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NEWS BRIEFS

Appointments

Chairman of the Bangladesh Textile Mills Corporation Syed Yusuf Hossain has been appointed Additional Secretary of the Industries Ministry, an official handout said last night. Additional Secretary of the Economic Relations Division Ayub Quader was appointed Director General of Bangladesh Rural Development Board on deputation, reports UNB.

2 defaulters arrested

CHITTAGONG, Oct 30: Two executive staff of a private ship breaking yard were arrested from Sitalpur in Sitakunda thana today for defaulting on bank loan. The Agrabad Branch of Uttara Bank seized the ship breaking yard recently by the order of a court for realising loans amounting to Tk 35 crore. Police nabbed M A Malek and Jalal Ahmed, executive staff of Sohel Enterprise Ltd, when a group of people were shifting valuable goods from the yard. Owner of the enterprise Showkat Newaz Chowdhury was absconding, reports UNB.

2 Sarbaharamen held

SATKHIRA, Oct 30: Two members of outlawed Sarbahara Party were rounded up from a village in Tala thana of the district on Friday. Police said they nabbed Jabbar and Islam while they were carrying out an "operation" in Talpuk village Friday night and seized one gun and seven cartridges from their possession, reports UNB.

APHC withdraws from talks, sets conditions Hazratbal crisis deepens

SRINAGAR, Oct 30: Efforts to resolve the Hazratbal crisis appeared to have received a setback with the All Party Hurriyat Conference (APHC) members announcing withdrawal from the negotiations, reports PTI.

The decision of the APHC, a pro-militant umbrella organisation, was conveyed to the newsmen at a hurriedly called news conference this evening after a marathon meeting of the constituents of the conference even as authorities were reportedly giving finishing touches to the modalities to resolve the crisis.

Prof Abdul Gani, executive member of the APHC who led a four-member team inside the shrine and held discussions with people holed up in the shrine for the 16th day today, told newsmen that the APHC had decided to withdraw from the negotiations.

"There are people who try their best to see that the crisis was resolved, but there exist people also who put hurdles in the way", he said when asked why they decided to withdraw from the negotiations.

However, he said they will consider entering into the dialogue with the government if it (government) concedes their pre-conditions namely lifting of the siege of the shrine, ensure supply of food without interruption and allow neutral observers to verify whether the locks of the outer door of the shrine have been tampered with or replaced.

Prof Gani denied that there were foreign nationals inside the shrine but said he cannot deny that there were no arms inside the shrine.

Meanwhile, India today unequivocally told the United States that it would not brook any outside interference from any quarter and decried Washington's attempt to question the status of Kashmir.

Responding to query, the External Affairs Minister, Dinesh Singh, expressed surprise at the timing of the US pronouncements as they came just as it appeared that armed terrorists inside the Hazratbal shrine in Srinagar were about to release the civilian hostages held by them.

These signals could en-

courage a continued confrontation not only in Kashmir but all over, Singh said.

Dinesh Singh's strong reaction came as major political parties and eminent personalities condemned for the second consecutive day the statement by the US Assistant Secretary, Ms Robin Raphel.

Kashmir is, was and shall remain an integral part of India. We will not brook any outside interference from any quarter, Dinesh Singh said.

Ms Raphel, in a background briefing for South Asian journalists in Washington, questioned the validity of the instrument of Kashmir's accession to India.

Dinesh Singh said the Indian public opinion was perturbed about reports emerging out of Washington regarding Kashmir.

We don't accept any ones right to question the status of Kashmir as an integral part of India. We are surprised that even the validity of the instrument of accession is being questioned, the External Affairs Minister said.

The world has not ques-

tioned for half a century the legality of this Indian independence act passed by the British Parliament from which flowed the instrument of accession, he said.

Earlier AFP report said, Indian political parties today denounced remarks by a senior US official questioning the finality of Kashmir's accession in a move seen by the government as a policy shift by Washington.

