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DHAKA WEDNESDAY FEBRUARY 17, 1993

SHABAN 24, 1413 HIJRI

Inside Today

Article

Clinton's International Team Ramps up

Kevin J Kelley writes from Washington Page 4

International

Talks with Israel not possible until deportee crisis solved



A Shia woman with her children recounts Sunday how her husband was killed by Mujahideen in the Afshar district in western Kabul Page 5

Science and Technology

Area Navigation Technique for Air Traffic Services

Plant Breeding for Better Crops

Business

Doha keen to help uplift activities of Dhaka

OPEC zeroing in on output deal

Metropolitan

Spirit of Ekushey Lives On



An Assail at 'Two Cheers for Democracy' Page 3

NEWS BRIEFS

PM commissions ferry today

MANIKGANJ, Feb 16: 'Bhasha Shaheed Barkat', a locally made roll-on-roll-off ferry, will be pressed into service at Aricha terminal tomorrow (Wednesday). Prime Minister Begum Khaleda Zia will inaugurate commissioning of the ferry at 3 pm. State Minister for Shipping Harunur-Rashid will be present as special guest at the function, reports UNB.

Mostafiz in Riyadh

RIYADH, Feb 16: Foreign Minister ASM Mostafizur Rahman arrived here this morning from Jeddah on an official visit to the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. The Bangladesh Foreign Minister will hold official talks with his Saudi counterpart today, reports BSS.

One jailed under Anti-terrorism Act

A special tribunal on Monday sentenced a man to nine years imprisonment and pay a fine of Tk 5,000 or in default another six months' prison term, under the Anti-terrorism Act. The accused, identified as Mohammad Selim of Kathkhal Thana in Barguna district, was given the sentence for his involvement in snatching money and a sackful of 'sponge and money from a man at Malibag railway gate on September 24 last year, reports UNB.

Peace efforts uncertain Shantibahini demands 'Jummaland'

Star Report

The peace efforts initiated late last year by the government, to end the 18-year-old insurgency in the Chittagong Hill Tracts (CHT), has entered into an uncertain phase as the Parbatya Chittagong Jana Sanghati Samity (PCJSS) has toughened its stand and is now demanding full autonomy. According to a highly placed source, the PCJSS, the political wing of the outlawed Shantibahini, earlier this year placed a detailed 5-point charter of demands with the government seeking complete 'administrative and political' autonomy through the creation of 'Jummaland'. Under the circumstance, the source added, uncertainty looms large over holding the third round of talks between the 9-member government committee headed by Communications Minister Oli Ahmed and the PCJSS leaders, which was scheduled to be held during the first week of this month.

The government committee, formed in July last year and which includes eight other Members of Parliament, has already held two rounds of meetings with the rebel leaders last year. During the second round of talks, which was held in Khagrachhari on December 26, the PCJSS leaders placed a three-point demand seeking return of their land and an end to all new settlements in CHT. The government agreed to the demands in principle, the source noted, and asked the PCJSS leaders to present the demands in writing. This prompted the PCJSS leaders to submit the 5-point demand in a 7-page type-written document written in Bangla. The 5-point charter of demands of the Shantibahini is nothing short of seeking independence in the form of creating 'Jummaland,' the source

pointed out, adding 'this is absurd, no government can accept this.' According to a copy of the document, obtained by The Daily Star, the first of the five demands says: 'The Government of Bangladesh has to give Chittagong Hill Tracts the status of a specially administered area by amending the country's Constitution, if necessary. It also includes granting of autonomy under a 'Regional Council' formed by elected representatives, which in turn will form an 'Executive Council'. The Executive Council shall have the power to frame rules, regulations, by-laws etc. regarding the subjects transferred to it and shall have power to enforce them,' the document adds. The first point of the demand also seeks safeguards against amending the Constitution which in any way may affect the people of CHT

and against framing of any laws or even declaring emergency without the 'advice and consent' of the Regional Council and the MPs elected from CHT. It also calls for the creation of a police force 'with permanent residents of the area' and to frame such laws so that a 'non-resident' of CHT 'cannot be appointed to the post of officers and staff of all government and semi-government offices and autonomous bodies' in the region. The second point demands that CHT be replaced by the term 'Jummaland' to turn the region into an 'administrative and political unit, taking together and keeping intact Rangamati, Khagrachhari and Bandarban districts.' This demand also seeks the formation of a separate ministry for the region, to establish a special judicial system for the Juma people and to arrange the reservation of

