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NEWS BRIEFS

Call to halt Bosnian war
 SARAJEVO, Nov 12: Bosnian Premier Haris Silajdzic and Croatian Foreign Minister Mate Granic called today for an immediate cessation of hostilities in war-torn Bosnia, after a five-hour meeting here. The two men told reporters that both sides would meet again within seven days, at a top military and political level to arrange a more permanent ceasefire, reports AFP.

30 Indians die in landslide
 MADRAS, Nov 12: At least 30 people were killed and 50 others injured in a rain-triggered landslide in southern India, police and rescue officials said Friday. The landslide occurred late Thursday near Calicut village, 600 kilometres (372 miles) east of Madras, capital of Tamil Nadu State. Rescuers pulled out 25 bodies. But they had to stop work when it started raining late Friday, reports AP.

Burger King gets access to India
 NEW DELHI, Nov 12: Burger King has decided to open its fast food restaurants in India, a newspaper said Friday, but its beef burgers may not go down well in the land of the sacred cow. The chain, which is the second largest in the US after McDonald's, already has government permission to do business, the Economic Times daily reported, but it has not decided how it wants to operate in India, reports AP.

Banks shy to invest for lack of risk-cover

By Sohel Manzur

The country's banks are unlikely to go for any immediate large-scale long-term financing because the factors needed to cover the future risks are totally absent in the industrial sector, according to banking sources.

Not only the bankers, but also the entrepreneurs are unable to cover the risks in the present situation arising out of some economic and non-economic factors as well as some contradictory policies adopted by the government, the sources said.

The banks are now concentrating more on financing non-industrial sectors and providing working capital for the indus-

Inter-bank rates depressed

Star Report

Although the bankers witnessed some letters of credit (LC) openings in major currencies, the money market remained mostly discouraging for the foreign currency dealers during the last week. As a result, the commercial banks preferred to sell their forex to the Bangladesh Bank at the reference rates, market sources said.

The Sonali Bank sold about ten million dollars to the central bank while the Janata Bank sold about five million dollars at the quoted price of the Bangladesh Bank during the week.

The total interbank transaction of the week was around 21 million US dollar and the banks were engaged in hectic mutual transactions.
 See Page 12 Col 7

Dutch govt urged to review FAP role

By Rashed Mahmud Titumir

The Netherlands may withdraw from the Flood Action Plan (FAP) if the massive constructions under the plan are not justified through further inter-disciplinary considerations.

A report of the Dutch foreign ministry, reaching here this month, said the large-scale technical works under the FAP must satisfy the balanced considerations of technical, economic, social, environment and fisheries issues.

The foreign ministry's report also asks the Dutch government to 'use its influence to promote, for the time being, construction of less controversial and less ambitious water works.'
 See Page 12 Col 7

Democracy doesn't mean anarchy, says Khaleda

Prime Minister Begum Khaleda Zia said here yesterday that the definition of democracy does not include destruction of public property, indiscipline and anarchy rather it supports sustainable development, progress and ensuring rights of the people, reports BSS.

"Under a democratic system, protest is there all over the world. But the language of protest should not violate the real spirit of democracy," Begum Zia told the office bearers of the P C College and the Khanjahan Ali College of Bagerhat district who met her at the Sugandha office.

The Prime Minister said an opposition party was resorting to indiscipline and destruction in the name of protest as they did not have any issue.
 See Page 12 Col 4

Old scourges pose new threats to public health worldwide

By Asiuzzaman

Old scourges like Malaria, tuberculosis and leprosy have posed new threats to public health worldwide, overshadowing overall progress in the health sector, a recent WHO report said.

"Malaria, from the point of near eradication in 1960s resurged in epidemic form in a majority of the endemic countries in the region," the report, released during last week's three-day 11th meeting in Dhaka of the health ministers of the World Health Organisation's South-East Asia Region (SEAR), said.

