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NEWS BRIEFS

Ministers visit ailing Hafiz

Seven Ministers, State Minister, Deputy Minister and Attorney General yesterday visited the ailing Law Minister Mirza Golam Hafiz, who is undergoing treatment at the Diabetic Hospital. They were Information Minister Barrister Nazmul Huda, Food Minister Shamsul Islam, Post and Telecommunication Minister Keramat Ali, Labour and Manpower Minister Abdul Mannan Bhuiyan, State Minister for Finance Mujibur Rahman, Deputy Minister for Health and Family Welfare Serajul Islam and Attorney General Aminul Haq, reports BSS.

104 arrested on various charges

By Staff Correspondent
 Dhaka Metropolitan Police on Thursday arrested 104 persons in connection with different charges, police said. Police also recovered a car, two baby taxis, pipe gun, revolver and crude bomb from their possessions.

BPMPA election suspended

Election to Bangladesh Private Medical Practitioners Association (BPMPA) was suspended by an order of the court. The election was scheduled to be held today, reports UNB.

Power lines snapped : 5000 houses damaged

20 killed, 300 hurt in Mymensingh tornado

From Our Correspondent

MYMENSINGH: Apr 23: At least 20 persons including two women were killed and 300 others injured when a tornado swept Mymensingh and adjoining two upazilas Wednesday night.

The tornado continued for about two minutes from 10:05 pm over the areas with a speed reaching 80 kilometres per hour.

Over 5000 houses were razed to the ground, 1000 trees and several electric poles were uprooted by the devastating tornado, local official estimated.

The tornado one of the worst during the last one decade left a trail of devastation in the Mymensingh town, Agricultural University, Gauripur and Ishwarganj upazilas.

Out of the total killed, four persons were from Mymensingh town, eight from Ishwarganj and eight from Gauripur upazilas of the injured. 40 persons were admitted to the Mymensingh Medical College Hospital (MMCH) and the others were released after first aid from MMCH and other Health Complexes of the areas.

The four persons killed in the Mymensingh town were Jainal (22), Jahana Begum (40), Munni (5) and Jamal (20). Four other persons killed in Ishwarganj were identified as Hossain Morol (95), Jonab Ali (40), Judh Banu (20) and Moharram Ali (40). Other killed were yet to be identified.

The worst affected area in Mymensingh town is the Agricultural University. Three residential halls, four faculties, poultry farm, agri-mechanical department and the research centre of the university were damaged severely.

According to the university authorities the total losses of the university stood at about Taka one and a half crore.

The University authorities postponed all the scheduled examinations of the University.

The other affected areas in Mymensingh district are Krishnapur Bagmara, Kewatkhali, Palashpur, Bhatkashar, Purahtara, Dhopakola, Shankipara, Natakghar lane and Charpara.

The worst affected areas in Gauripur Upazila and Ishwarganj Upazila are Bhangamatir Char and Darundia respectively. See Page 12 Col 7

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Tornado-hit Bolaspur in Mymensingh town.

— Photo Ataul Karim Khokon

Bloody showdown looks imminent Rival Mujahideen factions take up positions in Kabul

KABUL, Apr 23: Rival Afghan guerrilla factions and their commanders infiltrated Kabul today as the government tried to make peace with hardline fundamentalist Gulbuddin Hekmatyar who has threatened to attack the city, reports Reuters.

With their armies positioned in the mountains and valleys around Kabul, groups bitterly divided along ethnic and ideological lines moved quietly into the capital, raising the chances of a final bloody showdown.

Vice-President General Mohammad Rafe met Hekmatyar, the radical leader of

Hezb-i-Islami, in an attempt to avert a battle for Kabul after 14 years of civil war, the official Bakhtar news agency reported.

Hekmatyar has threatened to attack Kabul if the government does not surrender by Sunday — the 14th anniversary of the communist takeover in Afghanistan.

The news agency made no mention of the deadline and quoted both men as saying they wanted to reach a peaceful solution.

"Esteemed Gulbuddin Hekmatyar said we are in favour of an urgent, fair and peaceful solution to the Afghan problem," the agency said.

Hekmatyar was quoted as saying he wanted an interim government that would be formed by all Mujahideen parties and include commanders from Kabul and around Kabul.

It was not clear if this meant he was ready to allow the present government to play a future role.

An interim government would form a commission to hold elections within a year, Hekmatyar said.

The two men met on Wednesday in an area of Logar province under rebel control south of Kabul, the agency said. In Islamabad, Hezb-i-Islami See Page 12 Col 3

Political freedom seen a must for human uplift

By Staff Correspondent

Bangladesh has slightly moved upwards in human development, ranking, according to the Human Development Report, 1992, released yesterday globally.

