

Preston : Jamuna Bridge

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Preston said, "In December (after the bids are evaluated), I think, we will have a better ability to assess if the figures come in nearer to the estimated cost of the project."

The WB President did not make any specific commitment about financing the Jamuna Bridge project with an estimated cost of 650-million US dollars.
On resuming the credit line to the energy sector, Preston said that although the government had made some progress in the sector "there were certain undertakings given to donors in Paris (in April) that have not been achieved."

The Bank withheld a credit line of about 300 million US dollars for rehabilitation work in the power sector in 1991 asking the government to reduce its staggering systems loss.

Saying that the Bank was very anxious to resume the loans to the power sector, he added, "We are hopeful... it is vital that rehabilitation of these plants begin immediately."

On the economic reform programme undertaken in the country, Preston said: "We came with the impression that the adjustment programme is proceeding on track" while noting that the reserves, balance of payment and export trade, up 14 per cent in dollar terms, have all shown improvements.

However, he cautioned against the tendency of slowing down the adjustment process. "We came conveying a sense of urgency that the process cannot be slowed down...to continue the programme of privatisation and various other programmes under the 'adjustment process.'"

He added that this was the message conveyed during his meetings with the Prime Minister and the Finance Minister.

Despite Bangladesh's very good performance, he said some neighbouring countries in the region were doing "even better". There is going to be more competition for Bangladesh and we do not want you to fall behind."

Termining the economic competition in the region as a 'competitive party', the WB chief added, "I will keep people from relaxing too much in the long run."

Noting that the Overseas Development Assistance (ODA) amount of major donors was shrinking because of a serious budget crisis, he urged the government to improve the project implementation rate and utilise more of the undisbursed aid money.

He said that a total of 1.8 billion US dollars of International Development Agency (IDA) aid and another five billion US dollars from the donor countries remained undisbursed and in the pipeline.

"This was an issue that troubled the donors," he said, "and it is difficult in the current aid environment to recommend for more aid" when such a large commitment remained unused.

He pointed out that there were nine new countries eligible for IDA aid.

At least three persons were killed and a pedestrian was injured in four separate road accidents in the city Tuesday.

A pedestrian was killed when a speeding minibus ran over him at Gabtoli bus-stand at about 2.15 pm Tuesday. The unidentified victim was about 27.

In another road accident, a 13-year-old boy died when a speeding truck knocked him at Sayedabad bus-stand at about 6 am Monday. The victim, Mohammed Akter Hossain was rushed to DMCH where he succumbed to his injuries the next day.

An unidentified minor boy was killed when a speeding auto-rickshaw ran-over him at Motijheel Tuesday morning. He died on the spot.

A pedestrian was injured seriously when a running train ran over him at Airport rail-crossing at about 6.30 pm Tuesday. The victim identified as Mohammed Ershad, 17, was admitted to the DMCH.

Islamic Varsity teachers go on indefinite strike
JHENIDAH, Nov 17: Teachers of Islamic University went on strike today for an indefinite period in protest against forcible use of a teachers' bus by some students, reports UNB.

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The LGRD and Cooperatives Minister Barrister Abdus Salam Talukder offering Fateha at the Mazar of Moulana Abdul Hamid Khan Bhashani at Santosh, Tangail yesterday. - PID photo

Low over SE bay intensifying into cyclone

A deep depression over the south-east Bay and the adjoining Andaman Sea moved west-north-westward and intensified into a cyclonic storm over the south-east Bay and adjoining area yesterday, Met office bulletin said, reports BSS.

The storm is centred at about 1000 kms south-southwest of Chittagong port at 6 pm Tuesday and is likely to intensify and move in a west-north-west direction.

The maximum sustained wind within 56 kms of the storm centre is about 60 kilometre per-hour (kph) rising to 85 kph in gust and squalls, the bulletin said.

RUCSU elections rescheduled

RAJSHAH, Nov 17: RUCSU and hall union polls and election of student representatives to the Rajshahi University Senate have been rescheduled for some "unavoidable reasons", reports UNB.

