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NEWS BRIEFS

730 bags powdered milk seized

The City Special Branch
Police yesterday seized 730 bags
of powdered milk worth about
Tk 30 lakh from a godown at
Imamganj on suspicion that the
milk is contaminated, reports
UNB.

Madrasah-e-Alia reopens Sept 13

Classes of the Madrasah-e-
Alia will start from September
13, according to a press release
of the madrasah here last
night. The decision was taken
at a meeting of the teachers
council of the madrasah with
its Principal Sikdar Mohammad
Yunus in the chair, reports BSS.

Forged passports, seals recovered

A special squad of the
Criminal Investigation Depart-
ment yesterday seized a large
number of forged passports,
seals and other papers from an
office room of two commercial
firms at Motijheel and arrested
one person in this connection,
reports BSS.

Arafat fails to win public support from Damascus

DAMASCUS, Sept 6: PLO
chairman Yasser Arafat left
Damascus today after failing to
win a public endorsement from
Syrian President Hafez al-Assad
for his proposed peace agree-
ment with Israel, report Reuters,
AFP, AP.

Assad's spokesman, speak-
ing after Arafat's meeting with
the President on Sunday, said
the Syrian leader had told the
PLO chief it was up to the
Palestinians to decide what
suited them.

During six hours of talks in
Damascus, Arafat failed to
win the support from a re-
luctant president of Syria, Israel's
chief foe in the Middle East,
who threw the ball back in the
Palestinian court.

Talks between Assad and
Arafat dealt with the PLO Israeli
agreement reached in secret

talks between the two sides in
Norway, Syrian presidential
spokesman Jabran Kourieh
said.

Assad's cool response fell
short of outright endorsement
but allowed Arafat to press
ahead with his peace plan. The

TUNIS, Sept 6: A PLO official said today the organisation expected a PLO-Israeli deal on mutual recognition within two days. "There is progress and the surprise is expected very soon, within two days," the official, who is close to the talks with Israel, told Reuters.

PLO leader's campaign to drum
up support was boosted when
he received backing from the
oil-rich Gulf Arab states.

"I am very happy to have
made this visit. We exchanged
points of view with President
Assad and I hope we will thus
be able to pursue our difficult
route in historic circum-

stances," Arafat told reporters
on leaving.

"I thank President Assad in
the name of my people."

Arafat cautioned that the
signing of the accord on auton-
omy starting in the Gaza strip
and West Bank town of Jericho

was "linked to other questions
which have not yet been re-
solved."

Two senior PLO leaders
based in Damascus, George
Habash and Nayef Hawatmeh,
refused to meet the organisa-
tion's chairman during his one-
day visit.

The Popular Front for the

Liberation of Palestine and the
Democratic Front of the
Liberation of Palestine — the
PLO's second- and third-largest
factions after Arafat's own
Fatah — remained vehemently
opposed to the deal, despite
Syria's hedged endorsement.

Arafat later arrived in Egypt,
the main backer of the accord
and key mediator between
Arafat and his rivals. In Cairo
he immediately held talks with
Foreign Minister Amr Moussa.

His next step was not im-
mediately known, though some
Palestinian sources said it
would be Oman.

On arrival in Cairo, Arafat
said his talks with Syrian
President Assad on Sunday
were "brotherly."

Syria presidential spokes-
man Jibril Kourieh said Assad
See Page 12 Col 2

WB minor irrigation projects run aground

By a Special Correspondent

The decline in sale of irriga-
tion equipment during the last
fiscal year has little chance of
reversal in the near future be-
cause very little progress has
been achieved in using the 120
million dollars available since
mid-1991 for purchase of shal-
low and deep tubewells.

In mid-1991 two credits were
signed with the World Bank
(WB) to finance farmers' in-
vestment in irrigation equip-
ment through the private sec-
tor. The money was to be avail-
able to private dealers through
commercial banks for import of
minor irrigation equipment.

The first among the two
credits was to finance the Na-
tional Minor Irrigation Develop-
ment Project. The project was
drawn up by the Ministry of
Agriculture to introduce smaller
capacity deep tubewells in place
of larger capacity ones run by
the BADC. In return for the 50
million dollars credit the

Ministry of Agriculture agreed
to phase out the BADC from the
irrigation sector.

In two years since the credit
was signed, not more than two
million dollars have been spent.
The project was held up be-
cause the European Economic
Commission (EEC) a cofinancier
chosen by the WB, took until
May of this year to recruit and
send the consultants who are to
run demonstrations of the ir-
rigation system that the farmers
are expected to buy.

