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VOL. III NO. 27 REGD. NO. DA 781 | MAGH 28, 1399 BS, | DHAKA WEDNESDAY FEBRUARY 10, 1993 | SHABAN 17, 1413 HIJRI | 12 PAGES : PRICE TAKA 4.00

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NEWS BRIEFS

Khaleda, Hasina attend BDR dinner

Prime Minister Begum Khaleda Zia attended a dinner at BDR headquarters at Peelkhana here last night. The dinner, arranged in connection with BDR Reunion '93, was attended, among others, by Speaker Shaikh Razzaque Ali, ministers, Leader of the Opposition Sheikh Hasina, members of parliament, Chiefs of Army and Air Force, diplomats and high civil and military officials, reports BSS.

JU Hons exams from Feb 24

SAVAR, Feb 9: The Honours examinations of different departments of Jahangirnagar University, postponed earlier, will now start from February 24. This was decided in a meeting of the deans, provosts, chairmen of the university which was chaired by the Vice Chancellor Prof Kazi Saleh Ahmed. The meeting, however, decided that any department in consultation with the concerned students might hold the examinations in earlier dates, reports BSS.

DU exams postponed

Certificate Course Examination in Library and Information Science scheduled to be held from today (Wednesday) has been postponed due to unavoidable circumstances, reports UNB.

Six held with arms in Comilla

From Our Correspondent

COMILLA, Feb 9: Kotwali police arrested six persons with one pipe gun, 6 cocktails and 4 kirich (sharp weapons) last night from Chanpur village near Comilla town. The arrested persons are: Md Ali, Md Jatul, Md Selim, Hachu Mia, Md Halim and Md Azad.

A case has been filed with Kotwali police.

Rajshahi Govt College closed sine die

RU VC assaulted

From RU Correspondent

RAJSHAHI, FEB 9: Vice-Chancellor of Rajshahi University Anisur Rahman was manhandled Tuesday by a group of students at the Rajshahi Medical College Hospital, police and witnesses said.

The agitated students pulled at his necktie, pushed him to the ground and rebuked him accusing him of siding with the Jamaat-Shibir circle in the University where the bloodiest clash Saturday left five students dead and hundreds of others injured.

The students, mostly attendants and friends of the injured under treatment at the RMCH, attacked him in front of medical emergency room immediately after he came there at about 11 am to enquire about the injured students, witnesses said.

Police rescued and brought him to the ward but the agitated students continued demonstrating against his visit.

During his visit one injured student at Ward no 11 attacked the Vice-Chancellor and tried to injure him with a saline needle. The student was caught and taken back by the doctors on duty, witnesses said.

Later, University authorities in a press release condemned the attack on the Vice-Chancellor. It held a group of unruly students responsible for the incident.

Meanwhile, tension was prevailing in the city as several hundred activists of the All-Party Students Unity (APSU), a conglomerate of 13 student organisations, brought out a procession ignoring a ban.

Central student leaders Ruhul Kuddus Babu, Ragin Ahsan Munna, Mosrefa Misu, Aslam Khan, Kader Sarker participated in the procession.

Rajshahi Govt College was closed sine die today apprehending violence. It was earlier closed for two days

Additional police forces and BDR jawans were deployed around the city to stall any untoward incident. Since Saturday's incident no Shibir activities have been noticed in the town, witnesses said.

Black flag was hoisted at the local BNP office and the National Flag was also kept half mast mourning Saturday's incident.

The University authorities Tuesday distributed applications for admissions to the First Year and Masters (previous) but postponed the admission tests due to begin February 17.

The local BNP in a press release said that the Jamaat-

See Page 12 Col 4

Ganatantrik Chhatra Oikya brought out a mourning procession in city yesterday protesting killing of students by Shibir activists in Rajshahi University Saturday. — Star photo

AL calls 8-hr countrywide hartal today

By Staff Correspondent

Awami League (AL) has called an eight-hour country wide hartal today in protest against alleged "media coup" by the government to "manipulate" the February 3 Mirpur by-election results.

The 6 am to 2 pm hartal has been called also to register protest against harassment of AL activists on the election day.

BNP candidate Syed Mohammad Mohsin was declared elected.

The city AL yesterday (Tuesday) held a rally at the Bangabandhu Avenue to muster support for today's hartal.

Presided over by Mohammad Hanif, AL General Secretary Zillur Rahman urged the people to observe the hartal peacefully.

He said, "we shall resist with strong hands any attempt by the government to foil the hartal".

See Page 12 Col 6

PM tells Khulna public meet

Frequent hartals disrupt process of development

KHULNA, Feb 9: Prime Minister Begum Khaleda Zia today made a clarion call for all to maintain peace and order in all spheres of society for the sake of welfare of the country and the people, reports UNB.

