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NEWS BRIEFS

World Maritime Day today

World Maritime Day '93 will be observed today in Bangladesh as elsewhere in the world. The day will be observed in Dhaka by Mercantile Marine Department while Chittagong and Mongla port authorities have chalked out programmes on the occasion at Chittagong and Khulna on Thursday, reports UNB.

Spurious tonic seized in city

Police seized a huge quantity of spurious tonic from a factory at Lalbagh area in the capital yesterday and arrested two persons in this connection. Acting on a tip, a special squad of the detective branch of police raided the factory at Aga Nawab Dewri road this afternoon and seized the spurious and sub-standard drugs that included Baby Grel Juice, Ascor Vita, Vitamin C and Hime Fruit Vita. They arrested owners of the factory Mohammad Rafiqul Islam and Hekim Shafiqul Islam and also seized their manufacturing machines along with spare parts, reports UNB.

Sukhumi falls to rebels, Shevardnadze in hiding



Eduard Shevardnadze

TBILISI (Georgia), Sept 27: After 12 days of intense fighting, Abkhazian separatists captured the key Georgian city of Sukhumi on Monday. Georgian leader Eduard Shevardnadze, who led the failed government

the government trapped on the devastated city's outskirts. Shevardnadze, whose whereabouts were not known, sent a message to his office in the capital Tbilisi that the city had fallen. The Abkhazian press

Yeltsin ordered the Defense Ministry to give 'maximum' assistance to get Shevardnadze safely out of Abkhazia, Russian officials said Monday.

More than 3,000 people have been killed since he region's nationalist leaders declared sovereignty a year ago, and over 100,000 have been made homeless by the fighting.

Under the terms of a Russian-brokered peace plan in July, Georgia had withdrawn more than 80 per cent of its troops and equipment from Sukhumi, leaving it vulnerable when Abkhazians attacked on Sept 16.

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TBILISI, Sept 27: Hundreds of civilians living in Sukhumi were killed by Abkhaz rebels today, Shevardnadze said in a statement. Shevardnadze was evacuated from Sukhumi shortly before it fell and taken to Gulripshi some 12 kilometers down the Black Sea coast, reports AFP.

defense, admitted defeat and was in hiding, reports AP.

Abkhazian forces fought their way downtown and raised their flag over city hall, keeping reinforcement troops sent by

service in Moscow said he was in hiding in the town of Gulripshi, nine miles from Sukhumi, but the report could not be confirmed independently. Russian President Boris

Yeltsin rules out any compromise

MOSCOW, Sept 27: President Boris Yeltsin ruled out any compromise with his hard-line opponents in Parliament, saying Monday he would not accept any plan for simultaneous presidential and parliamentary elections, reports AP.

Speaking on national TV, Yeltsin rebuffed suggestions from some opponents and moderates that he accept a compromise to end the political crisis triggered when he dissolved Parliament last week and ordered new elections.

He continued to insist that parliamentary elections will be held in December, to be followed by presidential elections in June. He said the alternative would be a non-functioning government.

Yeltsin's televised address came after demoralized lawmakers appealed to the Russian armed forces to revolt and oust him. But the lawmakers' support continued to dwindle as the military stood firm behind Yeltsin.

Yeltsin was cheered by thousands of people at a concert in Red Square on Sunday, and thousands more marched through the Russian capital in a major show of support for the President.

The jittery lawmakers claimed early Monday that Yeltsin ordered riot police to storm Parliament, where they have been holed up since Tuesday. But there was no attack, and the police appeared to be set off by a backfiring truck.

Conditions inside the Parliament building kept deter-

iorating, adding to the isolation and discomfort of the holdouts. Telephone, electricity and hot water has been cut off, so Parliament has fallen back on an underpowered reserve generator. Virtually all lights and all elevators have been turned off.

Guards used chairs and tables to set up barricades in the corridors after rumours of the imminent government attack swept the building. Such rumours have repeatedly gripped Parliament, but Yeltsin has said he will not use force to end the protest.

Later Monday, police ringing Parliament stopped people entering the grounds in an apparent effort to check off the protest. Police said people inside would be allowed to leave freely.

