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NEWS BRIEFS

Hasina visits ailing Mohiuddin Sheikh Hasina yesterday visited ailing Awami League presidium member Mohiuddin Ahmed, MP and Mirza Zakaria of Rajshahi City Awami League at Suhrawardy Hospital. They are suffering from heart diseases. Hasina also went to Upasham Nursing Home to see Sramik League Joint-Secretary Purul Haq, who was injured in a recent road accident, reports UNB.

SAIC meeting begins Oct 28 The first meeting of the Focal Points of SAARC Agricultural Information Centre will begin in Dhaka Wednesday (Oct 28). Minister for Agriculture and Irrigation, Water Development and Flood Control Maj Gen Majid-ul Haq (Retd) will inaugurate the three-day SAIC meeting at 9:45 am at Bangladesh Agricultural Research Council (BARC), reports UNB.

109 more held on various charges Police arrested 109 people from different parts of the city on Saturday on various charges, a DMP press release said yesterday. Besides five wanted criminals, the arrested include five accused under the anti-terrorism ordinance, one on murder charge, two in arms case, one under the explosives control law, three for dacoity and two for rioting, reports UNB.

BPATC revised budget okayed SAVAR, Oct 24: The Board of Governors (BDG) of Bangladesh Public Administration Training Centre (BPATC) has approved the revised budget of BPATC for the financial year 1992-93 amounting to Taka six crore and seven lakh at its 23rd meeting held in Dhaka yesterday, reports BSS.

Body recovered Police yesterday recovered the body of an unknown man (35) from in front of a shop at Nawabpur road yesterday noon, reports UNB.

Tenth round of refugee talks

Yangon agrees to let Dhaka newsmen visit Arakan

From Staff Correspondent

CHITTAGONG, Oct 24: Myanmar today agreed to let Bangladesh journalists visit its western province of Arakan from where quarter of a million Rohingya refugees have fled to escape a military crackdown.

The agreement came at the 10th round of Bangladesh-Myanmar official level talks to step up the repatriation of the refugees encamped along Cox's Bazar-Teknaf region.

Leader of 7-member Bangladesh delegation Omar Faruk told reporters at the end of three-hour talks that Bangladesh journalists will be able to visit Arakan time to time. Bangladesh officials are also free to tour Arakan any time they want.

"This is a great achievement. We are happy over the

outcome," Faruk, Divisional Commissioner of Chittagong said.

An 8-member Myanmar delegation at the two-day talks was led by Maung Aung, Director General of Immigration and Manpower.

Faruk said the Myanmar side informed the meeting that the 112 refugees who returned home since last month are happy and safe. He said Bangladesh hopes to send soon another 650 refugees back home under its voluntary repatriation programme. He did not specify the time-table.

According to him Myanmar sought at least one more month to take a decision on a Bangladesh proposal to extend the "services of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees to see how the re-

turnees are being resettled."

"They have agreed to let us know about this at the next round of talks scheduled in Myanmar next month," he said.

Another important outcome was that Muslims in Arakan will no longer be required to bow their heads to show respect to Myanmar national flag. Instead it will be enough for them to salute the flag in accordance with Muslim practice, Faruk said.

He said Myanmar officials agreed to consider the question of granting resident registration certificates to the returnees besides handing their land and property back to them.

The Myanmar delegation at the talks was flown by a helicopter from the frontier town of Teknaf, where they landed

in the morning.

Faruk said the two sides will sign agreed minutes on the decisions tomorrow. The Myanmar delegation is scheduled to leave for home on Monday.

This was for the first time the repatriation talks was held in Chittagong since last May when the two sides started negotiations to implement the repatriation pact signed in April.

Despite some progress the pace of repatriation remains slow. Bangladesh has so far been able to send 112 refugees back home in two batches.

Bangladesh today submitted a list of another 17,905 refugees to Myanmar side raising the total number to 1,24,905 of which Myanmar cleared 13,005 names only.

