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NEWS BRIEFS

Preston leaves for London

World Bank President Lewis T Preston left Dhaka for London yesterday evening ending his three-day official visit to Bangladesh. Finance Minister M Saifur Rahman and Mrs Rahman saw off the Bank Chief and Mrs Preston at Zia International Airport. World Bank Vice-President Joshep Wood and Bank President's Assistant Gisa Mohadjer also left along with their Chief, reports BSS.

Restaurant owners meet Hasina

Leaders of Bangladesh Restaurant Owners Association yesterday met with opposition leader Sheikh Hasina and apprised her of their grievances against VAT and turn-over tax. The Awami League President and Leader of the Opposition in Parliament extended her support to the just demands of the restaurant owners, reports UNB.

Radio programme on Titumeer

Radio Bangladesh Dhaka in observance of the death anniversary of 'Titumeer' will directly broadcast an audience participated programme tomorrow at 4 pm from Sher-e-Bangla National Broadcasting House auditorium. On this occasion a drama 'Baser Kella' will be broadcast. All the regional stations will simultaneously relay the programme, reports BSS.

Food employees call off strike

The Central Action Committee of the Food Department officials and employees suspended their proposed programme of abstention from work. The decision for suspension of the programme was taken following a satisfactory discussion of the members of the committee with Food Secretary Ershadul Hoq held at the office of the Food Directorate in Dhaka yesterday, reports BSS.

Preston non-committal over funding Jamuna Bridge



Preston at the press conference. —Star photo

The visiting World Bank (WB) President Lewis T Preston Tuesday declined any specific commitments on financing the Jamuna Bridge project and on resuming credits to the energy sector.

Addressing a crowded press conference prior to his departure at the end of a three-day visit, Preston expressed his guarded satisfaction at the progress of the economic reform programme, family planning initiatives, success of the agricultural sector and the overall economic performance of the country.

However, he expressed concern over the slow process of privatisation and the debtor

problems in the financial sector. He also cautioned that unless the implementation rate improved it would be difficult to recommend increased financial aid as the resources of the donors were being stretched with new countries seeking aid.

"All in all, from our perspective, it was a very very useful visit...in trying to understand a large, diverse and complex country," the WB chief said. "I am very appreciative for the invitation."

On his meetings with various government and non-government officials and other prominent people during his visit, he said: "I met with virtu-

ally every segment of society, including intellectuals who do not approve of the WB...little humility would do us no harm."

Replying to a question, Preston acknowledged that the Jamuna Multi-purpose Bridge Complex project "has developed a very symbolic importance to the country."

However, he quickly added, "It's not a simple project and a number of environmental issues, including resettlement, that have to be addressed."

Noting that the project was still at a "very early stage" as the international bids for it have only been called recently, See Page 12 Col 1

Khaleda, Preston talk issues of mutual interest

The visiting World Bank President, Lewis T Preston, called on Prime Minister Begum Khaleda Zia at her residence here yesterday afternoon, reports BSS.

Welcoming the World Bank President, Begum Zia pleaded for withdrawal of suspension of World Bank's assistance from the power sector. She apprised Preston of the recent government decisions for transfer of power lines from the Power Development Board (PDB) to the Rural Electrification Board (REB).

The Prime Minister informed him that disciplinary actions were being taken against corrupt practices in the power sector. She said results of the decisions were encouraging.

She also said her government was firm in reducing systems loss in power sector.

Begum Zia stressed the need for expansion of power generation and distribution for expediting the country's development process in different sectors including industries, health, population control, female education and rural development. She hoped that the development strides would be faster in a couple of years.

She apprised him the favourable response from private and foreign investors in large numbers following liberal trade and industrial policy declared by her government.

She also informed him measures taken for improvement of law and order situation and efficiency in public administration. She requested See Page 12 Col 6

SKOP, Govt talk issues Nov 21

By Nurul Kabir

The government, in a bid to avert 48-hour workers strike scheduled for 29 and 30 this month, has decided to talk with the leaders of the Sramik Karmachari Oikya Parishad (SKOP) on November 21, official sources said.

The SKOP announced the strike on October 24 to press its five-point charter of demands.

The demands include halt to denationalisation of public sector businesses and industries, fixation of a minimum national wage for both private and public sector workers at Taka 14 hundred and repeal of certain clauses of the labour laws that go against the interests of the workers and employees.

Incidentally, the SKOP has been struggling for the demands since beginning of the last decade.

The government signed a memorandum of understanding (MOU) with the SKOP last December.

According to the MOU, the government was under obligation to work out a solution to the SKOP's five-point charter, that practically includes a total of 78 demands, within January 15, 1992.

The chambers of commerce and industries of the country, however, sharply reacted to signing of the MOU and termed the accord illegal.

See Page 12 Col 6

BDR repulses 2 BSF bids to push in 140

LALMONIRHAT, Nov 17: BDR repulsed two BSF attempts of pushing into Bangladesh 140 Bengali-speaking Indian Muslims through the border in Hatibandha thana in the last two days.