Mirpur by-election Mohsin retains position

By Staff Correspondent

BNP candidate Syed Mohammad Mohsin retained his previous position on being elected in the Mirpur by-election as the Returning Officer pronounced the official results yesterday morning. The Election Commission recounted all ballots and announced the fresh results. The second official results, announced by the Returning Officer Badiur Rahman 13 days after balloting in the parliament's vacant seat of Dhaka-11 (Mirpur), showed that the BNP nominee had won the election by a wider margin than before. According to yesterday's official results Mohsin defeated his main contender Kamal Ahmed Majumder of the Awami League by 2625 votes. The difference in votes polled by the two leading candidates was 2592, said the first official results, declared by the Returning Officer the day after the by-poll February 3. The 17-hour non-stop recounting of ballots, that ended at 4.30 am yesterday, took place after the EC cancelled previous results that had caused

widespread controversy. As the fresh counting took place in an peaceful atmosphere at the EC Secretariat heavily guarded by armed police and para-military BDR forces, the Returning Officer started declaring results of 117 centres singularly at 5.15 am and concluded doing so at 7.12 am the same day. After a break of three hours, the RO declared Mohsin elected officially at a function at the EC conference room at 10.45 am. He also revealed the number of votes bagged by 17
 See Page 12 Col 4
Recounting was necessary: CEC
 By Staff Correspondent
 Chief Election Commissioner Justice Mohammad Abdur Rouf has expressed satisfaction over recounting of the Mirpur by-election ballots saying that it was done as some relevant laws had not been properly implemented in this regard.
 See Page 12 Col 7

Police fire on jute, textile workers

Three killed in Khulna, says action body

By Staff Correspondent



Kamalapur Railway Station (top) and coaches of Chittagong route at Fakirerpool Road (bottom) in city yesterday during 48-hour rail-road barricade programme of the jute and textile employees. — Star photo

The second day of the two-day road and rail barricade programme by the jute and textile workers was observed partially Tuesday with reports of violence from Khulna. Road and rail communications remained disrupted with the Port City of Chittagong as several thousand workers barricaded the roads and rail-tracks near Barabkundu, our Staff Correspondent from Chittagong reports. Parliament will discuss the 'road and rail barricade' issue today (Wednesday). Speaker Shaikh Razzak Ali set the time for discussion under Rule 68 following a number of adjournment motions moved by opposition members to discuss the barricade situation and its aftermath. The Jute and Textile Workers Action Committee that called the barricade for their respective eight and six point demands, claimed that three workers were killed when police and BDR men open fire at the barricading workers near the Natunrastra Square Tuesday morning. The Khulna unit of action committee has called a full-day hartal in Khulna today (Wednesday). Khulna's Khalishpur thana sources when contacted over telephone rejected the claim of the Action Committee saying 'none was killed but several dozen including five police men were injured.' The officer on duty said that 56 people were arrested from the scene near the rail gate and BIDC road and charged under anti-terrorism laws.
 See Page 12 Col 8

