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NEWS BRIEFS

President assents to two bills

President Abdur Rahman Biswas assented on Monday to two bills passed by the Jatiya Sangsad, said an official handout yesterday. The bills are the Industrial Relations (Amendment) Bill 1993 and the Supreme Court Judges (Leave, Pension and Privileges) (Amendment) Bill 1993, reports UNB.

Hasina improving

The condition of Awami League president Sheikh Hasina, now undergoing treatment in Singapore, is improving. She is under constant observation of doctors at the Singapore University Medical Hospital, according to a message received at the Awami League office in Dhaka yesterday, reports UNB.

Probe body on RU incident

The government has formed a one-member enquiry commission with retired Justice of the Supreme Court Justice Abdul Wadud Chowdhury to enquire into the incident of clashes in the Rajshahi University campus on September 19, an official handout said yesterday, reports BSS.

One electrocuted in Jhenidah

JHENIDAH, Sept 28: An army sepoys was electrocuted at his in-law's house at Soyali village in the Sadar thana today. Police said Asaduzzaman, 35, of istlapur village was electrocuted while plugging in TV set, reports UNB.

Troops seal off parliament with trucks, razor wire

Yeltsin gives 24hrs for surrender



A Muscovite testing the razor-wire set up around the Russian parliament building overnight yesterday by security forces in order to totally seal off access to the compound. — AFP photo

MOSCOW, Sept 28: Hundreds of armed, helmeted riot police surrounded the Russian parliament Tuesday as the government gave hard-liners holed up inside an ultimatum to end their occupation, reports AP.

Senior police officers used loudspeakers to broadcast the order to surrender in 24 hours as President Boris Yeltsin's government mounted its biggest show of force yet against hard-liners who have occupied parliament for a week. The ultimatum expires around 0800 GMT Wednesday.

Dozens of guards and volunteers inside the parliament complex piled rocks and manned barricades as commanders barked orders. Russian Orthodox priests in flowing black robes blessed the defenders with crosses.

"Motherland or death," the parliament supporters chanted.

Some of those inside the parliament used loudspeakers to urge police to defect, but their appeals were ignored.

Both sides watched each other warily in pouring rain.

At least 2,000 riot police were deployed around the building, stopping anyone from entering but allowing people already inside to leave if they wished. Police used trucks and razor-sharp barbed wire to block roads leading to parliament.

It was not clear if the massive show of force would lead to violence or if the government was stepping up the psychological war of nerves with the hard-liners inside parliament.

Police commanders at parliament told The Associated Press they might storm the building if the defenders did not surrender their weapons.

First Deputy Prime Minister Vladimir Shumeiko said the government wanted the building cleared. "No one needs this hotbed of tension," he said.

Chairman of the blocked parliament Ruslan Khasbulatov said today he was not going to give in to pressure to leave the building and that any attempt

to storm it would meet armed resistance.

"We are not going to use arms (first) but if there is an attempt to storm it, we will rebuff it. Blood spilled will fall on the heads of those who support the coup d'état," he told a news conference in the White House building.

But Yeltsin's press spokesman, Vyacheslav Kostikov, said the government had no plans to attack the parliament building.

The Interior Ministry said the hard-liners in parliament were becoming increasingly desperate and had ignored orders to surrender their guns.

Yeltsin on Monday rejected proposals for simultaneous presidential and parliamentary elections as a way to end the standoff, which began a week ago when he dissolved parliament.

Yeltsin's tough stand and the constant presence of hundreds of flak-jacketed riot police appeared to be eroding the will of his opponents, who are weak.

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51.66 pc pass Dhaka Board HSC examinations

By Staff Correspondent

with 948 marks.

In the Humanities, Islamic Studies and Music Group Rumana Huq of Viqarunnissa Noon College (M-2567) stood first with letter marks in four subjects. She was followed by Shahidur Rahman of Dhaka

Merit lists on back page

Md Abu Zafar of Dhaka College, bearing Roll 98042, topped the combined merit list in the Science, Agriculture Science and Home Economics Group by obtaining 960 marks with distinctions in four subjects.