University sources said today the elections would now be held on December 2 from 8 am to 2 pm in respective residential halls.

Nomination papers will be received on November 19 and 21 and candidature can be withdrawn on November 23 till 2 pm.

The final list of the candidates will be published on November 23 at 3 pm.

Tributes to Bhashani

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Tangail and placed wreaths there.

Leaders and workers of the BNP visited the mazar and paid their respects.

The leaders included LGRD Minister and BNP Secretary General, Barrister Abdus Salam Talukder, Labour and Manpower Minister, Abdul Mannan Bhuiya, Social Welfare and Women Affairs Minister, Tariqul Islam, Whip of the Jatiya Sangsad, Ashraf Hussain and others.

The BNP also held a public meeting at Santosh to mark the day.

The meeting addressed by the LGRD minister recalled Bhashani's contribution to the peasants of the country.

Bhashani Smriti Sangsad held a folk song session in the evening while Bangladesh Garib Dal held a public meeting at Gulistan Square.

Sunrise Pen-Pal Club also held discussions on Bhashani. Bangladesh Janata Dal held a discussion on the life of the great leader.

BSS adds: The Dhaka metropolitan unit of Bangladesh Jatiyabadi Chhatra Dal also visited the mazar of Moulana Bhashani and placed wreaths there. They also offered fateha.

Wreaths were placed and munajat offered at the mazar on behalf of Bangladesh Jatiyabadi Samajik Sangskritik Sangstha.

Zia Jubo Parishad organised a discussion at its central office where Advocate Mahfuzur Rahman Humayun, convener of the Parishad, presided.

Wreaths were also placed and munajat offered by the Progressive Nationalist Party, Bangladesh Islamic Party, Jatiya Ganotantrik Front, Desh Premik Smriti Sangsad, Bhashani Jatiya Sangsad.

Radio Bangladesh and Bangladesh Television put up special programmes on Moulana Bhashani on the occasion and the national dailies carried special articles on the life and struggle of the great leader.

Meanwhile Law, Justice and Parliamentary Affairs Minister Mirza Golaam Hafiz yesterday called upon the people, irrespective of political affiliation, to come forward unitedly to materialise the dreams of late Moulana Bhashani.

He was addressing a meeting organised in observance of the death anniversary of Bhashani at Santosh.

Tangail district unit of BNP organised the meeting which was also addressed by State Minister for Relief and Rehabilitation Lutfur Rahman Khan as the special guest.

The Law Minister said, it was Moulana Bhashani who had inspired the people for independence of Bangladesh.

He said the people were united under the guidance and leadership of the Moulana to establish their rights. "The political and social ideals of Moulana Bhashani will be implemented to build a long cherished happy nation, the Minister said.

WB: Energy sector credit

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Shah in city yesterday afternoon at the conference room of the Cabinet Division.

"We wish your success," Preston said at the two-hour long discussions.

Stressing the need for creating a more favourable foreign investment climate and raising the confidence of the entrepreneurs the World Bank chief said the multinationals would come to this country if they were satisfied with the economic conditions, congenial regulatory environment and sensitivity of the labour union.

World Bank Vice-President Joshep Wood, who accompanied Preston, raised various sectoral issues and said the Bank did not want Bangladesh's power sector to collapse.

Wood said both for Bangladesh and the Bank the bottom line was the expansion of the power generation and distribution and so reduction of the system loss was necessary for the country from the point of view of its resource constraint.

Welcoming the World Bank chief, Finance Minister M Saifur Rahman said Bangladesh economy was now on the right track and the democratically elected government of Prime Minister Begum Khaleda Zia had been able to bring back fiscal and budgetary discipline, ensure rule of law, accountability and transparency for the overall development.

Rahman asked the World Bank chief to withdraw the suspension of the energy sector and gas infrastructure credits, both suspended during the Ershad regime.

The Finance Minister said that the government was now politically committed to improve the situation.

