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NEWS BRIEFS

Gold recovered

By Staff Correspondent
Air Freight Department of Zia International Airport (ZIA) Friday recovered 16 gold bars weighing 160 tolas from the main air freight building. The gold bars were found in a foreign newspaper packet that had no address on it.

Vehicles attacked: 25 damaged

By Staff Correspondent
A group of angry people Friday evening damaged at least 25 vehicles at Mirpur Road and Manik Mia Avenue adjacent to Asad Gate bus stand in the city.
Mohammadpur police said, a group of rickshaw pullers protested the prohibition of rickshaws on VIP roads. Another source however said that some agitating Jatiya Party workers attacked vehicles following govt refusal to allow proposed JP grand rally.

3 Indians handed over to BSF

CHITTAGONG, Feb 28: Bangladesh Security Force last night rescued three kidnapped Indian nationals from the hands of tribal insurgents at Dighalchhari of Barkal upazila under Rangamat hill district after an exchange of fire with insurgents. Official sources said, the three Indian nationals were recovered after a raid on a hideout of outlawed Shantibahini. They were handed over to the Border Security Force (BSF) of India at a flag meeting today, reports BSS.

52 shops gutted

BRAJMANBARIA, Feb 28: A devastating fire razed through several shops in a busy market at Anandabazar early today destroying properties worth about taka one crore. At least 52 shops stocked with cloth, garments, furniture and other valuables were burnt to ashes, traders and fire brigade sources said, reports UNB.

Amendment of voter list

Applications for inclusion, exclusion and amendment of names in the voter list in all the pourasavas of the country have to be submitted to the registration officers and district election officers within March 7, according to an Election Commission press release, reports BSS.

International seminar on cooperation in South Asia Confidence building vital for progress: PM

By Staff Correspondent

Prime Minister Khaleda Zia has said that the South Asian countries need to undertake confidence-building measures to achieve the region's common goals like eradication of poverty and tackling the social ills.

"There are many examples of quiet achievements in understanding and agreements in our region. (However) these have not always received adequate publicity. We have tended to emphasize the negative elements. This must cease forthwith," the PM told the inaugural session of an international seminar in the city yesterday.

The three-day seminar on 'New Imperatives for Regional Cooperation in South Asia' was organised by the Bangladesh chapter of the World Peace Council.

Sheikh Hasina, the Leader of the Opposition in Parliament, was the special guest and also addressed the inaugural session of the seminar held at the National Museum Auditorium.

"If the billion people of South Asia speak with one voice you can imagine the political force they will have. The entire world will pay heed to it," Begum Zia told the seminar.

The Prime Minister also invited all South Asian countries to follow Bangladesh in signing the nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty and rejecting the nuclear option in pursuit of confidence-building.

"It is not just the Indian Ocean that should be a Zone of Peace. It should encompass the total land mass of South Asia as well," she commented.

Presided over by former Vice-Chancellor of Dhaka University Prof Shamsul Haq, the function was also addressed by World Peace Council President Romesh Chandra, Executive Secretary Ray Stewart, President of Nepal Peace Council Dr N P Singh, Secretary General of Bangladesh Peace Council Ali Akasad and the Editor of Indian daily 'Desh Bandhu', Maya Ram Sarjan.

Referring to the common colonial experience of the states, Begum Zia said, "The similarities that bind the people of the region are stronger than the dissimilarities that divide".

Begum Zia said the SAARC was the result of shared President Ziaur Rahman's wish to build a structured regional cooperation on the

commonalities of countries in South Asia.

Referring to the global summit on environment and development to be held in June in Brazil, the Prime Minister urged the regional states to cooperate with one another to make a singular contribution to the summit in preserving our land, water, air, forests and wild life.

The Prime Minister said with great faith in simple programmes she had spoken of a "daal-bhaat" approach in the last SAARC summit in Colombo. She observed that once the basic needs of the region's people were met higher goals could be approached which would enable the countries to tackle the social evils of drugs, terrorism and other vices along with the eradication of poverty.

"We shall spare nobody involved directly or indirectly with the killing of a fellow party man," said a young MP, adding, "the size or influence of the accused will not be able to save them from getting punished for their crime."

The extended meeting, according to insiders, will basically aim at finding out means and ways of combating increasing frustrations of the party workers all over the country since last general elections held in February last year.