It said tuberculosis continues to be a serious problem in all the countries of the region while leprosy is an old problem which has passed through various phases.

The report said during the last four decades considerable progress has been made in achieving health. The overall death rate has declined while the nutrition status of mothers and the live birth weight of newborns have improved. The spectacular success achieved in eradication of small pox, was also mentioned.

But all these achievements have been overshadowed by some communicable diseases like malaria, tuberculosis and leprosy.

"Deaths due to malaria were almost zero in the 1960s but some 1.5 million cases have been reported in the region in 1991-92," the report said, adding that "it is grossly under reported."

The WHO South-East Asia Region comprises of 11 countries — Bhutan, North Korea, India, Indonesia, the Maldives, Mongolia, Myanmar, Nepal, Sri Lanka, Thailand and Bangladesh — with a 1.2 billion population.

The resistance of a newly-discovered malaria strain — P. falciparum — to standard therapy-chloroquine and sulphapyrimethamine posed threats and caused deaths in malaria affected countries.

The P. falciparum resistant strain was initially reported from the Thai-Cambodian border and has made a westward march. It had now been reported from most malaria-affected countries of the region, the WHO report added.

Resistance of the vector has made commonly used insecticides by and large ineffective in many situations.

About tuberculosis, the report said that out of a global total of eight million cases, some three million occur in the region. The region also accounts for about one million TB deaths annually.

The existing problem of TB has been aggravated with the emergence of HIV/AIDS and it is estimated that about three million people have been dually infected with TB and HIV globally.

It said more than 80 per cent of registered cases of the world are from five countries of which three are in this particular region.
 See Page 12 Col 8

6-hr hartal today

By Staff Correspondent

A dawn-to-noon hartal has been called in the capital today to protest alleged police excesses on demonstrators of two opposition parties in the city last Wednesday.

The Awami League (AL) and the Jatiya Party (JP) simultaneously announced identical programmes for today after police battled with the AL activists — trying to stage a sit-in near the Secretariat, protesting the BNP government's 'maladministration' — and the JP workers — agitating at the Motijheel Commercial Area, demanding release of the jailed President HM Ershad.

The Bangladesh Janata Dal of KM Obaidur Rahman has also supported the six-hour hartal.

The last hartal, an 8-hr nationwide general strike, was called by the Ghatik Dalai Nirmul Samannaya Committee and its political allies on October 30 demanding the trial of Jamaat chief Golam Azam as a 'war criminal'.

The AL has arranged a public rally at the Bangabandhu
 See Page 12 Col 6



The Awami League brought out a torch procession in the city yesterday evening to mobilise support for its 6-hour hartal today.
 — Star photo

Myanmar forces kidnap 32 more fishermen

From Our Correspondent

COX'S BAZAR, Nov 12: The Myanmar border force 'NASAKA' yesterday kidnapped 32 fishermen along with five fishing boats and 12 nets from the Shahpari Island, some seven kilometres from Teknaf.

BDR sources said in the last two weeks the NASAKA had kidnapped 89 fishermen and 14 fishing boats from the maritime waters of Bangladesh.

The commanding officer of the 39 battalion of the BDR officially protested the incident to the NASAKA authority today.

The BDR and the NASAKA will sit for a flag meeting within a week to discuss border-related problems.

Prokrichi, BCS cadres to stage hunger strike Monday
 By Staff Correspondent

The Prokrichi and 26 BCS cadres will stage a token hunger strike at the Institution of Engineers in the city Monday from 9 am to 5 pm to press home their 17-point charter of demands.

The engineers, agriculturists and physicians (Prokrichi) and the BCS Central Council yesterday, at a meeting, demanded the government form an administrative reform committee comprising representatives from different professional groups.

The meeting in the city was presided over by the Prokrichi Central Action Council chairman Dr M A Majed. Dr Jamilur Reza Chowdhury, Md Abu Reza, Dr Gazi Abdul Haq, M A K Azad, Javed Iqbal, Ruhul Mattin, Dr Mushtaq Hossain, A N H Akhter Hossain, Dr A B Bhuyian and others took part in the discussions.

