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Special Supplement
 Today's issue of The Daily Star carries an 8-page Special Supplement marking the second anniversary of its publication.
 The price of today's 20-page issue remains unchanged. — Management

NEWS BRIEFS

PM attends iftar party at Senakunja
 Prime Minister Begum Khaleda Zia yesterday attended an iftar party hosted by Chief of Army Staff Lt General Muhammad Noor Uddin Khan at 'Senakunja' here. Speaker Shaikh Razzaque Ali, Deputy Speaker Humayun Khan Panni, Ministers, Parliament Members, chiefs of navy and air force, heads of missions of Muslim countries, members of the Armed Forces and high civil officials attended the iftar, reports BSS.

Diabetic Awareness Day today
 Diabetic Association of Bangladesh will observe 'Diabetic Awareness Day' today throughout the country. Twenty three branches of the Association have taken day-long programmes to observe the day. The Association has organised a function at the Ibrahim Memorial Diabetic Centre at 3 pm today. Prime Minister Begum Khaleda Zia will attend the function as chief guest, reports UNB.

Sheri, Iftar Timings

Ram	Feb	Sheri	Iftar
5	28	—	6.06 pm
6	1	4.59 am	6.07 pm

75 foreign firms get NOCs to invest

By Sohel Manzur

Seventy five foreign companies are likely to invest about Taka 556 crore in various industrial sectors of the country, according to official sources.

They have already been given No Objection Certificates (NOCs) by the government, the sources say, adding that the project proposals are, however, yet to be submitted to the concerned government department.

The officials of the Board of Investment (BOI) are now continuing discussions with the entrepreneurs of the companies belonging to USA, United Kingdom (UK), China, Japan, France, Italy, Sweden, Taiwan, Denmark, South Korea, Singapore, Hong Kong, Ireland, India, Pakistan, Luxembourg, Greece, Egypt, Malaysia, Sri Lanka and Yugoslavia, the sources mention.

The investment sectors of the companies include, electronic goods, switch gear transformers, fans, mild steel products, agricultural machinery, tools and equipment, wrist watches and clocks, rubber products, industrial chemicals, pharmaceuticals, ceramics, edible oil refinery, footwear, plastic products etc.

A total of 46 foreign investment proposals were registered from March '91 until December, 1992. The amount of investment was, however, Tk 220.72 crore.

The numbers of foreign investment proposals registered in 1990, 1989 and 1988 were 34, 11 and 17 respectively. The amounts of investment were, however, Tk 3727.729 million, 2294.188 million and 2971.049 million.

Meanwhile, the Task Force on Investment Development in its report submitted to the Prime Minister's Secretariat last August put forward a number of recommendations to create investment climate for both local and foreign investors.

The report after being reviewed by the officials of the PM Secretariat is now awaiting approval of the Cabinet.

The recommendations of the Task Force included, bringing appropriate changes in the existing labour law to keep the production areas free from external influences, enforcing the existing laws in dealing with matters concerned with production and industrialisation properly, setting up of a service centre to provide infrastructural facilities to the entrepreneurs and equipping the Board of Investment with all sorts of administrative, financial and executive powers to enable it to take major decisions in promoting investment.

CPB hardliners hold rally, oppose reforms

By Staff Correspondent

Some 200 workers of the Communist Party of Bangladesh (CPB) held an unannounced meeting in the office premises in support of the hardliners opposing transformation of the party.

Jasimuddin Mandal, a well-known party hardliner, addressed the rally in the evening immediately after the second days meeting of the Central Committee was over.

Sunil Roy and Jatin Sarker were also on the dias during the meeting which ended without any untoward incident. Speakers strongly called for sticking to the traditional party line.

Some of the leaders campaigning for major reforms of the party, however, alleged that the participants of the rally were not CPB members, and identified most of them as transport workers.

There was no immediate reaction from the reformists but sources said that some members may raise the issue at the concluding session of Sec Page 12 Col 5

3 proposed laws to solidify democracy hang in balance

By Nurul Kabir

Three bills, that politicians say are designed to strengthen and protect parliamentary democracy, seem to be miles away from becoming laws because of alleged dilly-dallying by the government.

The proposed legislations are the Constitution (amendment) Act, 1991 seeking to stop usurping of state power by extra-constitutional means; the Constitution (amendment) Act, 1991 seeking separation of judiciary from the executive wing of the state and the Parliament Secretariat Act, 1992 aimed at parliament's setting up a secretariat of its own.

The first two bills, moved respectively by Workers Party (WP) leader Rashed Khan Menon and Salauddin Yusuf of the Awami League (AL), have their roots in the Joint Declaration of the three political alliances (the BNP-led Seven-Party, the AL-led Eight-Party and the left leaning Five-Party) announced November 19, 1990 — 16 days before the ouster of the autocratic regime of Ershad.

In the Declaration the alliances promised to enact laws effectively forbidding conspiracy or attempt to subvert constitutional governance of the country and ensuring separation of the judiciary from the executive.

An independent parliament secretariat, on the other hand, is the constitutional obligation of the government. Article 79(I) of the Constitution reads: Parliament shall have its own secretariat.

