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NEWS BRIEFS

Ghali's speech on Radio today

Radio Bangladesh will broadcast a recorded speech of Boutros Boutros-Ghali, Secretary General of the United Nations today. The 2:50 minute speech will be broadcast at 9:30 pm in the magazine programme 'Uttaran' in observance of the United Nations Day, reports UNB.

PM has breakfast with Clerides

LIMASSOL, Oct 23: Prime Minister Khaleda Zia had a breakfast meeting prior to her departure for Dhaka with Cyprus President Glafkos Clerides here this morning. The two leaders discussed Commonwealth matters and the existing global situation. Begum Zia congratulated the Cyprus President for the successful holding of the 29th Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting (CHOGM) in his island nation, reports BSS.

Jamiruddin Sircar off to Paris

Education Minister Barrister Jamiruddin Sircar left Dhaka yesterday morning for Paris to attend the 27th session of the General Conference of the UNESCO. Sircar will lead a four-member Bangladesh delegation, reports UNB.

Jahan-ara Begum goes to Bangkok

State Minister for Cultural Affairs Prof Jahan-ara Begum left Dhaka yesterday for Bangkok to attend the International Conference of Free Trade Union Asia-Pacific regional conference on trade union rights. Senior officials of the Cultural Affairs Ministry saw her off at the Zia airport, reports BSS.

Delhi keen to resolve water issue, says Khaleda

By Staff Correspondent

India has expressed its willingness to resolve the long-disputed water-sharing issue with Bangladesh, Prime Minister Begum Khaleda Zia said yesterday on her return from the Commonwealth Summit in Cyprus last night.

"I held talks with the Indian Finance Minister who has agreed that the matter should be resolved," Begum Zia told newsmen at a press briefing at the Zia VVIP lounge.

"I am told that the Indian Prime Minister may visit Bangladesh in January," Begum Zia said, adding: "We drew international attention on the water issue."

Begum Zia, wearing a sky-blue chiffon saree, disembarked from a Biman DC-10-30 at around 9-15 pm at the Zia International Airport on her return from a five-day visit to Cyprus where she attended the Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting (CHOGM).

Nearly two dozen ministers and chiefs of the three services received the Prime Minister at the airport. She was smiling and looked fresh.

Begum Zia said it was a fruitful and successful meeting as 36 out of 50 Commonwealth states were represented at the highest level.

Bangladesh played an active and constructive role in the executive session in CHOGM where the agenda revolved around a global review and the

special theme of a new global humanitarian order, she said.

"My intervention on these items has been circulated," Begum Zia said. "I called for a world summit on the issue of refugees, migrants and displaced persons, and on monetary reform and financing development."

"I touched on the importance of non-military threats, specially water scarcity, to the security of small states and the need of the international community to be seized of these problems," she said.

In reply to a question on what will be Bangladesh's response if India proposed a short-term agreement on water-sharing, the Prime Minister said, "Let them first propose; then we will discuss."

"Do you have any such proposal," a smiling Begum Zia asked the journalists in return.

Queen Elizabeth of Britain specially inquired about the crisis Bangladesh is now facing for scarcity of water, Begum Zia stated adding that the Queen also said that the matter should be resolved.

In reply to another question regarding the Kashmir problem and the recent violence there, Begum Zia said, "We are always against the violation of human rights."

She did not elaborate. On her meeting with new Pakistan Prime Minister Benazir See Page 12 Col 8



Prime Minister Begum Khaleda Zia briefing newsmen at the Zia International Airport on her return from Cyprus last night after attending the 29th summit of the CHOGM. — Star photo

Death toll rises to 51 Probe ordered into carnage in Kashmir

SRINAGAR (India), Oct 23: Indian officials ordered an enquiry today into the killing of at least 51 Kashmiri Muslims by border guards, the worst carnage in four years of separatist violence in the state, reports AFP.

Kashmir government spokesman Mehnood ur-Rehman said a judicial probe would be conducted into what he described as 'gruesome tragedy' which officials in this city said had led to a tense and explosive situation.

"We are enquiring into the provocation which led to the firing," Rehman told a news conference.

Indian troops shot dead at least 51 demonstrators in the Kashmir valley Friday to prevent them marching on Srinagar's Hazratbal Mosque, where 50 Muslim guerrillas have been besieged by some 10,000 army and paramilitary forces.

Police sources told AFP that 43 people were gunned down at Bijbehara town, about 40 kilometers (25 miles) south of here. Seven Muslim protesters were shot dead in Srinagar and one in the neighbouring town of Anantnag.

