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NEWS BRIEFS

Cases against 16,000 vehicles

By Staff Correspondent
 Dhaka Metropolitan Traffic Police have registered cases against more than 16 thousand vehicles in the city during the last 17 days. The offenders for violating the traffic rules were fined about Taka 6 lakh and the traffic police have realised Taka 1.28 lakh on the scene during the period.

World Coast Confere from Nov 1

Environment and Forest Minister Akbar Hossain left here last night to attend the five-day 'World Coast Conference '93' scheduled to be held in the Netherlands from November 1. The conference will deliberate on issues like climate change and sea level rise affecting coastal and low-lying areas, reports BSS.

GF meets today

A meeting of the Gano Forum secretariat will be held today at 5 pm at its new office at 81, Segun Bagicha. All members of the secretariat are asked to attend the meeting, reports UNB.

442 Rohingyas go home

COX'S BAZAR, Oct 27: Four hundred and forty two Rohingyas voluntarily returned to their homes in Myanmar through two transit camps at Teknaf here today, reports BSS.

Khaleda opens Eastern Refinery conversion plant Nat'l energy policy soon

CHITTAGONG, Oct 27: Prime Minister Begum Khaleda Zia said here today that work was on to formulate a national energy policy for the overall development of the country's energy sector, reports BSS.

She was inaugurating the secondary conversion plant of the Eastern Refinery Limited, built at a cost of Taka 250 crore, including an IDA credit of Taka 163 crore.

The Prime Minister said a number of realistic projects had been undertaken to develop the oil sector and measures taken to ensure easy availability of petroleum products in the south-western and northern regions of the country.

"Our aim is to ensure balanced supply of fuel in all regions," she said and added that two projects would soon be started at Tangail and Sylhet to extract and develop liquefied petroleum gas from natural gas as an alternative source of energy.

As part of the policy of achieving self-reliance in all fields, Begum Zia said her government had put emphasis on the exploration and extraction of the country's own resources.

She described petroleum products as the driving force in the economic activities and said steps had been taken to ensure proper storage and supply of petroleum products.

Measures have been taken for providing farmers with fuel at a fair price during the irrigation season, she said.

Begum Zia said maximum utilisation of agricultural and irrigation equipment through adequate supply of fuel had led to the significant growth in agricultural production.

The Prime Minister said her government had taken up a massive programme to develop and extract oil and gas.

A national petroleum policy has been formulated consistent with a free-market economy, she said, and hoped this would encourage local and foreign entrepreneurs to develop and extract the country's natural resources.

Begum Zia pointed out that a number of multinational companies had already shown interests in exploration of oil and gas in Bangladesh.

The Prime Minister said growth in the energy sector had exceeded the target during the last two years and described the setting up of the secondary conversion plant at the Eastern Refinery as an example of her government's achievements in this sector.

She thanked the World Bank for providing foreign exchange for this plant which would help produce an additional quantity of one hundred fifty thousand tonnes of diesel.

Begum Zia also thanked the officers and employees of the Eastern Refinery and the Petroleum Corporation for completing the plant on schedule and asked them to work with the same enthusiasm and See Page 12 Col 1



Prime Minister Begum Khaleda Zia visiting different sections of the Secondary Conversion Plant of the Eastern Refinery after its formal opening in Chittagong yesterday. Energy and Mineral Resources Minister Dr Khandaker Mosharaf Hossain is seen on the left of the Prime Minister. — PID photo

Strike paralyses Kashmir

SRINAGAR, Oct 27: Kashmir was paralysed by a protest strike today as the 12th day of an army siege of its holiest Islamic shrine coincided with the anniversary of the states 1947 accession to India, reports AFP.

The authorities ordered a five-hour curfew break in Srinagar but residents stayed indoors while shops, businesses and restaurants remained shuttered in the city and in other parts of the troubled Kashmir valley, witnesses said.

No traffic plied the streets of this state summer capital, which is the urban hub of Muslim militants fighting for an end to Indian rule. Schools were shut and annual examinations postponed indefinitely.

The seat of the state government shifted Tuesday to Jammu, the winter capital, in an annual move, halting normal administrative activity.

Senior superintendent of police Ram Lubhaya said no protests or violence had been reported in the Muslim-majority valley. Other police sources said the strike was 'total'.

It was the latest in a rash of general strikes to hit Kashmir since Indian army troops laid siege to the Hazratbal Mosque on the night of October 15 to flush out armed Muslim militants entrenched in the shrine.

Muslim militant organisations had called on residents to observe a strike and stage street protests to mark Kashmir's accession to India following the Subcontinent's August 15, 1947 See Page 12 Col 7



Kashmiri women chanting slogans in front of the United Nations' military-observers office in Rawalpindi yesterday to protest Indian forces' siege of the Hazratbal shrine. — AFP photo

No report on power failure yet

By Special Correspondent

Sources concerned said the committee could not finalise its report since it had failed to identify the actual cause of the debacle.

