

The Daily Star

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NEWS BRIEFS

Cops attacked in city

By Staff Correspondent

A rickshawpuller was killed and 11 policemen were seriously injured at Shahidnagar, Lalbagh in the city last night. The incident occurred when police, on receipt of secret information, went to arrest an alleged terrorist Abdul Rahim who was said to be attending a meeting in the area. After police reached the spot and arrested Abdul Rahim, a number of bombs were hurled at the police men from the rooftops of nearby buildings. Police spread out to search for the culprits and arrested five persons. The injured policemen were admitted to the Rajarbagh Police Hospital while the body of the rickshawpuller was sent to the DMCH morgue.

Zia museum fire: probe report today

CHITTAGONG, Sept 3: The enquiry committee, formed to probe Wednesday's fire incident at the Zia Memorial museum here, is likely to submit its report to the government tomorrow, an official source said today. The four-member committee headed by Joint Secretary of Cultural Affairs Ministry Moslem Ali started its function at 10 am today. Prime Minister Begum Khaleda Zia is expected to inaugurate the museum on September 6.

Five MPs leave for Washington

Five Members of Parliament left Dhaka yesterday evening for Washington to join a month-long programme to observe legislative process and development of democracy in the USA, reports BSS.

Khaleda warns against anti-party activity

By Staff Correspondent

Prime Minister and BNP chairperson Begum Khaleda Zia urged her party leaders to iron out all internal differences and cautioned that all anti-party activities would be strictly dealt with.

"It so happened that a section of party leaders and workers, failing to get nominations, worked against the BNP candidates during the various past elections leading to defeats of the party candidates," Begum Zia said in her summing-up speech of the fourth national council at her Sugandha office yesterday.

"None is an opponent to anyone inside the party," she added.

"In future stern action would

be taken against such people," she was quoted as having said by a councillor. The delegate did not elaborate but said the chairperson's speech indicated a degree of unhealthy factionalism in different districts.

Begum Zia also urged the party leaders and workers to

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maintain the present thrust generated from the council to win the forthcoming city corporation and district council elections.

She said elections to the four city corporations will be held in January, and a bill relating to the district councils polls would be placed before Parliament in its coming session beginning

September 12.

More than 2000 councillors attended the three-day council session of which some 150 took part in the discussion.

Begum Zia said fresh blood would be injected at different tiers of the party leadership to boost organisational activities.

"I have carefully heard your opinions and will reorganise the entire gamut of committees on the basis of your suggestions," Begum Zia said, adding that tested leaders of the party would be placed in the right positions.

She also said that those who have completed their tenure and responsibility in the Jatiyatabadi Chhatra Dal (JCD) would be placed in the right positions. See Page 12 Col 2



BNP Chairperson Prime Minister Begum Khaleda Zia addressing the concluding session of the fourth national council of the Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP) at Sugandha yesterday. LGRD Minister and Secretary General of the BNP Barrister Abdus Salam Talukder and Communications Minister Oli Ahmed are seen on her right. —PID photo

Fate of coal-bed methane gas project uncertain due to cash crisis

The fate of a highly prospective project for extraction of coal-bed methane gas in the country has become uncertain due to financial constraints, reports UNB.

Work on the one-year pilot project costing Tk 25 crore was initially scheduled to begin in July this year.

But the fate of the project, already delayed due to late approval by the Planning Ministry in August, still remains uncertain as no fund has yet been earmarked, according to informed sources.

Under the first phase of the project, two wells — one in Jamalganj (Jolpurhat) and the other in Pirganj (Rangpur) — are to be dug to assess the quantity of methane gas available in the region. The second phase provides for digging of five wells in Jamalganj to extract the entrapped methane gas.

Meanwhile, the Indian Modi Group, with the help of an American company, has already undertaken a similar project to

explore methane gas in the neighbouring West Bengal.

The sources said more than one trillion cubic feet (TCF) of methane can be exploited from the proven coal reserve of the Jamalganj mine alone, besides the extraction of coal. A similar coal reserve has also been found at Khalashpur in Pirganj, Rangpur.

