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NEWS BRIEFS

5 cops held for stealing arms

From Staff Correspondent CHITTAGONG, Aug 27: Five policemen were arrested here for their alleged involvement in the pilferage of six SLR and 10500 bullets from the District Police Armory.

AL Presidium meets today

A meeting of the Bangladesh Awami League Presidium will be held today at 11 am at 29 Minto Road, in the city. Awami League chief Sheikh Hasina will preside over the meeting, reports BSS.

560 arrested in Barisal

From Our Correspondent BARISAL, Aug 27: Police in a fortnight long special drive arrested 560 persons on various charges from six districts. They include 69 members of the outlawed Sarbahara Party. The drive continued from August 11 to August 26. The district wise break up of the arrests: Barisal: 160; Patuakhali 97; Bhola 91; Barguna 61; Jhalakathi 70; and Pirojpur 69.

Smuggled goods seized: 3 held

SIRAJGANJ, Aug 27: Police today arrested three children in the town on charge of smuggling and seized huge quantity of electronic goods and spares worth about Tk one lakh.

Stay-at-home protests paralyse Lagos

Abiola threatens to return home, form govt



Moshood Abiola

LONDON, Aug 27: Moshood Abiola, the unofficial winner of Nigeria's annulled presidential elections, announced here today that he planned to return to Nigeria and form a government, reports AFP.

Abiola told a press conference he would return "by the end of next week" to "hold wide-ranging consultations and begin the process of democratic government in earnest."

Former military leader Ibrahim Babangida on Thursday kept a pledge to stand down after eight years in power, but handed over to an interim administration of his own making rather than to Abiola.

Abiola, the candidate of the left-leaning Social Democratic Party in the June 12 poll annulled by the junta, said that

his programme was to "restore fundamental human rights, integrity, transparency, accountability in conduct of public affairs through the elimination of extra budgetary expenditure."

He also vowed to crack down on fraud.

A Muslim millionaire businessman from southwestern Nigeria, Abiola has been travelling abroad to muster support from the country's western partners, which called on the junta to abide by the democratic process.

After the press conference here, Abiola said he would leave for Washington for further consultations before returning to Nigeria.

In Abuja, Justice Minister Clement Akpangbo, a member of the interim council installed

by departing ruler General Ibrahim Babangida on Thursday, said such a move would be treated as "insurrection" and "rebellion".

Stay-at-home protests paralysed Lagos, Nigeria's biggest city, again and officials said the oil industry, the country's economic lifeblood, was partially disrupted for the first time in the 10-week-old crisis.

A Shell official in Lagos said a strike by the oil workers' union Nupeng closed the company's operations at the Bonny oil terminal, the main outlet for crude oil exports.

A union official said Shell workers in the port Harcourt area had begun the strike a day early and the union's plan for a wider strike remained fixed for See Page 12 Col 8

Number of drug addicts on rise

By Chapal Bashar

With the abuse and trafficking of drugs on the rise worldwide, the number of drug addicts in Bangladesh has increased alarmingly.

According to latest government estimates, the country has more than eight lakh drug addicts, of whom nearly a lakh are addicted to heroin.

An official survey five years ago had put the total number of addicts around two lakh.

"The number of drug addicts has grown four times in the last five years and this rapid growth is really alarming," said an authoritative source in the Department of Narcotics Control of the Home Ministry.

The source mentioned that a World Health Organisation (WHO) team which conducted a survey on heroin addiction in Bangladesh found that there were no less than one lakh addicts here.

For over a decade, there's

been a great increase in the trafficking of various drugs including heroin, cocaine, opium, pathedine, hashish, marijuana, cannabis, Phensidyl and other drugs into the country. These are usually smuggled through land or sea routes.

Official sources said heroin was first detected in Bangladesh in 1983 and since then over 55 kilograms of this dangerous drug were seized by the law enforcing agencies in different areas of the country.

The sources admitted that the amount seized is only a small fraction of the total quantity being smuggled into the country regularly. This is because the authorities have very inadequate resources to detect and nab all the traffickers and their consignments.

About one thousand persons were arrested during the last ten years for heroin trafficking. See Page 12 Col 4

Nation pays tribute to Nazrul

By Staff Correspondent

The 17th death anniversary of poet Kazi Nazrul Islam was observed across the country with due solemnity yesterday.

Different socio-cultural organisations paid tributes to the Rebel Poet by laying wreaths at his mazar at the Dhaka University campus.

They also organised milad mahfil, Quran-Khwani, discussion on his life and works, recitation sessions and musical soiree on the occasion.

