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NEWS BRIEFS

ALCWC meets today

By Staff Correspondent An emergency meeting of the Central Working Committee of the Awami League will be held today at 29, Mintia Road. The meeting will be presided over by party chief Sheikh Hasina.

Two women commit suicide in city

Two women allegedly committed suicide in the city yesterday, police said. Johura Khatun, (40), a housewife, hanged herself from a tree near their house at 156, South Pirbagh to get rid of stomach pain, according to family sources. She was reportedly suffering from gastric ulcers. In another incident, a 15-year-old maid also hanged herself from a grill at the house of Habibur Rahman at 63, East Rampura. The cause of her committing suicide could not be known, reports UNB.

Rabin in Singapore

SINGAPORE, Oct 15: Israeli Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin arrived in Singapore Friday on a two-day visit. A statement from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs said Rabin would meet with Prime Minister Goh Chok Tong and elder statesman Lee Kuan Yew. Rabin arrived from Indonesia, and his stopover in Singapore was announced only after he reached here, reports AP.

1000 die of cholera in Afghanistan

GENEVA, Oct 15: Nearly 1,000 people have died of cholera in Afghanistan since the start of 1993, the highest national toll of the year so far, the World Health Organisation (WHO) said today. A spokesman said the UN agency was preparing to launch an appeal for one million dollars to ensure safe drinking water and better sanitation to combat the disease in Afghanistan, reports Reuters.

NA elects Prime Minister Tuesday

Benazir, Sharif reject power-sharing

ISLAMABAD, Oct 15: Pakistan rivals Benazir Bhutto and Nawaz Sharif vowed to strengthen the democratic process but rejected any power-sharing, as the new parliament met today amid a tussle for power, reports AFP.

The newly-elected National Assembly was inducted by outgoing Speaker Gohar Ayub Khan who administered a collective oath after which the deputies signed the membership register individually. The hung parliament's crucial sitting is scheduled for Tuesday, when the House is to elect a prime minister for the next five years.

Analysts said a preview of

their battle for the top slot is due Sunday when the Assembly elects its Speaker and Deputy Speaker.

The contest for speakership by secret ballot is expected to end suspense generated by an inconclusive electoral result, with independents and fringe groups in a position to tilt the delicate balance either way.

Sharif's Pakistan Muslim League (PML) has nominated Ayub Khan to face Yousaf Reza Gilani, a nominee of Bhutto's Pakistan People's Party (PPP), in the race for the Speaker's office.

Ruling out power-sharing between PPP and PML, a formula which unconfirmed reports said had been proposed

by caretaker premier Moeen Qureshi, the PPP leader said "Things will be decided on the floor of the House."

The people have given their verdict, which must be respected, the 40-year old former premier told reporters when she came out after the oath-taking.

She denied claims by the opposition that her party had initiated a proposal for PPP and PML to rule for equal periods, on a rotating basis, until the next elections.

Bhutto called on the elected representatives to discharge their duty to the nation selflessly, saying "this is no time to grab favours and make money" a reference to allegations by

both camps that the other was buying support of members.

Pledging to promote democratic reforms Bhutto said, "we want clean politics, we don't believe in bargaining."

Sharif talking to reporters, said the country was on the path of democracy and "it is our duty to strengthen the democratic process."

He also dismissed the power-sharing idea saying "We have our own programme and people have given their support to PML."

Sharif said his party did not believe in the politics of confrontation and destabilisation and called on all sides to work

Magistrate stabbed by magistrate dies

By Staff Correspondent

Magistrate Shahida Chaudhury, reportedly stabbed by another magistrate a week before, died in the city's Combined Military Hospital (CMH) yesterday.

The accused Magistrate Liaquat Ali Khan, now freed on bail, denied his involvement to police on October 8, the day of the incident, and repeated his denial in the Dhaka Metropolitan Magistrate's court on the following day.

Shahida, 33, mother of a one and a half-year old daughter, was severely stabbed in the flat of Squadron Leader Rezaul Karim, her brother-in-law, at Kurmitola Airforce Officers Quarters on October 8. She was rushed to the CMH where she died yesterday afternoon.

Relatives said, Liaquat who was acquainted with Shahida, came to meet her in the morning on the day and after an altercation stabbed her in the drawing room. Liaquat was later handed over to the Cantonment police, they added.

Shahida was a Magistrate of Mymensingh Sadar Thana and Liaquat a Magistrate of Sherpur Sadar Thana.