But the BNP, even two years after its getting the mandate to govern the country, is yet to make the constitutional amendment.

Sec Page 12 Col 4

Diarrhoea claims 10 more lives

By Staff Correspondent

Ten more people died yesterday in the diarrhoea epidemic which is sweeping over seven southern districts.

With this, the death toll rose to 850 on Saturday, health officials said.

The situation in Bhola and Pirojpur were stated to be serious where four and three persons died respectively overnight.

Two deaths were reported from Patuakhali and one in Jhalokathi.

There were no reports of death from Bagerhat, Barguna and Khulna but more than 200 people fell sick in the districts on Saturday.

Some 44,700 people fell

Sec Page 12 Col 6

Wearing of combat dress by civilians punishable

Wearing of dresses made of clothes used by members of the armed forces is unlawful and a punishable offence under clause 940 of the penal code, an official handout yesterday said, reports BSS.

The handout said, it had recently come to the notice of the government that some civilian young people were found using shirts, caps, trousers and handbags made of combat clothes meant for the members of the Armed Forces.

Only the members of the Armed Forces were entitled to wear combat dress and wearing or using of the same type of clothes by the civilians could create confusion in the minds of the public, the handout said.

In the past, members of the public were deceived by persons identifying themselves as officers and jawans of armed forces through use of fake uniforms and similar incidents may also happen in future.



Prime Minister Begum Khaleda Zia attending an iftar party hosted by the Bangladesh Army at Senakunja yesterday. —PID photo

7 killed, 12 injured in road accidents

By Staff Correspondent

At least seven persons were killed and 12 others injured, three of them seriously, in three separate road mishaps in Dhaka, Comilla and Jhenidah yesterday.

Our Correspondent from Comilla says: Four persons were killed and seven others injured when a truck (Chittagong Metro Dha 1818) skidded off the road at 2.45 am Saturday at Syedpur near Comilla Cantonment.

The dead are Shanti Mia, 50, Kanu Mandal, 40, Kutub Mandal, 35 and Amanuddin.

The injured were admitted to Comilla Sadar Hospital.

The truck was carrying sacks filled with gram. The accident occurred at a place where the road was under construction. The victims were all day-labourers. They died as the sacks fell on them.

In another incident in Dhaka, a passenger was killed Saturday and the driver was seriously injured at Banani when the car was rammed by a loaded passenger bus.

The passenger, Sadeq Gani, died on the spot while driver Alauddin was admitted to Sec Page 12 Col 3

Higher earning this year likely

By Inam Ahmed and Sohel Manzur

Despite a depressed world market and the gnawing problems within the jute industry, the country expects to fetch a higher earning from its exports of jute goods this year.

The Jute Minister had expressed the hope that this year's export earning from jute goods would stand at Taka 1600 crore as against last year's figure of Taka 1400 crore.

Demand for Bangladesh's traditional jute goods is expected to recover from its 1990-91 low of 3.63 lakh metric tons to a peak demand of about 4.20 lakh tons by the year 1993-94.

After this recovery, demand will decline at one per cent per annum through the year 1999-2000, sources in the jute sector predict these forecasts assume that the sector makes significant improvements in its marketing and sales practices as part of the jute sector restructuring project.

However, if it continues its past practices into the future, projected demand would be lower, recovering to approximately 3.95 lakh metric tons by 1993-94 and then declining at four per cent per annum rate through the year 2005 and thereafter, with only about 2.75 lakh metric tons of sales by the year 2004-2005.

Tough competition from other manufacturing countries like India and from alternative synthetic has shrunk the jute market to a great extent in the past years making the prices dwindle.

In the B-Twills (sacking) class only, the price in the international market dropped from 78 US dollar per hundred bags in 1985 to the present rate of about 38 US dollar only. Prices of Hessian cloth fell from 20 US dollar in 1990 to 17 US dollar.

Prices of Indian jute goods (IJO) projection, the excess availability of PP is likely to keep prices of PP products at low levels. This would put pressure on jute goods market.

Another dimension of the marketing problems for the country's jute mills is that 99 per cent of their products are exported while the local consumption is only one per cent.

During this year, the mills have exported 1.5 lakh tons of goods so far while the local sale was only 1500 tons.

As the production is totally

Poor response to BSFIC retirement option

Star Report

The voluntary retirement option offered by Bangladesh Sugar and Food Industries Corporation (BSFIC), targeted to reduce 20 per cent of the existing manpower in its 16 sugar mills, has received a poor response as the deadline for availing the opportunity expires today.

"The response so far has not been very encouraging," said a Corporation source Saturday. He added that the total number of applicants opting for the offer would be known in about a week's time after managers of individual mills send the information to the headquarters.

The Corporation issued a circular February 16 offering the voluntary retirement option to all of the 25,475 workers, employees and staff members in the sugar mills, who have completed at least 10 years of service and who are not above the age of 50.

The target was to reduce about 5,500 workers, employee and staff through this option.

The Corporations is not likely to extend the deadline, said the BSFIC source. "Although some applications have been received for extending the deadline but the Corporation has no intention of doing so."

