

Khaleda invited to DPRK Dhaka supports Koreas' unification move

Prime Minister Begum Khaleda Zia said here yesterday that Bangladesh wanted the Korean peninsula to remain a nuclear-free zone and supported the peaceful reunification process of the two Koreas, reports BSS.

The Prime Minister told this to the visiting Vice Premier of North Korea, Chang Chol, when he called on her at her office.

Begum Zia said that Bangladesh was continuing friendly relationship with North Korea which was initiated by Shaheed President Ziaur Rahman with his visit to North Korea.

The Prime Minister sought the cooperation of North Korea in the expeditious implementation of the Madhyapara Hardrock Project which would help the two nations get into closer ties particularly in the economic sector.

Begum Zia said as sharing of experiences in the cultural sector helps peoples to know each other, North Korea and Bangladesh should develop more cultural ties with each other to deepen their existing friendly relationship.

The visiting Vice Premier expressed his hope that the socio-economic progress of the people which had been initiated by Begum Zia's government would be continued unhindered and Bangladesh would attain the targets of progress and prosperity.

Chang thanked the Prime Minister for ensuring Bangladesh's support to the peaceful reunification process of the two Koreas and said that his country wanted the peaceful reunification of the Koreas as Koreans could understand that any disturbance of peace in the Korean nations only, no other nation would be damaged. "We want reunification keeping two existing systems of the two Koreas intact," he said.

The Vice Premier, who is also the Minister of Culture and Art of North Korea, called for strengthening the cultural ties between the two countries to forge closer friendship.

Chang said the preparatory stage of the North Korea assisted Madhyapara Hardrock Project had been completed and the project work would begin soon.

He extended an invitation of great leader Kim Il Sung to Begum Zia for visiting North Korea. The Prime Minister accepted the invitation and said the visit would take place at mutually convenient time.

Begum Zia conveyed her good wishes to Kim Il Sung through the vice premier. State Minister for Cultural Affairs Jahanara Begum, North Korean Ambassador, Principal Secretary to the Prime Minister and Cultural Secretary were present on the occasion.



Acting president of the Awami League Abdul Mannan addressing a public meeting at the Bangabandhu Avenue in the city yesterday. — Star photo

Hartal

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criminal and a ban on communal politics.

The Jatiya Party of deposed president H M Ershad also called a similar hartal protesting police excesses on Nov 10. They also demanded release of Ershad and fresh elections under a caretaker administration.

The Bangladesh Janata Dal of former BNP minister and secretary general K M Obaidur Rahman also supported yesterday's hartal programme.

Leaders and workers of all the three political parties brought out processions and held a number of rallies at different city points.

Police resorted to baton-charge to disperse two processions of the Jatiya Party at Kawran Bazar and Bijoyagar at 8 am and 11:30 am respectively. Four people were picked up from the JP procession at Bijoyagar.

Jatiya Party secretary general Khaledur Rahman Tito led a procession at the Gullistan area, which was also obstructed by police.

The Bangladesh Janata Dal held a rally near the Jatiya Press Club and brought out a procession chanting anti-government slogans.

During the hartal hours some explosions were heard at Topkhana Road, Purana Paltan and Nawabpur, but no casualties were reported.

Police, Ansars and the paramilitary BDR were deployed on the city roads to maintain peace during the hartal.

AL: Care-taker govt

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of restoring democratic order, was perpetuating autocracy in the country. Moreover, he added, it had introduced fresh black laws like the Anti-Terrorism Act to repress its political opponents.

"The countrymen now want another political change."

Condemning Wednesday's police action against the AL protesters, Mannan wondered how the BNP government had dared to assault the demonstrators of his party on Shaheed Noor Hossain Day, the day on which the anti-autocracy agitation had taken a new shape with the participation of the then major opposition parties, including the BNP.

Addressing the rally, Abdur Razzak MP remarked that respectively by the BNP government was reminding the people of the Ershad era.

Fundamentalists and communal forces who opposed the country's independence had got an upper hand under the rule of this government, he said and called all pro-liberation forces to unitedly resist the enemies of independence.

Zillur Rahman, in his speech, attempted to justify yesterday's AL-sponsored hartal by saying that they did not have any option other than the hartal after the government's 'barbarous assault' on the party workers Wednesday.

"We know hartals bring public sufferings. But it is the government that pushes us to that path," he said.

Matia Chowdhury, MP, castigated the Prime Minister for her recent comments that untruths were told in the Jatiya Sangsad. It's a blow to the sovereign Parliament and the remark revealed her disrespect for the Sangsad, Matia Chowdhury said.

On the question of raising the Farakka issue in the UN General Assembly, the AL leader criticised that the move in the UNGA was supported by no other member. "It's a disaster for the country's diplomacy," said she.