Mirza Mohammad Mamun Sadat secured the third place in this group scoring 901 marks.

In the Commerce Group, Shahnewaz Ahmed Shishir of Notre Dame College secured the top place with 852 marks. Mohammad Imtiaz of Dhaka Commerce College was second with 848 marks.

The third place went to

Mohammad Sohel Mostafa of Notre Dame College with a score of 839.

The overall pass percentage showed that the female candidates did better than male candidates in this year's examinations. Of the 37,833 female candidates, 21,212 examinees came out successful with a pass percentage of 56.07 while the male pass percentage was 49.42 per cent.

Of the successful students 11,639 received first division, 27, 883 second division and 18,536 third division.

The Science Group, as usual, has the highest pass percentage (61.04), followed by Commerce Group with 60.97 per cent and Humanities with 45.85 per cent.

Govt refixes sales price of rice

The government has refixed the sales price of rice considering the difference of prices in various parts of the country, reports UNB.

The price of rice, selling from food godowns, has been refixed at Tk 8 per kg in all the districts of Chittagong division and Tk 7.50 per kg in districts of Dhaka and Barisal divisions instead of present rate of Tk 10 per kg.

The rate will be effective immediately, says an official handout here yesterday.

The government has also decided to sell out foodgrain from government godowns through auction or tender in the districts of Rajshahi and Khulna.

The decision of selling rice through tender or auction was taken as the open market price in those divisions is lower than those of others.

BNP may drop its three central body members

By Asiuzzaman

At least three members of the powerful central standing committee of the ruling Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP) are likely to be dropped when a new committee is announced in the middle of next month, party sources said.

"Three posts in the 15-member committee already remain vacant and another three members are to be dropped during the reshuffle," one source holding a cabinet post told The Daily Star.

The present committee members are party chairperson Begum Khaleda Zia, Law Minister Mirza Golam Hafiz, Deputy Leader of the House Professor Badruddoza Chowdhury, Secretary General and Local Government Minister Abdus Salam Talukder, Irrigation Minister Md Majid-ul-Huq, Foreign Minister ASM Mostafizur Rahman, Finance Minister Md Saifur Rahman, Communications Minister

Col (Retd) Oli Ahmed, Abdul Baten, RA Gani, Emran Ali Sarkar and Chief Whip Khandakar Delwar Hossain.

Energy Minister Dr Khan-daker Mosarrat Hossain, Works Minister Barrister Rafiqul Islam Mian, Information Minister Nazmul Huda, Telecommunications Minister Tarique Islam and one of the vice-chairmen Chowdhury Tanbir Ahmed Siddiqi are learnt to have been already taken in the standing committee.

But the source declined to name those likely to be dropped.

Prime Minister Begum Khaleda Zia is likely to announce fresh party committees after her return from the United States, the source said yesterday.

"For the past couple of weeks she has been busy with preparations for her trip to the United Nations headquarters and little

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AL call to build resistance against Jamaat-Shibir

Awami League yesterday called for building a resistance movement against anti-liberation forces to protect independence and sovereignty of the country, reports UNB.

Leaders of the largest opposition party at a rally warned the government that they would take to street to solve the issue of communal politics, if not solved in Parliament.

The city unit of AL organised the rally at Bangabandhu Avenue to protest a spate of terrorism unleashed, what they said, by Jamaat-Shibir in educational institutions, including Chittagong, Rajshahi and Islamic universities.

AL General Secretary Zillur Rahman told the gathering that killings and acts of terrorism had spread throughout the country and against the government of patronising the terrorists.

Convertibility likely from mid-Oct

Star Report

The Taka will be made fully convertible on current account from the middle of October, not Oct 1 as was previously announced. A competent source in the Finance Ministry said the delay was due to some unfinished preparatory steps.