The ruling Congress (I) Party said it regretted the comments by the US official on Thursday that the United States did not recognise the instrument of Kashmir's accession as meaning it was an integral part of India.

"We find this attitude incomprehensible and totally unacceptable," spokesman Chandulal Chandrakar said.

The main opposition Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP), Indian People's Party) called the remarks a "totally unwarranted and unacceptable interference in what is and has always been our own internal affair."

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European heads of state pose for photographers after the EC summit in Brussels yesterday (L-R): British Prime Minister John Major, French President Francois Mitterrand, Belgian Prime Minister Jean Luc Dehaene, German Chancellor Helmut Kohl and Spanish Prime Minister Felipe Gonzalez. Second row (L-R): Belgian Foreign Minister Wily Claes, German Foreign Minister Klaus Kinkel, Luxemburg Foreign Minister Jacques Poos, Dutch EC Commissioner Hans Van Den Broek, British Foreign Secretary Douglas Hurd, Luxemburg Prime Minister Jacques Santer and Dutch Foreign Minister Peter Kooijmans. — AFP photo

Solar power project delayed

Star Report

Implementation of a French grant assistance funded solar power pilot project for the off-shore islands is being delayed due to inter-ministerial wrangles, according to official sources.

The Planning Ministry is withholding final approval of the Tk 5.98 crore pilot project, although it was approved earlier in an inter-ministerial meeting of the Planning Commission.

Under a grant-protocol signed in Paris on August 10 last, the French government agreed to fund the Tk 4.25 crore foreign exchange component of the pilot project, which was prepared by the Rural Electrification Board, under the Energy Ministry. The project was also included in the Fourth Five-year Plan, the three-year rolling plan and the annual development plan for 1993-94.

The French ambassador, in a recent letter to the Energy Minister, requested early im-

plementation of the pilot project, designed to provide solar energy in the off-shore coastal islands, including the cyclone shelters, the sources said.

But the Planning Ministry is stalling approval of the project by raising various issues and is even questioning the process in which the grant-protocol, to fund the project, was signed with France.

The pilot project was made to establish feasibility of solar power as an alternative source of energy at the field level and to provide a facility for technical research and training for technology transfer.

Earlier, in December 1991, a Tk 19 crore project on 'improved stove and solar photo-voltaic system' was placed before an ECNEC meeting. But the ECNEC directed that a smaller pilot project should be prepared only on solar energy.

Accordingly, the Energy

Ministry prepared the pilot project on renewable energy and it was approved in an inter-ministerial meeting at the Planning Commission in October last year.

However, the Planning Minister in a subsequent meeting late last year, asked the Energy Ministry to seek the opinions of local organisations, including the Atomic Energy Commission and the University of Engineering and Technology.

All experts whose opinions were sought supported the pilot project and it was again approved in an inter-ministerial meeting of the Planning Commission in March this year.

Consequently, the pilot project was included in the France-Bangladesh grant protocol, 1993 and the French government agreed to fund the purchase of solar power generators for the project.

Thirteen solar power genera-

See Page 12 Col 6

EC faces problems with ID experiment

By Nazmul Ashraf

The Election Commission (EC) is facing some problems with its experimental introduction of identity cards for voters, mainly because a section of the target electorate has been rather indifferent to the novel idea, official sources said.

According to the sources, the EC employees found a segment of voters in Dapunia union of Mymensingh Sadar thana, unwilling to exercise their right of franchise.

As a result only 15,000 out of the 20,000 voters there could be listed for providing them with identity cards. Even a door-to-door campaign by the members of 20 voters' clubs failed to bring the remaining 5,000 voters, mostly women and day-labourers — all indifferent to the project — under the EC programme for

experimental introduction of voters' identity cards.

The EC is currently implementing a one-year pilot project to introduce identity cards for the voters of two particular areas — Dapunia union of Mymensingh and Ward Number Two of the Gazipur municipality — purely on an experimental basis.

