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Inside Today

Article

**We Can Do without
 a Mid-term Poll or
 a New Party**

Column : At Home and
 Abroad
 by SM Ali
 Page 4

International



**Liz on the verge of
 pneumonia**

**Iran asks India to help
 ease tension in Gulf**
 Page 5

Business

**Low demand eases
 tea prices**
 Page 7

National

Across the Country

**A springboard of action
 against '71 killer
 hordes**
 Page 9

Feature

Development

**DEEDAR's Success in
 Cooperative Village
 Development**
 Page 8

Metropolitan

Dhaka Day by Day



**A Miscellany of Road
 Scenes**
 Page 3

NEWS BRIEFS

MUJ leaders meet Khaleda

Leaders of the Mymensingh Union of Journalists (MUJ) and Mymensingh Press Club last night met Prime Minister Begum Khaleda Zia at her Sugandha office. Begum Zia listened to their various problems and said the government was trying to solve the problems of greater Mymensingh district, reports BSS.

Hasina visits ailing Altaf

Sheikh Hasina visited the ailing Ganatantri Party leader and former MP Syed Altaf Hossain at his RK Mission road residence yesterday evening. Syed Altaf is suffering from old age complications, reports UNB.

Bangladesh gets Arcasia award

The Architects Regional Council of Asia (Arcasia) yesterday announced a gold medal award for Bangladesh this year for the architectural design of historic Ahsan Manzil. This was disclosed at a meeting of the Trustee Board of Bangladesh Folk and Crafts Foundation held yesterday at the conference room of the Cultural Ministry with State Minister for Cultural Affairs Prof Jahanara Begum in the chair, reports BSS.

Air Chief returns

The Chief of Air Staff, Air Vice Marshal Altaf Hossain Choudhury, returned Dhaka Tuesday night ending a week-long goodwill visit to the People's Republic of China, an ISPR press release said. He led a three-member delegation, reports BSS.

Fresh evidences by Kerry Committee

Ershad smuggled out \$ 520 m state funds through BCCI

WASHINGTON, Nov 11: US Senate sub-committee headed by Senator John Kerry in its report found fresh evidences of misappropriation of state funds and smuggling out of 520 million US dollars by the ousted President H M Ershad during his autocratic rule, reports BSS.

The report released here today said the suspended BCCI bank had helped the fallen dictator to siphon out at least 520 million US dollars equivalent to over Taka 2000 crore and had appointed three close relatives of former President Ershad, twelve sons and daughters of his Prime Minister, Finance Minister, Police chiefs and Bangladesh

Bank governors for this purpose.

The BCCI bank had transferred this state fund from Bangladesh through its London and Hong Kong branches, the Kerry report said, adding even the Disaster Relief Fund money donated by the different donor agencies and countries during the 1988 flood also included in the smuggled out funds by Ershad.

Quoting an investigating agency, the report said the former President had also appointed a senior banker of the BCCI as its ambassador to Brunel and the ambassador mainly had used his embassy office as a branch of the BCCI.

The report said the ousted President's tenure was a period of uninterrupted and golden time for the BCCI in Bangladesh and the smuggling racket had been constituted with Ershad, some of his colleagues and his mistresses.

The Kerry report said the then Bangladesh permanent representative to the United Nations and brother-in-law of Ershad, AHG Mohiuddin had played an important role to smuggle out this huge fund. The services of Mohiuddin was terminated and he was called back home after the fall of Ershad, he has not returned Dhaka and is now residing at a palatial house in New York at a

monthly rent of about Taka two lakh.

Mohiuddin is now looking after the illegally smuggled out funds of Ershad from that house.

Senator John Kerry and Senator Hank Brown prepared this investigative report on the basis of the witnesses of the top level BCCI bank officials and findings from different sources.

Ousted from power by a mass upsurge in December 1990, Ershad has already been sentenced to 10 plus 3 years in jail for keeping illegal arms and amassing wealth beyond known sources of his income. He is facing more than 3 dozen corruption cases.

'No concession to terrorism' People accepted bill, feeling safe: PM

Prime Minister Begum Khaleda Zia yesterday warned that no "concession" would be given to anyone indulging in terrorism, anarchy and indiscipline in national life, reports UNB.

"More stringent measures will be taken if people are harassed," she categorically said focusing the need of the anti-terrorism law.