Lawmakers claimed to have received telegrams of support from some army and navy units, but there was no sign of any military support for the hard-liners. The mood in the building, called the White House, was increasingly despondent as about 100 lawmakers morosely deliberated what to do next.

Some 300 supporters, many of them elderly, slept on carpets in the corridors of Parliament. A small group of volunteers, armed with rifles and dressed in military fatigues, stood guard.

There was no sign of trouble in Moscow on Monday as people headed for work and businesses and shops opened as normal.

The lawmakers, headed by Vice President Alexander



Dissident Russian President Alexander Rutskoi sits holding his forehead yesterday in an almost completely dark Congress hall in the Russian Parliament. — AFP photo

Split in Sharif's camp will benefit Benazir: Analysts

ISLAMABAD, Sept 27: Ten days ahead of national elections, former premier Benazir Bhutto is benefitting from a split in her rival's camp, diplomats and analysts said today, reports AFP.

This time her Pakistan People's Party (PPP) stands a good chance of improving its performance against the rival Pakistan Muslim League (PML), diplomats said.

The PML, backed by the country's Islamic movement, had two years ago thwarted her attempts to return to power.

Sharif defeated Bhutto in 1990 at the head of a nine-party Islamic Democratic Alliance (IDA), but most components in the loose coalition defected during his 30 months in office.

In the wake of his acrimo-

nious power tussle with the then-president Ghulam Ishaq Khan, the PML also split and Sharif resigned July 18, resulting in a snap election.

But most observers agree that the worst damage to Sharif's electoral prospects in the October 6 to October 9 elections was being caused by an apparent loss of Islamic votes after he and vocal fundamentalist leader Qazi Hussain Ahmed parted ways.

Ahmed has now formed his Pakistan Islamic Front (PIF), which is emerging as a third political force.

In his vitriolic campaign against both Sharif and Bhutto, Qazi is offering an 'alternate' Islamic leadership over the previous 'looters and plunderers'.

The PML splinter group, led by former planning minister Hamid Nasser Chattha, has

joined with the PPP which, according to political observers, gives further strength to Bhutto in the most populous Punjab Province, where a key tussle is on the cards.

While the southern Sindh Province remains her stronghold, Bhutto has entered into an electoral arrangement in the North West Frontier Province with an important religious party Jamiat Ulama Islam (JUI) led by Fazalur Rahman.

Analysts said that while no party was expected to emerge with a clear majority in the less developed Baluchistan, Sharif's power-base Punjab has become the battle ground for the main contenders. No reliable survey was available so far, but most observers say Punjab with 115 seats in the 217-member house will decide who wins the premiership.

BSF men kill one, injure another

From Our Correspondent

SATKHIRA, Sept 27: Indian Border Security Force (BSF) guards intruded into Charabari village in Kolaroa thana under this district and shot one villager dead Sunday night.

Abul Kasem, 38, a brother of the dead, identified as Abdul Gafur, 28, was injured critically in the shooting by four BSF men.

Gafur and injured Kasem are the sons of one Rajab Ali Moral. Sources said the BSF men from Amudla camp from 24 Parganas district attacked Gafur's house and dragged him towards their camp which was about 300 yards from his house.

The BSF members shot Gafur while his elder brother Kasem resisted them from taking away his brother, sources said.

Kasem received bullet injury in his thigh and was admitted to the Sadar hospital in a critical condition.

Walkout marks JS prorogation

By Staff Correspondent

The eleventh session of the country's fifth Jatiya Sangsad (JS) was prorogued yesterday with the Opposition benches of the House totally empty.

Earlier, the Opposition parties present in the house yesterday — the Awami League (AL), the Jatiya Party (JP), the Jamaat-e-Islami, Bangladesh and the Islami Oikya Jote (IOJ) — staged stormy, separate walkouts protesting the chair's alleged interference to an AL member's right to give a personal explanation on the floor.

The Awami League members, led by acting Leader of the Opposition Abdus Samad Azad, walked out first amidst a pandemonium following the winding up statement of Mojibar Rahman, State Minister for

Finance. In reply to the Opposition's criticism of the Financial Institution Bill, 1993.