In order to reinvigorate the party rank and file, the meeting will discuss restructuring of the party Central Committee in the forthcoming national council, sources added.

To this end, according to a senior AL leader, the meeting would try to reach a consensus on restructuring the party Central Committee in the forthcoming conference by replacing the presidium with three to four vice presidents and introducing the provision of having three to four assistant general secretaries for providing both the party chief and the general secretary with effective support in discharging their organisational duties.

The party would prefer a non-MP general secretary so that he could give maximum efforts for strengthening the organisation throughout the country, said a senior AL leader. He, however, said that in case such a person accepted by the majority was unavailable the party would opt for an MP equal to the post of general secretary having no important role to play in parliament.

Zillur Rahman fulfils the first criterion while Abdur Razzak fulfils the second, a young influential leader hinted on condition of anonymity.

Of the reported aspirants for the post of general secretary, an ageing lawyer MP ruled out the names of Nasim and Tofiq saying, "The first one is too young to fit in the post while the second one is too vocal to be the secretary of a party like AL where the party chief enjoys almost sovereign power."

Abdus Samad Azad and Dr Kamal Hossain are likely to be appointed as the vice presidents of the organisation, after the party constitution is amended, to discharge the responsibility of the party chief in absence of Sheikh Hasina.

The meeting will also concentrate on, along with other issues, chalking out future course of action to, what Mohammad Nasim MP of AL told The Daily Star, effectively press the government for the passage of Indemnity Repeal Bill, withdrawal of the bill on terrorism and implementation of the joint declaration of the three political alliances.

The meeting will decide the date of the national council of the party which is likely to be held some time in the first quarter of May.

Although it is AL's constitutional obligation to hold its national council every two years, the last one was held in 1987.

Heated debate likely to mark AL central committee meet

By Nurul Kabir

The move by Dr Kamal Hossain to form 'Democratic Forum' and the issue restructuring the Central Committee are expected to be hotly debated in the two-day extended committee of the Awami League (AL) which begins in city tomorrow.

Also, insiders say, irritants like the killing of Badal, leader of student wing of the party, and its stand on Indemnity Repeal Bill will also come up for discussion.

About two hundred leaders representing Central Committee, National Committee, District Committees and the Parliamentary Party are expected to attend the meeting, to be chaired by Sheikh Hasina.

It will be the second extended meeting of the party since the parliamentary polls.

The move by Dr Kamal Hossain, according to insiders, has already hurt a section of the AL leadership.

However, one group will propose disciplinary action against Kamal Hossain for his attempt to form democratic forum without consulting the party while another group will demand of the party command to place Dr Hossain in the party leadership with sufficient executive powers, said sources.

The incident of killing of Badal allegedly by the party insiders as well as alleged connection of some party leaders with the killers will be hotly debated in the meeting, sources said.

"We shall spare nobody involved directly or indirectly with the killing of a fellow party man," said a young MP, adding, "the size or influence of the accused will not be able to save them from getting punished for their crime."

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Prime Minister Begum Khaleda Zia, Leader of the Opposition Sheikh Hasina attending International Seminar on South Asian Regional Cooperation held at the National Museum Auditorium yesterday. Prof Shamsul Haq former Vice Chancellor of Dhaka University (seen seated between the PM and Leader of the Opposition) presided over the seminar also participated by World Peace Council President Romesh Chandra (far right). — Star photo

Steps for qualitative change a must, says Hasina

By Staff Correspondent

Sheikh Hasina has said that steps should be taken on priority-basis to bring about qualitative changes in the socio-politico-economic fields for development in the South Asian countries.

Speaking as special guest at the international seminar titled 'New Imperatives for Regional Cooperation in South Asia', the Leader of the Opposition painted a gloomy picture for South Asia.

Prime Minister Khaleda Zia inaugurated the three-day seminar.

UNB adds: The Opposition Leader devoted her lengthy speech on various issues of common concern among the South-Asian nations. She said the South-Asian countries should share experiences for resolving the problems like child mortality, population boom, education and environment.

"We want cooperation for

peace and we want peace for living a good life -- with democracy, development and justice."

Hasina also felt the urgency of reaching consensus on national important issues in the wake of new democratic atmosphere.

Referring to Bangladesh's outstanding issues with India and Pakistan, the Opposition Leader called for resolving those through discussions and understanding to create an atmosphere of regional cooperation in South-Asia.