She was addressing a group of political activists of Pabna who joined Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP). Nearly 1,500 men and women, belonging to Awami League, JSD, NAP and other political parties, came at Sugandha yesterday evening to join the ruling party.

Begum Zia said those who had amassed black money exploiting public exchequer were trying to unleash terrorism

and indiscipline in society. Referring to the Anti-terrorism Bill passed in the last session of parliament, the Prime Minister said it was meant for those involved in anarchy, extortion and harassment of commonman.

The general people have accepted the bill, and "they are feeling safe," she asserted. Saying that people's rights have been given importance in the bill, she pointed out that every accused would have the opportunity to appeal to the High Court.

Those who do not want development and progress of the country, Begum Zia said, are creating "unnecessary" issue by opposing the bill. The only issue today should be build the country and increase production in fields and factories.

See Page 12 Col 6

Bush invites Clinton to White House

FORT MYERS (Florida), Nov 11: President George Bush and president-elect Clinton had a telephone chat today their first since Clinton's election last week, and discussed a Clinton visit to the White House, a Bush spokesman said, reports Reuter.

Bush phoned Clinton from Air Force one as he flew to a brief Florida fishing vacation and had a very nice conversation that lasted about five minutes, spokesman Marlin Fitzwater said.

He said Bush invited the President-elect to come to the White House any time at his convenience to start getting acquainted with the executive mansion that will become his home after he takes his oath of office on January 20.

Governor Clinton said he would like to do that but he didn't know exactly when, See Page 12 Col 8

OECF chief meets PM, assures continued aid

Overseas Economic Cooperation Fund (OECF) of Japan has assured continued assistance to Bangladesh for different development programmes, reports UNB.

The assurance came when the visiting OECF President Akira Nishigaki called on Prime Minister Begum Khaleda Zia at her office yesterday morning.

"I am impressed to see your personal initiative in smooth implementation of development and welfare projects undertaken by the government," Nishigaki told the Prime Minister.

Nishigaki appreciated the leadership of Begum Zia in the country's march towards achieving self-reliance.

Begum Zia thanked the Japanese government for its continued support to Bangladesh in implementing various development programmes aimed at people's welfare.

The Prime Minister said the present government has identified priority sectors and sought increased OECF assistance for implementing the See Page 12 Col 6

Mostafiz leaves for Delhi today

Foreign Minister ASM Mostafizur Rahman leaves for India today on the second leg of his trip to South Asian capitals that will take him to New Delhi, Islamabad and Kathmandu, reports UNB.

Mostafiz returned home on Tuesday concluding a 5-day airtrip to Colombo and Male where he conveyed invitation to President Ransinghe Premadasa of Sri Lanka and President Mamnoon Abdul Gayoom of the Maldives to attend the forthcoming SAARC summit in Dhaka next month.

Officials said the Foreign Minister would be in New Delhi on Friday to call on Indian Prime Minister Narasimha Rao. As special emissary of Prime Minister Begum Khaleda Zia, he will deliver invitation to Rao to attend the summit December 12-14.

Mostafiz, the sources said, is scheduled to fly to Islamabad on Saturday to invite Pakistan Prime Minister Mian Nawaz Sharif. The Foreign Minister will go to Kathmandu to invite Nepalese Prime Minister Girza Prasad Koirala before flying back home on November 19.

30 injured in Adamjee clash

From Our Correspondent

NARAYANGANJ, Nov 11: Fresh clashes between the Awami League backed Rehan group and BNP backed Kashem group at the Adamjee Jute Mills (AJM) today left ten persons injured.

Both the groups fought three bouts blasting over 50 crackers. The clash first started at 10am then again at 2.30 pm and 7 pm at the AJM main gate, Kadamtali and Sumipara areas.

Police shot four rounds of rubber bullets and baton-charged to disperse the feuding groups.

Later, police also raided different areas and arrested 30 persons. The raid continued till writing this report at 10 pm.

Kamal calls for 'common platform'

By Staff Correspondent

Dr Kamal Hossain has blasted both the government and the opposition for their role in steering the nation.

"People know who are collaborating with the rajakars and who are shaking hands with the fallen autocrats," the convener of Bangladesh Democratic Forum and member of Awami League Advisory Council told a meeting of the Mantu faction of the Awami Juba League (AJL) yesterday.