"Frequent hartals disrupt the development process," she told a mammoth public meeting at the Circuit House maidan this afternoon, adding "those who give such hartal calls do not want development and progress of the country."

The Prime Minister said "there are now two trends of politics in the country — one is the politics of welfare and production based on Bangladeshi nationalism and another the politics of destruction, violence and arson."

She said the former one, pursued by her party, BNP, is for ensuring welfare of all classes of the people while the latter impedes development and adds to the miseries of the people.

Presided over by city BNP President M Nurul Islam, the meeting was also addressed, among others, by Speaker Shaikh Razzaque Ali, Foreign Minister ASM Mostafizur Rahman, Post and Telecommunications Minister Keramat Ali, Minister for Social Welfare and Women's Affairs Tariqul Islam, Syeda Nargis Ali, MP,

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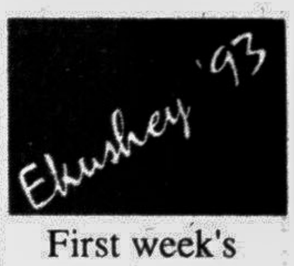

First week's 'best-seller'

Star Report

"Bhalobasar Sukh Dukkha", a novel by Imdadul Huq Milon, became the best-seller among all the books sold in the first week of the Amar Ekushey Granthamela being held at the Bangla Academy premises since February 1.

"Nari" of Humayun Azad became the best-seller among the books of articles and other types. The Bangla Academy authorities, however, did not disclose the number of the books sold.

Among the novels and poetry books "Behula Eka Bhasiechhilo Bhela" and "Nimontran" of Taslima Nasrin, "Michhile Ekjan" of Shahrier

See Page 12 Col 7

Islamic Varsity closed for 12 days

KUSHTIA, Feb 9: The Islamic University campus was closed today for 12 days up to February 20 to avert a possible flareup in the aftermath of bloodshed at Rajshahi Varsity, reports UNB.

Residents were asked to vacate their dormitories by 5 pm tomorrow (Wednesday).

Campus sources said authorities were prompted into such decision on information that activists of Chhatra Oikya, staying out of the campus for long in the wake of threat posed by Islamic Chhatra Shibir, would march in to protest the bloody violence at Rajshahi University that took at least 5 lives and maimed hundreds.

See Page 12 Col 3

WB to resume aid to power sector

WASHINGTON, DC, Feb 9: World Bank has decided to resume assistance in the power sector of Bangladesh viewing its achievement in reducing the system loss in the sector, reports BSS.

World Bank President Lewis Preston informed this to the visiting Finance Minister M Saifur Rahman yesterday while they met in a discussion here.

During the meeting the Finance Minister briefed the WB chief about progress in different fields of the national economy since the Preston's visit to Bangladesh last October.

Saifur said the government's policy efforts has contributed to an upsurge in exports side by side with an indication of upturn in private sector investment.

He said financial sector reforms coupled with prudent monetary policy have helped to bring back financial discipline as well as the lowest ever recorded inflation rate. The further liberalisation policy framework for the private sector will contribute to significant increase in growth rate and employment generation, he said.

Referring to various difficulties in carrying out the reform programme the minister sought the support of the

See Page 12 Col 8

Gas cylinder blast

Two killed, 75 hurt in Feni

FENI, Feb 9: Two people were killed and some 75 injured in explosion of gas cylinders on a truck at Lemua on the Feni bypass tonight, reports UNB.

Police and local people said the explosion occurred while a Dhaka-bound truck from Chittagong loaded with chemical gas was passing village Lemua, seven kilometres from the district town.

The cause of the explosion was yet to be ascertained.

Passengers of a number of buses, trucks and tempos behind the truck were affected by the toxic gas, identified as chemical gas by the Civil Surgeon of Feni.

See Page 12 Col 5

Police attack on Nasim, RU incident

House body decides on discussion today

By Staff Correspondent

The Business Advisory Committee of Parliament will meet today to decide on the format to discuss, as demanded by the Opposition, the alleged police assault on the Opposition Chief Whip and the "grave" situation at the Rajshahi University.

Speaker Shaikh Razzak Ali proposed the Advisory Committee meeting after Opposition members insisted on an adjournment of the House proceedings yesterday to discuss the police assault on Mohammad Nasim on Saturday and the RU incident, in which at least five students were killed, on the same day. The committee is scheduled to meet at 3 pm today.

Leader of the Opposition Sheikh Hasina took the floor and said, "We can accept your proposal as you are the custodian of the House under parliamentary norms. But you have to assure us about the positive outcome of the Business Advisory Committee meeting."