Hasina hails

UNB adds: Awami League President and Leader of the Opposition in Parliament Sheikh Hasina congratulated the party dwellers for observing the half-day hartal yesterday spontaneously and peacefully.

Hasina, who is now in Beijing, urged the people to prepare for a greater agitation against 'undemocratic and anti-people steps of the BNP government.'

She also called for organising demonstrations and rallies on November 19 throughout the country to press for implementation of the November, 1990 joint declaration of the then three alliances.

The Awami League chief also urged the people to join her party's rally in Dhaka on November 20.

PM starts Nepal visit Nov 22

Prime Minister Begum Khaleda Zia will pay a three-day visit to Nepal beginning November 22, highly placed sources said here yesterday, reports UNB.

Foreign Minister ASM Mostafizur Rahman, Director General, SAARC, Ashfaqur Rahman and Director (South Asia) Saiful Ameen Khan, among others, will accompany the Prime Minister.

Begum Zia, who is the current Chairperson of the SAARC, will discuss with leaders of the Himalayan kingdom both bilateral matters and SAARC issues.

The possibilities of further expanding bilateral trade, particularly transit facilities for the landlocked country, are expected to come up for discussion, the sources indicated.

Besides, Begum Zia, in her talks with Prime Minister Grijia Prasad Koirala, will exchange views on regional and international problems of common concern.

She is also likely to discuss with Koirala the Farakka problem which has been severely affecting farming, navigation, hydro-power and environment of Bangladesh.

In 1975, India commissioned the Farakka barrage across the Ganges for diverting 40,000 cusecs of water from the Ganges into the Hoogly river through a feeder canal during the dry season.

Bangladesh has repeatedly suggested a tripartite arrangement for reaching a durable and acceptable solution to the water sharing problem of the Ganges — the 1,570-mile long international river flowing through China, Nepal, India and Bangladesh.

An Indo-Bangladesh accord in 1977 has provided for an agreed recommendation of augmenting the dry season flows of the Ganges at Farakka.

The flows of the Ganges during the dry season could be augmented up to the level of 48,000 cusecs by constructing only seven reservoirs in Nepal.

The proposed reservoirs in Nepal, according to experts, would not only augment the dry season flows of the Ganges but also produce huge hydro-electric power that should be able to meet the electricity demands of all its basin countries.

Begum Zia's visit to Nepal is taking place only two weeks ahead of a meeting of the Ministerial Council of the SAARC, due to be in Dhaka on December 6-7. That meeting is expected to finalise a number of future courses of action, including the fixation of the next SAARC summit.

SAARC Chairperson Begum Zia is due to travel to the other South Asian capitals before the 8th summit of the seven-nation forum, to be hosted by India.

President, PM greet Leghari

President Abdur Rahman Biswas and Prime Minister Begum Khaleda Zia yesterday felicitated Farooq Leghari on his election as the President of Pakistan, reports BSS.

In a message President Biswas said, "May I extend to your excellency my heartfelt congratulations upon your election as the President of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan."

"I have every confidence that during your excellency's tenure of office our bilateral relations will continue to widen and deepen," he said.

In another message of felicitation, Prime Minister Begum Khaleda Zia said, "It is our sincere wish that the people of Pakistan will prosper and fulfil their hopes and aspirations during your tenure of office."

"I wish you all success, in fulfilling the onerous responsibilities reposed in you and pray for the continued well-being of the brotherly people of Pakistan," she said.

Oil tanker blaze

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to extinguish the fire. After about an hour firemen from Khulna reached the stricken vessel by country boats and joined in the operation.

Only after two hours of struggle the firemen succeeded in dousing the blaze.

The charred bodies were identified by the survivors as those of Yunus, Mostafa, Shamsul and Golam crew of the tanker.

The oil tanker MV Bay Bridge is owned by Nazrul Islam Khan of the Asia Shipping Ltd, Dhaka.

Govt college teachers postpone strike

The Association of Bangladesh Government College Lecturers and Professors have suspended their planned strike which was scheduled from today, reports UNB.

A PID handout said leaders of the associations decided to withdraw their programme following the assurance given by Education Minister Barrister Jamiruddin Sircar and State Minister for Establishment Barrister Aminul Haque on November 9.

The Midnight File

Troops lift LTTE siege

COLOMBO, Nov 13: Sri Lankan troops today lifted a Tamil rebel siege on a heavily battered military base where nearly 900 were feared killed or wounded, officials said. As dozens of crack army commandos penetrated defences of the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) to reach besieged troops at the Pooneryn military complex, the rebels offered to hand over the bodies of 300 soldiers they had killed, reports AFP.