The second credit is of 70
million dollars and was offered
by the WB in support of the
Agriculture Ministry's Shallow
Tubewell and Low-Lift Pump
Project. This money was ex-
pected to be used by the farm-
ers to buy around 80,000 shal-
low tubewells and low-lift
pumps and about 20,000 power
tillers.

There has been very little in-
See Page 12 Col 8

Li, Rao for closer ties

BEIJING, Sept 6: Indian
Prime Minister P V Narasimha
Rao met with his Chinese coun-
terpart Monday at the start of a
state visit that could lead to
troop reductions along their
disputed border, reports AP.

Rao met with Premier Li
Peng at the state guest house
shortly after arriving in Beijing.
The Indian prime minister is to
meet several other leading
Chinese officials during his
four-day visit.

Most attention will focus on
whether the world's two most
populous countries can reach
an agreement on troop reduc-
tions along their border, which
has been in dispute since a 21-
day war in 1962.

Indian Foreign Secretary
Jyotindra Nath Dixit told re-
portedly in New Delhi last week
that the groundwork for such
an agreement was ready.

Thousands of square kilome-
ters are in dispute. Officials
have met six times since 1988
See Page 12 Col 3

Maneka Gandhi in city

By Staff Correspondent

Maneka Gandhi, a former
Indian Environment Minister
under VP Singh, arrived in
Dhaka yesterday afternoon on a
two-day trip to Bangladesh.

During her stay, Maneka
Gandhi, widow of Sanjay Gan-
dhi, will attend as chief guest a
workshop on 'Women and the
Environment' in the capital.

Sponsored by the National
Association for Resource Im-
provement (NARI), the day-long
workshop and an 'ECO' exhi-
bition begins today at 9am at
Sonargaon Hotel.

The main objective of the
workshop is to review the im-
plications of Agenda 21 adopted
at the Rio Earth Summit in the
context of women and Bang-
ladesh.

AL legal notice on DCC mayor

A legal notice has been is-
sued on the Mayor of Dhaka
City Corporation asking for
withdrawal of the rent imposed
for holding public meetings in
certain areas of the city, reports
UNB.

Barrister K S Nabi served the
notice on Saturday on behalf of
Awami League General Secre-
tary Zillur Rahman, an Awami
League press release said last
night.

The City Corporation last
month imposed a rent of Tk
25,000 for holding public
meetings at the Manik Mia
Avenue and Tk 15,000 at
Motijheel and Panthapath.

The notice said holding pub-
lic meetings is a fundamental
right guaranteed in Article 37 of
the Constitution. There is no
provision of rent for public
meetings in the Dhaka Muni-
cipal Corporation Ordinance of
1983 or in any other rules and
regulations under the Ordinance.

Private company to help govt in mass literacy programme

By Staff Correspondent

Some seven lakh 40 thou-
sand people, both young and
old, in the country can neither
read nor write, according to the
available statistics.

Everyday, about 5,000 peo-
ple add up to the volume of the
illiterate mass. The number of
the educated people is on the
rise but the rate of literacy is
still very low because of the
population growth.

With this grim scenario in
the backdrop, a non-profit pri-
vate company made its debut
yesterday with a promise of
drumming up a broad-based
campaign to mobilise people in
the mass literacy programme of
the government.

The company — Nijera
Shikhi (Let's Teach Ourselves)
— would work as a supplement-
ary to the government efforts
for building up a nation of edu-
cated people, its proponents
announced.

Speaking at a press confer-
ence at the Jatiya Press Club
yesterday afternoon, directors of
the Nijera Shikhi said that the
company would work for the
promotion of non-formal pri-
mary education as well as adult
literacy by its own education
service delivery.

The company plans to mo-
bilise, organise and support
See Page 12 Col 5

'Education a weapon against poverty'

MIRE SARAI (Chittagong).
Sept 6: Prime Minister Begum
Khaleda Zia today termed edu-
cation one of the effective
weapons for eradicating poverty
and said her government had
attached top priority to this sec-
tor, reports UNB.

She was addressing a func-
tion at the S N Government
Primary School on the occasion
of inaugurating the govern-
ment's 'Food for Education'
programme in Miresarai thana.

The Prime Minister launched
the countrywide programme on
August 29 aiming to encourage
the poor and underprivileged
boys and girls to go to school.