Citing examples of how the complexities of conditionalities and co-financiers act as a deterrent to the speedy implementation of the development projects, he said the 600 million dollars 4th Health and Population Project had 65 clements and a number of co-financiers.

It is a nightmare to deal with so many co-financiers with so many elements, Rahman said.

The Finance Minister said that the present government had been attaching high priorities to the policies and institutional development as advo-

cated by the World Bank chief for economic development.

Energy and Mineral Resources Minister Dr Khondker Mosharraf Hossain asked the World Bank chief to consider the 450 million dollars loan for gas infrastructure development project instead of the 180 million dollars for only the infrastructure component.

Listing the measures undertaken by the government in the energy and gas sector, the Energy Minister said, we are now getting positive responses and seven foreign investment groups had shown interest to invest in the oil exploration in Bangladesh.

He said that the whole energy sector was the fastest moving sector as per as the project implementation is concerned and the implementation of the Annual Development Programme in this sector was far above the target (112 per cent).

He also pointed to the reduction of the system loss in electricity to 38 per cent from 40 per cent, he said.

Agriculture and Irrigation Minister Majid-ul-Huq said the agriculture sector was a key area for the development of the country as well as for the alleviation of poverty.

"We have reached a breakthrough in rice production this year despite last year's catastrophic cyclone and flood," he said.

He asked the World Bank chief to assist Bangladesh to overcome the depressed rice price problem for the sake of the interest of the poor farmers.

The Agriculture Minister suggested for providing output incentives to the farmers instead of the input subsidy.

Huq asked the Bank chief to waive the conditionality of appointing expatriate engineer in-charge in every project and said the local experienced engineers some of whom had expertise of US standard, should not be deprived of being the engineer in-charge of the foreign aided projects.

Citing the example of the Teesta barrage, constructed completely by the local engineers of US standard, he said the experts of the country could do world standard construction works.

Jute Minister Hannan Shah said there was an urgent need for balancing, modernisation, replacement and expansion (BMRE) of the jute mills of the country and he sought the

Eliadah produced before court

Eliadah McCord, 19-year-old American national, who was arrested from Zia International Airport with 3 kilograms of heroin was yesterday produced before a tribunal court along with 2 other co-accused, reports UNB.

She is facing trial for smuggling heroin from Bangladesh. The court fixed November 24 for hearing the charge.

SKOP

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The SKOP, in the backdrop of government's failure to implement the MOU within the agreed time, called a 24-hour countrywide work stoppage in May this year and later withdrew the call following signing of a fresh MOU that assured the SKOP leaders of a solution to the five-point charter.

An influential SKOP leader told this correspondent last evening that they had announced the 48-hour strike only after 'government's repeated failure in keeping its own commitment to the workers.'

According to sources, the government, with a view to working out solutions to the problems, meanwhile, proposed the SKOP leaders for a meeting with officials of the concerned ministries on 16 of the current month but later unilaterally cancelled the programme for the reasons not disclosed.

PM: IFRCS

From Page 1 Col 8
She also had words of praise for the IFRCS for the cooperation and assistance to Bangladesh during the War Of Independence of Bangladesh and after independence.

Begum Zia thankfully recalled the assistance of the Federation for supporting the assistance programme for the Rohingya refugees now in Bangladesh. She expressed the hope that the Federation would continue to support Bangladesh Red Crescent Society to continue its relief operation for the Rohingya refugees.

Lander said, the problems of Bangladesh would continue to get priority consideration of his organisation. Praising the performance of Bangladesh Red Crescent Society Lander said it would continue to get the support of IFRCS.

Darrell Donald Jones, Vice-President, IFRCS, Jerry Talbot, Head, Asia and Pacific Department, IFRCS, Morris Eiris Villegas, IFRCS and Syed Shahidul Huq Jamal MP, Chairman, Bangladesh Red Crescent Society were present on the occasion.