The Asia Foundation-aided project also provides for the eventual computerisation of the entire polling system.

The idea of introducing ID cards has been floated with the aim of checking false-voting and ensuring fair and neutral polling.

The Dapunia scheme, the rural component of the EC experiment, is nearing completion while the urban trial, in Gazipur municipality near the capital, is expected to begin

soon, EC officials told The Daily Star.

The EC officials, quoting persons who worked for the Dapunia programme, said they failed to gain spontaneous cooperation from the villagers' mainly because of their lack of concern for the step. Elaborating, they said illiteracy, unawareness and superstition — the usual drawbacks of rural Bangladesh — largely contributed to the apathy among a section of the voters of the area.

The officials informed this correspondent that a significant number of female voters did not turn up for being photographed because of superstition. The EC deployed 10 photographers for 45 days, from early June the year, for taking mugshots of the voters free of cost for the planned ID cards.

Foreign investors demand revision of drug ordinance

Members of the Foreign Investors Chambers of Commerce and Industry (FICCI) met Prime Minister Begum Khaleda Zia at her office yesterday, reports BSS.

The members mainly discussed the problems faced by the multi-national pharmaceutical companies in Bangladesh. They suggested revision of the Drug Policy and Drug (Control) Ordinance 1982 — with special reference to registration of new medicine, pricing, raw materials, non-discrimination and patent protection.

Assuring all possible cooperation to the chamber members the Prime Minister said an expert committee headed by Deputy Leader of Parliament Prof A Q M Badruddoza Chowdhury had already been constituted to look into the matter.

The delegation members included Mahbub Jamil and Gerhard Doege.

8 killed, 88 hurt in road mishaps country-wide

Eight people were killed and 88 more injured in separate road accidents in the country yesterday, reports UNB.

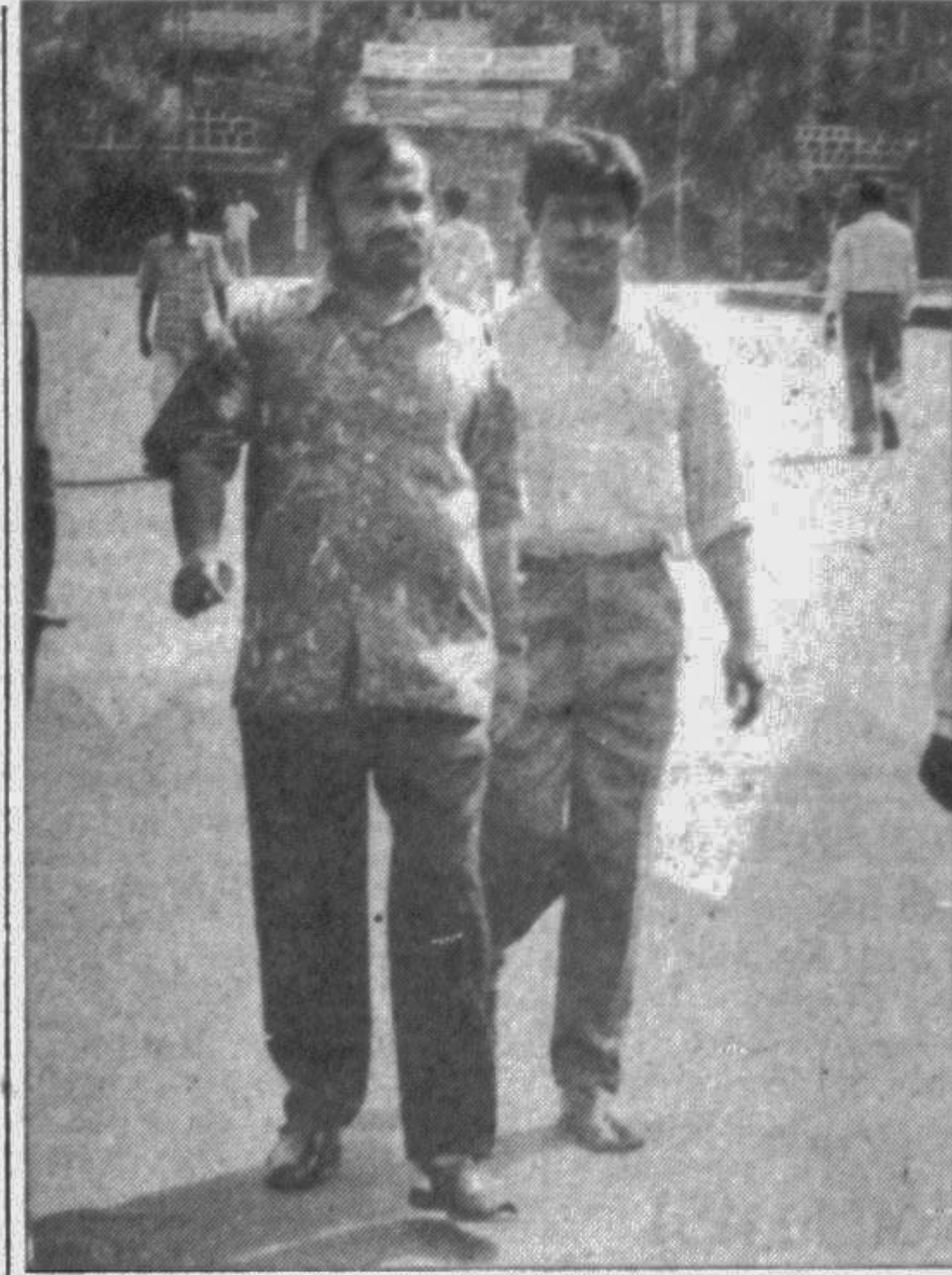
In Pabna, five people, including three children, were killed and 35 injured when a bus tumbled into a roadside ditch. Police said an Ishurdi-bound overloaded bus skidded off the Pabna-Ishurdi road near Alhaj crossing in Ishurdi thana, killing three children instantly.