The voluntary retirement option is similar to the "golden handshake" option offered to the public sector jute and Sec Page 12 Col 1

Two injured in police firing

By Our DMCH Correspondent

Two pedestrians were injured in police firing during a clash between police and truck workers at Mohammadpur Truck Stand Saturday morning.

The incident occurred when police seized the papers of a truck which hit a tempo at the stand.

As the truck workers tried to stop the policemen from confiscating the papers, a clash started between the police and the truck workers.

Police at one stage, opened fire to disperse the mob in which two pedestrians, Pradip Majumder, 22, and Jashim, 18, were injured. They were admitted to the DMCH.

Crisis in jute sector-IV

fell significantly during the period as a direct result of devaluation of Indian rupees and Bangladesh export price was reduced to compete with the Indian price. It could be noted that India devalued its rupee by 39 per cent from 1990-91, while Bangladesh devalued its currency by only four per cent during the same period.

Meanwhile, although the prices of polypropylene (PP) remained fairly stable at low levels, those of jute fibre declined further. Jute goods lost its price advantages both in the United States and the Western Europe.

According to the International Jute Organisation dependent on export to the world market, the mills are subjected to losses because of international market price fluctuation.

India, the major country that dumps jute goods in the world market, on the other hand consumes 99 per cent of its products locally. This keeps its jute industry healthier than the Bangladeshi units.

As a result of Indian dumping of jute goods at a minimum price, Bangladesh's share of jute goods in the European and the US market dropped from 61 per cent during 1985-91 to an alarming 48 per cent in 1992. At the same time, India's share increased from 39 per cent to 52 per cent during the same period.

High officials in the BJMC told these correspondents on condition of anonymity that India could complete in international tenders by quoting low prices as the Indian government compensates the jute mills by paying them the money they lose by dumping. They said this policy of India often push out Bangladesh from international sales.

At a time when Bangladesh is facing such impediments in its marketing of jute goods like sackings, carpet backing cloth (CBC) and Hessians, the jute year market had so far been good and the jute spinning mills flourished from only six units in 1980 to the present number of 33 units.

These units are 100 per cent export oriented with the annual production capacity of 1.30 lakh tons.

During the late fiscal year, the spinning mills earned a total of Taka 220.29 crore in foreign currency which was 8.1 per cent higher than the previous year's earning.

However, they are also now subjected to tough competition from other exporting countries.

The concerned people in the jute industry now feel that the government should see Sec Page 12 Col 8

Tokyo unmoved despite Kohl's plea for more aid to Russia

TOKYO, Feb 27: German Chancellor Helmut Kohl urged Japan today to extend more help to Russian President Boris Yeltsin, but his hosts did not appear to be moved by the plea, reports AFP.

"I make an appeal to Japan to join efforts supporting Yeltsin's economic and political reforms. Kohl told a press conference shortly after meeting Japanese Prime Minister Kiichi Miyazawa.

Kohl, who arrived Friday on a three-day visit, revealed that he would make a one-hour stop over in Moscow on Wednesday after his East Asian tour, during which he hoped to see the embattled Russian leader.

A German spokesman said the meeting had yet to be confirmed. German sources in Tokyo said that if Kohl cannot see Yeltsin, he might confer instead with Russian Prime Minister Victor Chernomyrdin.

"I pointed out (to Miyazawa) the negative course of a failure of Yeltsin's policy initiatives," Kohl said, stressing that a "military dictatorship" in Moscow would cost the world dearly.

He said he was looking to Japan in particular to join efforts to ensure the safety of Russian nuclear power plants and to control the proliferation of weapons out of the former Soviet republics.

"I really hope we may come to a common approach" Kohl said.

Kohl refused to say how Miyazawa reacted, but a Japanese official quoted the Prime Minister as saying Japan was now giving "maximum assistance" to Russia, essentially humanitarian and technical aid.

Tokyo refuses to give any substantial economic aid to Moscow due to a long-running dispute over four of the Kuril islands, just north of Japan, which the Soviet Union occupied at the end of World War II.

Kohl said Germany supports a quick normalization of Russo-Japanese relations, adding that Sec Page 12 Col 3

Rao begins silencing party dissidents

NEW DELHI, Feb 27: Emboldened by his success in blocking a Hindu nationalist rally, Prime Minister P V Narsimha Rao has begun to silence dissidents in his own party and sell his new federal budget with a wary eye on the left, reports AP.

For the first time since India exploded in Hindu-Muslim riots in December, Rao is beginning to appear active and decisive.

On Friday, Rao told critics in his Congress Party they will be disciplined if they make "anti-party" statements in the press.

The move was directed against Arjun Singh, a senior Cabinet minister who is one of Rao's leading critics and a top power broker in the party.

For months, Singh criticized Rao for failing to openly challenge the Hindu nationalist Bharatiya Janata Party, the largest opposition group in Parliament.

Singh's tough line appeared vindicated when Hindu zealots ran riot during a BJP protest in the holy city of Ayodhya on December 6 and demolished an ancient mosque. That action set off nationwide communal violence.

Even though 1,940 people have been killed, the BJP has been gaining power by advocating Hindu supremacy in a nation whose majority Hindu Sec Page 12 Col 8

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