UN envoy dismisses use of force in Bosnia

SARAJEVO, Nov 13: UN special envoy Sergio Vieira de Mello dismissed today the use of force to punch open aid corridors to Bosnia, putting him in conflict with the top UN commander in the former Yugoslavia. De Mello said the use of force was 'not on', three days after General Jean Cot, commander of the UN Protection Force (UNPROFOR), called for the world body to consider using force to ensure relief got through, reports AFP.

Modern container port on Buriganga by 1997

NARAYANGANJ, Nov 13: Construction work on the country's first inland riverine ultra-modern container port at Pangao on the bank of the river Buriganga will start soon at a cost of Taka 267 crore under Japan-Bangladesh joint collaboration, official sources said today, reports BSS.

They said the container port on 88 acres of land at Pangao, about ten miles from here, was expected to be completed by 1997.

The Bangladesh Inland Water Transport Authority (BIWTA) sources said the port is expected to earn over Taka 30 crore annually.

Of the total cost of Taka 267 crore, Japan will contribute Taka 145 crore while the Bangladesh government will provide the rest Taka 122 crore.

Leghari

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working at cross-purposes, now we will all work in harmony," Ms Bhutto said earlier.

Ms Bhutto was chosen prime minister last month after her Pakistan People's Party narrowly won national elections. The party leads a coalition government that includes several smaller parties and independents.

Leghari joined Ms Bhutto's left-leaning party in 1971 and



Farooq Leghari

was a production minister in the government of Ms Bhutto's father, Zulfikar Ali Bhutto, who was ousted in a 1977 coup and executed. Leghari was jailed for four years after the coup.

Sajjad, 52, was senate chairman until the resignation in July of Ishaq Khan. He became acting president under Pakistani law that automatically gives the position to the senate chairman.

A lawyer and Rhodes scholar, Sajjad entered politics at the urging of military dictator Mohammed Zia-ul-Haq, who led the coup against Bhutto. Zia died in a mysterious plane crash in 1988.

Garments export

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the collateral of the entrepreneurs and they will have to pay premiums for the scheme," a source in the Finance Ministry said.

Sources said the government has already placed a Tk 30 crore fund to start the scheme at the Bangladesh Bank.

Initially, the plan would be implemented through the central bank to quicken the procedures. The scheme is likely to be effective within a couple of months.

"If needed, we will put in more money for the plan," the source said. "We will watch how this idea works and will take up more actions to increase the investment if necessary."

The idea of formulating the new scheme came following a finding of a survey supported by USAID which revealed that 80 per cent of the loans-seekers are refused despite having viable projects for lack of collaterals. The survey was conducted to identify bottlenecks in the investment atmosphere.

The low level of investment has flagged attentions of both the government and the donors recently. Between 1990-91 and 1992-93, investment as a ratio of the GDP has increased from 11.5 per cent to only 12.7 per cent.

Finance Minister M Saifur Rahman had also on several occasions asked the bankers to speed up their lending, saying that if the banks and financial institutions need any amount of money they would be provided with it by the government.

The government had been taking various measures, like reducing the percentage of reserves to be maintained with the central bank, to generate more money for the commercial banks to provide loans.

But when that measure failed to yield the desired results, the government cut the bank rates from 6.5 per cent to six per cent a couple of months ago with the hope of a corresponding reduction in lending rates. However, the lending rates are yet to come down effectively for encouraging investments.

Majid tells FAO confce Drying of Padma causes desertification

ROME, Nov 13: Agriculture, Irrigation and Water Development Minister M Majid-ul-Haq has said that Bangladesh is faced with a grim situation in the desertification of its south western region and depletion of fish wealth due to drying of the river Padma and its tributaries as a result of withdrawal of water by the upper riparian country, reports BSS.

Addressing the 27th session of Food and Agricultural Organisation (FAO) conference here on Thursday, Haq said the economy of Bangladesh had been adversely affected by the withdrawal of water and consequent increase in salinity in the coastal areas causing damage to industry and forest in the Sunderbans.

He urged FAO to take cognizance of this and called upon the countries of the region to cooperate and be fair to the lower riparians.

The minister said developed countries have been unfair in preventing subsidy to agriculture in the developing countries while they themselves were heavily subsidising their own agriculture sector.

He said, "This increases the cost of production of agriculture produces in developing countries. This is bound to cause

serious economic imbalance and chaos in world economic order and need serious consideration of the developed countries," he observed.

Haq suggested for allocation of pulses, oil seeds and fertilizers in lieu of wheat or rice by World Food Programme and donor countries for countries reaching self-sufficiency in cereal production. He said this would help off-setting of huge imports of oil, oilseeds and pulses by countries which in turn can allocate their own surplus wheat and rice towards food for world programme.

The Agriculture Minister stressed the imperatives of adoption of biotechnology for increased food production in the next century and urged the conference to evolve ways and means for funding such expensive technological operations in poor countries particularly where fifty per cent or more population live below poverty line.

