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NEWS BRIEFS

Ratan Sen murder case judgement

KHULNA, Sept 11: The judgement of the Ratan Sen murder case will be delivered by the Additional District and Sessions Judge tomorrow. Communist leader Ratan Sen was killed by a group of miscreants near the DC office on July 31, 1989. Accused in the case were 15 people including one district BNP leader and an associate professor of a government college, reports UNB.

SC vacation begins

By Staff Correspondent
The Supreme Court goes on its annual vacation from today until October 25. However, a vacation bench will sit during the recess.

BMC reopens Sept 18

From Staff Correspondent

BARISAL, Sept 11: The Barisal Sher-e-Bangla Medical College will reopen on September 18 after one and a half months. The hostels will also open the same day. The Academic Council of the college at a meeting today took the decision. The college was closed on August 3.

Lightning kills one in Cox's Bazar

From Our Correspondent

COX'S BAZAR, Sept 11: One person was killed and another was injured by lightning here in the afternoon today. The victim was identified as Bashir Ahmed, 30, while the injured person was identified as Abul Kaseem, 45. They were workers of a shrimp project near North Nunlachhata.

Train rams push cart in city

An inter-city train, Titas Express from Dinajpur, rammed onto a push cart laden with iron rods at Khilgaon rail crossing in the city yesterday evening minutes before it was to enter the Kamalapur station, reports UNB.

Cabinet approves minimum basic wage of Tk 950 for workers

The government has announced minimum wages of Tk 950 plus other allowances for the workers of nationalised industrial enterprises, reports UNB.

The announcement came after the Cabinet on Friday approved the wage structure recommended by the National Wages and Productivity Commission 1992. Prime Minister Begum Khleda Zia chaired the Cabinet meeting at Bangabhaban.

An official communiqué said yesterday the minimum wages had been fixed at Tk 950 plus other allowances as announced in the government declaration on July 17 this year.

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Jatiya Sangsad goes into session today

By Staff Correspondent

The fifth Jatiya Sangsad (JS) of the country goes into its eleventh session at 4:30 this afternoon.

The JS Business Advisory Committee, in a meeting yesterday morning, decided that the session would be spread over ten working days.

The body, comprising representatives of both Treasury and Opposition benches, also decided that the House will take up two burning issues — ways and means of poverty alleviation and the paths of removing crisis in the country's jute sector — for general debate during the autumn session.

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Arafat, Rabin will sign self-rule deal Monday

JERUSALEM, Sept 11: Israeli Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin and PLO leader Yasser Arafat will go to Washington to sign a historic self-rule deal between Israel and the PLO on Monday, officials in Jerusalem and Tunis said today, report Reuter, AFP.

In Houston, US President Bill Clinton confirmed today

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that Arafat and Rabin will sign the Palestinian autonomy accord.

"Yes they are," said Clinton, when quizzed by journalists if the two leaders would sign the document.

Both of them, he added.

Rabin's spokesman Oded Ben-Ami told Reuters that US Secretary of State Warren

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Dhaka hails PLO, Israel mutual recognition

Bangladesh considered the mutual recognition between PLO and Israel "an encouraging and welcome development" a Foreign Office spokesman said yesterday, reports UNB.

Commenting on the reports of the mutual recognition between PLO and Israel, the spokesman said the development could lead to the creation of a more propitious climate in achieving the ultimate goal of a just, comprehensive and lasting solution of the Middle-East problem.

PLO leader Yasser Arafat and Israeli Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin Friday exchanged letters of recognition paving the way for the Gaza-Jericho autonomy

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PLO Chairman Yasser Arafat (L) Thursday evening signed an official recognition of Israel. Next of him is the Norwegian Foreign Minister Johan Jorgen Holst at the PLO headquarters in Tunis. Standing behind (from L), Director of the Norwegian labour movement Terje Roed Larsen, PLO executive committee member Mahmoud Abbas and PLO member Abu Alaa.

— AFP photo

Commentary

Clinton should show some sensitivity over Bosnia conflict

By S M Ali

President Bill Clinton's reported rebuff to Alja Izetbegovic in declining to set a deadline for possible US air strikes against Serbs if they do not lift the siege of Sarajevo shows the US leader's insensitivity over a conflict that casts a long shadow over the conscience of the mankind.

President Alja Izetbegovic met Clinton last week as a desperate man, trying to save his people in Bosnia from hunger, starvation and further annihilation. With the US-based electronic media covering the tragedy, with gruesome TV pictures beamed around the world, the White House can no longer claim any ignorance of what is going on.

With the UN peace-keeping

operation running from one crisis to another, any action by the United States, either as air strikes or participation in the peace-keeping exercise remains Izetbegovic's last hope.

Maybe the request for a firm deadline for air attacks against Serbs, made by the Bosnian leader, was a little too direct for the leader of the all-powerful superpower in the world. However, the least Clinton could do was to assure the visiting leader that he would give the matter his careful consideration. Instead, according to a Reuter report, he delivered a "rebuff" declining to set the deadline.

