Asia. This could come about by motivating the respective coun-

tries, through SAARC to help one another. Such an expression of goodwill is bound to be reciprocated.

The cabinet decided to direct the chairman/ high level advisory committee to obtain identification on a sectoral basis from the relevant governmental agencies of the products that Sri Lanka could purchase from the other SAARC countries.

President Premadasa said that he would consult the heads of state or government on a proposal for the SAARC countries to agree on a stand still and roll-back of all non-tariff barriers that impede the growth of intra-regional trade.

The cabinet decided to establish a committee chaired by the Dr Wimal Wickremasinghe, Minister of State for Policy Planning and Implementation to handle matters pertaining to the Colombo conference on children in South Asia-1992.

Countdown to Shaheed Day

Star Report

The banning of the Pakistan Observer and closing down of the Al-Helal Press on February 13, 1952 did not come as a bolt from the blue for most government-watchers at the time.

From 1950 onwards, the paper had become the most important medium for projecting anti-government opinions, and opposition campaign issues. The government assertion that the Observer had been engaged in "anti-state activities for the past two years", was a clear indication that the editorial titled "Crypto Fascism" of Feb 12 which allegedly insulted Caliph Osman bin al-Affan, was used merely as an excuse to silence the paper.

The Observer, although owned by a former Muslim League minister, Hamidul Huq Chowdhury, broke with the government on the issue of the "Fundamental Principles" (FP), which was designed to become the constitutional framework of Pakistan.

The Pakistan Constituent Assembly set up the Fundamental Principles Formulation Committee (FPFC) on March 12, 1949. The Committee submitted its re-
See Page 12 Col 1

2 killed as hailstorm lashes Kushtia

KUSHTIA, Feb 7: Two people were killed and 15 others injured when a severe hailstorm accompanied with rain at a speed of 100 km per hour lashed the town and adjoining areas this afternoon, reports UNB.

Around 5,000 kutcha houses were damaged and 15,000 people rendered homeless during the storm which started around 4 pm and lasted for about 25 minutes.

One unidentified septuagenarian was killed on the spot when an electric pole fell on him at Babar Ali gate near Sonali Bank in the town while Shariful Islam (15) succumbed to his injuries on way to hospital at Jugia village, two miles off from the town.

Hails upto six inches in thickness piled up on the road and took about an hour to melt.

Dr Kamal joins hands with leftists to float new organization

By Nurul Kabir

A new socio-political organisation, Bangladesh Democratic Forum (BDF), is likely to be floated by the end of this month with a view to contributing to the build-up of democratic institutions in the country.

The BDF, according to its organisers, will uphold liberal democratic values and concepts in the society and campaign for these ideals on a regular basis.

Initiated by the leaders and activists of some left leaning political parties a few months back, the idea of floating such a forum has meanwhile succeeded in attracting a large number of liberal bourgeoisie intellectuals including Awami League presidium member Dr. Kamal Hossain.

According to sources, Kamal Hossain and some of his colleagues in the Lawyers Coordination Council were present at a preparatory meeting of the forum held Monday last at a Motijheel mansion.

Explaining his perceptions about democracy and democratic institutions at the meeting Dr Hossain expressed his intention to work with the proposed forum, sources said. The pioneers of the Democratic Forum include, among others, Otkya Prakria chief Naim Jahangir, Janata Mukti Dal leader Harun-ur-Rashid and Abul Kashem of the Communist Party of Bangladesh (CPB).

They have already prepared a draft working paper of the proposed forum and started distributing its printed copies among selected intellectuals willing to contribute in transforming the society into a democratic ones.

Drafting of a declaration of the forum is also under way which will be announced with the formal launching of the organisation by the end of this month.

The draft working paper of the forum, however, felt 'pressing necessity' of either

bringing out a qualitative change in the psychological make-up of present political leadership of both in and out of the state power or of emergence of new leadership in the political arena to lead the country towards prosperity and advancement.