Referring to the post by-election incident in Mirpur, Hasina alleged that the ruling party unleashed a reign of terror in the area and harassed AL workers.

She reiterated her previous allegation that a media coup snatched away her party's victory in the Mirpur by-election.

Hasina demanded clarification from the leader of the House Prime Minister Begum Khaleda Zia, who was absent at that time, about what she (PM) meant by "defeated force" claiming that AL secured 38 per cent votes in February '91 elections against 30 per cent by BNP.

She said that BNP had joined hands with the Jamaat and Begum Zia assumed power after several meetings with its leader Golam Azam.

"How dare police raise hands on a member of the parliament? From where did they get the order?," Hasina questioned.

She said that Parliament should adopt a condolence motion on the deaths of Rajshahi University students and a resolution condemning the police assault on the Opposition Chief Whip. She also demanded punishment to those involved with the incident.

Hasina said, "We honoured the request of the Speaker before and met with the ruling party but all those attempts turned into failures as none of the agreements were implemented."

She also requested the Chair to assure that this opportunity would not be used "merely as a stalling tactics" by the ruling party and that there should be a "positive outcome".

Immediately after the session resumed after Magreb prayers at 7 pm with Speaker Shaikh Razzak Ali in the chair, the deputy leader of the Opposition Abdus Samad Azad referring to their adjournment notices sought Speaker's permission to initiate the discussion on the issues.

Displaying a photograph in which Nasim was confronting a police officer after the assault, he said: "How can the Opposition Chief Whip or an MP be assaulted by police?"

He said that the Awami League office was attacked and a number of leaders including Amir Hossain Amu, Mozaffar Hossain Paltu and Mofazzel Hossain Chowdhury Maya were injured. "From where did the order for attacking AL office came?" he wanted to know.

Samad Azad also said that the gravest incident happened in the Rajshahi University where the Shibir activists occupied the campus and killed

See Page 12 Col 1

Industrial Relations (Amend) Bill introduced

A bill incorporating certain measures was introduced in parliament last night seeking to remove labour unrest in the transport sector and ease the functioning of the labour court in disposal of cases, reports UNB.

Titled Industrial Relations (Amendment) Bill 1993, the bill also aims at keeping the Security Printing Corporation (Bangladesh) at Gazipur outside the Industrial Relations Ordinance 1969.

Labour and Manpower Minister Abdul Mannan Bhuiyan introduced the bill for consideration by the House.

Ebadur Rahman Chowdhury of Jatiya Party opposed the landing of the bill, saying it would affect independent trade union activities as well as "politicise" the labour court.

The Minister rejected Chowdhury's plea and said the amendments aimed at removing unrest from the transport sector and expediting disposal of the cases in the Labour Court. The bill was welcomed by a voice vote.

According to amendments concerning the Labour Court, the Labour Court will consist of a Chairman appointed by the

See Page 12 Col 8

IFC may finance six industrial projects

By Staff Correspondent

The Executive Vice-President of International Finance Corporation (IFC), Sir William Ryrie Tuesday said the corporation was considering financing six industrial projects in the country.

He said IFC is also interested to promote cellular telephone system and develop the country's power sector. High value added sectors like textile and leather are also in IFC's financing consideration, he added.

Sir William was addressing a press conference at the World Bank Resident Mission Office in Dhaka Tuesday.

He also said that the IFC was considering setting up a self-managed company which would provide technical and advisory services to small and medium business in Bangladesh.

"This initiative would depend on the willingness of the business community here to subscribe to the capital of the company," he said.

Sir William also said that IFC was interested to invest in banks and other financial companies to create a strong financial system for the private sector.

He said Bangladesh has potential for developing its private sector provided that the existing bureaucratic obstacles be removed.

"Bureaucracy is blocking private investment," Sir William said adding that the country had a low level of private investment in relation to GDP which was only six per cent.

"The investment climate in Bangladesh is changing and we have come to renew our effort," Sir William said but added that the government had still "quite a long way to go to implement its polices".

IFC is a member of the World Bank group and the largest source of financing for private sector projects in developing countries. It has been active in Bangladesh since 1969 and has invested about 20 million US dollar in six companies in the last 20 years.

"Our activities in Bangladesh over the past years are disappointing and we found discouraging business climate," the IFC Executive Vice President said, adding "we do not find private sector prepared to take risk with us."

See Page 12 Col 7

Dhaka, UNHCR work out draft of MOU on Rohingyas

By Farid Hossain

Bangladesh and the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) have edged closer to signing an agreement on the welfare of Rohingya refugees and their voluntary repatriation, a UN official said on Tuesday.