Mostafiz may start tour of SAARC states Nov 5

By Toufique Imrose Khalidi

Foreign Minister ASM Mostafizur Rahman is likely to begin his trips to SAARC capitals on November 5, according to a rescheduled but yet-to-be finalised itinerary, his aides said yesterday.

In an unexpected turn of events, Rahman had to put off the trips Thursday just a couple of hours before he was to board the plane bound for Pakistan, beginning his tour of four countries — India, Nepal and Bhutan being the other three — to deliver the formal invitations to heads of state and government of these countries to the SAARC summit in Dhaka.

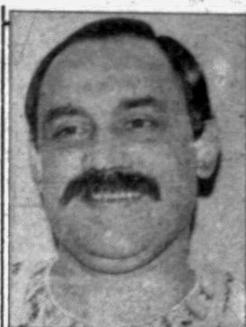
The sudden postponement triggered rumours ranging from his departure from the Foreign Office to a Cabinet

reshuffle to a rupture of relations with India.

Informed sources said that the Minister had left the Foreign Ministry at around 11.30 in the morning Thursday to see the Prime Minister before going to the airport, but came back to his office grim-faced to tell his colleagues that he would not be going.

The Foreign Office immediately sent messages to the four countries' Dhaka missions informing the Minister's decision, much to their surprise.

The sources said that the Foreign Minister later at night held a long session with the Prime Minister at her Sugandha office. The meeting "helped solve whatever problem" See Page 12 Col 7



Auranga arrested

By Staff Correspondent

Hemayetullah alias Aurangzeb, an Awami League MP from the Shariatpur-1 constituency, was arrested by police from Hotel Purbani in the city Saturday.

A special team of the Detective Branch of Police led by its Deputy Commissioner arrested him at about 4-15 pm See Page 12 Col 2

Delhi denies mine laying plan along borders

India has dismissed newspaper reports that it was planning to lay mines along its borders with Bangladesh as "false and without any foundation," reports UNB.

This was stated by a spokesman of the Foreign Office in Dhaka yesterday when his attention was drawn to press reports in this regard.

The spokesman told newsmen that soon after the publication of the reports in the Statesman on Friday, Bangladesh High Commissioner in New Delhi Farooq Sobhan raised the matter with the Indian authorities.

He categorically told by the secretary of the Indian Home Ministry that "there is not a word of truth in the report and it is false and without any foundation," he added.

Ministry evolves formula to resolve travel agents strike

By Staff Correspondent

The Ministry of Civil Aviation evolved a formula to resolve the indefinite strike of the travel agents, under which the Value Added Tax (VAT) would be realised from the passengers, Bangladesh Biman sources said Saturday.

But it was not clear whether the Finance Ministry approved the formula or not. High officials of Biman held a meeting with the State Minister for Civil Aviation Abdul Mannan at his office and decided that VAT should be collected at a flat rate on every ticket sold by the travel agents.

Following the meeting the Association of Travel Agents of Bangladesh (ATAB) was requested to submit an application to the ministry proposing the said formula, a source said requesting anonymity.

Earlier, VAT was imposed on the nine per cent commission the travel agents earn from each ticket sold.

Some 550 ATAB members started the indefinite strike from Monday demanding withdrawal of VAT but the Finance Ministry refused to concede.

The Ministry of Civil Aviation is likely to place new proposal with the Finance Ministry today or tomorrow, sources said. Finance Minister M Saffur Rahman is currently on a visit to Sylhet.

Meanwhile, the five-day See Page 12 Col 3

DU student robbed of Taka 2.5 lakh

By Staff Correspondent

Muggers looted Taka 2.5 lakh in foreign currency from a Dhaka University student, intending to travel abroad for study, in the busy Motijheel area yesterday.

Rafiqul Islam, the DU student and resident of Mohsin Hall, was mugged while he was on way to convert the currency into taka, after he failed to go abroad.