The police had earlier put the toll at 40.

It was the worst single day's carnage since Muslim militants stepped up a drive in 1989 to secede Kashmir, India's only Muslim-majority state. The bloody drive has left more than 7,000 people dead.

Meanwhile, the tense stand-

off at the lakeside Hazratbal Mosque, Kashmir's holiest Islamic shrine, entered its second week with no signs of a breakthrough in sight.

Indian troops have surrounded the white-marble mosque on the shores on Nagin lake since trapping the group of armed separatists inside the shrine during the night of October 15.

Lieutenant General S. Padmanabhan, the army officer

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directing the siege, said Saturday that the security forces would consider storming the complex only as a last resort.

I and my forces have infinite patience, he said. I can wait till a peaceful surrender takes place.

An army spokesman added that the troops today noticed some masked gunmen laying a cable between four tall minarets that ring the main dome of the Hazratbal mosque.

When the soldiers asked the militants over loudspeakers what they were doing, they reportedly replied: "We are laying flowers to welcome you."

Scattered protests were reported in several towns in the Muslim-majority Kashmir valley today to seek an end to the siege of the Hazratbal Mosque and to denounce Friday's shootings by the federal Border Security Force (BSF).

Border guards fired warning shots and used clubs and tear See Page 12 Col 3

UN Day today

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

The anniversary of the entry into force of the United Nations Charter — October 24, 1945 — has been celebrated as the United Nations Day since 1948.

The day is observed around the globe through meetings, discussions and exhibits on the achievements and goals of the organisation.

The UN Day is also observed as World Development Information Day, which the General Assembly of the UN set up in 1972 with a view to drawing the attention of the world opinion to development problems and the necessity of strengthening international cooperation for their solutions.

In Bangladesh, UN bodies and various non-government organisations have planned elaborate programmes to observe the Day.

Prime Minister Begum Khaleda Zia, in a message on the eve of the United Nations Day, said the tasks before us is to overcome the balance of conflicting forces by remaining steadfast to the principles of the UN Charter.

The Prime Minister, reaffirming her government and the people's sincere and unflinching commitment to the purposes and principles of the UN, said "the peoples of the United Nations are witnessing today an unprecedented development in global affairs."

"These developments constitute not only a challenge but also a historic opportunity for the creation of a new global order consistent with the vision of the framers of the Charter."

Nirmul body meets Hasina

By Staff Correspondent

Leaders of the Ghatak Dalai Nirmul Samannaya Committee yesterday exchanged views with Awami League (AL) chief Sheikh Hasina on the preparations for making the October 30 hartal a success.

The Samannaya Committee announced the hartal last month to press home its demands which include trial of Golam Azam as a 'war criminal' in a special tribunal and a ban on the political activities of the Jamaat-e-Islami, Bangladesh.

Sheikh Hasina, while talking to the Nirmul leaders yesterday evening at her Minto Road residence, felt there was a need for increased public support for the success of the Samannaya Committee-sponsored agitation, an AL leader present at the meeting informed The Daily Star.

AL chief said she would instruct her party activists to give their efforts to make the October 30 hartal a success, the source added.

Liakat gets 17 yrs RI for keeping arms

A special tribunal court yesterday convicted Liakat Hossain and sentenced him to 17 years rigorous imprisonment for possessing illegal arms, reports UNB.

The court also fined him to pay Tk 7,000 in default to suffer another one and half years imprisonment.

Liakat Hossain, 35, former leader of Awami Jubo League was earlier acquitted in Dr Milton murder case. He was arrested on December 4, 1991 from Sabuj Sangho Club at New Eskaton Garden in the city and police recovered from him a 9 mm pistol with 7 rounds of bullet. Ramna police had prosecuted him to the court.

During the trial the court examined 18 prosecution witnesses.

Doctors continue strike in Ctg

From Staff Correspondent

CHITTAGONG, Oct 23: Stalemate in the Chittagong Medical Hospital caused by the doctors' strike continued while the sufferings of the patients mounted, sources said.

Hospital sources said most of the patients who were already under treatment here left their beds due to lack of care from the doctors.

Only a few emergency patients are attended by the doctors, hospital sources added.

The doctors here began their strike from October 18 protesting the raid by unidentified gunmen on the doctors' cafeteria at the Chittagong Medical Hospital that left three persons including a doctor killed.

Structural reforms must be continued, says Saifur

By Staff Correspondent

Finance Minister M Saifur Rahman yesterday underlined the need for continuing the structural reform programmes to provide a firm base for the economy to alleviate poverty.