The first draft of the proposed Memorandum of Understanding was worked out during talks in Dhaka on Sunday and Tuesday between the government and the UNHCR, said Werner Blatter, director at the UNHCR's Asia Bureau.

He said the second and final draft would be prepared soon.

The MOU, which will formally be signed during UNHCR chief Mrs Sadako Ogata's planned visit to Dhaka, will cover overall collaboration on the assistance and voluntary repatriation of an estimated 250,000 refugees.

"We have made progress, I'm confident that the Memorandum of Understanding will be signed soon," Blatter told The Daily Star as he left his hotel to catch a plane for Geneva.

During his four-day visit Blatter held talks with Bangladesh officials who were led by Foreign Secretary Reaz Rahman. Blatter was aided by UNHCR Dhaka mission chief Durioush Bayandor.

A Foreign Ministry official

See Page 12 Col 2

Sultans sit today as Malaysians mount pressure to cut royal rights

From S M'Ali in Malaysia

KUALA LUMPUR, Feb 9: With pressure mounting on the country's nine traditional Sultans to accept the constitutional amendments which seek to remove their legal immunity, the two-day Conference of Rulers, starting here tomorrow, may prove crucial for this affluent tradition-bound nation.

However, since no agenda for the meeting is known, some observers believe that rulers may postpone the discussion on the controversial matter until Feb 20 when the Constitution (Amendment) Bill is due to become law, with or without the assent of the Malaysian King.

Prime Minister Dr Mahathir Mohammad has publicly taken the position that due to constitutional amendments made in 1985, which also curbed some powers of the Sultans, the bill does not require the King's assent to become law after 30 days of its passage through the country's parliament. The bill

Star Special

that removes the legal immunity of Rulers in their personal capacity was approved by the parliament by two thirds majority on January 20, thus setting the stage for this "Battle Royal" in Malaysia.

If the discussion on the bill is put off tomorrow, moderate elements would continue to work for a face-saving compromise for the Sultans without the government of Mahathir making a retreat. In such a move, the country's present King, Azlan Shah, an eminent jurist and an ardent advocate of the rule of law may play a pivotal role, aided by a couple of his fellow Sultans.

However, putting the rulers on the defensive, government leaders have been making hard-hitting speeches against the Sultans, with the media publishing examples of their lavish life styles, defiance of the law of the land and lack of concern for the welfare of the common people.

In one such speech, Deputy Prime Minister Ghafar Baba said on Sunday that part of the problem lies in the "Rulers' conceited belief that they owned their respective states." Then, he added, "the government is seeking to correct

See Page 12 Col 1

Probe body formed

Large number of accused in corruption cases freed

The government has constituted a committee with the Additional Secretary of Cabinet Division as the chairman to investigate the reasons behind the release of a large number of accused persons under the anti-corruption cases, reports BSS.

The seven-member committee will also formulate realistic recommendations on its remedy and successful implementation of the anti-corruption law, according to a gazette notification published on January 21 in Dhaka.

Other members of the

See Page 12 Col 3

Ship breakers violating rules

VHF radios may fall into 'wrong' hands

Star Report

Ship breakers in Chittagong are not obtaining the mandatory clearances, that pose a "danger" of sensitive very high frequency (VHF) radio equipment, aboard the ships, falling into the "wrong" hands, official sources cautioned.

Abandoned foreign ships, procured by Bangladeshi businessmen, are broken for metal scrap at the ship breaking yard at Fouzdarhat.

In a written communication late last year, the concerned authorities informed the Shipping Ministry about the alleged violation of the regulations and requested that appropriate measures be taken.

It noted that as per the existing regulations, the radio and other navigational equipment aboard the ships were supposed to be either "destroyed" by the Bangladesh Navy or "collected/preserved" for its own use, before the ships were dismantled.

"Presently, it is being seen that the ship owners start breaking the ships without obtaining the clearance certificate and without taking adequate measures," the note added.

It warned that this could lead to the equipment's falling into undesirable hands. "This has given rise to the danger of various important equipment, particularly VHF radio equipment, going to some undesir-

See Page 12 Col 8

Another 568 Rohingyas go home

From Our Correspondent

COX'S BAZAR, Feb 9: Another 568 Rohingya refugees of 119 families returned home today under UNHCR supervision.

The refugees were repatriated from the Rangikhali, Nayapara and Shailer Deva transit camps. With today's repatriation, the total number of repatriated Rohingyas stands at 20,877 out of 2.65 lakh sheltered in Cox's Bazar district.

A relief and repatriation officer along with UNHCR representatives was present on the bank of the river Naaf during the repatriation.