Abdus Samad Azad, immediately before staging the walkout, became very agitated and asked, at the top of his voice, Deputy Speaker Humayun Khan Pannu, who was presiding over the session, to get out of the House. Samad Azad's colleagues in the AL bench were also very loud against the chair at that time.

The JP, the Jamaat and the IOJ followed the AL. These parties, before staging their separate walkouts, also accused the Deputy Speaker for creating 'such an undesirable situation.'

Deputy Leader of the House Prof Badruddoza Chowdhury, See Page 12 Col 1

Khaleda leaves for New York tonight

Prime Minister Begum Khaleda Zia leaves here for New York tonight to address the current session of the United Nations General Assembly (UNGA), reports UNB.

Begum Zia is scheduled to address the 48th session of UNGA on Friday.

The UNGA began at the headquarters of the world body a week ago with a 153-item agenda covering the international political and socio-economic situation.

The Prime Minister, who will lead a 35-member delegation to the UNGA, is expected to highlight in her speech some stirring issues posing a threat to world peace and leading to violation of human rights, particularly the tragic situation in the Balkans.

See Page 12 Col 8

Clinton for moratorium on N-arms testing

UNITED NATIONS, Sept 27: President Clinton, in his first address to the United Nations, urged all nations Monday to heed an international moratorium on testing nuclear weapons — remarks clearly aimed at China, reports AP.

He also pledged that his government would 'remain engaged and lead' and not turn its back on the world's problems.

'It is a moment of miracles,' Clinton proclaimed, citing peace accords between old enemies in the Middle East and South Africa and the fledgling democracies in Russia and in other formerly totalitarian states.

Still, Clinton added: 'Serious threats remain... Even small conflicts can take on murderous proportions.'

Clinton, in his speech to the General Assembly, announced plans to negotiate an international treaty that would ban production of fuels for nuclear weapons.

'One of our most urgent priorities must be attacking the proliferation of methods of mass destruction, whether they are nuclear, chemical or biological,' Clinton said.

He denounced isolationism and protectionism, pledging new US efforts to combat nuclear proliferation, improve global conflict resolution and promote sustainable development.

In a clear reference to US intelligence reports that China is on the verge of setting off a new underground explosion, Clinton

referred to his July 3 moratorium on US nuclear tests. 'I renew my call on the nuclear states to abide by that moratorium as we negotiate nuclear testing for all time,' he said.

Clinton, noting the UN's expanded role as a peacekeeper, said there should be still conditions for creating peacekeeping operations.

He said basic questions must be answered before troops can be committed: 'Is there a real threat? Does the mission have a clear objective? Can and end point be identified for those who wish to participate? And how much does it cost?'

Clinton also: — Praised the international relief effort in Somalia, saying, 'the United States and the United Nations have worked together to achieve a stunning humanitarian rescue.'

'UN peacekeepers from over two dozen nations remain today, including some brave Americans who have lost their lives... to ensure that anarchy and starvation may not return,' he said.

— Called for the creation of a UN commissioner for human rights. Human rights are not something conditional, founded by culture, but something universal granted by God.

— Recognized Cambodia's new elected government — a coalition that brings the Khmer Rouge's former allies together with their mutual enemy of 13 years, the former Vietnamese — installed government of Hun Sen.

UNGA begins debate

UNITED NATIONS, Sept 27: The UN General Assembly began its annual general debate here Monday, with US President Bill Clinton and Japanese Prime Minister Morihiro Hosokawa as first day's speakers, reports AFP.

Brazil's foreign minister, Celso Amorim, officially opened the session as is traditionally the case.

He will be followed by almost 50 heads of state and government and 100 foreign ministers who will address the 48th session of the UN General Assembly over the next three weeks.

'Upon opening the debate of this 48th session of the General Assembly we are, once again, swept by winds of change,' Amorim said.

'And the fresh breeze that brings forth the message that understanding and peace may finally prevail over selfish interests blows from the East, cradle of some of the most valuable moral lessons on which our planetary civilization is built.'

Amorim welcomed the Israel-Palestine Liberation Organization accord reached earlier this month and Brazil's support for Russian President Boris Yeltsin, saying he was confident the transition to democracy would succeed.

'It is, therefore, with renewed faith in the ability of mankind to find the solutions to the problems it continuously creates for itself that we begin our work,' Amorim said.