Awami League (AL) president and Leader of the Opposition in Parliament Sheikh Hasina and the AL's central leaders paid homage to the poet by placing wreaths at the mazar in the morning.

The poet's relatives living in Dhaka, including granddaughter Khil Khil Kazi also paid tributes to the national poet.

Vice Chancellor of the Dhaka University Prof Emajuddin Ahmed along with university officials and students also visited the mazar.

Radio Bangladesh and the See Page 12 Col 6

CHT talks may resume next month

The fifth round of talks between the government and the Shantibahini insurgents is likely to take place at Khagrachhari some time next month.

Talking to UNB on Thursday, Communications Minister Col (Rtd) Oli Ahmed, who is the leader of the eight-member special committee on the Chittagong Hill Tracts, said although the exact date for the meeting has not yet been finalised, yet it might be some time in the middle or the third week of September.

Oli Ahmed carefully evaded a question concerning the progress so far achieved during the first four rounds of talks by asking "If there were no progress, how could we have restored peace and normalcy in the Hill Tracts?"

He noted with satisfaction that the incidence of raids by the Shantibahini has been reduced to almost zero. "During the past several months, we have scarcely received reports of burning down of sleeping villages, plunder and surprise raids to kill innocent tribals by the Shantibahini guerrillas."

The minister said the government is quite keen to repatriate the tribal refugees living in camps on the other side of the border and resettle them with honour and dignity in their respective homes in Bangladesh.

It is with this objective that the present government has announced a complete general amnesty, he added.

FBUTA calls for work stoppages on Sept 5, 8

By Staff Correspondent

The Federation of Bangladesh University Teachers' Association (FBUTA) has called full-day work stoppages on September 5 and 8 demanding arrest of students against whom there were criminal charges.

This decision was taken at a meeting of the FBUTA at the Dhaka University Teachers' Club with FBUTA President Prof Khandaker Mustahidur Rahman in the chair Thursday.

The FBUTA will bring out a silent procession from the Aparajeo Bangla statue at the DU and hold a rally on September 8. The teachers will also hold a press conference at the DU Teachers' Club on September 5 to take stock of the situation prevailing at the universities.

The examinations scheduled earlier will, however, be exempted from the work-stoppage.

Ravi Shankar operated upon

CALCUTTA, Aug 27: Sitar maestro Pandit Ravi Shankar, who was admitted to the University of California Medical Centre in the US yesterday following a heart attack was operated upon early this morning, according to his secretary, R Paul, reports PTI.

Paul told PTI here that the starist who underwent an angioplasty operation at 0430 hours was now keeping well.



Dr Kamal Hossain addressing the opening function of the Grand National Convention of the Democratic Forum at the Engineers' Institution auditorium in the city yesterday. — Star photo

Dr Kamal calls for a new approach

By Staff Correspondent

The much-awaited National Grand Convention (NGC) of Dr Kamal Hossain and his allies began yesterday with a call for national unity on the basis of a programme for a dynamic economy.

The three-day convention was inaugurated at the city's Institution of Engineers in the presence of over 6500 delegates and observers from all over the country. Leaders of several political parties, diplomats and members of the intelligentsia were present at the opening session.

The convention began at 9:45 am with the national anthem and hoisting of the national flag jointly by NGC convener Dr Kamal Hossain and

Mujibur Rahman, father of Shaheed Noor Hossain who was killed in 1987 during an anti-Ershad agitation.

Welcoming the participants and the guests, Dr Kamal, a former Foreign Minister in the Awami League government, stressed on national unity, saying, "Our historical experience teaches us that our strength lies in unity and this unity must be built around certain basic values and goals."

He called upon the people to be united on a single platform and work together on the basis of a national programme to identify priorities and pave the way for a dynamic economy, as well as a civil society to build a See Page 12 Col 1

Pakistan admits receiving missiles from China

WASHINGTON, Aug 27: Pakistan Prime Minister Moeen Qureshi has admitted receiving a small number of short-range tactical missiles from China more than a year ago for self-defence, according to a British wire service report published in the US press today, reports PTI.

Qureshi said yesterday that the purchase was 'well within the parameters' of the missile technology control regime and 'the unilateral and arbitrary' decision of the US to impose sanctions on Pakistan was unjust and misinformed.

"However limited the impact of the sanctions on Pakistan, the government is lodging a protest with Washington, against this decision," he said hours after his Foreign Minister Abdus Sattar accused Washington of acting on wrong and sketchy information.

Qureshi referred to dangers Pakistan feels from neighbouring arch-enemy India and said the US decision had "ignored the realities of the security envi-

ronment around Pakistan." "Procurement of missiles... was essential for the maintenance of Pakistan's self-defence capacity," he said. "Under no circumstances can this imperative be ignored by the government."