Kamal speaking as chief guest at the meeting organised to mark the AJL founding day at Ramna Batamul said, "People's hopes and aspirations have been shattered" and called for a 'common platform' to address their needs.

Jatiya Sangsad in not a forum for mere debate, it has to solve national problems", Kamal warned, "democracy doesn't mean doing whatever we like."

Regarding the recently passed anti-terrorism bill, Kamal said that the new law was contrary to fundamental rights and had curbed the supremacy of the judiciary.

Chaired by his faction of Juba League President Mostafa Mohsin Mantu, the meeting was also addressed by Barrister Amirul Islam, AL leaders Sheikh Abdul Aziz, Advocate Sirajul Islam, Advocate Zahurul Islam, Advocate Mofijul Islam, Motiur Rahman and Saifuddin. Besides, other AL leaders including Salahuddin Yusuf, Moshtaq Ahmed, Major Gen (Retd) Khalilur Rahman, See Page 12 Col 1

BNP crippling democracy, says Hasina

By Staff Correspondent

Leader of the Opposition in Parliament Sheikh Hasina Wednesday said that the nascent democracy in the country would have to be saved through 'movements and struggles'.

The new-born democracy is being crippled in the hands of the ruling BNP, the Awami League chief alleged while addressing a discussion meeting marking the 20th founding anniversary of Awami Juba League.

"The rulers have become neo-autocrats" Hasina said, "democracy is not a plaything of the ruling party. We won't tolerate any move to kill it."

"We want to nurture the hard-earned democracy. We have to save democracy through movements and struggles," she said, adding that "under the parliamentary system, fall of a government does not mean fall of democracy".

Held at Bangabandhu Avenue in front of the party central office, the meeting was presided over by the Juba League chairman Nurul Majid Humayun.

It was also addressed, among others, by party General Secretary Zillur Rahman, president member Amir Hossain Amu, Organising Secretary Muhammad Nasim, MP, central committee member Kader Siddiqui, Publicity Secretary See Page 12 Col 4

Muzaffar Hussain Paltu and Juba League General Secretary Fulu Sarkar.

In a blistering attack on the BNP government's foreign policy, Hasina charged Prime Minister Khaleda Zia with selling out national interest to 'foreign countries', creating an unprecedented diplomatic crisis for the country.

"Begum Zia sold out Bangladesh to India by signing a joint declaration on May 26 while she was in New Delhi, admitting large-scale migration of Bangladeshis to India," she said. This, she added, prompted India to begin the 'push back' operation."

The AL President said that the present government also compromised the national interest on the question of establishing Bangladesh's sovereignty in the 'Tin Bigha Corridor'.

She also criticised the 'silent diplomacy' of the government in handling the Rohingya issue which, she said, has thrown the country in a crisis of diplomatic debacle.

Condemning Monday's police firing on the refugees which left 10 people dead, Hasina alleged that a deep rooted conspiracy is being perpetrated in the refugee camps by the anti-liberationist Jamaat-Shibir elements against See Page 12 Col 4



Sheikh Hasina addressing a meeting marking 20th founding anniversary of Awami Juba League at Bangabandhu Avenue (top) and Dr Kamal Hossain addressing the Mantu faction of Juba League meeting at Ramna Batamul in city yesterday (above). —Star photo

One crore drug addicts in SAARC countries

About one crore people in SAARC countries have fallen victims to drug abuse that threatens the socio-economic fabrics of most countries of the region, reports UNB.

Experts from SAARC countries, who were in Dhaka recently in connection with a three-day symposium on "Prevention of Drug Abuse Among Youth", reckoned that an estimated 50-70 lakh drug addicts are in India and about one lakh in Sri Lanka.

According to the 4th National Survey of Pakistan, conducted in 1988, some 22,44,000 people were addicted to drugs. Of them, 10,79,635 were heroin ad-

dicts, 7,22,880 addicted to charas, 2,60,745 opium, 1,31,205 bhang and the rest 49,535 addicted to other drugs.

Various government and non-government sources put the figure of drug addicts in Bangladesh at about two lakh, of which more than one lakh are addicted to heroin.

"Anti Drug Movement", a journal published by Bangladesh Anti-Drug Abuse Organisation on the occasion of International Drug Day, said about 15 lakh people of Bangladesh use ganja while 10 lakh others are addicted to tranquilisers.