On the night of October 12 the entire country, except certain areas in Chittagong division, was plunged into darkness for several hours due to stoppage of power supply through the national grid. The Power Development Board (PDB) attributed the cause for the disruption to a trip at the Ashuganj Power Plant that resulted in successive trips at Ghorashal and Siddhirganj Power Stations which snapped electricity supply to the national grid. The reason for the trips or the nature of any mechanical fault at the power plants could not be fathomed because the authorities were tight-lipped about the matter.

However, an informed source told this correspondent, on condition of anonymity, that a high-tension conductor having three-fourths of an inch diameter in the national grid line was found snapped at Bolta near Siddhirganj, which actually caused the disruption. But the reason for this mysterious snapping is yet to be known.

"Maybe it was a case of burning or the conductor was in a corroded state," he said.

Meanwhile, there was also a rumour of possible sabotage. Some quarters believe that the snapping of the power supply was done deliberately with an ulterior motive.

When contacted, a Chief Engineer of the PDB, who is also a member of the probe See Page 12 Col 3

AL to seek '96 elections under care-taker govt

By Nurul Kabir

The Awami League Central Working Committee (ALCWC) yesterday resolved that the party would demand the next parliamentary elections under a neutral care taker government.

The decision was officially taken at the concluding session of its two-day meeting yesterday.

Speakers at the meeting felt that no elections under the BNP government could be fair and neutral. AL chief Sheikh Hasina made similar observations at a press conference last week.

The CWC meeting also decided to set up a party fund to help distressed leaders, organisers and workers of the Awami League, an office-bearer of the party told The Daily Star last night. The fund would be named the Awami Foundation and would be run by a board of trustees.

The meeting also evaluated the party's performance in the last parliamentary polls. An evaluation paper was submitted at the meeting which observed that the party had lost 73 seats in the 1991 general elections by a 'small' margin of 2700-3000 votes. The meeting felt that a bigger effort by the organisers across the country could have ensured the party's victory in the elections. The CWC meeting felt the need for putting in more serious efforts in the next general elections, due in 1996.

The CWC also resolved that the thana-level local governments must be headed by the elected representatives of the people. The composition of the See Page 12 Col 8

No govt-Prokrichi dialogue

By Staff Correspondent

Contrary to expectations, no dialogue took place between the government and the leaders of the coordination council of the non-administrative civil servants and the engineers, agriculturists and doctors yesterday.

Prime Minister Begum Khaleda Zia, at a late night meeting with some senior ministers Tuesday, assigned Local Government and Rural Development (LGRD) Minister Barrister Abdus Salam Talukder and State Minister for Establishment Barrister Aminul Haque to begin official negotiations with the coordination council yesterday.

The coordination council or Prokrichi has been agitating for implementation of a 17-point charter of demands since April last.

The Prokrichi leaders when contacted, told The Daily Star last night that they were yet to receive any proposal for dialogue from the government.

They, however, said that the door for dialogue was open to the government.

None of the ministers assigned to open the dialogue were available till late last night for comments. But one of their cabinet colleagues told The Daily Star, on the condition of anonymity, that the government side was yet to contact the non- See Page 12 Col 8

Luxembourg Court rejects settlement of BCCI case

LUXEMBOURG, Oct 27: A Luxembourg court on Wednesday rejected a settlement plan drawn up by liquidators and the government of Abu Dhabi, the main owner of the defunct Bank of Credit and Commerce International, reports AP.

The surprise decision by the Luxembourg Court of Appeals will block payments to BCCI's 250,000 creditors and depositors worldwide, perhaps for years, and whittle down their chances of recovering any money at all.

The banking empire, with more than 70 branches around the world, collapsed in July 1991 when regulators in London and other capitals shut it down on charges of widespread fraud.

Bank liquidators agreed to a settlement proposed by Abu Dhabi, but needed a go-ahead from courts in Britain, the Cayman Islands and Luxembourg, the sites of BCCI's main operations. The plan won approval in the first two courts, but the appeal here has been holding up the plan since last year.

The settlement would have repaid the BCCI depositors and creditors from 40 countries between 30 cents and 40 cents on the dollar. Reimbursements would have come from the bank's assets worldwide and a dilrs 1.7-billion contribution from its major shareholders in Abu Dhabi, part of the United Arab Emirates in the Gulf region.

But the appellate court ruled that the plan violated Luxembourg's laws on public order, which guarantee equal treatment for creditors.

"The appeal is justified," said the presiding judge, Raoul Gretsck. The liquidators are not authorized to sign the (settlement) agreements."