The Bangladesh Rifles pushed back 60 Indians Monday night after they were pushed in by the Indian Border Security Force in three groups through Daikhawa border. They also pushed back another 80 knocked in through Daikhawa and Singamari border passes.

Meanwhile, an Indian journalist who didn't want to be

named told UNB that BSF action on a procession, brought out by Muslims residing at two frontier villages in Coochbihar district of India in protest against the killing of a Muslim pregnant woman by the Indian border guards left 30 people injured.

Rubina Begum, 28, wife of Minaj Rahim, brought from Delhi into a camp, died after she was allegedly assaulted by some BSF members.

The Indian journalist said several hundred Muslims of Nayahat and Marichapara villages brought out the procession.

See Page 12 Col 8

Alleged ring leader of Rohingya violence held

COX'S BAZAR, Nov 17: A Rohingya 'terrorist', wanted against an award of Tk 10,000 for allegedly masterminding violence in the refugee camps, was nabbed today from a village, reports UNB.

Police arrested Nurul Haque Majhi (37) along with one of his henchmen, Miah Hossain (40), at village Taipalong, 5 kilometre from Ukha thana headquarters.

A cut-gun along with eight rounds of ammunition was also seized from the possession of Majhi, charged with obstructing the repatriation of Burmese refugees and threatening concerned government officials, police said.

Majhi was hiding from a

withhunt since the November 9 bloody clashes in Dechuapalong-2 camp which left 8 dead and 50 injured.

The Rohingya Refugee Repatriation Action Committee (RRRAC) declared Tk 10,000 at stake for arrest of Majhi who allegedly led a terrorist group to resist the repatriation and asked the Rohingyas to kill a magistrate and a local UP member.

BSS adds: Home Minister Abdul Matin Chowdhury said here today that the ongoing repatriation process of the Rohingya refugees would be completed within the shortest possible time.

Presiding over a high level See Page 12 Col 8

Energy sector credit WB will consider lifting suspension

Visiting World Bank President Lewis T Preston yesterday lauded the macro-economic management of the present democratic government and said the Bank would positively consider the withdrawal of suspension from the 300 million-dollar energy sector credit, reports BSS.

The credit was suspended by the bank when it had imposed a set of conditionalities during the previous government.

Recognising the difficulties and multiplicities of the conditionalities and co-financiers for

smooth implementation of the adjustment programme and projects, Preston said the country's performance was 'very fine in terms of the key indicators of the adjustment programme.'

The Bank chief was discussing various issues and exchanging views with Finance Minister M Saifur Rahman, Agriculture and Irrigation Minister M Majid-ul-Huq, Commerce Minister M K Anwar, Energy Minister Dr Khondaker Mosharraf Hossain and Jute Minister Hannan See Page 12 Col 3

Economists, NGOs for transparency in WB conditions

Some leading economists and NGO representatives Tuesday called for transparency in the World Bank's conditionalities with regard to Bangladesh's economy permitting their discussions in parliament, reports UNB.

Their plea was put forward during a meeting with World Bank President Lewis Preston at the bank's resident mission here.

The academics and NGOs advocated that parliament should be in a position to discuss the conditions tagged with the bank's credit programmes to avoid any misgiving or controversies.

During the meeting, they exchanged views on the overall See Page 12 Col 2

Work stoppage, procession in AJM Rehan arrested, sent to jail

From Our Correspondent

NARAYANGANJ, Nov 17: In a pre-dawn raid on his Dhaka residence today Siddhirganj police arrested Rehanuddin Rehan, president of the Collective Bargaining Agent (CBA) of the Adamjee Jute Mills workers.

Immediately after the arrest, the police sent the AL-backed Adamjee labour leader to the Dhaka Central Jail.

The charges, all made before 1990, include a murder. The other charges are related to violence.

When The Daily Star asked the OC of the Siddhirganj thana why the CBA leader had not been arrested in the last

two years, the OC replied that he had been absconding.

Meanwhile, the workers of the Adamjee Jute Mills upon receiving the news of Rehan's arrest, stopped their work for two hours from 8:30 am.

The workers also brought out protest procession in the premises of the mills and demanded his release.

The CBA enforced one-hour work stoppage and held a protest rally in front of Rehan's local residence at Saw Mill Para at 5:00 pm. The rally, presided over by CBA Vice President Abdur Rashid, was addressed, among others, by See Page 12 Col 8

Hasina demands release of Rehan

Sheikh Hasina has demanded unconditional release of Rehanuddin Rehan, the CBA President of Adamjee Jute Mills, who was arrested from Maghbazar area of the city yesterday morning, reports UNB.

Rehan, also the Vice-President of Jatiya Sramik League, was arrested from Maghbazar area yesterday morning.

In a statement Awami League President and Leader of the Opposition in Parliament condemned and protested the arrest of Rehan, also the Vice-President of Jatiya Sramik League.

