

Inside Today

Article

The Middle-East Problem: Do We See Light at the End of the Tunnel?

Column: On The Record
by Shah AMS Kibria
Page 4

International

PLO wants presence of UN troops in Gaza, Jericho

BJP launches motorcade campaigns
Page 5

Business

Rich states agree on financial help to new Palestinian entity

Industrial nations set to block \$50b IMF plan to Third World
Pages 6, 7

Feature

Living

Glattons, and How to Deal with Them; Of the Carefree Days; Beauty Tips; Cookery
Page 8

Metropolitan

Dhaka Day by Day



An Outlet of Energy in Rhythmic Sweeps
Page 3

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 college 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 Kasem, 45. They were workers of a shrimp project near North Nuniachhata.

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 Khaleda Zia chaired the Cabinet meeting at Bangabhaban.

An official communique 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.

To pay the new wages and other benefits, the government would require an additional amount of Tk 300 crore.

The announcement said the recommendations of the Commission had been approved to give the workers "reasonable wages" consistent with the pay structure of government employees.

The Cabinet also approved the draft of the Nationalised Manufacturing Industrial Enterprises Workers (Conditions of Services) Ordinance 1993 to enable implementation of the recommendations of the National Wages and Productivity Commission.
See Page 12 Col 8

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.

According to the advisory body decision, the legislators will deliberate on each of the two issues for two hours.

Speaker Shaikh Razzak Ali, head of the 15-member advisory committee, will fix the dates for the debates.

Editorial on Page 4

Besides, the session is expected to witness debates on 11 bills. Of these, seven had been introduced in the House during the previous session.

Four ordinances, promulgated by the President following prorogation of the 'budget session', will be discussed.
See Page 12 Col 4

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, reports Reuters. AFP.

In Houston, Texas President Bill Clinton confirmed today

More on Page 5

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

See Page 12 Col 1

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.
See Page 12 Col 1



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 Ala.

— AFP photo

Commentary Clinton should show some sensitivity over Bosnia conflict

By S M Ali

President Bill Clinton's reported rebuff to Alija 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 Alija 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 Reuters 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. 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.



Police stand around the charred debris of an automobile and some bicycles after the car exploded due to a powerful car bomb yesterday outside the headquarters of the offices of the youth wing of the Congress (I) party in New Delhi.

— AFP photo

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, reports AP, Reuters.

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.

Benazir Bhutto, who waited in a nearby car during the fracas, eventually spoke and told Murtaza's supporters to "hold your own public meeting, this one is ours."

Murtaza Bhutto, who is wanted in Pakistan on terrorism

See Page 12 Col 5

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

Nasrullah Khan.

Sources informed that the delegation members would also exchange views with the local tribal leaders.

The delegation was expected in the first week of August but was delayed due to unexplained reasons.

Meanwhile as a confidence building measure, the Khagrachhari district administration has relocated over 3000 non-tribal families from the lands and homesteads owned by the tribals who sought refuge in Tripura.

The re-located non-tribal families were provided with financial help at the rate of Taka 2000/- per family to build houses in other places, administration sources said.

Earlier, the authorities had completed preparations to start

See Page 12 Col 8

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 today, 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,

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.

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

which flung the car filled with explosives about 20 feet away and destroyed some 15 other cars, scooters and cycles.

A huge tree was partly uprooted, while overhead electricity wires snapped. Several cars began to burn, some with occupants inside. Several passengers of a passing bus were also injured.

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.

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 in 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, Shahmarnagar, Iswardi, Patuakhali, Bogra and Mongla with

See Page 12 Col 2

Saifur requests donors not to impose deterrent terms on JMB

Finance Minister M Saifur Rahman yesterday said timely completion of the Jamuna Multipurpose Bridge (JMB) project is a political commitment of the present government accountable to the people and requested the donors not to impose any deterrent conditionalities on it, reports UNB.

He was talking to a delegation of the World Bank appraisal mission on JMB which called on the Finance Minister at his office. Ismail Mubbarak, Chief of the World Bank appraisal mission, led the delegation.

Representatives from the World Bank, the Asian Development Bank and the

See Page 12 Col 6

Huda chairman, Matin SG of JP (Nationalist)

By Staff Correspondent

Former Speaker of Parliament Shamsul Huda Chowdhury has become the Chairman of the newly-formed Jatiya Party (Nationalist) with Dr. MA Matin as the Secretary General.

A Central Organising Committee was announced yesterday, a day after Huda and his allies formally launched their party at a press conference.

Former MP Maj Gen (Retd) Abdul Matin has been made the Vice-Chairman and former State Minister TM Qasuddin Ahmed the Treasurer.

Recently expelled General Secretary of the Jatiya Mahila Party Towfiq Karim assumed the post of co-ordinator for women's affairs jointly with former MP Parvin Monowar.

Shah Ashrafuddin Ahmed

See Page 12 Col 5

JP (N) does not worry Mizan

By Staff Correspondent

Acting chief of the Jatiya Party Mizanur Rahman Chowdhury yesterday said the move by his former party colleagues Shamsul Huda Chowdhury and Dr. MA Matin to float a rival party would not affect the Jatiya Party.

"Let them do their work, it will not affect us," Chowdhury told The Daily Star while giving his reactions after the formation of the Jatiya Party (Nationalist) by the Huda-Matin faction Friday.

"I have nothing to say about Shamsul Huda Chowdhury who has already been expelled from the party for anti-party activities," he added.

He also said this was part of 'their old game' and no prominent member of the JP was involved in their scheme.

SC judges to inspect district courts

By Staff Correspondent

The Supreme Court is to start inspection of the district courts from Monday. Investigations will also be conducted into alleged irregularities in some district civil and criminal courts.

According to a statement issued by the Registrar of the Supreme Court Kazi Golam

See Page 12 Col 7

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 phosphorus," 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 go 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

due to this reason while only about 50 to 60 per cent of the deep tubewells can actually pump water from underneath.

The BARC scientist said that over use of cultivable land due to the huge population pressure was one of the major causes of the reduction of the fertility level.

"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

See Page 12 Col 7