Meanwhile, UNB reports: The IFRCS and the Bangladesh Red Crescent Society yesterday discussed bilateral cooperation, particularly in disaster preparedness and Rohingya refugee relief operation.

The official-level talks between the two organisations was held at the BDRCS headquarters.

IFRC President Dr Mario Enrique Villarreal Lander and BDRCS Chairman Syed Shahidul Haque Jamal, MP, led their respective sides. Head of delegation of IFRCS in Bangladesh Daniel Prewitt also attended the meeting.

Khaleda, Preston

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The World Bank management to be 'sensitive to the socio-economic realities' of the country.

Begum Zia said if some conditions were imposed without caring for the reality of the situation, it may cause destabilisation and social frictions with a new democratic government having popular support.

Referring to efficiency of the administration Begum Zia said there has been favourable change following restoration of an accountable democratic government. She, however, said it would take more time to reach the expected level.

During the meeting Preston, advocating for greater role of private sector and foreign investment, emphasised upon the 'desirability of relating wages to productivity.' He said such measures would create additional jobs.

He praised the government measures in health, primary and non-formal education sectors. He narrated her experience of the visit to the site of Jamuna bridge where he saw for himself the enthusiasm of the local people. He also narrated his experience of visits to satellite schools and health clinics in outlying areas.

During the meeting the Prime Minister was assisted by Finance Minister M Saifur Rahman, External Resources Division Secretary Enam Ahmed Chowdhury, Alternate Executive Director to World Bank M A Sayeed and Dr Kamal Siddiqui, Secretary to the Prime Minister, while the World Bank President was assisted by World Bank Vice President Joseph Wood, Bangladesh Mission Chief Christopher R Willoughby and Mrs Gisa Modjer, special assistant to the President.

The employees' strike has disrupted the administrative activities of the university campus, sources said.

The Midnight File

Nigeria's return to civilian rule to be delayed

LAGOS, Nov 17: The military regime of President Ibrahim Babangida announced today that Nigeria's return to civilian rule would be delayed until August 1993. Vice-President Augustus Abkhoro told the diplomatic corps at a briefing here that presidential election originally scheduled for December 5 would not be held until June 12 and the handover of power to an elected government would take place August 27 and not January 2, reports AFP.

Yeltsin keeps pressure on critics

MOSCOW, Nov 17: President Boris Yeltsin hinted Tuesday he may retaliate against his legislative foes if they try to slow his reforms, but denied he would declare presidential rule to block a parliament session. However, Yeltsin appeared to be doing everything else he could to hinder his opponents. City police enforced his ban on the hard-line National Salvation Front by denying it access to a meeting hall, forcing the group to hold a news conference on the snow-covered street. Yeltsin banned the group last month after some members called for his overthrow. Its members in the pro-Communist parliament majority want to roll back reforms, remove leading ministers and even call a no-confidence in Yeltsin vote during the Dec 1 session of the Congress of People's Deputies, reports AP.

Pak govt paralysed

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and Islamabad and assembled 500 die-hard terrorists to sabotage the capital and reduce it to chaos, he alleged. Colleges and universities have been closed, police have placed road blocks on Pakistan's Grand Trunk Road between Lahore and Islamabad, buses have been hauled off roads.

Commerce Minister Maleek Naem invited reporters to lunch but chose to answer questions on politics rather than trade.

The Prime Minister has called a string of cabinet meetings since Bhutto announced her march last Tuesday.

There has also been a series of meetings of the troika — the three most powerful men in the land — Sharif, President Ghulam Ishaq Khan and army chief of staff Asif Nawaz.

AFP from Rawalpindi adds: The government sent armed police to occupy a planned opposition rally site in Rawalpindi Tuesday after banning Wednesday's protest march on Islamabad.

As fears grew of violent confrontation scores of police surrounded the Liaquat Garden site and sealed it off from the public, witnesses said. All public gatherings in Rawalpindi were banned by the Punjab provincial government Monday.

"We have strict instructions not to allow anyone to enter the area," said a police officer supervising the operation, part of stringent security measures enforced by Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif's government.