The measure will be implemented both in the trade and service accounts.

Meanwhile, the code of conduct to check any malpractices by the dealers in the exchange market, has already been finalised.

Once the convertibility takes into effect, the market will determine the rates of foreign exchange, but the Bangladesh Bank will always quote a buying and selling rate for the banks to fall back upon in case of any unprecedented fluctuations in exchange rates.

10 hurt as police clash with hawkers at New Market

By Staff Correspondent

The convertibility of the Taka in the current account, now fixed for the middle of October, is expected to be more of a managed float than a free float of the currency.

However, it will be a crucial benchmark in the liberalisation

The Daily Star Round Table

By Staff Correspondent

of the economy, a process that has started since 1992.

This was disclosed by the Industries Minister Zahiruddin Khan at The Daily Star Round Table on "Taka Convertibility: Bane or Boon" held at the Dhaka Sheraton hotel yesterday.

His efforts should be to replicate the Hong Kong model where the market is allowed to float within a limited range," the Star photo

minister said.

"Convertibility does not mean free float," he observed. The three-hour-long discussion, moderated by Mahfuz Anam, Executive Editor of The Daily Star, was participated by 19 experts.

They included the Minister for Industries A M Zahiruddin Khan, former Governor of the Reserve Bank of India S. Venkitaramanan, top executives of banks, chambers and business leaders.

Zahiruddin said the people will have more confidence in the Taka and will know its real value against international currencies after the convertibility.

Previously only the central bank (Bangladesh Bank) used to trade in foreign currency but

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40-member SAARC team to observe Pak elections

A 40-member delegation from four SAARC countries including Bangladesh will visit Pakistan to observe the parliamentary elections there scheduled for October 6, according to a press release here yesterday.

The visit to Pakistan has been organised by the International Centre for Ethnic Studies (ICES), Colombo, Sri Lanka. In the past ICES coordinated similar missions in Pakistan, India, Nepal, Bangladesh and Sri Lanka.

The members of the delegation to Pakistan have been drawn from India, Nepal, Bangladesh and Sri Lanka. The 10 members from Bangladesh to the observers' mission are Justice Kemaluddin Hossain, Fakhruddin Ahmed, Justice K.M. Subhan, Prof Zillur Rahman, Md Siddiqui, K.C. Mostafa, Seraia Hossain, Fawzia Kartim Firze, Sultan Kamal, Mohboob Akther Mahmud and Dr. Gowher Rizvi.

Its other demands include restoration of the upazila system, and a halt to harassment of the JP leaders and workers.

This is the first-ever hartal called by the JP since it was ousted from power in December 1990. The programme was en-

JP calls hartal Oct 10

By Staff Correspondent

The Jatiya Party has called a nationwide day-long hartal on October 10 to press home its seven-point demands including Parliamentary elections under a caretaker government and release of party chairman H M Ershad.

"We waited for two and a half years expecting a democratic behaviour from the government, but instead we suffered from repression which forced us to go for action," Mizanur Rahman Chowdhury told newsmen at a crowded press conference at Hotel Sundarban yesterday.

The JP will also observe a demonstration day on October 8 and organise torch procession on October 9 in support of the hartal, he said.

Its other demands include restoration of the upazila system, and a halt to harassment of the JP leaders and workers.

This is the first-ever hartal called by the JP since it was ousted from power in December 1990. The programme was en-

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The Daily Star Round Table on "Taka Convertibility: Bane or Boon" was held at the Dhaka Sheraton hotel yesterday. The participants (seen in the picture) are (from left) Kamaluddin Ahmed, Deputy Governor, Bangladesh Bank, Mahfuz Anam, Executive Editor, The Daily Star (moderator of the Round Table), A M Zahiruddin Khan, the Industries Minister, Azimur Rahman, Chairman, Mediaworld Ltd, S Venkitaramanan, former Governor, Reserve Bank of India, Latifur Rahman, MCCI President.

— Star photo

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