According to a proposal by a US-Australian company BHP, a 100-MW power plant can be easily run by using the methane or seam gas of Jamalganj.

The Geological Survey has identified about 10 to 12 Gondwana basins where possibility of discovering coal fields similar to Jamalganj, Barapukuria and Pirganj are very bright. These will be the additional sources of coal-bed methane.

Energy Ministry sources said the amount of country's natural gas reserve in 17 gas fields is 21.4 TCF, of which 10.7 TCF is extractable. Experts are of the view that this reserve will dry up by the year 2015 and extraction of methane — the alterna-

tive source of energy — should be given top priority.

By the end of the decade, consumption of natural gas in the country is expected to be around 1400 million cubic feet per day (MCFD), more than double the present 600 MCFD.

Bangladesh is one of the lowest energy users, equal to 51 kg oil per head. Total electricity production in the country is 1724 MW against a capacity of 2398 MW by all the power stations.

Extraction of methane gas will reduce the gap in development activities between the eastern and western zones of the country. At present, all activities in gas development are in the eastern zone because all the discovered fields are in the eastern part of the country.

Two mighty rivers — the Jamuna and the Padma — are the main obstacles for the gas pipeline from eastern to western part of the country. Even, there is no provision for gas transportation from the eastern zone. See Page 12 Col 1

Leaders to oversee development projects : Talukder

By Staff Correspondent

From now on political leaders will oversee all development works undertaken in their respective areas for proper implementation of projects.

The decision was taken after the three-day council session of the ruling Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP) which concluded in Dhaka yesterday.

"The projects, usually taken up and supervised by civil servants, reveal a lot of flaws after completion," BNP Secretary General Abdus Salam Talukder told newsmen at the post-council press conference at the party's Naya Paltan central office.

In reply to a question he said "It is not, however, a direct integration of the politicians in government projects. Rather it will be a voluntary supervision for See Page 12 Col 7

'BNP responsible for Hasina staying away from council'

The Assistant Publicity Secretary of the Awami League yesterday said the opposition party could not attend the opening session of the BNP council because of the "narrow-mindedness" of the ruling party, reports UNB.

"The opposition leader (Sheikh Hasina) was not only ready to attend the BNP council but also prepared to deliver her goodwill speech at the inaugural session," Abdul Mannan said in a statement.

If the BNP sincerely sought the opposition party's cooperation in ensuring development of the country or its presence in the council, Begum Khaleda Zia would have avoided "unrestrained and vituperative" remarks about the opposition as well as "distortion of history" in her opening address, he said.

Most city areas become water-logged

By Staff Correspondent

The capital was virtually swamped on Friday with water in almost all places as rains drenched the city, as also other parts of the country, for the third consecutive day.

Most parts of the city became water-logged and several areas went under one to two feet water. The city's outworn and ill-planned sewerage system failed to cope with the heavy discharge.

Traffic at some major city intersections were seen moving with great difficulty while many cars and other vehicles went out of order after getting stuck in water-logged roads. Pedestrians had to wade through mud and filth as the water in several places remained knee-deep.

In two or three areas in the capital, even boats were seen competing with the rickshaws. Once again, some people caught fish on the lush lawns of the Ramna Park and Suhrawardy Uddyan, which were flooded. See Page 12 Col 6

PLO leader in city says Proposed self-rule is a correct first step

by S Y Bakht

The visiting Member-Secretary of the Palestine Liberation Organisation's (PLO) executive committee Jamal Sourani yesterday termed the recent dramatic development — leading to a possible rapprochement between the PLO and Israel — as "totally unexpected and unprecedented."

"It seems to me that (Israeli Prime Minister) Itzhak Rabin and (Foreign Minister) Shimon Peres have really changed (their stand) or there is something which I don't quite understand," Sourani, here to attend the national council of the BNP, said.

The proposed self-rule in the two areas, he said, "is more

than autonomy and less than independence."

He was reacting to news reports of an Israeli offer to initially provide self-rule to the Palestinians living in the Gaza Strip and the West Bank enclave of Jericho. The Israeli offer reportedly came after secret negotiations with the PLO in Norway and was welcomed by the PLO high command.