"The ruling party is involved in a deep-rooted conspiracy to obstruct the onward march of Awami League and the Sramik League," Hasina said. "As part of this conspiracy, the government has resorted to repression on soldiers of Bangabandhu across the country."

VC's office gheraoed, damaged Students take over DU bus to see soccer tie

By DU Correspondent

Several hundred students of the Dhaka University gheraoed, partially damaged the Vice Chancellor's office and forcibly took control of university buses to witness the Sher-e-Bangla Cup soccer final at Mymensingh yesterday (Tuesday).

The final match of the Sher-e-Bangla Cup between Dhaka University and Khulna DSA was held at the Mymensingh stadium at 2 pm

yesterday. The agitated student started for Mymensingh at about 11-30 am disregarding the existing university rule that prohibits the taking of university buses outside Dhaka, campus sources said.

The students also disobeyed the Vice Chancellor's request to use private buses to go to Mymensingh, witnesses said. Sources said that the stu-

December 8 hartal may be deferred if govt asks

Ghatak Dalal Nirmul Committee may think about deferring its planned December 8 hartal if the government requests so.

The indication came from the committee chief, Jahanaara Imam, while talking to UNB last night.

"We'll definitely think of it, if the government requests us to change the date of hartal in view of the coming SAARC summit," Mrs Imam said.

To a question, she said the government side had not yet made any contact with her on this question.



Para-military soldiers guard on top of a truck in front of Parliament Building in Islamabad yesterday. Security has been beefed up to avoid possible violence during today's long march. — AFP photo

Pak govt activities paralysed ahead of today's long-march

ISLAMABAD, Nov 17: An opposition threat to stage a mass protest march on Pakistan's parliament has paralysed the normal business of government, analysts said today, reports Reuter.

Just days after celebrating his second anniversary in power, Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif was facing the deepest political crisis of his government, diplomats said. Stalwarts still loyal to Sharif's crumbling coalition have launched a barrage of in-

veective against opposition leader Benazir Bhutto and her vow to lead a huge long march on parliament to topple a government which she says won power only after massive rigging of 1990 elections.

They are losing their cool, one western diplomat said. Government leaders ranging from the usually reclusive Prime Minister to the almost powerless Prime Minister of disputed Azad (Free) Kashmir convened news conferences to chorus their anger.

If the long march is not a serious threat then why do they seem to be panicking? said one Pakistani political analyst. Why don't they just get on with governing the country?

This is not a long march but a wrong march, Interior Minister Shujat Hussain told the senate on Monday.

The former Prime Minister's opposition Pakistan People's Party (PPP) has tried to smuggle firearms to Lahore See Page 12 Col 7



Tributes to Maulana Bhashani

By Staff Correspondent

The nation yesterday paid tributes to the legendary leader Maulana Adbul Hamid Khan Bhashani on his 16th death anniversary.

Different organisations held discussions on the leader who had devoted his life for democratic rights and the emancipation of the common people.

The nation also recalled the contribution of the revolutionary leader in the Liberation War.

Leaders and workers of different socio-political organisations visited the mazar of the late leader at Santosh in See Page 12 Col 4

PM urges IFRCS chief to release held up funds

Prime Minister Begum Khaleda Zia yesterday urged Dr Mario Villarreal Lander, chief of the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies to release the fund held up by the IFRCS on account of unspent balance of 1988 flood and 1991 cyclone relief operation, reports BSS.

She was talking to the IFRCS president when he called on the Prime Minister at her office in Dhaka yesterday.

The Prime Minister told Lander that if the money is released, Dhaka could spend it for construction of cyclone shelters and also for buffer relief stock to meet any emergency.

During the meeting Begum Zia appreciated the role of the IFRCS in organising and coordinating the international assistance following all major disasters in Bangladesh. She made special mention of international support following the floods of 1987 and 1988 and the cyclones of 1985 and 1991.

See Page 12 Col 6

4 get 6-yr RI each for mugging

An anti-terrorism tribunal yesterday sentenced four youngsters to six years rigorous imprisonment each for mugging in the city street, reports UNB.

This is the second conviction under the new law enacted by parliament on November 1.

Tribunal judge Nastruddin Ahmed found guilty of the charge and convicted Straj, Abu Bakar, Darbesh and Mohammad Khan.

Charge against them said on September 21 they got hold of Lance Naik Nurul Islam in front of Science Laboratory at about 5:15 pm and snatched away his wrist watch and tried to take away money from his pocket. Islam grasped one of them and raised hue and cry. Two of the miscreants were caught with the help of passersby but two others succeeded to escape.

Blasphemy charges against Akhtar Hamid Pakistan

KARACHI, Nov 17: Pakistan has withdrawn two blasphemy charges punishable by death against a prominent 80-year-old social worker, his lawyer said today, reports Reuter.

The charges alleged Akhtar Hamid Khan defiled the name of the Prophet Mohammad (SM).

Khan heads a successful social development project called the Organgi Pilot Project in western Karachi that has transformed a poor area of the crowded city.

A court official said the government considered the cases and concluded they were not sustainable.