Cabinet okays Housing Policy

The cabinet yesterday approved the draft Housing Policy that aims at making housing facility accessible to the people of all strata of society on suitably located land at affordable price, reports UNB.

An official handout said the approval came at the regular weekly meeting on the cabinet held at the Bangabhaban with Prime Minister Begum Khaleda Zia in the chair.

The policy, placed by the Ministry of Works, also aims at accelerating housing building in urban and rural areas with major emphasis on the needs of the low and middle-income groups.

It envisages development of institutional and legal framework to facilitate housing improvement and enhancement of the character, quality and environment of the existing residential areas.

The cabinet also approve the draft of a bill titled Institute of Postgraduate Studies in Agriculture (IPSA) Act 1993. It aims at establishing IPSA into an autonomous institution.

Pak woman jailed for smuggling gold

A Pakistani woman was convicted yesterday of smuggling gold into Bangladesh and sentenced to four years in prison, reports UNB.

A special tribunal also fined accused Rashida, 32, a sum of Tk 1 lakh or suffer another three years' simple imprisonment.

Mother of 4 children, Rashida pleaded guilty during her trial.

According to the prosecution, Rashida landed at the Zia International Airport from a PIA flight on September 18 last year. She was suspected, searched and found carrying 401 gold chains weighing about 3,200 grams worth Tk 10.28 lakh concealed in her attire.

'Taka to become stronger with current account convertibility'

By Staff Correspondent

Currency convertibility would most likely strengthen the Taka — as experienced in other countries — rather than depreciating the local monetary unit, a former Indian central bank official said on Monday.

Inflow of foreign exchange through increased remittances via the official channels and the return of capital flight money led to a strengthening of the Indian rupee after the current account convertibility was introduced during the budget in March this year, S Venkataramanan, former governor of the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) pointed out.

The enhanced foreign exchange inflow-led appreciation

of the rupee, he said, even forced the RBI to intervene to keep the rupee weaker.

'I think the Bangladeshi Taka would also become stronger' with the current account convertibility, scheduled to be introduced from October 1, he told a group of leading bankers, businessmen and officials attending a discussion meeting on the 'deregulation of foreign exchange.'

However, he cautioned that the strengthening of the local currency would start a 'nightmare' for the exporters. He suggested that something in the line of providing subsidies to the exporters may have to be considered under those circumstances.

Organised by the Metropolitan Chamber of Commerce and Industry (MCCI) and held at the chamber conference room, the discussion produced a lively exchange between Bangladesh Bank officials, bankers and leading industrialists and businessmen. The session was chaired by MCCI president Latifur Rahman.

The business leaders sought clarifications if trade and service account convertibility would provide full freedom for currency conversions; on how the market rate of foreign exchange would be determined; and also expressed their apprehensions about the ability of commercial banks to deal with the new system.

The central bank officials and bankers, on the other hand, noted that current account convertibility would mean full convertibility upto a certain limit. They also alleged all apprehensions about the ability of the commercial banks — the foreign exchange authorised dealers — to cope with the situation.

Deputy Governor of Bangladesh Bank Syed Kamaluddin observed that convertibility and free float of a currency are two different things, but they must go hand in hand for sustained growth. Convertibility on trade account, he said, was achieved sometime ago and there are no restrictions.

Service account convertibility, he added, would include travel, educational and medical treatment expenses abroad and the banks would be allowed to provide any currency, upto a certain limit, without authorisation of the central bank.

He indicated that convertibility on trade and service accounts would be administered through a managed float for the time being, in which the central bank would fix their own buy/sell rates for foreign exchange.

This would be done to provide a smooth transition and to avoid volatility in the market and liquidity problems and it would be done without a

'chilling effect'.

Venkataramanan, also a former Finance Secretary of India, strongly advocated the 'free float' of the currency as opposed to a 'managed float' and allowing the market to set the rate of foreign exchange.

However, he added that transition to full convertibility has to be at a pace and in a manner dictated by a country's unique circumstance.

He also cautioned against totally dismantling exchange control mechanisms before making it sure that it does not have to be re-imposed again.

Salman Rahman, vice-chairman of Beximco and a former president of the MCCI, See Page 12 Col 3