However, he emphasised the importance of sequencing and timing the reform measures according to the requirements and prevailing conditions in the country.

"Reforms are the only way to get rid of wastage, inefficiency and mismanagement and to accelerate economic development and employment generation," he told participants of a seminar on 'Implementation of Structural Reforms'.

The Finance Minister was inaugurating the day-long seminar, jointly organised by the Metropolitan Chamber of Commerce and Industry (MCCI) and the World Bank Resident Mission (WBRM) at the NEC auditorium in the city yesterday. MCCI President Latifur Rahman, World Bank Resident Mission chief Christopher R. Willoughby and World Bank Industry and Finance Unit chief Owais Saadat are seen sitting on his left.

Mission, at the National Economic Council auditorium.

The inaugural session was also addressed by MCCI president Latifur Rahman, World Bank mission chief Christopher R. Willoughby and chief of the industry and finance unit at the mission Owais Saadat.

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Saifur Rahman noted that there is a built-in confrontational attitude prevailing in the country about the World Bank-funded structural reform process simply because it was advised by the donor agencies.

"There is a tendency that if something comes from outside the country, we consider it as not good... But reforms are necessary for good management and not all reforms are harmful to the country," he said.

As the country is dependent

on outside assistance for implementing the reform measures, he added, even unpalatable conditionalities have to be accepted.

"The reform process has to be owned by the country or else you cannot ask for funds from the donors, and if you cannot accept the conditionalities then you should ask the Finance Minister not to seek money from outside."

The Finance Minister said the conditionalities for the structural reform programme were tailored to the needs of the country. However, he was sharply critical of some other World Bank conditionalities, which are not country specific.

He singled out the Bank's conditions on environment and re-settlement issues for funding projects in the country. "The See Page 12 Col 1

Govt has launched two-pronged attack on poverty

Finance Minister M Saifur Rahman yesterday said that the government had launched a two-pronged attack on poverty, created a congenial atmosphere for both domestic and foreign investment, geared up implementation and accelerated the pace of development, reports BSS.

Rahman was addressing a meeting of the local consultative group of the Bangladesh aid consortium here in the afternoon at the NEC room. Almost all the development partner country ambassadors or high commissioners and donor agency representatives took part in the three-hour long elaborate discussion, evaluating the programmes, prospects and problems.

Rahman said that the government had already undertaken a number of steps to give favourable signals to investors and help achieve a quantum See Page 12 Col 6

Youngman held for raping maid

By Staff Correspondent

A youngman was arrested by the Dhanmondi police late Friday for allegedly raping a maid in the city.

Officials of the Dhanmondi thana said they arrested Md Harun, a resident of the Dhanmondi area, following a rape case filed by Moni, the maid of Harun's house.

The 18-year-old maid, in her complaint to the police, said Harun and his brother had been raping her for a long time.

When the matter was disclosed, the two brothers shifted her to a house at Pagla on the Dhaka-Narayanganj highway.

The maid alleged that the brothers, their driver and a guard of the house continued to abuse her at Pagla and, even, See Page 12 Col 7



Finance Minister M Saifur Rahman addressing the inaugural session of the seminar on the 'Implementation of Structural Reforms' jointly organised by the Metropolitan Chamber of Commerce and Industry (MCCI) and the World Bank at the NEC auditorium in the city yesterday. MCCI President Latifur Rahman, World Bank Resident Mission chief Christopher R. Willoughby and World Bank Industry and Finance Unit chief Owais Saadat are seen sitting on his left. — Star photo

Several aspirants for Pak presidency

ISLAMABAD, Oct 23: Speculations about the aspirants for the most powerful office of the Presidency have already begun here after the newly-elected central and provincial governments took over and the presidential election date was announced last week.

This will be the second presidential election under the present democratic set up, which is scheduled for November 13. The new President will be elected by an electoral college comprising members of parliament (Senate and National Assembly) and the four provincial assemblies.

The names of eleven prominent politicians are being bandied about as candidates for

the presidency.

Although nomination papers are to be filed by October 31, yet none of the parties have come out with their nominees officially.

According to the results and voting patterns during the general elections for the National and four provincial assemblies on October 6 and 9 respectively, the PPP-led combine again appears just short of a majority for the presidential election, while the PML(N)-led opposition is also only a few votes behind. So once again the race is likely to be very closely run.

The likely candidates from the Pakistan Muslim League (Nawaz) are: the acting

President Wasim Sajjad, former Speaker and present Deputy Leader of the Opposition Gohar Ayub and Ghous Ali Shah.