In fact, creating new complications and bringing down the credibility of Washington on the Bosnia issue still further — it is

now almost all time low —

Clinton named two more conditions for the US participation in the peace-keeping exercise in Sarajevo. He told the visiting Bosnian leader that the US force would operate "only under NATO, not under any UN command" and that Washington would make the move when (and if) it was approved by the Congress-B both are inexplicable conditions which suggest that they are designed to delay the process of the US involvement in saving whatever is left of the people of Bosnia. No one would be surprised if all the pledges of Clinton to help the people of the strife-torn, bleeding republic eventually go by default, leaving a scar on the conscience of the US president.

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in a nearby car during the fracas, eventually spoke and told

Murtaza Bhutto's supporters to "hold your own public meeting, this one is ours."

Murtaza Bhutto, who is

wanted in Pakistan on terrorism

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Benazir, Murtaza supporters clash

KARACHI, Sept 11: A campaign rally of Benazir Bhutto was disrupted when supporters of her exiled brother, Murtaza Bhutto, stormed the stage, chanted slogans and scuffled with rivals, report AP, Reuter.

Some 200 young men in T-shirts bearing a portrait of Murtaza Bhutto jumped on the campaign platform Friday night shortly before Benazir was to deliver a speech before some 25,000 backers.

The men were eventually forced from the platform, but continued to heckle from the crowd as they carried posters of Murtaza. At least two people were slightly injured.

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in a nearby car during the fracas, eventually spoke and told

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Refugee delegation from Tripura to visit CHT

From Staff Correspondent

CHITTAGONG, Sept 11: A 21-member refugee delegation from the Tripura state of India

is expected to arrive at Khagrachhari on September 14 to see for themselves if the conditions prevailing in the CHT districts are favourable for the repatriation of over 50,000 Chakma refugees, official sources said.

The delegation, comprising the leaders of the refugees and officials of the Tripura district administration, will visit different areas of the hill districts to observe if there is any obstacle impeding return of the landed property of the tribals after their return from across the border, sources added.

The delegation will reach Khagrachhari through the Ramgarh border outpost and is expected to be received by the Secretary of Special Affairs

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8 killed as car bomb explodes outside Youth Cong HQ

NEW DELHI, Sept 11: Eight people were killed and 36 injured when a powerful car bomb exploded outside the office of the youth wing of India's ruling Congress (I) party here yesterday, police said, reports AFP.

Police said the bomb, detonated by remote control, was aimed at youth Congress (I) President Maninder Singh Bitta, a confidant of Prime Minister PV Narasimha Rao, who was leaving the downtown building when the blast occurred.

Police commissioner Mukund Kaushal blamed Sikh militants for the bomb attack.

But no one has so far claimed responsibility for the 2:30 pm (0900 GMT) blast,

the worst since the 1990 blasting of the New Delhi railway station, which killed 10.

"This is the work of terrorists," said Bitta, a Sikh who escaped with minor injuries and was later hospitalised for observation.

It was the third assassination attempt on Bitta, who is slated to address a mammoth youth Congress rally here on September 24. He lost a leg in a similar car bomb attack in Punjab last year.

The explosives were probably high-velocity RDX, also used in the string of blasts in Bombay on March 12 which killed some 300 people, the police chief said.

There is no off season for the lands, he said. "Years ago,

the lands used to get a season's

break from the farmers. But now, extreme poverty has led them to cultivate the land all year round."

In addition, the soil was not getting enough organic fertiliser like cowdung or compost since the rural people use that as fuel for cooking. The villagers suffer from acute fuel shortage nowadays. Once they exploited the forests and trees which almost

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Fertility of country's arable land declines sharply

By Sharier Khan

The fertility level of about 70 per cent of the total 13 million hectares of arable land in the country has gone below the critical point in the past ten years.

An on-going long-term soil fertility study carried out by the Bangladesh Agriculture Research Council (BARC) found that while the fertility level of the cultivable land was over 2.5 per cent during 1982-83, the level

has sharply decreased to 1.5 per cent presently. Soil researchers consider the fertility level critical when it's below 2 to 2.5 per cent.

Chief Scientific Officer of the Soil Research Division, BARC Anwar Iqbal told The Daily Star that the study also found serious zinc deficiency in two million hectares of land and sulphur deficiency in five million hectares.

On an average, almost all the arable lands of the country lack important soil elements like nitrogen and phosphorous," Anwar said. "Only the lands located in the active flood plains or the coastal areas are rich in those elements."

Another short-term field study on drought by BARC, completed a couple of years ago in North Bengal, reveals that the ground water level has fur-

ther fallen in Rajshahi Division and adjacent regions.

"During the dry seasons, the water level in North Bengal as well as its adjacent regions two metres below the normal on an average," the Chief Scientific Officer said. He said scientists have discovered that the water level now remains far below the roots of the trees.

During the summer most tubewells become inoperative

Domestic air services

Industrial Policy being amended

By Special Correspondent

The Industrial Policy is being amended to allow for operation of air services by the private sector on domestic routes.

According to a source in the Ministry of Industries, the amendment is necessary because the existing policy does not provide for private sector participation in the air transportation business which is the restricted list.

The Cabinet last month approved in principle the operation of privately owned air services in the domestic sector. It was decided that the STOL (short take-off and landing) service would be allowed to operate in some specified areas within the country where Biman Bangladesh Airlines does not operate.

According to a Civil Aviation Ministry source, STOL service can be introduced to connect Thakurgaon, Lalmonirhat, Shamsnagar, Iswardi, Patuakhali, Bogra and Mongla with

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