He added, "I want to make it clear that as a sovereign state, Pakistan cannot and will not sacrifice its right to take whatever step we deem necessary for its security."

Reuter adds: China today threatened to stop abiding by a key global arms control agreement in response to a US decision to slap Beijing with economic sanctions for alleged arms control violations.

"Now that the US side has resumed these sanctions, the Chinese government has been left with no alternatives but to reconsider its commitment to MTCR (Missile Technology Control Regime)," Vice Foreign Minister Liu Huaqiu told US Ambassador J Stapleton Roy. "The US government shall be

held fully responsible for all the consequences arising therefrom," Liu said in what he called a "strong protest" over the US action, the official Xinhua news agency said.

Beijing earlier dismissed the sanction threat as unjustifiable, and today accused Washington of acting aggressively "to put Sino-US relations in serious jeopardy."

"This naked hegemonic act has brutally violated the basic norms governing international relations," Xinhua quoted Liu as saying.

China's threat to stop a binding by the MTCR shakes one of the cornerstones of a new rapprochement reached in late 1991, when then US Secretary of State James Baker secured Chinese promises to hold two global anti-proliferation accord.

These were made in exchange for the removal of earlier US sanctions dating to Beijing's bloody June 1989 crackdown on the country's pro-democracy movement.

212 industrial units closed to save Taj Mahal

NEW DELHI, Aug 27: The Supreme Court on Friday ordered 212 factories to close because their pollutants are dimming the Taj Mahal's lustre, reports AP.

Sulfur fumes from foundries and smoke from private power generators in the industrial belt near the city of Agra have dulled the white marble of the Taj, a 17th century tomb built by a Mughal emperor for his wife.

The court said the 212 offending industries failed to even respond to notices demanding that they install pollution control devices, news agencies reported.

Air samples taken around the Taj, 200 kilometres (120 miles) south of New Delhi, were found to contain as much as eight times the permissible quantities of suspended particles. Many people say the glistening marble is slowly acquiring a yellow tint. Exhaust from Agra's 27,000 vehicles add to the decay.

Khaleda opens BNP programmes today

By Asiuzzaman

A three-day programme ahead of the fourth national convocation of the ruling Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP) begins today.

Prime Minister Begum Khaleda Zia will open the series of programmes by inaugurating a photo exhibition at the Shilpakala Academy in the morning, convener of the council preparatory committee said. He added that preparations for the national council are now complete and all 11 sub-com-

mittees have completed their reports.

The three-day pre-council programmes include cultural functions, soiree of patriotic songs in various parts of the city and a milad mahfil at the mazar of late President Ziaur Rahman.

Council preparatory committee convener Chowdhury Tarvir Ahmed Siddiky told The Daily Star last night that the draft reports of the constitutional See Page 12 Col 4

Arafat under fire for secret peace deal



PLO Chairman Yasser Arafat smiles at photographers yesterday in Tunisia during the second day of the PLO crisis meeting. —AFP photo

TUNIS, Aug 27: PLO Chairman Yasser Arafat faced a showdown with his adversaries Friday over his leadership and a planned deal with Israel to give Palestinians limited self-rule in the Gaza Strip and a West Bank city, reports AP.

Adversaries accuse Arafat, once the unshakable leader of the PLO, of making too many concessions to Israel in peace talks and failing to cope with the movement's financial crisis.

Arafat faced unprecedented criticism at the meeting of the movement's ruling Executive Committee on Thursday, with some officials attacking him for failing to consult them and other Palestinian leaders on his peace proposal.

Another meeting was scheduled for later Friday, and some officials said the debate could go on for days.

The outcome of the Tunis meeting will be a critical factor in the 21-month-old, US-sponsored Arab-Israeli peace negotiations. The 11th round is

scheduled to open in Washington on Tuesday.

The latest peace proposal would give Palestinians limited autonomy in the Israeli-occupied Gaza Strip and the ancient city of Jericho in the West Bank. Azmi Shuabi, an adviser to the Palestinian negotiating team and an Arafat supporter, told the Associated Press in Jerusalem that an agreement could emerge "within weeks" and perhaps during next week's Washington talks.

The Israeli daily Yediot Ahronot on Friday quoted Foreign Minister Shimon Peres as saying "Today there is more agreement between us and the Palestinians than ever before."

Arafat made his surprise offer to the Americans earlier this month without consulting Palestinians outside his inner circle. That incensed the Palestinian negotiating team and radicals opposed to piecemeal deals with Israel that fall short of an independent Palestinian state in the West Bank and Gaza. Some have called for Arafat's resignation.