Deadlock over Hazratbal continues Kashmir protesters defy curfew



A Kashmiri youth is hugged by his mother Thursday at the Badami Bagh army camp in Srinagar after he was released by the authorities. The army says he was among half a dozen youths arrested while attempting to cross the border into Pakistan.
 — AFP photo

SRINAGAR, Nov 12: Police used batons and tear gas to breakup small groups of Muslims who defied curfew and gathered in the streets after Friday prayers to protest against the Indian army's siege of Kashmir's holiest shrine, report AP, AFP.

Residents of Srinagar, Jammu-Kashmir state's summer capital, assembled at eight places and tried to march to the Hazratbal Mosque, which has been encircled by Indian troops since Oct. 15, police said.

There were no injuries, the state police chief, Mahinder Sabherwal, told reporters.

Government negotiators talking to some of the militants holed up inside the shrine failed to make headway.

Hundreds of Indian troops equipped with shields, batons and tear gas were deployed in Srinagar to foil the demonstrations called by Kashmiri Muslim political and militant groups.

A curfew was imposed on this troubled city of some 700,000 people and in other towns in the Muslim-majority Kashmir valley.

The call for mass street protests came from the All-party Kashmir Freedom Conference, an umbrella organisation which Thursday pulled out of talks between the government and 50 armed Muslim militants holed up in Hazratbal.

The Freedom Conference groups 27 political and militant parties.

Embarrassing, either way!

Star Report

When the State Minister for Civil Aviation has been insisting for maintaining flight schedule, a Biman pilot had been grounded for a timely take-off by leaving a VIP behind in Chittagong.

The captain of the turbo-prop ATP aircraft was suspended and a departmental inquiry committee was formed a day after he left behind Information Minister Barrister Nazmul Huda stranded in Chittagong on April 20 last.

The thorough and extensive investigation revealed nothing against the pilot who made a timely departure from Chittagong at 7:30 pm when the weather in Dhaka was monitored as turning bad.

But the captain, who recently qualified to fly the bigger pilot DC-10s, was cautioned for leaving the VIP behind — an act that had reportedly put the Biman authorities in an 'embarrassing situation.'

The suspension order against the pilot was, however, withdrawn on July 2 when the investigation was on.

The two-member probe committee comprising the Deputy Chief of Flight Safety and the Deputy Chief Technical unearthed the 'only fault' that he (the pilot) did not carefully examine the 'check list' in which the names of all the 61 passengers were listed and that
 See Page 12 Col 8

News Analysis Saifur's crucial trip to Tokyo

By S Y Bakht

Finance Minister M Saifur Rahman's upcoming visit to Tokyo is being seen here as crucial in securing Japan's commitment to co-finance the Jamuna Bridge Project, its participation in developing the country's power sector and in attracting Japanese investment into Bangladesh.

The Finance Minister is expected to leave for Tokyo tomorrow on a five-day official visit. He is leading a five-member delegation at the invitation of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan.

During the visit Rahman is expected to renew and strengthen the existing friendly ties between the two Asian countries. The visit is of added significance since it is the only such high-level Bangladesh delegation to visit Japan during the past several years.

According to Japan watchers here, the Finance Minister's visit is also expected to remove some existing minor irritants between the two countries. The visit would also help allay fears of Japanese businessmen, mainly arising out of the cancellation of the original KAFCO contract last year, and in changing the 'negative' image of the country among Japanese investors.

The analysts added that the high-level visit would also help in smoothing the relationship after the diplomatic faux pas earlier this year, when a Bangladeshi ambassador was appointed, and subsequently accepted by Japan, but was abruptly withdrawn within a few months without any explanation.

In the process the important diplomatic post remained vacant.
 See Page 12 Col 4

SEC opens tomorrow

The newly-created Securities and Exchange Commission, will be launched formally tomorrow (Sunday), reports BSS.

