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50 killed as Afghan jets bomb town near Kabul



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NEWS BRIEFS

ALPP meets Nov 20

A meeting of the Awami League Parliamentary Party will be held on November 20 at 6:00 pm at the Sangsad Bhaban in preparation for the coming JS session. Leader of the Opposition Sheikh Hasina will preside, reports UNB.

Mostafiz greets Pak FM

Foreign Minister A S M Mostafizur Rahman congratulated Sardar Asif Ahmed Ali on his appointment as Foreign Minister of Pakistan. He hoped the existing cordial relations between the two countries would strengthen further, reports UNB.

Cigarettes seized

Police in two drives recovered 81 cartons of contraband Benson & Hedges cigarettes worth about Tk 40,000 from Begum Bazar yesterday afternoon, reports UNB.

515 Rohingyas return home

COX'S BAZAR, Nov 17: Another batch of 515 Rohingyas refugees voluntarily went back to their homes in Myanmar raising the total number of repatriated people to 48,090. Official sources told BSS here to night that this 104th batch of refugees were seen off by local UNHCR and Bangladesh officials

Tokyo team on JMBP visits Dhaka soon Japan convinced but stops short of a 'yes' to co-financing

By A Special Correspondent

Japanese Finance Minister Hirohisa Fujii assured Finance Minister M. Saffur Rahman of Tokyo's continued support and assistance to Bangladesh's development programmes and projects and said he was fully convinced about the importance of the 700-million dollar-plus Jamuna Bridge project.

Rahman cleared most of the misunderstandings and listed the measured undertakings to the government to attract more overseas investment, including Japanese capital.

Fuji highly acclaimed the macro-economic successes of Bangladesh and hoped that the bilateral relations between the two friendly countries would grow further in the coming years.

The Japan-Bangladesh Parliamentary League president Hiroshi Mitsuizaka, MP also expressed his league's total support for the Jamuna Bridge project yesterday at a luncheon he hosted in Rahman's honour.

100 hurt in Rangamati clash One killed as police open fire on mob

From Staff Correspondent

CHITTAGONG, Nov 17: At least one person was killed and about 100 others were injured in a clash between police and several hundred supporters of the Pahari Chhatra Parishad (Hilly) Students' Council demanding the withdrawal of a security outpost from there, sources said.

Police attempted to remove a barricade put on the road at Naniarchar bazar by the supporters of the Pahari Chhatra Parishad (Hilly) Students' Council demanding the withdrawal of a security outpost from there, sources said.

Status of MPs changing sides still unclear

Star Report

All seven members of Parliament who have so far quit their original parties and joined other platforms will be deemed to be representing their respective constituencies in their personal capacities.

This was the reported view expressed by Jatiya Sangsad Speaker Shaikh Razzak Ali in response to queries made to him by some of the MPs who changed their allegiances lately.

According to Parliament Secretariat sources, letters signed by the Speaker were issued to the concerned seven MPs yesterday explaining the legal position and their present status.

However, the letters, while quoting relevant articles of the Constitution, were silent on the issue of their present status.

Contentious issues likely to make JS session stormy

By Nurul Kabir

The coming winter session of Parliament is expected to witness heated debates on a number of political and legal issues which are now sparking controversy in the country's various political camps.

The Jatiya Sangsad (JS) is scheduled to go into session Sunday. It will be the 12th session of the country's Fifth Parliament.

However, the issues likely to be debated in the House include a constitutional amendment seeking that all national level elections be held under a caretaker interim government, a ban on religion-based politics, the Opposition's allegations of government repression against its political opponents and the Prime Minister's reported observations about the moral standards of the Opposition lawmakers.

Discussion on the fate of some special parliamentary committees dealing with issues like a repeal of the Indemnity Ordinance, the probe into Opposition allegations of corruption in the Agriculture Ministry, and separation of the judiciary from the executive branch of state machinery, are also likely to generate some heat.

According to sources in the Parliament Secretariat, the committee relating to the indemnity and judiciary issues failed to reach a consensus following dozens of meetings over two years while the JS body on the probe is yet to fix its terms of reference, although the members have met more than six times since the formation of the committee during the last budget session in July.

On the issue of elections under a caretaker government, two opposition MPs — Abdur

AL observes Jt Declaration Day tomorrow

The Awami League will observe the Joint Declaration Implementation Day throughout the country tomorrow, reports UNB.