Opposition leader Benazir Bhutto's four-party People's Democratic Alliance (PDA) said police had continued rounding up opposition supporters across the country. Bhutto said in Islamabad on Monday that 6,000 had already been detained.

Sharif described the plan-

VC office

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dents started gathering in front of the VC's office from about 9 am yesterday and requested the Acting VC Professor Enajuddin Ahmed for university buses to go to Mymensingh.

At least 1500 students later gathered near the VC's office and strongly demanded that buses be provided.

At the time the VC told the students that there was no rule to use university buses outside Dhaka and asked them to use private buses, sources said adding that the VC also hired three private buses to solve the problem and said that more buses could be hired if needed.

But the angry students did not accept his offer and insisted on using university buses, witnesses said.

Sources said that at this stage some students pelted stones at the windows, damaged doors and a showcase of the Vice Chancellor's office.

Later at about 11 am the angry students started for the Mymensingh stadium aboard 12 university buses and a rented bus, witnesses said.

Meanwhile the university Syndicate at an emergency meeting yesterday condemned the damaging of the VC office and the violation of university rules by the students.

The Syndicate warned that stern action would be taken against those who tried to violate the rules.

The Syndicate also decided to inform all the students, teachers, officers and employees of the university that university buses would not be allowed to be taken outside Dhaka.

The meeting was presided over by the Acting VC Professor Enajuddin Ahmed yesterday afternoon.

Meanwhile, the Pakistan government said yesterday it had arrested 1,285 'activists and terrorists' who supported a banned protest march, but the country's opposition leader said she would defy the ban.

He told reporters the government had never obstructed 'legitimate' political activity during its two years in power. "But I think they are coming here with different motives," he said.

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Rehan

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Sardar Babu, Sardar Mujibur, Jatiya Sramik Party leaders Dewar Hossain and Abdur Rab.

They demanded release of Rehan and warned that the government would be responsible for the consequence of the arrest.

Meanwhile, the Jatiyabadi Sramik Dal brought out a procession halting the arrest.

The mills authority in the evening told The Daily Star that the three-hour suspension of work by the labourers today cost the mills Tk 6 lakh.

The CBA Secretary Ismail Hossain was arrested on similar charges about six months ago.

"With the arrest of the present CBA president the bargaining activities in the mills practically came to a halt," said an official of the mills on condition of anonymity.

He said, "the mills will find it hard to control the large number of the workers now as the CBA is inactive."

Rohingya leader

From Page 1 Col 7
official meeting at the local Circuit House after visiting a number of Rohingya refugee camps at Teknaf and Ukhta the minister said a total of 204 refugees had gone home voluntarily in three batches to the Arakan under the agreement signed between the Bangladesh and Myanmar governments.

The Home Minister said so long the refugees would stay in the country, this national problem would put adverse impacts on socio-economic condition in the region.

The Home Minister visited Damdamia, Dechuapalong-2 and Raingakhall transit camps. Matin found about 100 refugees waiting at the Raingakhall transit camp for voluntary repatriation.

Push in

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sion to protest the killing, BSF members resorted to lathi-charge to disperse the protesters.

Meanwhile, the Indians set up seven new camps across the border to accommodate Muslims rounded up for push in under a so-called Operation Push Back, witnesses said. Some 2,000 more have been concentrated into the camps for push-in, they said.

UNB correspondent, talking to some of the Indians who were pushed into Bangladesh but later pushed back by BDR, learnt that some of them even do not know Bengali, but speak in Hindi.

Before pushing them in to Bangladesh, the BSF men ordered them to say that they had migrated to India from Bangladesh just six months or a year back and that if they went back to India, they would be subjected to oppression in the camps.

Karim Bakht, 24, a salesman of a shop in Ajmeer, said his father had migrated to India about 30 years ago, they are Indian citizens and also exercised their right to vote.

Bangladesh has strongly protested the Indian action, terming it illegal, inhuman and violation of diplomatic norms and international laws.