He was going to the Foreign Exchange Branch of the Sonali Bank, police said.

BNP backing terrorism on campuses: Hasina

Opposition leader Sheikh Hasina yesterday asked the students to play their due role in freeing the campus from arms and terrorism, reports UNB.

Speaking to a group of Chhatra League leaders of New Model Degree College at her official Minto Road residence, the Awami League President criticised the BNP government for not realising 10-point demand of the student community.

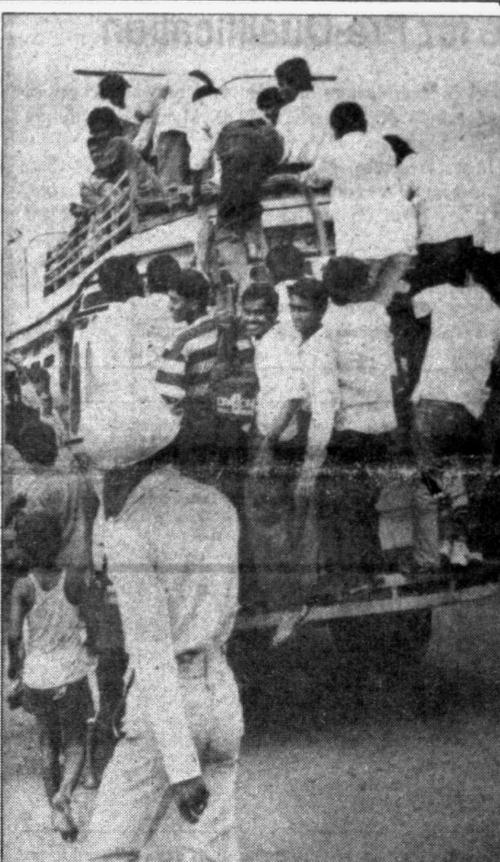
Hasina, the Leader of the Opposition in Parliament, accused the government party of backing terrorism on campuses and repressing its political opponents.

"The academic atmosphere in educational institutions is spoiled and civic life disrupted because of the government-backed terrorism," she said.

Referring to prevailing situation in socio-economic life, the opposition leader said politicisation, corruption, nepotism and undemocratic attitude of BNP have shattered the expectation of the people for peace and economic wellbeing.

Hasina demanded halting police harassment on students of New Model Degree College.

VP Zahidul Islam Pulak and GS Masud Adnan Siddique and Mustafizur Rahman Liton, General Secretary of the college unit of the Chhatra league were among others present.



So much for the month-long traffic rules enforcement drive! — Star photo

Action against corrupt JB officials soon

Star Report

The government plans to take stern action against a number of officials of Janata Bank allegedly involved in corruption, irregularities and misappropriation of public funds, according to well-placed sources.

The Public Undertaking Committee of the Jatiya Sangsad has submitted a report to the Parliament on October 17 on 12 cases of alleged corruption in various branches of Janata Bank, the sources said.

In the report Specific allegations have been brought against a former Managing Director Hayatur Rahman and a number of high level officers of the bank.

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Share sale offer CCI issues show cause notices on 4 companies

Star Report

The office of the Controller of Capital Issues (CCI) has served show cause notices on four companies listed with the Dhaka Stock Exchange (DSE) for offering to sell shares through open tenders in violation of securities and exchange regulations, sources said.

Three of the four companies are managed by the Bangladesh Chemical Industries Corporation (BCIC). They are: Eagle Box and Carton See Page 12 Col 1

Opponents of anti-terrorism ordn aren't democratic: PM

BHOLA, Oct 24: Prime Minister Begum Khaleda Zia today called upon the people to resist those who are trying to hinder the government's development efforts, reports UNB.

"They want to stop the on-going democratic process", she told a rally without naming any quarter in particular.

Begum Zia was addressing a huge rally at Bhola Government High School ground this afternoon during her day-long tour of the southern island district.