On this day in 1990, the then 8-party alliance led by the Awami League, 7-party alliance led by the BNP and leftwing 5-party alliance simultaneously made the declaration at three separate rallies in the capital at the final stage of the out-autocracy struggle.

The declaration envisaged the constitutional guidelines for the resignation of former president Ershad and transfer of power to a neutral caretaker government to conduct parliamentary elections.

The opposition will also press the ruling party to come out with a specific stand on the question of banning religion-based politics. In this connection, the AL will stress

The leaders of the AL, JP and the Jamaat will strongly demand for the constitutional amendment, arguing that this is needed for ensuring free and fair elections, sources in the three parties said.

However, the Opposition demand for a caretaker government is likely to meet with a strong rebuff from the leaders of the treasury bench on the ground that the issue is irrelevant when an elected government is running the state, sources in the BNP said. They will also argue that an independent Election Commission is already there to conduct the polls neutrally.

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The body of Nayan was sent to the Dhaka Medical College Hospital morgue for autopsy. Meanwhile, police were questioning Tania till writing of this report late last night. Police said she will be produced before the court today.

Servant found dead Actress held for questioning

By Staff Correspondent

A film actress was arrested yesterday by police in connection with the mysterious death of her servant at Tallabagh in the city.



Tania Rahman was arrested when she went to Mohammadpur police early yesterday morning to inform them about the mysterious death of one Nayan, 22, who she claimed was her servant.

The actress, who appeared in bit roles in some local movies, told police she found Nayan lying unconscious in her bedroom at around 8:30 pm Tuesday.

She took Nayan to the Suhrawardy Hospital and then shifted him to the Dhaka Medical College Hospital where the attending doctors declared him dead. Nayan had a severed tendon and a scar on his neck, sources said.

Tania, estranged from her husband Russell Rahman for the past two years, reportedly lived with the victim. But neighbours of the actress said Tania had introduced Nayan as her servant when hiring the second floor apartment.

A cousin of the victim said that Nayan had also acted in some films.

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Importers of toxic fertilizer yet to be penalised

By S Y Bakht

The Ministry of Agriculture is yet to take any action against those responsible for the import, from the United States, and distribution of toxic fertilizer last year, although a probe body report recommending punitive measures was approved by the Prime Minister's office some time ago.

Earlier in June the Prime Minister's office had approved the report by a 3-member enquiry committee, headed by the Vice Chancellor of the Open University Dr Shamsher Ali, recommending legal and punitive actions against the suppliers and officials involved in the import and distribution of the fertilizer containing high levels of toxic lead and cadmium substances.

According to informed sources, the Agriculture Ministry has not initiated any step to implement the approved actions so far.

Senior ministry officials, when contacted, remained tight-lipped about the whole affair but said that it is being handled

at the "highest" level. They declined to elaborate.

The corporation went on to distribute 1113 tonnes of the toxic fertilizer after just a preliminary test at the Bangladesh Agriculture Research Institute (BARI), which was done without proper standards, BARI recommended the use of the fertilizer and opined that it would not be harmful to the environment or to human health.

By doing so, both BADC and BARI also completely ignored a timely warning, well before the consignment reached Chittagong port, from the US Embassy, quoting the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), that the fertilizer may contain toxic industrial wastes.

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33 freed, Hazratbal reopens today

SRINAGAR, Nov 17: The Indian authorities today released all 33 Kashmiri Muslim pilgrims who were trapped in the shrine of Hazratbal for more than a month with a group of Kashmiri rebels, reports AFP.

Kashmir police chief Mahinder Nath Sabherwal said his officers released the pilgrims, who left the shrine on Tuesday after the entrenched Muslim militants gave themselves up in a pre-dawn surrender.

"Some of them may have reached their homes by now," Sabherwal said.

A curfew imposed in the neighbourhood surrounding the mosque remained in force for the 33rd straight day on Wednesday but Kanwar said that residents evacuated by the army would be allowed to return home later in the day.

Soldiers remained in force in large numbers around the shrine on Wednesday although witnesses said they had begun to remove sandbag bunkers and

other gun emplacements in preparation for a withdrawal. Despite the end of the siege, shops, businesses, offices and schools were shut here Wednesday in response to a call for a general strike by the All-party Kashmir Freedom Conference, an umbrella group opposed to Indian rule.

Conference leaders said the strike, which has paralysed the Muslim-majority Kashmir valley since the siege began, would continue until the Hazratbal mosque reopened for prayers and underwent a "purification" ceremony.

Meanwhile allegations of army brutality and fears of further conflict over Hazratbal were raised today, a day after the siege ended.