The report, third in an annual series, has been prepared by an independent team of economists for the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP).

The report places Bangladesh at 135th position out of

160 developing countries. The place was 136th in the report for 1991.

The report was simultaneously released from Stockholm, Sweden and Washington.

The UNDP in Bangladesh held a press briefing yesterday afternoon on the occasion. Whinston Temple, Deputy Resident Representative, formally released the report here. Bruno J Pouzeat, Assistant Resident Representative, See Page 12 Col 1



Winston Temple — Star photo

Series of sewer blasts in Mexico leave 227 dead

GUADALAJARA (Mexico), Apr 23: The death toll rose to 227 today as rescue workers dug desperately through rubble in search of victims of a series of underground explosions that demolished a densely populated section of Guadalajara.

Explosions tore through the Mexican city of Guadalajara with the force of a powerful earthquake, the government news agency Notimex said.

Jaime Avalos Medina, chief spokesman of the government of Jalisco state, said several companies were being investi-

gated on suspicion of dumping chemicals or solvents into the sewer system of Mexico's second-largest city.

In a flurry of charges, counter-charges and denials, Petroleos Mexicanos (Pemex), the state oil company, and a cooking oil factory called La Central said they had nothing to do with the blasts, which injured more than 800 people and levelled scores of buildings.

Notimex quoted rescue workers in the devastated centre of the city as saying hun-

dreds of bodies had been pulled from the rubble of buildings levelled in the blasts which began at around 10 am local time (1800GMT).

Radio reports from the city, located some 270 miles (440 km) northwest of the capital, said it had been hit by as many as 10 separate explosions.

It's in a state of catastrophe, Juan Guzman Flores, a spokesman for the Jalisco state government, said of the downtown area of Guadalajara. It's like there was an earthquake measuring 6 or 7

10 killed in bus plunge

By Staff Correspondent

At least 10 people were killed and 25 others injured when a passenger bus slipped off a ferry into the Dholeswari River on the Dhaka-Mawa highway on Thursday.

Fire service personnel recovered all the bodies from inside the ill-fated bus which fell into the river because of reported brake failure at around 9 pm, police sources said.

The bus was on its way to Dhaka from Mawa, police said.

The victims include three women and two children. Their identity could not be known till the writing of this report.

Keraniganj thana source said the bus (No Tangal Ba-67) was carrying at least 50 passengers most of whom were inside the bus as it was getting on to the ferry.

Police said that most of the victims died of suffocation.

Fire service men from Dhaka were carrying on the rescue operation till the writing of this report. However, police said that divers searched the sunken bus but could not find any bodies inside.

The concerned authorities sent a crane to salvage the bus.

Our Bogra Correspondent says: Six people were killed and 15 others injured in two separate road accidents on Tuesday.

Five people were killed and 12 others injured at Chandakona on the Bogra-Nagarbari highway Tuesday night when a loaded truck (Comilla-Ta-3220) carrying 17 people fell into a ditch while giving side to a night coach.

The dead were identified as Dula Mian (25) of Swandif, Jamiruddin (30), Abdul Hamid (35) and Saki Hossain (32) of Kishoreganj. One person could not be identified. The 12 injured people were admitted to

See Page 12 Col 7



Satyajit dead

CALCUTTA, Apr 23: One of the brightest lights in the national and international world of celluloid was extinguished with the death of Satyajit Ray at the Belle Vue Clinic this evening, reports PTI.

Ray was 71. He is survived by his wife, Bijoia and son Sandip who were at his bedside when the end came at 5.45 pm.

Ray was admitted to the clinic for a routine checkup on January 27, but developed heart and respiratory complications. He never recovered and had been on ventilatory support for the past few days.

Ray received the special Oscar in recognition of his rare mastery of the art of motion pictures on March 16 and

the Bharat Ratna the same month.

He was also conferred the national professorship, a rare honour for eminent educationists, also in March, on his sick bed.

The condition of Ray, who spent exactly 87 days at the clinic, began deteriorating from last week when he developed respiratory problems and was put on ventilatory support.

A team of doctors led by eminent cardiologist, Dr KB Bakshi, who worked round-the-clock for days, fought a losing battle to stabilise Ray's condition.

The history of Ray's illness goes back to 1984 when he suffered a massive heart attack See Page 12 Col 7

Dutta urges Delhi to 'press Dhaka stop minority persecution'

By Staff Correspondent

Major General (Retd) Chitta Ranjan Dutta Thursday accused the government of persecuting the minority communities in the country in the 'Rohingya style'.

Dutta then called upon the Indian government to arrange shelters for the refugees, prepare lists and press Bangladesh government for an 'honourable return of the refugees'.