A party trying to push country backward: PM

KALIAKOIR (Gazipur), Feb 16: Prime Minister Begum Khaleda Zia today blamed 'a certain political party' for trying to push the country backward by calling frequent hartals, reports UNB. 'Today there is a people's representative parliament in the country where issues can be raised', she told a huge public meeting at Golam Nabi Pilot High School ground here this afternoon. In the past, there was need for hartals to oust autocracy, Begum Zia said, adding that the country today has an elected government. She said today people would not get any benefit from hartals. She said responsibility of the people has not ended with restoration of democracy. 'We have to fulfil the five basic needs of the people... Everybody has equal responsibility in building the nation.' The government alone cannot solve all the problems faced by the country, the Prime Minister observed stressing the need for united efforts in resolving national issues. 'We have to transform the country's 22 crore hands into working hands and increase production in all sectors to make the country self-reliant', she asserted. The agriculture sector cannot solve all the problems of the country, she said adding that industrialisation 'is essential to speed up the pace of national development. She assured all sorts of government assistance including loans and listed the incentives in the new industrial and privatization policies of the present government. The Prime Minister said the present world market is a place of competition and we have to compete there to go forward. She stressed the need for increasing exports. 'The nation has courage, will and the ability to advance', she said pointing at the wide market prospect for the traditional muslin and jamdani fabrics and jute goods. Begum Zia announced amidst applause the nationalisation of Kaliakoir College and asked the students and all others concerned to maintain peace and discipline at the institution. Presided over by thana BNP president Abdul Kader, the meeting was also addressed by State Minister for Religious Affairs Prof Abdul Mannan, Hamida Khanum MP, BNP central leader Tanvir Ahmed Siddiqui and local leaders including Alhaj Abdus Salam.

BBC phone-in programme of PM Feb 21

Prime Minister Begum Khaleda Zia will participate in a live international phone-in programme to be broadcast on BBC World Service on February 21, reports UNB. The phone-in with the Bangladesh Prime Minister will be broadcast on the BBC English network and Bengali service at 8 pm Bangladesh time, said a press release of BBC International yesterday (Tuesday). Listeners and viewers to the 'It's Your World' phone-ins have been requested to telephone London (004471) 379 7444 with short and succinct questions in English or (004471) 379 0411 with questions in Bengali from 6 pm on the day.

JS debate on city corps bills continues

By Staff Correspondent
 Parliament last night witnessed an inconclusive long discussion on four bills seeking major changes in the Constitution of all the four city corporations of the country. The proposed changes in the Constitution of the corporations include direct election of Mayors and Commissioners on the one hand and omission of the post of Deputy Mayors and reserved seats for women Commissioners who will be elected indirectly by the Commissioners. The House took up all the four identical bills for discussion together to save time. A total of 29 MPs of the opposition bench took part in yesterday's discussion on the issue, while rest of the MPs scheduled to deliberate on the proposed laws would express their opinion on the bills today.
 See Page 12 Col 4

SAARC Secy Gen, officials review activities

Star Report
 The SAARC Secretary General, Ibrahim Zaki, yesterday held talks with Bangladesh officials to review the state of the regular activities of the crisis-ridden seven-nation forum. Zaki and Bangladesh Foreign Ministry officials said that they did not discuss the new dates of the twice-postponed summit as the issue was being handled by the current chairman of association, President Ranasinghe Premadasa of Sri Lanka. 'My visit is for holding consultations on the on-going SAARC activities and discussing the progress on whatever the Standing Committee and the Council of Ministers agreed last December,' Zaki, who arrived in Dhaka Monday
 See Page 12 Col 2