Though government figures, including Prime Minister P V

Narasimha Rao, denied any deal was made to end the standoff, militant, military and official sources said a compromise was thrashed out.

Kashmiri police officers told Reuters that army soldiers insisted on interrogating the militants late on Tuesday and beat some of them severely, despite an agreement that they should be questioned only by local police.

Residents living nearby said they heard screams. No official comment on the allegation was immediately available.

The militants had already accused the government of bad faith, sending messengers to the media to convey their anger at government statements and media reports presenting the end of the siege as an official victory.

The BGMEA president Redwan Ahmed, a BNP MP, in a press conference at the Jatiya Press Club, urged the government to ensure that such incidents do not recur at the airport.

The press conference was also attended by BGMEA vice president Nurul Haq Sikder — who was severely beaten up and

Fate of IWT-3 project hangs in balance

By Sohel Manzur

A decision on the fate of the crucial Third Inland Water Transport Project (IWT-3), which is also being considered as a determining factor for the government's relations with the World Bank, is likely to be taken on Monday by the cabinet, according to official sources.

The cabinet will decide whether the government would go ahead with the project accepting the conditionalities imposed by the bank or refuse to accept those leading the project towards cancellation.

The conditionalities imposed by the World Bank in the form of action plan for the Bangladesh Inland Water Transport Corporation (BIWTC) were opposed mainly by the Ministry of Shipping, although other concerned government agencies feel there is little scope

for opposing the conditionalities since the government has already signed the Development Credit Agreement (DCA) with the bank.

The action plan as suggested by the WB as precondition to disbursement of aid (both credit and grant) for the 64 million US dollars project include organisational restructuring, fleet restructuring, manpower rationalisation and financial restructuring of the BIWTC.

The WB also insisted the government approve the technical assistance for the project provided by the Finnish government and appoint the management consultants and the local consultants within the shortest possible time to pave the way for disbursement of the credit.

But the Ministry of Shipping, according to Redwan and

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Tuesday's untoward incidents at ZIA BGMEA demands action against Customs men

By Staff Correspondent

The Bangladesh Garments Manufacturers' and Exporters' Association (BGMEA) yesterday protested the harassment and assault of industrialist Md Nurul Haq Sikder by Customs officials at the Zia International Airport (ZIA) and demanded punishment of those responsible.

wrongfully confined by Customs officers and sepoys Tuesday — and senior vice president of the BGMEA Fazlul Haq.

Redwan Ahmed, MP said, press reports of Tuesday's sad incidents were distorted by the Customs people. These untrue reports had tarnished the personal image of Sikder, a commercially important person (CIP) of the country owning over 16 industries.

The BGMEA chief said Sikder's Pall Mall Group of Companies had earned at least US 100 million dollars in exports for the country.

According to Redwan and

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Glowing tributes to Bhashani

The 17th anniversary of the death of Maulana Abdul Hamid Khan Bhashani was observed yesterday with glowing tributes to the leader of the downtrodden, reports UNB.

Leaders and workers of different political parties and socio-cultural organisations thronged his mazar premises at Santosh in Tangail yesterday morning to pay due respect to the memory of Bhashani.

The programme, taken up in commemoration of his death, include offering wreaths and fatiha at the mazar of the great leader at Santosh, milad mehfili, Quran Khwani, discussions, sessions of mass songs and public meetings.

Leaders and workers of the ruling Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP) placed wreaths and offered fatiha at the mazar of the Maulana in the morning. Party Secretary General and LGRD and Cooperatives Minister Barrister Abdus Salam Talukder led them to Santosh.

Bhashani Smriti Sangsad members placed wreaths and offered fatiha at the mazar in the morning. It arranged Quran Khwani and milad mehfili at its Dhaka office at 3:00 pm. It will also organise a discussion and

thousands protest disinvestment of National Tubes

From Our Correspondent

GAZIPUR, Nov 17: Several thousand labourers at Tongi today brought out a hunger-procession in the afternoon that paraded the main streets of this industrial town.

The rally organised by the Jatiya Samik League began from the local Awami League office and terminated at the Meghna Road where a meeting was held by the workers.

The rally leaders claimed that the National Tubes, a government organisation was being sold at Tk six crore only, while its value was around Tk 125 crore.

They demanded payment of arrears salary of the nationalised mill workers and stoppage of further denationalisation. They also threatened to hold a hunger-procession by foot to Dhaka and gherao the Secretariat if their demands were not met.