He argued the settlement benefited Abu Dhabi, which is not only a shareholder but a creditor, to the detriment of smaller account holders.

Under the plan, as liquidators recovered assets owned by the defunct bank, Abu Dhabi would have shared those assets as a shareholder. The sum retained by liquidators would then be divided among creditors, and Abu Dhabi would have received money again as a creditor. Abu Dhabi is part of the United Arab Emirates in the Gulf region.

The judge also rejected another part of the plan, which forced creditors who accepted the settlement to renounce their right to take future action against Abu Dhabi.

Liquidators had said that if the settlement was rejected, See Page 12 Col 8

Land requisition in Mirpur Affected people will be rehabilitated: Rafiq

Works Minister Barrister Rafiqul Islam Miah said here yesterday that all the affected persons of land requisition in Mirpur by the Housing Directorate since 1958 would be rehabilitated, reports BSS.

"Although it is a difficult task to remove the legacy of three decades, the government would solve the problem in two to three months," he said.

The minister was speaking as chief guest at a formal handing over ceremony of allotment letters of rehabilitated plots among the residents of greater Mirpur area, affected by land requisition from 1958 to 1973.

A large number of people became homeless following requisition of 3570 acres of land from the Mirpur area in 12 phases between 1958 and 1973. At different times, nearly 1500 affected people were given plots in different areas by way of rehabilitation.

Since this government came to power, special endeavours have been made by the Works Ministry to solve the problems once and for all. A three-member high powered committee was formed to identify the genuine affected people. Out of 1632 applicants, the committee finalised a list of 669 genuine affected people and the Housing Directorate allotted plots among them. In yesterday's function, the Works Minister handed over See Page 12 Col 6

Missions in Tashkent, Hanoi by Dec

By Staff Correspondent

Preparations are now at the final stage for opening two new diplomatic missions in the capitals of Uzbekistan and Vietnam. The embassies in Tashkent and Hanoi are expected to start functioning within December.

The embassy in Tashkent will be the first Bangladesh mission in any new CIS state following the demise of the Soviet Union while that in Hanoi will lead to a more 'expanded diplomatic presence' in the Vietnamese capital.

Mostafa Faruk Muhammad will take over as the first Bangladesh ambassador to Vietnam while Khawja Sharif Hasan, Consul General in Jeddah has been proposed as the envoy to Uzbekistan.

Meanwhile, a number of See Page 12 Col 3

Hasina to visit China Nov 5

By Staff Correspondent

Awami League chief Sheikh Hasina will lead a four-member delegation to China on a week-long visit. She leaves Dhaka on November 5 and is scheduled to return on November 19.

The invitation to the Awami League has been extended by the International Relations Department of the Communist Party of China.

The other party members who will accompany Sheikh Hasina are Abdus Samad Azad, Deputy Leader of the Opposition and AL Presidium member, SAMS Kibria, a member of the AL Advisory Council and Abul Hasan Chowdhury MP, International Relations Secretary of the party.

This is for the first time that the Chinese government or the Communist Party has extended an invitation to the Awami League as a political party, according to informed sources.

Thai-CAAB meeting today

By Staff Correspondent

The Ministry of Civil Aviation is holding an emergency meeting today to discuss the request of Thai International which has sought permission to fly to Dubai from Dhaka, the ministry source said.

The Thai airways has fifth freedom from Dhaka under a bilateral agreement between the two governments but the Ministry of Civil Aviation held its permission in abeyance until further orders, jeopardising the relations between the two countries.

Thai International had so far operated only Bangkok-Dhaka-Bangkok flights but for the first time sought approval to operate twice-a-week Bangkok-Dhaka-Dubai flights from November 1 during its winter schedule.

The Bangladesh authorities endorsed the Thai application on September 30 permitting the airlines to operate to Dubai from Dhaka. But, in a separate letter on October 12, the Civil Aviation Authority of Bangladesh withheld the permission until further orders.

Under the fifth freedom rights an airlines can carry onward passengers from that particular station.

A Thai official in Dhaka told The Daily Star that they had booked passengers for the planned new route but following the latest decision they had to cancel most of the bookings. See Page 12 Col 7

Tanbir, Afsar likely to become pol secys to PM

By Staff Correspondent

Prime Minister and BNP chairperson Begum Khaleda Zia will appoint two political secretaries to help her handle party affairs, reliable party sources said yesterday.

"Madam has chosen Chowdhury Tanbir Ahmed Siddiqy and Afsar Ahmed Siddiqy for the posts," the source, holding a central post, told The Daily Star.

A decision to this effect may be announced within the next week, he said, adding that the matter may be discussed during today's emergency central standing committee meeting at 8 pm at the party central office.

Both Tanbir and Afsar were close associates of late See Page 12 Col 8