The literacy scheme, which
adds a new dimension to the
compulsory primary education
programme, has been under-
taken initially in one backward
union of each thana across the
country.

Some 1,24,000 tons of food-
See Page 12 Col 6

PM opens Zia Memorial Museum in Ctg

CHITTAGONG, Sept 6: The
80-year-old Circuit House here
where President Ziaur Rahman
was slain in 1981 today turned
into a museum to preserve the
late leader's memories, reports
UNB.

Prime Minister Begum Khaleda
Zia in a solemn function
formally inaugurated the Zia
Memorial Museum set up with
personal belongings, photo-
graphs and memories of the late
President and founder of the
ruling Bangladesh Nationalist
Party (BNP).

The two-story building, a
1913 structure of mixed Bengal
and South Asian architecture,
standing on a hilltop, will also
have a children's park adjacent
to it.

Begum Zia, the widow of
Ziaur Rahman and Chairperson
of the BNP, looked emotional
at times during the function and
on occasions seemed nostalgic
staring at the younger of her
two sons, Arafat Rahman Koko,

seated in the front row of the
audience.

A number of family members
and close relatives of the late
leader, including Begum Zia's
sister Khurshid Jahan Huq, MP
and Ziaur Rahman's cousin
Momenur Rahman Tofee, were
present on the occasion.

Seven hundred and forty
three items, including the mi-
crophone and transmitter with
which Shaheed President Ziaur
Rahman, as a major of the army
in 1971, declared the indepen-
dence War from the Kalurghat
Radio Station, are preserved in
the museum. The bed on which
the great son of the soil was
born has also been collected
from his paternal house in
Bogra and displayed at the
museum, set up at Tk 2.89
crore 37 thousand.

The cabinet on June 3 in
1981 decided to turn the circuit
house into a museum, but the
decision was put off by the au-
See Page 12 Col 7

Dissidents under Huda to float 'JP (Nationalist)'

Star Report

The dissidents in the Jatiya
Party (JP) led by Shamsul Huda
Chowdhury are to announce
their separate entity next Friday
as a first formal step to launch-
ing their own party.

The former Speaker and his
associates will spell out the
plans and programmes of their
faction which will be known as
the Jatiya Party (Nationalist).

The dissidents, however,
claim they are not going to float
another party, rather they
would be working to uphold the
ideology of the mainstream JP.

"We are not breaking the
party — we will reorganise it on
the basis of Bangladesh na-
tionalism only to revitalise it,"
said Huda Chowdhury who,
along with 29 other JP stal-
warts, made a joint statement
on 16 August disclosing their
decision to reorganise the party.

Talking to The Daily Star last
night Huda Chowdhury, who
has been a front-ranking leader
of the JP since its creation
nearly eight years ago, ex-
plained that to avoid legal
problems, they had to bring in a
slight change in the party's
name by adding the word
'nationalist'.

He said a small organising
committee will be formed to run
the party until a national coun-
cil which is expected to be held
within three months.

"The constitution of the JP
will also be amended", he
added.

Criticising the present JP
leadership, Huda Chowdhury
said it had totally failed to guide
the party. "The grief and agita-
tion of the Jatiya Party's district
leaders were clearly reflected at
the recent extended meeting" he

mentioned, saying that the
leadership has lost the confi-
dence of the rank and file.

The former Speaker ex-
pressed optimism that his or-
ganisation would enjoy the
support of a large number of JP
members and workers all over
the country and disclosed that
a good number of MPs belong-
ing to the JP are already sup-
porting him and will come in
the open in due course.

The JP stalwarts, who have
joined hands with Shamsul
Huda Chowdhury include for-
mer Deputy Prime Minister Dr
MA Matin, former Foreign
Minister Humayun Rashid
Chowdhury, Former ministers
Mahbubur Rahman, Nazim-
uddin Al-Azad, former state
ministers TM Giasuddin
Ahmed, Syed Mohammad
Kaiser and others.

Mizan denies any threat from Raushan

Acting chairman of the
Jatiya Party Mizanur Rahman
Chowdhury yesterday denied
the knowledge of any surrepti-
tious move by a party stalwart
to replace him with Begum
Raushan Ershad, reports UNB.

"It is the leadership of Ho-
ssain Mohammed Ershad, not
anyone else, that really matters
in the Jatiya Party," Mizan said
while reacting to reports that a
JP stalwart, who returned home
after a long stay abroad, was
making clandestine moves to
replace him by Begum Ershad
as acting chief of the party.