The minister reiterated Bangladesh's support and co-operation to activities of FAO in the developing countries particularly in the Asia-Pacific region.

The minister also chaired the sixth plenary session of the conference.

Dhaka seeks donors' continued help in FP

Health and Family Welfare Minister Chowdhury Kamal Ibne Yusuf has called upon the Non-Aligned countries as well as the international donor agencies to continue their support to Bangladesh's family welfare and related programmes, reports BSS.

While making a statement at the Non-Aligned Movement (NAM) ministerial committee meeting at Bali, Indonesia on Friday he also sought international support to Bangladesh's efforts for human resources development and achieving economic self-reliance.

According to an official message received in Dhaka yesterday from Bali, the Health Minister also held a number of bilateral meetings with his counterparts from Indonesia, India, Nepal, and the Maldives and the UNFPA Director, Dr Nafis Sadiq.

The Health Minister, in his statement at the meeting, mentioned various steps taken by

the present Bangladesh government to meet the challenges of economic growth as well as social and community development.

Along with successful implementation of family planning programmes, the Health Minister said, the government has a firm and continuing political commitment to universalise primary education and literacy, primary health care, EPI coverage and women's development.

Likewise, the government is committed to achieving self-sufficiency in food in keeping with the goal set by Prime Minister Begum Khaleda Zia to ensure 'Dai-Bhat', or basic food, for all.

Kamal Yusuf called on Indonesian President Soeharto and conveyed to him the greetings and best wishes from the Bangladesh Prime Minister. The Indonesian leader reciprocated the sentiments.

Chinese passenger plane crashes

BEIJING, Nov 13: A Chinese passenger plane crashed and burst into flames while landing Saturday in the western city of Urumqi causing an undetermined number of deaths and injuries, authorities said, reports AP.

The plane, an MD-82 belonging to China Northern Airlines, crashed in a field a half-kilometer from Urumqi airport, breaking into several pieces and catching fire, said a local official who gave only his surname, Wu.

Wu, who was on duty at the regional government office, said there were fatalities but that he had no figures.



Picture taken in Singapore of US star Michael Jackson performing during his "Dangerous" tour. Jackson said yesterday that he is addicted to painkillers and has cancelled the remainder of his tour. (Story on Page 5) — AFP photo

Students block Teknaf-CB road

From Staff Correspondent

COX'S BAZAR, Nov 13: Road communication between Cox's Bazar and Teknaf was disrupted for four hours from noon till 4 pm today after local students set up barricades on the highway.

The agitated students blocked the road after a Cox's Bazar bound bus, Chittagong Metro 1894, hit a pedestrian, Ramizuddin, 22, who later succumbed to his injuries.

Communication was restored following intervention by the Ukha Police.

Dacoity in Ctg

From Staff Correspondent

CHITTAGONG, Nov 13: A dacoity was committed last night at Kulshi, a posh residential area of the port city.

A group of armed dacoits stormed into the residence of Akhter Matin, an official of a multinational company, at Kulshi last night and decamped with gold ornaments and other valuables worth Taka 1,28,000, police said.

The dacoits entered the house after breaking open the window grille and forced the inmates of the house at gunpoint to handover the valuables, police added.

A case was filed today with the Panchlaish thana and police claimed to have nabbed two suspects.

Keep education above all

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lined the need for proper field level supervision of education programmes, especially primary education, where the government had given utmost importance.

Begum Zia asked the ministers, Members of Parliament and high officials to regularly visit the rural areas and closely monitor the ongoing programme.

Begum Zia said accountability must be ensured at every level of the education programme. She said lack of accountability had damaged the education sector the most during the autocratic regime.

Begum Zia said "Now we have to give extra efforts to streamline the sector, which is the top most priority of the nation."

The Prime Minister said the media should design their programmes to motivate the guardians to bring their children to the schools.

She said her government had taken up programmes to encourage the poor students to go to schools by launching the food-for-education programme.

She also underlined the need for the family planning programme. Otherwise, she said, the rate of education could not be raised. She said there was no alternative to education to turn the country's huge population into human resources.

The meeting which was held

Benazir govt gripped by fear: Murtaza

KARACHI, Nov 13: Pakistani Prime Minister Benazir Bhutto's jailed brother said today that his sister's government is gripped by political fear and is over-reacting to his return home, reports AFP.

Murtaza Bhutto, 39, told reporters after his court appearance here, that there was a "deep sense of insecurity in Islamabad" since he announced his decision to contest last month's general election.

"There is irrational political fear, verging on panic in Islamabad," he said. "That is obvious with the amount of police they have everywhere."

Murtaza ended his 16-year self-exile abroad on November 4 and was arrested soon after his arrival.