Liaquat told the Chief Metropolitan Magistrate Court that Shahida was his wife and he married her in December last. However, Shahida's relatives denied it saying that her husband was Dr S M Bulbul, a teacher of the Bangladesh Agricultural University, Mymensingh.

Shahida along with her mother, Sultana Chaudhury, came to her sister's residence a day before the incident, they said.

A case was registered with the Dhaka Cantonment police.

Khasbulatov, Rutsenko charged with 'organising mass disorder'

MOSCOW, Oct 15: Former Russian vice-president Alexander Rutsenko and former speaker of Parliament Ruslan Khasbulatov have been charged with "organising mass disorder," Interfax news agency reported today, says AFP.

The offence carries a prison sentence of between two and 15 years.

Former Security Minister Viktor Barannikov was also charged in connection with the abortive revolt by parliamentary hardliners against President Boris Yeltsin. Interfax said, quoting the prosecutor general's office.

Another report says: A referendum on a new draft constitution for Russia will be held on December 12, at the same time as the general elections, under a decree signed by President Boris Yeltsin today.

If approved, the new constitution, replacing the Soviet-Era basic law of 1978, will come into effect on December 12.

Debts hinder pace of privatisation

By Inam Ahmed

Privatisation of the public sector enterprises is progressing very slowly because of the huge outstanding liabilities of these units.

According to high officials of the Finance Ministry, the issue of the debts has become the key factor in the process as prospective buyers are not ready to bear those.

"A political decision is now needed to expedite the process," the source said. "The government should either write off the accumulated liabilities or find a fresh solution to the process."

The government had a plan to divest 25 enterprises this fiscal year. These include ten textiles, five jute and ten other units. However, the target is likely to remain unfulfilled because of the bottlenecks.

The present government so far has managed to sell off only three major units to the private buyers.

Most units have huge current expenditure liabilities which the private entrepreneurs refuse to shoulder. On the other hand, the government has not yet taken any decision on the issue, sources said.

Textile Ministry sources said it had floated tenders for selling some of its units, but the bids were much lower than the estimated value of the enterprises. As a result the ministry could not come to any decision on the bids.

The private entrepreneurs want that the loans of the units against salary or bonus to the workers of the loss-making units be written off.

PM opens Tourism Month today

By Staff Correspondent

"Tourism Month" will be observed in the country beginning today. Organised for the first time, the month will endeavour to create tourism consciousness among the people and also to promote growth of the domestic tourism industry.

Prime Minister Begum Khaleda Zia will formally inaugurate the month through a programme at the Osmani Memorial Hall in the afternoon.

The Prime Minister in a message on the eve of the month expressed the hope that it would be possible to attract greater number of foreign tourists by publicising the places of tourist attractions including heritage and culture of Bangladesh.

She said that promotion of tourism will lead to increase in foreign exchange earning like many other countries.

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Nelson Mandela



Frederik de Klerk

Mandela, de Klerk share Nobel Peace Prize

OSLO, Oct 15: Nelson Mandela and FW de Klerk won the Nobel Peace Prize Friday for working "to peacefully end apartheid" and push South Africa toward democracy, reports AP.

"By looking ahead to South African reconciliation, instead of back at the deep wounds of the past, they have shown personal integrity and great political courage," the Norwegian Nobel Committee said in awarding the \$25,000 prize to be shared by the two men.

Committee chairman Francois Sejerstad said he hoped the award would lead to less violence in South Africa, where daily bloodshed has taken thousands of lives. He acknowledged that some people may not consider de Klerk and Mandela men of peace.

"We know we are taking a risk," he said, after announcing that anti-apartheid activists had taken the prize for the third time since 1960.

"These two winners' political past has included attitudes that could be criticised," based on the criteria that we used to award the peace prize," he said. "But... these are not saints. They are politicians in a complicated reality and it is the total picture that was decisive... together with what they have achieved recently."

De Klerk, 57, descended from generation of white conservative Afrikaners, changed the course of history when he became

President in August 1989. He immediately began dismantling the apartheid laws of race division and white privilege and offered the majority blacks a role in governing their country.

"White domination will have to disappear. Otherwise, there will never be peace in South Africa," de Klerk said during his first days in office.

On Friday, he said he accepted the award "with great humility" and predicted it would serve as an inspiration.

Mandela, leader of the African National Congress, emerged without bitterness from 27 "long, lonely, wasted years" in prison in 1990 saying his goal was the same as it has been when he launched the AC guerrilla wing in 1960: "A democratic, non-racial South Africa."

Mandela, 75, said in London earlier this week that if he and de Klerk won the prize, "it would be an acknowledgement of the role of the government and the ANC to pull South Africa from apartheid to democracy."