Two other children succumbed to their injuries on way to Rajshahi Medical College Hospital.

The dead were identified as Shadhana, 10, of Sadar thana, Rani, 4, of Pabna town, Arjina, 2, of Ullapara thana, Mizanur Rahman, 25, and Tofazzal, 21, of Ishurdi.

Of the injured, 15 were admitted to Ishurdi Health Complex and four to the Pabna Sadar Hospital.

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State Minister for Youth and Sports Sadek Hossain (L) walking to his Bangladesh Secretariat office during yesterday's hartal hours. — Star photo

Tribal students, cops clash: 30 injured

From Staff Correspondent

CHITTAGONG, Oct 30: At least 30 people were reportedly injured this afternoon at Khagrachhari when police fought a pitched battle with some hundreds of stick-wielding demonstrators.

According to official sources, the injured included police personnel and supporters of the Pahari Chhatra Parishad who staged a rally and demonstration in violation of restrictions imposed by the district authority, demanding the release of their leaders.

Some of the injured were admitted to the Khagrachhari hospital while others were released after first aid.

The trouble began at 1 pm when police resisted the demonstrators who were marching to gherao the thana and district administration offices.

The demonstrators, belong-

ing to the Pahari Chhatra Parishad (Hilly Students' Council), attacked the police with sticks and stones, officials said. To disperse the demonstrators police initially resorted to lathicharge but when the situation turned violent police lobbed teargas shells and fired several rounds to bring the situation under control, official sources said.

At one stage the local authorities called out a platoon of BDR to disperse the agitators.

The demonstration and subsequent trouble followed the arrest of the PCP's Khagrachhari unit president Bodiprya Chakma by police this morning.

Bodiprya was arrested on charge of assaulting a sepoy of the security forces on Thursday. A case was filed with the Khagrachhari thana.