The Commission, which will streamline the functioning of the securities and capital market, is expected to be inaugurated by Prime Minister Begum Khaleda Zia, Commission sources said yesterday.

Besides its important responsibility to ensure proper issuance of securities, the Commission will work for protecting the interest of the investors in the capital market.

Leghari favourite to win today's Pak presidential polls

ISLAMABAD, Nov 12: Foreign Minister Farooq Leghari is likely to win Pakistan's presidential election tomorrow, after four candidates withdrew to make the contest a straight race against acting President Wasim Sajjad, party sources predicted today, reports AFP.

Leghari, 53, nominated by Prime Minister Benazir Bhutto's governing alliance, has secured an 'unassailable' lead after challenger Akbar Bugti withdrew, leaders of her Pakistan People's Party (PPP) said.

A senior PPP leader, senator Iqbal Haider, said Leghari was now poised to secure a large majority because the party's vote bank appeared reunited.

Leghari, a big landlord from lower Punjab, has been assured support from around 279 of the 642 votes in the presidential electoral college, Haider told reporters.

The opposition Pakistan Muslim League (PML) of former premier Nawaz Sharif was equally optimistic that its nominee, Sajjad, 52, would win.

Sharif has also accused Bhutto of indulging in 'Gross horse-trading' to win the loyalties of deputies in Baluchistan and the North West Frontier Province (NWFP) assemblies.

Sharif said he believed in clean politics and enjoyed majority support in the electoral college, comprising both houses of Parliament and four provincial assemblies.

Bugti, an influential tribal chieftain and former governor of southwestern Baluchistan province, said Thursday he was retiring in favour of Leghari, whose election is considered important by Bhutto for the smooth running of her newly-appointed government.

In a reversal for Sharif's nominee, veteran politician Nawabzada Nasrullah and a former attorney-general, Yahya Bakhtiar, also decided to back Leghari.

While the three quit in favour of the PPP man, a leader of the centrist Tehreek-i-Istiqal Party and former air force chief, Asghar Khan, also decided to bow out.

Diplomats said the outspoken Baluchi leader's stay in the field could have spoiled Bhutto's votes to the advantage of Sajjad.

To further boost Leghari's chances, two Baluchi nationalist groups and an important religious party, the Jamiat-Ulema Islam (JUI) of fundamentalist leader Fazlur Rahman, also announced support to Bhutto's candidate.

JUI, which had been uncommitted, said it decided to side with Leghari after Bhutto pledged to protect the country's Islamic laws.

"We have decided to support Farooq Leghari following the government's assurances that all Islamic provisions of the constitution will remain intact," said JUI Deputy Chief Maulana Mohammed Khan Sheeran after repeated sessions with the government negotiators.

Bugti told reporters the understanding with the government includes development of his province and implementation of job quotas for Baluchistan, improvement of road networks and distribution of water in the under-developed region.

Neither Sharif nor Bhutto won an absolute majority in the hung Parliament elected last month. Bhutto was elected Prime Minister with support of smaller factions and independent members who hold the balance.

Observers said the two-way presidential contest was expected to help Bhutto but it was also likely to keep her under pressure from smaller parties.

How she fulfills the promises her party made with the religious and mostly nationalist groups would decide the future of her government analysts said.

Sohrab placed in DB remand

By Staff Correspondent

M. Sayedur Rahman alias Sayeed Sohrab, the main accused of the murder of the Jinnah, was yesterday placed in the custody of the Detective Branch (DB) for five-days for interrogation.

Sohrab, a former literary and publication secretary of the Jatiyatabadi Chhatra Dal (JCD) central body, was produced before the CMM yesterday. He was arrested from the house of a former Jatiya Party minister, Shamsul Haq, at Kalkaikoir Thursday.

Jinnah, cultural secretary of the JCD, was gunned down on the DU campus.