From the Pakistan Democratic Front (an alliance of the PPP and the PML-J), the names of former President Ghulam Ishaq Khan, president of the Junejo Muslim League Chaudhry Hamid Nasir Chatta, and the former caretaker prime minister and Junejo group Muslim League leader Balakh Sher Mazari are the aspirants for Pakistan's top position.

Others whose names are being speculated from independent quarters are former caretaker prime minister Moeen Qureshi, former foreign minister Sahibzada Yakub Khan and

former Chief of Army Staff Gen (ret'd) Aslam Beg.

Air Marshal Asghar Khan, leader of the Tehrik-e-Istiqal, has already announced himself as a candidate for the office.

According to press reports, two Junejo Muslim League leaders, and allies of the Peoples Party — Chaudhry Hamid Nasir Chatta and Balakh Sher Mazari, both from Punjab — have expressed their willingness to be candidates.

PML(J) chief Nasir Chatta indicated that he would not be averse to the idea if the PPP-PML(J), in their joint parliamentary party meeting, were to take such a decision.

"We are democratic people See Page 12 Col 7

BTMC to disinvest 10 textile mills by Dec

By Staff Correspondent

The government will float tenders for divesting another ten public sector textile mills this December.

The mills have been selected and all preparations have been completed.

This was disclosed by the State Minister for Textiles Abdul Mannan at a seminar on implementation of Structural Reforms organised jointly by the MCCI and the World Bank, Resident Mission, Dhaka yesterday.

Mannan said that a 30 million dollars BMRE fund will also be made available for these disinvested mills.

The minister said that two out of the ten BTMC mills for which tenders were floated will be handed over to the private buyers by the year-end. Retenders will be floated for the rest eight units, the minister

said.

Mannan said bids lower than the assessed price of the mills has necessitated the retendering. He mentioned that the Noakhali Textile Mills, which was assessed to be worth around 31 crore, fetched the highest bid of only Taka three crore, for example. The minister also said the privatisation programme of the BTMC has hit snags because of huge financial involvements.

He said the current liabilities of the 36 BTMC mills stand at Tk 600 crore with another Tk 100 crore as arrears.

He also said to divest the ten mills put on auction, the BTMC needs Tk 75 crore as service benefits of the workers, but the Finance Ministry has allocated only Tk 20 crore for the purpose.

Blast mars JP rally at Narshingdi

NARSHINGDI, Oct 23: A bomb explosion marred a Jatiya Party meeting at the local bus stand this (Saturday) afternoon, reports UNB.

Witnesses said none was hurt in the blast that occurred at about 4:30 pm.

The meeting was called by a faction of the local JP as part of their country-wide "Upazila Day" programme demanding restoration of the upazila system, release of former President Hussain Muhammad Ershad and holding of fresh elections under a caretaker government.

Two separate meetings were held in the town by two rival factions of the local JP. The other meeting was held in front of the local Janata Bank at 3

pm.

Another reports from Rajbari said the local Jatiya Party held a rally and brought out a procession in the town to observe the 'Upazila Day'.

The rally demanded restoration of the upazila system and release of political prisoners including their leader, deposed President Ershad.

Former district unit president of the Jatiya Party Abul Kashem Mridha presided over the rally held at the Rajbari thana parishad premises in the afternoon.

A report from Jamalpur adds: Jatiya Party staged a demonstration in front of the DC's office and submitted a memorandum.

Mahaastami observed

The Mahaastami was observed yesterday throughout the country on the third day of the five-day long Durga Puja, the greatest religious festival of the Hindu community, which began on October 21, reports BSS.

In the city 'Astami Puja' was held in the morning at different puja pandels and temples. This was followed by 'Sandhi Puja' held in the afternoon.

Immersion of the idols of Goddess Durga will be held on Monday, October 25.

The government has declared today a public holiday in celebration of Durga Puja. The educational institutions are observing a week-long holiday on the occasion.

President Abdur Rahman

Biswas yesterday greeted the members of the Hindu community on the occasion of Durga Puja.

President Biswas, in a message, said the bright example of communal harmony, which exists in the country, should be maintained at any cost.

"Peace, progress and national unity are our goals," he said.

"We will build a happy and prosperous society by ensuring peace, happiness and welfare to all people irrespective of caste, creed and religion."

Prime Minister Begum Khaleda Zia has extended her sincere wishes and congratulations to the members of the Hindu community on the occasion. See Page 12 Col 4