In an hour-long exclusive interview with The Daily Star, the PLO leader talked about the background of the proposed accord with Israel, the possible types of administrative set-up and the status of the remaining See Page 12 Col 3

Protesters brand Arafat a 'traitor'

AIN HELWE (Lebanon), Sept 3: Thousands of Palestinians in Lebanon and Jordan today protested the PLO-Israeli accord, denouncing it as a sell-out of their cause and calling PLO chief Yasser Arafat a traitor, reports AFP.

Around 4,000 vented their anger in the South Lebanon Palestinian refugee camps of Ain Helwe and Borj Esh-She-mall, while four hundred people demonstrated in Baqaa, the largest of 11 camps located in Jordan.

Imams in Jerusalem and the Gaza Strip also attacked the accord, which Israeli hopes will be signed at the current Middle East peace talks in Washington.

Two thousand protesters, most of them Muslim fundamentalists who oppose any negotiations with Israel, gathered outside the offices of the United See Page 12 Col 8



Yasser Arafat

Russia, Poland help boost tea sales

From Nurul Alam

CHITTAGONG, Sept 3: Bangladesh tea this season recorded a better position both in sales and prices than the previous season despite adequate supply in the global markets, officials and brokers said.

They said, the re-entry of Russia and Poland, the two traditional major buyers, had improved the auction markets here leading to a boost in sales and prices compared with the previous season.

As a result, most of the 18 tea auctions held so far witnessed brisk trading with fair participation from the buyers of Russia, Poland and Pakistan.

Market reports said, upto the sixteenth auction this season, over 14 million kg of tea were sold, up from 10.9 million kg the previous season.

The average price was recorded at Tk 51.11 per kg in the current season as against Tk 45.01 per kg previously, market reports added.

Talking to this correspondent, a director of a leading tea

broker house, said "Our tea market, both in price and demand, is quite healthy this year compared with last year."

An official of the state-owned Bangladesh Tea Board, said "Our tea has recaptured its global markets and fetched a better price this season in view of growing demand."

Bangladesh tea, the country's second major cash crop after jute, suffered a debacle last season following the collapse of the Soviet Union. Nearly 50 per cent of total offerings in every weekly auction here used to remain unsold. But in the current season the average withdrawal rate was below 20 per cent, brokers said.

A senior official of a leading foreign tea company here said "The price and demand of our tea this year are really good."

However, in the '92-'93 fiscal, Bangladesh exported 33 million kg of tea, up from 23.64 million kg during '91-'92 fiscal, showing an increase of over 9 million kg, official reports said.

3 CPB MPs moot joining BNP, AL

By Nazmul Ashraf

Two Members of Parliament (MPs) belonging to the CPB (reformist) are planning to join the ruling BNP while another is preferring the Awami League, sources told The Daily Star yesterday.

Earlier, two other MPs of the CPB — Shamsuddoha and Mohammad Yusuf — joined Dr Kamal Hossain's Gano Forum (GF).

Nazir Hossain and Mozahar Hossain have already started talks with the BNP leaders on their willingness to become Treasury Bench lawmakers, sources said adding that Nazir Hossain also met the Speaker of the Jatiya Sangsad to find out the legal position regarding changing their party identity.

Dabirul Islam, another CPB See Page 12 Col 4

PML will sweep Oct polls: Sartaj Aziz

The Secretary General of the Pakistan Muslim League (PML) Sartaj Aziz yesterday expressed his optimism that his party would sweep to power in the coming October elections, reports BSS.

He said his party had left its mark in the overall development of Pakistan during its tenure of more than two years. "Our performance in the election will be on the basis of our records and not on promises," he asserted.

Aziz, who came to Dhaka to attend the fourth national council of the BNP, was talking to a group of journalists at the Sheraton Hotel here yesterday morning.

The PML Secretary General said that Nawaz Sharif's popularity graph was higher now.

Referring to election violence, Aziz, a former finance minister in Sharif's Cabinet, said the caretaker government and the army wanted a free and fair election to take place. He ex- See Page 12 Col 8

Turkish troops on Armenian border on alert

ANKARA, Sept 3: Turkey, alarmed by Armenian advances into Azerbaijan and Iranian military movements near the Azeri border, has reinforced its troops on the Armenian border and placed them on alert, military sources said today, reports Reuter.