"We must resolve our issues relating to water sharing and enclaves with India. With Pakistan we should settle the issue of division of assets and the problems of repatriation of Pakistani nationals."

Hasina was critical about the rise of communal forces in the region and said it is a threat to humanity, development and democracy. This can

weaken the basis of regional cooperation.

The onward march of democracy and economic development and regional cooperation suffered a setback following the assassination of Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman by 'military junta' in August 1975, she said.

Sheikh Hasina said persecution of people in Burma by the military junta forcing its nationals flee to Bangladesh disturbed the peace in South-Asia.

"This has created serious humanitarian problem," said Hasina while speaking at the seminar.

She recalled that the World Peace Council awarded the highest honour 'Julio Curie Medal' to her father Sheikh Mujibur Rahman in recognition to his role for peace and active approach to implement the mission of peace.

BUET convocation today

By Staff Correspondent

The third convocation of the Bangladesh University of Engineering and Technology (BUET) will be held today.

Two young teachers of the university will lead the procession which will begin at 9.15 in the morning in front of the Electrical and Mechanical (EME) building of the university.

Prime Minister Begum Khaleda Zia, who has earlier been made the Chancellor of the BUET, will preside over the convocation.

Vice Chancellor Professor Mohammad Shajahan and the Bangladesh University Grants Commission (UGC) Chairman Professor Samsul Haq will address the function.

Degrees of some 3,185 graduates including some women shall be conferred out of some 6,273 since the academic year 1974-75 to 1987-88 after the second convocation held in 1976.

This is the first time the BUET authorities are giving out the bilingual certificates to its graduates.

'Amend constitution to free judiciary'

Chief Justice of Bangladesh Shahabuddin Ahmed Friday stressed ensuring full freedom of the judiciary by bringing amendments to certain articles of the constitution, reports BSS.

He was addressing as chief guest the fifth lawyers conference, organised by the Bangladesh Bar Council, in the Supreme Court Bar Association Bhaban premises.

Ahmed said as per Article 95 of the Constitution, the President holds all powers regarding the appointment of Supreme Court judges and the Chief Justice has no role in this regard.

As per constitution the judges are independent in their judicial exercises, but according to Article 116 of the

Constitution the appointment of judges of the lower courts, promotion, transfer, leave and other related responsibilities are vested with the government, he said.

The magistrates are working under the executive and not yet brought under the Supreme Court, the Chief Justice said.

The inaugural session of the two-day long conference was presided over by Dr Kamal Hossain, Vice-Chairman of Bar Council, and addressed by Aminul Haq, Attorney General and President of Bar Council, Shamsul Haq Chowdhury, Chairman of Bar Council Executive Committee, Abdus Salam Talukder, Conference Secretary and Khandaker

Mahbub Uddin Ahmed, member, Bar Council.

Chief Justice Shahabuddin said our lower courts have been facing criticism gradually and there are enough reasons for such criticism. The Supreme Court is not able to play any effective role in this regard as the judges of the lower courts are under the control of the government, he added.

Chief Justice Shahabuddin said the number of pending cases were gradually increasing in the lower courts. The main reason for not disposing of the pending cases is that even the half of the time stipulated for the judicial exercise was not utilised, he added. He said there were allegations that the judges lacked honesty and neutrality in holding judicial exercise but nobody was coming to the authority with specific allegations and proofs.

The Chief Justice said he was contemplating to appoint a competent judge as an administrative judge to look into such allegations and supervise the judicial process.

Dr Kamal Hossain in his speech said the rule of law and independence of judiciary are the two pillars of democracy. Dr Kamal said and called for taking steps to separate the judiciary from the executive.

Dr Kamal stressed bringing fundamental changes in the conventional legal education to create an improved atmosphere.

Lack of negotiation leads to WB credit lapse

By Sohel Manzur

Realisation of over 450 million dollars from the World Bank as credit aid has become uncertain as the government failed to negotiate in this regard in time, sources said.

According to a source, many committed funds could not be realised earlier due to lack of proper initiatives on the part of the government.

WB committed to provide Bangladesh with \$500 million credit aid for some sectors and projects at the last consortium meeting of the donors in June, 1991. But the negotiation of only \$25 million under Private Sector Industries Credit (PSIC) has been completed so far.

The next consortium meeting of the donors is likely to begin on April 21 of the current year and if the negotiation on rest of the committed funds was not made by the time Bangladesh would have to lose the amount.