Nomination for president polls close today

Benazir, Sharif coy about choices

ISLAMABAD, Oct 30: Pakistan's two major parties remained silent on their candidate choices as a deadline for nominations in the presidential race loomed today, reports AFP.

Chief Election Commissioner Naimuddin said nominations should be made before noon tomorrow for the November 13 election, when a president will be elected by an electoral college made up of parliament and four provincial assemblies.

The post is currently occupied by acting President Wasim Sajjad, whose name figures among the more than half dozen aspirants listed by the national press.

Reports said efforts were being made for agreement between the Pakistan People's

Party (PPP) of Prime Minister Benazir Bhutto and opposition leader Nawaz Sharif's Pakistan Muslim League (PML) to field a joint candidate.

Islamabad daily The Muslim said "signals" for such an understanding had gone out to

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Nirmul hartal passes off peacefully

By Staff Correspondent

A countrywide half-day hartal called by the Ghatok Dalal Nirmul Committee yesterday affected normal life in the capital and elsewhere.

No casualties or untoward incidents barring some cracker explosions were reported from any of the country's five divisions. During the eight-hour hartal which began at 6 am, picketers enforced the shut-down.

All modes of vehicles with the exception of rickshaws went off the roads. Educational institutions and business centres remained closed.

Attendance in the government offices, private firms, state-owned and private banks, mills and factories was comparatively thin during the hartal.

The hartal was observed demanding the trial of Jamaat Ameer Golam Azam, as a 'war criminal', withdrawal of cases against 24 members of the so-called Gano Adalat (people's court) and other leaders and workers of the Nirmul Committee.

Various opposition parties, students' organisations, professional and cultural bodies supported the hartal, also demanding bans on the politics of

See Page 12 Col 2

Situation was normal despite hartal call, claims govt

Overall situation in Dhaka and other cities of the country was normal yesterday despite a half-day hartal called by the Ghatok Dalal Nirmul Samannaya Committee, a government handout claimed, reports UNB.

Normal traffic in some areas of the capital city was, however, disrupted, it said.

All the running textile and spinning mills of the Bangladesh Textile Mills Corporation (BTMC) were in operation uninterrupted as the production process of the mills was normal. The presence of officers, employees and workers was satisfactory.

Production process of all the jute mills run by the Bangladesh Jute Mills Corporation (BJMC) was also normal and no untoward incident was reported from anywhere.

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PM assures equal rights for all

Prime Minister Begum Khaleda Zia said yesterday that her government was putting in continuous efforts to ensure socio-economic and political rights of all professional communities and groups, reports BSS.

The Prime Minister was addressing the community of oilmen (those who work the edible oil mills) who joined the BNP at her Sugandha office last night.

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CHEHLUM

On the occasion of the Chehlum of Begum Shakera Banu (Shakera Rahman), wife of late Khan Bahadur Mujibur Rahman, a Milad Mehfil will be held today, 31st October, 1993 at 6 PM at C.E.N. (H)-13, Road No. 109, Gulshan, Dhaka.

All her relatives, friends, acquaintances are requested to attend.

Marina & Dr S A Wadud,
Nargis & Yusuf Tajuddin,
Latifur and Shahnaz Rahman,
Sharmeen & Iqbal Hossain,
Saifur & Yasmeen A Rahman,
and all her Grandchildren

Nirmul plans march on JS

By Staff Correspondent

The Ghatok Dalal Nirmul Samannaya Committee yesterday announced a series of programmes including a march on the Jatya Sangsad the day it goes into winter session.

Member-secretary of the committee Prof Abdul Mannan Choudhury announced the new programmes at a post-hartal public rally held at the Bangabandhu Avenue.

The proposed Sangsad march would press for the introduction of a bill in the House seeking a ban on religion-based politics.

Other programmes include a demonstration week from November 2 to 8, and an organisational week December 9-15.

According to the announcement, the Samannaya Committee of Nirmul bodies will sponsor a nationwide 'victory

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