The Johannesburg headquarters of the ANC erupted in cheering and dancing when party members saw the announcement on television.

Some ANC supporters, protesting outside a courthouse where two whitemen were just convicted of murdering ANC leader Chris Hanu, objected to de Klerk's sharing the prize with Mandela.

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Lack of equipment obstacle to cargo handling in Ctg

From Staff Correspondent

CHITTAGONG, Oct 15: Shortage of equipment and absence of modern logistics stifle smooth cargo handling at the country's major sea-port here.

With the volume of cargo increasing everyday there is serious apprehension that things may come to a head unless steps are taken immediately to equip the port with advanced state-of-the-art handling equipment.

Amanul Islam, Chairman of the Chittagong Port Authority, while talking to this correspondent, admitted the seriousness of the problem and said steps have already been taken to procure modern handling equipment soon.

According to port sources the cargo volume rose to 7.6 million metric tons (MT) in the 1992-93 fiscal, an increase of over a million tons over the past ten years. The port's annual handling capacity is only six million MT.

Another senior port official, speaking on condition of anonymity, said one reason for the backlog in cargo handling has been the marked increase in containerized cargo. Over the years there has been a growing trend globally towards shipping in containers, also preferred by

shipping firms behind other ports of the region which have rubber-tired gantry (RTG) and other logistics, they said.

Due to lack of gantry cranes certain cargo vessels reportedly avoid Chittagong and divert to other neighbouring ports.

Port sources said the two Multipurpose Berths (MPB) which were inaugurated on August 18 this year by Prime Minister Begum Khaleda Zia, could not yet be pressed into full operation due to various short comings.

The two MPB were built as container terminals at a cost over Tk 400 crore. Concerned port officials said they had started to handle some LCL containers on limited scale from October 10 in the two MPB.

"But we hope to use the two MPBs fully after the procurement of some necessary equipment" they said.

Meanwhile, Minister for Port and Shipping M K Arwar, during his meeting with the officials of the port here on October 12, urged them to expedite the procurement and replacement of equipment as per proper rules to avert any crisis in the cargo handling operations.

Govt to release Tk 15 lakh for reconstruction of temples

The government has taken steps to release Taka 15 lakh for the reconstruction, repair and development of Hindu religious places of worship including temples, matha and ashrams on the occasion of the Sharadiya Durga Puja, reports BSS.

An official handout said the decision was taken at a meeting of the board of Trustees of Hindu Religion Welfare Trust held here yesterday, with its vice-president and State Minister for Environment and Forests Goyeshwar Chandra Ray in the chair.

The meeting was informed that there was a wide response all over the country for the observance of Durga Puja with due respect and enthusiasm like the previous years.

Meanwhile, a large number of applications from Hindu religious places seeking monetary help have been received by the trustee board here, the handout said and added more applications were still coming in.

The handout said steps had been undertaken for immediate release of the grant money through deputy commissioners after being recommended by the Trustee Board members and the local members of parliament on the basis of the applications.

Euro-parliament's views on FAP rejected

By Masud Hasan Khan

The government has said that most of the points raised in a recent resolution of the European Parliament against the Flood Action Plan (FAP) could be contested with "proof and substance."

The government recently conveyed its reaction in a letter to the Delegation of the Commission of the European Communities in Dhaka.

The European Parliament in its resolution adopted on June 24 at its meeting in Strasbourg, France called for suspending all major constructions under the FAP for environmental reasons.

The resolution criticised that the preliminary studies of the

FAP had not sufficiently taken into account the full extent of the harm caused by previous attempts to control floods by constructing embankments and the positive role of annual river flooding for soil enrichment, navigation, groundwater exchange, bio-diversity and wetlands, agricultural production and flood plain fisheries.

The resolution followed a two-day conference on the FAP, organised by 'The Greens' in the Euro-parliament.

Dhaka, in its letter said it was difficult for foreigners living in the flood-free land to realise that cyclonic storm surges, and

World Food Day today

The World Food Day will be observed in the country today as elsewhere in the world, reports UNB.

Different organisations have chalked out elaborate programmes to observe the day in a befitting manner.

The day's opening function will be held at the Bangladesh Agricultural Research Council (BARC) auditorium at 10 am under the joint auspices of the government and the United Nations Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO).

Agriculture, Irrigation, Water Development and Flood Control Minister M Majid-ul Haq will attend the function as the chief guest while Fisheries and Livestock Minister Abdullah-Al-

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Star Computer Special (October Issue)

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