Rao's move to stamp out revolt in Cong-I over Bombay riots

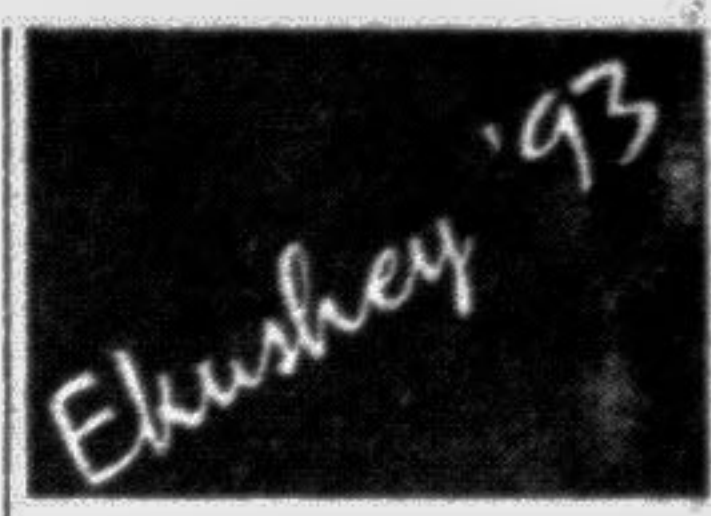
NEW DELHI, Feb 16: Prime Minister P V Narasimha Rao has moved to stamp out a revolt in his ruling Congress (I) Party over last month's rioting in Bombay in a bid to prevent the riot from spreading to regional chapters, reports AFP. Three Congress (I) heavyweights were completing a visit to the western metropolis today and were to hand down a verdict on the feuding that surfaced in the Congress (I) government which administers Maharashtra state. Bombay, India's financial hub, is the capital of Maharashtra. Some 50 of the state's 225 Congress lawmakers have called for the resignation of Chief Minister Sudhakarrao Naik for his inept handling of the rioting. Nearly 700 people died and tens of thousands fled Bombay during 10 days of Hindu-Muslim bloodletting which erupted in connection with the demolition of the Babri Mosque in Ayodhya on December 6 by Hindu fanatics. Congress officials and newspapers today said party trouble-shooters H.K.L. Bhagat, N.D. Tiwari and G.K. Moopnar would back Naik in a bid to contain the revolt, which led to the sacking of six Maharashtra ministers. 'If no action is taken, it will set a wrong precedent, and no chief minister will be able to function,' Home Minister S.B. Chavan, also a Maharashtra Congress leader, said in Bombay. 'I am of the opinion that all such acts of indiscipline should be firmly put down even at the risk of a split in the party,' he said. Congress (I) strongman Bhagat backed Chavan, saying most regional party leaders had come out against 'destabilisation.' 'They have expressed their support for a strong government in the state,' Bhagat added as news reports said the Congress (I) planned to isolate the Maharashtra rebels, supporters of Defence Minister Sharad Pawar. Naik sacked six of his 31 ministerial colleagues on Friday in swift disciplinary action to stem rebellion, saying he would not step down unless ordered by Rao. Factional infighting within the Congress (I), which administers 10 of India's 25 states, has grown at regional and national levels since Rao took over in June 1990.

Extortionists shoot one dead in city

By DMCH Correspondent
 An owner of a small motor parts shop, Mohammad Masum, was shot dead by extortionists at Dholaikhal in the city last night. He was 18. Masum was rushed to the Dhaka Medical College Hospital (DMCH), where he died at around 9.30 pm Tuesday — after one and a half hours of being admitted. The extortionists also ransacked the shop and looted cash and other valuables worth about Taka 20,000 at around 7.30 pm yesterday. While escaping, the extortionists fired at least 15 gunshots and blasted several crackers, witnesses said. As Masum refused to pay Taka 2000 as tolls on Monday, the extortionists barged into the shop at around 7.15 pm yesterday and shot at Masum on the head.

Electronic goods Duty for non-tourist passengers doubled

By Farid Ahmed
 The duty on electronics good for non-tourist passengers from abroad has been doubled to 60 per cent making it at par with the rate for commercial imports, an official source said. The rate, effective from February 4, comes following an amendment of the Passengers (Non-Tourists) Baggage (Import) Rules, 1990. The items covered by the increased rate are television set both coloured and black and white, refrigerator, deep freezer, domestic cooker and oven, vacuum cleaner, floor polisher, washing machine, dryer, dish washer, radio with cassette recorder, two-in-one or three-in-one, sewing machine, knitting machine, mu-



Promote libraries to educate people

Star Report
 Speakers at a discussion meeting at the Bangla Academy Tuesday called to promote the libraries of the country both in number and technology to help people quench their thirst for knowledge and develop their mental faculties. The discussion held on an article titled 'Development of Books in Bangladesh: Role of Libraries' was organised by the Academy as part of its Amar Ekushey programme. The meeting presided over by Abdun Nopr was addressed among others by Sadat Ali, Mohammad Shamsul Islam Khan, AF Fazlul Majid and Hasina Begum while the article was presented by Prof Mohammad Sharif Hossain. Prof. Sharif in his article, said that a large section of the educated people were deprived of the real education because of the lack of interest to use libraries.
 See Page 12 Col 1