According to the source, the government has in the

meantime taken up initiative to negotiate for the funds of two projects and a sector. But the preparation in this regard was at the very primary level, the source mentioned.

Only the staff appraisal report (SAR) of the forestry sector was prepared for negotiating with the WB, under which about \$25 million was committed to be provided with, the source said adding that the draft of the policy letter for the Public Sector Management Adjustment Credit (PRMAC) was yet to be finalised.

Bangladesh was committed to be provided with about \$150 million under PRMAC and another \$25 million under the Technical Assistance Credit (TAC).

The country was committed to be provided with more \$100 million for the power and gas sectors, \$20 million for the Chittagong WASA and \$100 million as the Industrial Sector Adjustment Credit (ISAC) from the World Bank.

Feb. 29
1992
Leap Day

Star Report

Born in 1792, Gioacchino Antonio Rossini was an unfortunate man. By the time the Italian composer died in 1868, he should have enjoyed 76 birthdays. Instead he had just 19.

He was born on February 29 in a leap year.

For the other 57 years, the unfortunate Rossini had to put up with the month of February having only 28 days. This leap day thing has come around this year and people born on February 29 are celebrating their birthdays which they could not for the past three years. Today, Saturday, is the 60th day of 1992 and there are 306 days left in the year.

The problem is that it is the normal thing for February to have 28 days. Actually, a normal year has 365.2422 days and not just 365 days. As a result, the fraction of a day, or about six hours, adds up to a full day every fourth year, and it becomes a 366-day year. The extra day is added to February as it is the shortest month of a year.

February 29 is certainly a bad day even to get married. No celebration for a straight three years, says A K M Mohsin. The wedding star smiled on the Daily Star's Chief Photographer on February 29 and he celebrates today his second marriage anniversary in eight years.

English King Henry VIII, who ruled from 1509 to 1547, took pity on the leap day folks and passed a law marking February 28 their birthdays during non-leap years.

However, it is doubtful if the Italian Rossini took much notice of Henry VIII's law as the English monarch had broken off relations with Rome after quarrelling with the Pope.

And to begin with a leap day an anonymous saying crosses the mind — "Leap year is when February has a day that is even rarer than a day in June."

Directive to open Rohingya accounts in missions abroad

All Bangladesh missions abroad have been directed to open accounts immediately to receive donations for the Myanmar refugees, reports UNB.

Official sources yesterday said that the missions had also been asked to receive contributions from both individuals and organisations for the same.

Bangladesh has recently appealed to the international community to come forward in support of the tens of thousands of the Rohingya Muslims who crossed into the country to escape persecution by the Myanmar military junta.

Meanwhile, a comprehensive programme for providing relief to the Rohingya refugees sheltered in Bangladesh is expected to be finalised within a couple of days.

The programme is being designed to cope with the increasing number of refugees from Myanmar, Relief Secretary M Abdul Hakim said Friday.

Special cabinet meet on KAFCO

Star Special

An emergency meeting of the Cabinet to discuss the Karnaphuli Fertilizer Company (KAFCO) issue was held last evening with Prime Minister Khaleda Zia in the chair.

The decision to hold the meeting was communicated to ministers available in Dhaka with no indication on the agenda.

Sources say that in the backdrop of a Cabinet reshuffle absentee ministers got worried and tried to know the outcome of the meeting.

The much-talked about reshuffle is expected to be delayed, according to the sources. Meanwhile, the government officials and the foreign shareholders of KAFCO yesterday held negotiations in a bid to resolve the crisis.

AL-FP gunbattle: Sec 144 at Tongi

From Our Correspondent

GAZIPUR, Feb 28: At least 30 people were injured in a clash between police and Freedom Party workers at Tongi today.

The clash ensued when the Freedom Party workers tried to enter into the Tongi municipal area violating the Section 144, clamped there from 1 pm today.

The Section 144 was imposed on the Tongi municipal area for an indefinite period following a three-hour gunbattle between the Awami League and Freedom Party activists Thursday late night. The Freedom Party in-

stalled a pendal at Tongi for holding a workers' meeting of the party today, which was ransacked twice by the AL workers yesterday leading to a three-hour gunbattle.

A large number of police deployed earlier at the spot failed to control the situation.

Freedom Party later held its workers meeting at Azampur and brought out a procession which was obstructed by police near Monno Textile Mills Limited. Six seriously injured persons were admitted to the Tongi Hospital.