The sources, quoted by the semi-official Anatolian news agency, said the air force was flying constant reconnaissance flights in the region and said the troops were "ready to perform any duty assigned to them."

"While very important development in the region are taking place, which closely interest Turkey, carrying out such military activities is normal," a military source said.

Witnesses in eastern Turkey said earlier today that they had seen many armoured troop carriers heading towards the Armenian border.

President Suleyman Demirel, Prime Minister Tansu Ciller, senior cabinet ministers and the armed forces deputy chief of staff held a crisis meeting on Azerbaijan on Thursday night.

Parliament overrules Yeltsin's decree

MOSCOW, Sept 3: Russia's parliament voted overwhelmingly today to overrule a decree by President Boris Yeltsin suspending his conservative vice-president Alexander Rutskoi from office, reports Reuter.

Deputies voted by 141 votes to 2 to suspend implementation of the decree and to refer it to the constitutional court for consideration. It left in place those parts of the decree that also suspended Yeltsin's political ally Vladimir Shumeiko.

Yeltsin urged parliament earlier to back his decree suspending the two men as vital to clear up accusations of corruption undermining the authority of the state.

"The adoption of our resolution means that the decree of the President is no longer in force," parliament Chairman Russian Khasbulatov told deputies after the vote.



Italian actress Sophia Loren (C) enjoyed the Stadium Cup match between Pete Sampras of the US and Daniel Vacek of the Czech Republic in the US Open in New York Thursday. Loren watched as the second-seeded Sampras won the match in four sets. — AFP photo

Ukraine to transfer N-arms, sell fleet share to Russia

YALTA (Ukraine), Sept 3: Ukraine has agreed to transfer its nuclear weapons to Russia for dismantling and to cede its share of the Black Sea fleet to Moscow in lieu of payment for energy, Russian President Boris Yeltsin said today, reports AFP.

"All the missiles shall be withdrawn from Ukraine, their dismantling and transport will be done by Russia," Yeltsin said at a news conference here following talks with Ukrainian President Leonid Kravchuk.

Details of the accord remained sketchy but Yeltsin said that Ukraine would pay its estimated three billion-dollar debt to Russia for shipments of energy in 1992 and 1993 "on the basis of the sale of the fleet."

"The Ukrainian share of the Black Sea fleet will be given by Kiev to Moscow to compensate for the energy debt," Yeltsin said, adding "We decided that the fleet will be Russian."

Yeltsin said Ukraine would be compensated for the withdrawal of its nuclear missiles

with supplies of non-enriched uranium for use in its civilian nuclear programme.

Kiev, which signed on to the START II Treaty through the Lisbon Protocols, had argued later that it wanted to retain the valuable missile material from the nuclear weapons on its territory for use or sale.

A senior Ukrainian official who asked not to be named said Russia had also agreed to extend financial compensation to Ukraine for use of the land — ports and bases mainly in Crimea — used by the fleet.

"The amount of compensation is to be examined by a special commission which will study this issue in September," Yeltsin said.

Russia has in recent weeks sharply reduced its energy shipments to Ukraine, seriously disrupting Ukrainian industry.

Yeltsin and Kravchuk were due to continue their talks at an official residence near here following the news conference. Meanwhile in Washington,

Russia and the United States, abandoning the last vestiges of Cold War hostility, signed wide-ranging agreements on Thursday that included cooperation on an international space station.

"It is time to leave behind the vestiges of the Cold War and reach for a new partnership between the United States and Russia," Vice President Al Gore said.

Russia also agreed to stick to international guidelines on exporting missile technology, clearing the way for a new era of high-technology cooperation.

"Russia has agreed to observe the principles of the Missile Technology Control Regime, which is something the United States very much appreciates," US President Bill Clinton said at a picture-taking session with visiting Prime Minister Viktor Chernomyrdin.

"In general, I think this is the beginning of a lot more opportunities for mutual trade and investment between our two countries."