The President of the Bangladesh Hindu-Buddhist-Christian Solidarity Council was speaking at the inaugural function of the Council's trien-

See Page 12 Col 6

Donors slam slow progress in market economy

Star Report

Increasing public revenue and savings, getting the private sector moving and emphasizing human development efforts were the three priorities identified at the meeting of the Bangladesh Aid Group which concluded in Paris on Wednesday.

On the economic front, the development partners were critical about the 'small progress' achieved in controlling public enterprise deficits, installing a more open, competitive market economy and the slow implementation of the public investment programme, according to a World

Bank press release.

However, the government won 'much praise' for its sound handling of fiscal and monetary policies, tight control of recurrent expenditures and a start on greater selectivity in capital expenditure.

There was 'virtual unanimity' between the government delegation led by Finance Minister M Saifur Rahman and the development partners that Bangladesh could emerge 'quickly' from low-growth equilibrium and that the primary need was firm actions along the lines laid out in the See Page 12 Col 4

Hasina demands withdrawal of cases against partymen

By Staff Correspondent

Opposition leader Sheikh Hasina blamed the government for having no respect to the rule of law and commented, "This government wants to remain in power by resorting to repression on its political opponents including the Awami League."

The AL chief Hasina in a press statement last night accused the government of back-

See Page 12 Col 2

Top executives eat up BCI

By Inam Ahmed

The Bangladesh Commerce and Investment Ltd (BCI) has become inoperative due to over-drawing of company funds by its directors, sources said.

The funneling of funds from the investment company, set up seven years ago, put BCI in liquidity crisis, paralysing its operations.

Finance Ministry sources

said they were examining the BCI situation, and a report will be prepared by Saturday.

However, the sources said that no complaints have been made so far to the ministry by any depositors.

The crisis in the company started when some directors of the company drew money See Page 12 Col 4

Myanmar FM arrives : Talks today

By Staff Correspondent

Within hours of the announcement that the chief of the Myanmar's ruling military junta had stepped down, Foreign Minister Ohn Gyaung arrived Dhaka last night with his delegation to talk refugee repatriation.

On arrival at the airport, the Myanmar minister, who was received by his Bangladesh counterpart, told reporters that he had come for a 'positive outcome'.

The two sides hold the first round of formal talks today at 9 am at a VIP vessel 'Kajol'.

According to sources, two more rounds of discussions have been planned.

Foreign Minister A S M Mustafizur Rahman in his opening statement at today's talks will table Bangladesh's proposals for smooth and safe repatriation of Rohingyas.

According to sources, Bangladesh will insist that the refugees on their return home

See Page 12 Col 6

Saw Maung resigns

YANGON, Apr 23 : Senior Gen. Saw Maung, head of the junta that has ruled Myanmar since a 1988 coup, has resigned as its chairman for health reasons, the officials Yangon Radio announced Thursday, night, reports AP.

Gen. Than Shwe, deputy chairman and army commander, will succeed Saw Maung as leader of the junta, officially known as the State Law and Order Restoration Council, the state radio said in a special announcement.

"Owing to heavy responsibilities undertaken continuously by Senior Gen. Saw Maung, his health failed, necessitating a complete rest as advised by his doctors," the announcement said.

The SLORC meeting Thurs- See Page 12 Col 8

Surprise visit PM dissatisfied to see unclean dispensaries

Prime Minister Begum Khaleda Zia Thursday paid surprise visit to Central Medical Supply Depot (CMSD) and different outdoor government dispensaries in the city to see the existing overall condition there, reports BSS.

The Prime Minister went round different sections of CMSD. She went to the computerised data bank of the CMSD and saw the latest stock position of the depot. She visited the main medicine store there and checked the daily registers. She also enquired about the validity date of different medicines stored there and asked the concerned authorities to utilise the medicines timely, so that they were not wasted.

The Prime Minister saw See Page 12 Col 7

Water talks end Dhaka asks Delhi for quick steps

The two-day ministerial level meeting on sharing the waters of the common rivers ended in New Delhi Wednesday, reports BSS.

Agriculture, Irrigation, Water Development and Flood Control Minister M Majid-ul-Haq led a six-member Bangladesh delegation in the talks while the Indian side was led by Water Resources Minister Biddacharan Shukla.

The two sides reviewed various aspects of the issue. The latest water levels in the rivers in Bangladesh was discussed with due importance. However, Bangladesh side demanded immediate solution of water flow of the rivers Ganges and the Teesta.

Majid-ul-Haq said he had taken new initiative for removing complications on the water sharing of the common rivers between the two friendly countries.

He said no necessary steps were taken for exchanging views on the issue during the last 10 years. All concerned will have to show tolerance and understanding in seeking a permanent solution of the issue, he commented.

The Irrigation Minister said several new proposals were put before the talks aimed at reaching a permanent solution and both sides were studying those.