"It will be your responsibility

to resist the quarters who are out to foil the government's development programmes aimed at welfare of the people," she said.

The Prime Minister also accused that the same quarters were opposing the new anti-terrorism ordinance because they do not want peace in national life. She said they talk about democracy but they do not believe in it.

Pointing at the recent union parishad elections and the Jatiya Sangsad by-elections, she said neutrality and fairness prevailed during the

polls, testifying that democracy has been taking roots.

Referring to the street agitation of the opposition, Begum Zia asked the people to denounce those who do not want people's welfare.

"They cannot be friends of the people", she told the rally and asked people to identify those who are out to hinder national progress and prosperity.

Begum Zia called upon the people to strengthen the hands of the nationalist forces and expressed her confidence. See Page 12 Col 1

Commentary

Let there be a cabinet reshuffle—the sooner the better

By S.M. Ali

If there is one secret that even the most open government guards with great care, as if its life depends on it, it is the timing and size of a cabinet reshuffle. Again, this is one issue where the prerogative lies entirely with the head of the government, leaving little room for consultations among cabinet colleagues.

In this sense, the exercise puts the political judgement of the head of the government to

a severe test. Prime Minister Begum Khaleda Zia faces this test today or, as some insiders would say, she has been studying the move for some time past, perhaps for weeks or even months.

Meanwhile, with speculations becoming stronger that the reshuffle is just round the corner, there is an air of uncertainty prevailing within a number of ministries. Government leaders are asked

questions they cannot answer. Some feel vulnerable; others are filled with expectations. The mood inside the administration, never particularly buoyant, is almost listless.

If there was an opinion poll on this issue, a cross section of the educated elite would definitely say, "Let there be a cabinet reshuffle, the sooner the better. And let the Prime Minister get on with the job of See Page 12 Col 4



Volunteers in Azad Kashmir ready for cross-border march near the Actual Line of Control yesterday. — Star TV photo

Kashmiris hold march today

Thousands camp near border as troops take up positions

HAJIRA, (Pakistan-controlled Kashmir) Oct 24: Thousands of Kashmiris camped for the night late tonight in this small town 12 kilometers from Indian-held Kashmir, but vowed to breach the line separating the disputed area the next day, reports AFP.

A kilometers away from where the marchers camped, paramilitary forces and troops took up positions behind

barbed wire barriers, ready to stop the march.

In New Delhi, Federal Home Minister Shankarao Chavan repeated warnings that Pakistan would be held responsible for any violation of the border by Muslim supporters of Kashmiri secessionists in India.

The Press Trust of India (PTI) also reported that Indian and Pakistani troops exchanged fire at seven places

across the 1,200-kilometer (750-mile) Line of Actual Control (LAC) dividing Kashmir after Indians "objected" to Pakistani troop deployments on the other side.

But India's Jammu and Kashmir state governor Girdja Saxena was quoted by PTI as saying in Srinagar, Indian-held Kashmir's summer capital, that the situation in his state and along the border "is fully under See Page 12 Col 1

Clinton's lead shrinking

GREENLEAF, Wis, Oct 24: Bill Clinton, declaring he won't be lulled by his lead in opinion polls, struck a populist tone Saturday as new polls indicated the lead is shrinking, reports AP.

President Bush has pulled to within 7 percentage points of his Democratic challenger — or 3, according to a smaller sample of likely voters — according to results of a survey by Time Magazine-CNN released Saturday. See Page 12 Col 4

The survey of 1,292 registered voters found Clinton with 38 per cent, Bush with 31 per cent and Ross Perot with 17 per cent. The same poll a month earlier showed Clinton with a 19-point lead.

The Washington Post also had the Clinton lead at eight points, Newsweek at 12 — all down from earlier polling. Perot was rising in all the surveys, as high as 22 per cent in the Newsweek poll. See Page 12 Col 4