The draft working paper of the proposed forum was very critical about political forces both in and out of power for their failure to come up with a comprehensive political direction to overcome some fundamental national problems.

The burning problems of the nation, according to the paper include a shattered economy, all-engulfing violence and anarchy, deteriorating law and order situation. In this connection, the draft accused the leadership of insincerity and preferring the party to the nation.

The draft also accused the party leaderships of being autocratic saying, 'although the
See Page 12 Col 4

Shilpakala gives a slovenly reception to Ravi Shankar

By Staff Correspondent

"Visiting this country is like making a pilgrimage to me... Bangladesh in two ways is my homeland — my ancestral home at Kalia, Jessore and the birthplace of 'my baba' Ustad Alauddin Khan."

Pandit Ravi Shankar told a reception accorded to him in the capital Friday "I am overwhelmed by the love and tender care shown to me by the country's people." The reception to the sitar maestro was organised by Shilpakala Academy Friday evening in the Academy auditorium.

Ravi Shankar, who arrived in the country on Tuesday on a five-day visit, is scheduled to leave today (Saturday).

Clad in Panjabi-Pajama, the living legend of sub-continental classical music said that he would return to Bangladesh next year for open-air recitals in Dhaka and other parts of the
See Page 12 Col 7

Delhi firm to push back JKLF march

JAMMU Feb 7: Indian troops were in a state of high alert all along the Line of Control following the move by activists of the Jammu and Kashmir Liberation Front (JKLF) to cross over into India on February 11, reports PTI.

A defence spokesman said today that patrolling has been intensified to thwart any attempt at infiltration.

A Srinagar report said the armed forces were closely monitoring the situation along the border in view of the JKLF move and all steps have been taken to meet any eventuality on the 280 km border almost making it 'water tight'.

Strict night curfew has been enforced in the five km border belt facing Pakistan-Occupied Kashmir (POK) and searches have been intensified for "possible outsiders" in the towns and villages near the border, the report said.

Meanwhile, thousands of Kashmiris rallied in Srinagar today to support a proposed march from Pakistan to Indian-held Kashmir, as New Delhi threatened to use force if the marchers crossed the international border.

An estimated 20,000 Kashmiris cheered a top guerrilla leader when he declared that the Jammu and

Kashmir Liberation Front (JKLF) would not back down from its threatened procession Tuesday, despite a ban by Pakistan, according to AFP.

Anyone who obstructs the march... will find his place among the enemies of the Kashmiri nation, witnesses quoted JKLF chief Jave Ahmad Mir as telling an emotionally charged gathering at the Hazratbal mosque in Srinagar.

Mir, who is wanted by Indian authorities, mingled in the crowd and disappeared after the brief speech in which he reiterated the JKLF demand that Kashmir be free of both Indian and Pakistani con-

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NEWS BRIEFS

Sarbaharamen abduct UP member

BARISAL, Feb 7: A newly elected union parishad member and his associate were kidnapped by members of the Sarbahara Party in Uzirpur upazila Thursday night, police said. Farooq Hossain, member of Bamrail Union Parishad, and his associate, Nuru, were abducted around midnight when they were asleep at a fish hatchery near Bamrail Bazar, reports UNB.

100 injured in post-poll clash

SIRAJGANJ, Feb 7: At least 100 people were injured in a clash between supporters of incumbent and newly elected Union Parishad chairman of Bagabati Union in Sadar upazila today. Of the injured, 10 were admitted to the local General Hospital. Farid Uddin Akhtar Leba was unofficially elected chairman of the union in the Sadar upazila but incumbent chairman Abdur Rashid, who also contested the election held on Thursday, protested the polls result alleging vote rigging, reports UNB.

Ferry services suspended

JAMALPUR, Feb 7: Ferry services between Jagannathganj ghat and Sirajganj ghat will remain suspended from tomorrow (Saturday) due to emersion of innumerable shoals and excessive fall in the water level of the river Jamuna. Railway sources said this will partially disrupt the capital's rail communication with North Bengal and Chittagong, reports UNB.