Among the drug addicts in

Bangladesh, about 70 per cent are youths. A sizeable portion of young students of universities and other educational institutions in big cities have also started taking drugs.

In Nepal, the figure is about 50,000 most being heroin addicts. Although it is a very small proportion of Nepal's total youth population of 57 lakh, but the rate of proliferation of drugs is very high, said Nepalese delegates at the seminar.

The figure is confined within several hundreds only in the Maldives. Bhutan has virtually not experienced any visible problems of drug abuse See Page 12 Col 7

Matlab College students clash: 30 injured

CHANDPUR, Nov 11: Some 30 students were injured when rival student groups clashed on the Matlab Degree College Campus today, reports UNB.

Campus sources said the college authorities suspended classes till Sunday after the clash between activists of the pro-Awami League Chhatra League and the ruling BNP-backed Jatiyatobadi Chhatra Dal this afternoon.

Seriously injured are the college student union member Mizanur Rahman (22), who was shifted to Sadar Hospital with head injury, AGS Anwar Hossain (20), Sulaiman Mia (21) and Anwar Hossain (18). All of them were said to be JCD men.

See Page 12 Col 6

Arms sales to Iraq Major under fire for complicity

LONDON, Nov 11: Opposition lawmakers on Wednesday accused Prime Minister John Major of alleged complicity in the sale of arms to Iraq by British companies in violation of a UN arms embargo, reports AP.

Major announced a judicial inquiry on Tuesday into charges that the government connived in helping British companies arm Baghdad and was prepared to let three British businessmen go to jail to cover up intelligence activities.

Labour leader John Smith said the opposition is not sat-

isfied with a judicial inquiry, which can hold sessions behind closed doors and has no power to subpoena witnesses. It wants an independent tribunal to investigate the affairs with evidence given in public and under oath, he said.

In a letter to the prime minister, Smith referred to "grave allegations made against not only current senior members of your Cabinet but also against the entire 1990 Cabinet of which you were a member."

Paddy Ashdown, leader of the centrist Liberal Democrats, See Page 12 Col 2

South Khulna people rising against shrimp farming

Nurul Kabir, back from Khulna

People on the banks of the river Shibsha in Paikgacha, south Khulna are getting restive against shrimp cultivation in the region against the backdrop of reduction in fecundity of the cultivable lands and severe environmental degradation caused by shrimp farming.

More than five thousand men and women of the Paikgacha thana gathered in the river-side Bigordana High School premises on November 7 to protest against 'undesir-

able shrimp cultivation' in southern Khulna.

Speakers at the rally vowed to resist shrimp farming in the cultivable lands 'at any cost' with a view to 'safeguarding the livelihood of the people living in the area and getting rid of continuous environmental pollution caused by shrimp farming.'

Organised by the local unit of the Nijera Kori, a Dhaka based NGO, the rally was addressed mostly by the leaders of the Khulna units of the left

leaning parties, local union parishad leaders and victims of the shrimp cultivation in the area.

The rally was organised in observance of the second anniversary of death of Karunamoyee Sarder, a poor woman activist who was killed allegedly by a Khulna based trader Wajed Ali Biswas and his hired hoodlums on November 7, 1990.

According to a number of people living in the area, on the day Wajed Ali and his men,

equipped with firearms, arrived at the Hortinkhola village of Paikgacha early in the morning and tried to cut the river-side embankment to let saline water into a piece of land he somehow managed to possess under lease agreement earlier for cultivation of shrimp against the choice of the local people.

The embankments in the area, the shrimp cultivators are now bent on cutting, were built in the late sixties and early seventies with a view to

protecting lives and property from flood waters and cyclones and to boost agricultural production.

The villagers, on getting information of Wajed Ali's design, rushed to the spot to resist the attempt.

In the face of strong resistance from the villagers, the outsiders opened fire and hurled bombs at them leaving Karunamoyee (45), member of Bigordana Bittahin Samabai Samiti, killed on the spot and more than 50 men and women

severely injured.

The body of Karunamoyee was taken away by the attackers while a tuft of her hair and a portion of her brain matter remained in the battle ground for two days until the Paikgacha police took those away for examination. Now people have built a memorial on the spot.

Paikgacha police, after investigation, submitted chargesheet against Wajed Ali and 34 others on December See Page 12 Col 7