Lending no credence to the
report, Mizan Chowdhury, on
the contrary, observed: "Whe-
ther I or anyone else is the
acting chairman of the party, it
is Hossain Mohammed Ershad
who is the guiding spirit and
tower of strength for the party.
He is leading the party from jail.
The party is being run in ac-
cordance with the directives he
is issuing from time to time from
See Page 12 Col 6

NBR order negates govt decision: BGMEA chief

By Staff Correspondent.

President of the Bangladesh
Garments Manufacturers' and
Exporters' Association (BGMEA)
Redwan Ahmed, MP, Monday
slated the recent introduction of
duty and tax rebate on imports
of capital machinery and spares
for the export-oriented indus-
tries.

The BGMEA president, in a
statement, said the move would
be totally ineffective in provid-
ing tax relief on investment.

"On the contrary, it would
create bottlenecks and compli-

cations in sponsoring invest-
ments for setting up export-or-
iented industries, increase red-
tapism and financial engage-
ment," he said.

He said the government de-
cision of allowing the 100 per
cent export-oriented industries
to import capital machinery and
spares free of duty and taxes
without any restrictions had not
been honoured.

The decision making the fa-
cilities enjoyed by the industries
See Page 12 Col 2

'Golden handshake' in Food Ministry hits snag

By Inam Ahmed and Sohel Manzur

The voluntary retirement
programme of the Food Ministry
seems to have hit a snag be-
cause of fund crisis, according
to ministry sources.

The government had taken
up a programme to scale down
the number of staff in the Food
Department last year and had
sought applications from in-
tending officials seeking early
voluntary retirement. As many
as 1200 employees and officials
applied for the option.

But till date, the government
could only muster funds for
giving retirement benefits to
just 700 employees retired un-
der the government's 'Golden-
Handshake' programme.

The rest of the applicants
had been notified that due to
shortage of funds they could
not be accommodated under the
programme, sources said.

The requirement for the pro-
gramme was about Tk 35 crore.

But in the first year, the gov-
ernment could mobilise only Tk
15 crore from its own fund
which was too meagre to meet
the demand.

According to a high official of
the Food Ministry, there has
been an allocation of Tk 18
crore in this year's budget for
the Food Ministry's retrench-
ment programme. But this
money has not yet been trans-
ferred to the ministry's fund
thus making the fate of the pro-
gramme uncertain.

However, a highly placed
source in the ministry said
without elaborating that the
rest of the fund may be avail-
able 'very soon.'

The plan to scale down the
number of staff in the Food
Ministry was taken up last year
following the government's de-
cision to decontrol the food
market and reduce the govern-

ment's role as far as possible.
This was being done in pur-
suance with the BNP govern-
ment's free market economic
policy.

The government, from now
on, would slow down its food
procurement drives and only
maintain an emergency stock.

This would be done mainly
to let the private sector play a
decisive role in dictating the
prices of rice and paddy in the
country.

The policy-makers now feel
that as the country has
achieved self-sufficiency in food,
there is no need for the gov-
ernment to keep a huge grain
reserve and the existing number
of officials.

But Food Ministry sources
said the number of excess
manpower in the food sector
could not be ascertained, since
this is not a 'service-oriented
sector like the railways.'

Muflehur Rahman appointed Foreign Secy

Bangladesh Permanent Rep-
resentative in Geneva Muflehur
Rahman Osmany has been
appointed the Foreign Secre-
tary, authoritative sources here
yesterday said, reports UNB.

Osmany will replace Reaz
Rahman who will proceed to
Washington to head the Bang-
ladesh mission there. Reaz is
expected to join his new as-
signment in December.

Kahrul Anam who has been
appointed one of the Additional
Foreign Secretaries, has already
joined the headquarters. He was
ambassador to Poland before
joining the new post.

According to the new ar-
rangement, the Ministry of
Foreign Affairs will have three
Additional Secretaries instead of
two.

Bangladesh High Commis-
sioner in Pakistan Anwar Ha-
shim is expected to join the
Ministry as Additional Secretary
in the near future.

Mohiuddin Ahmed is now
holding the office of the senior
Additional Foreign Secretary.



Three tiny enthusiasts trying to decipher the Bangla
alphabets on a billboard put up yesterday at Shantinagar as
part of a city campaign in observance of the World Mass
Literacy Day tomorrow.
— Star photo