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NEWS BRIEFS

SEANET Convention begins today

Bangladesh Amateur Radio League (BARL), a national society of radio amateurs in Bangladesh, has arranged a three-day SEANET '93 Convention from today at Hotel Sonargaon. Minister for Post and Telecommunications Tariqul Islam will inaugurate the convention at 4:30 pm, says a press release.

Emajuddin Zia Parishad adviser

Dhaka University Vice Chancellor Prof Emajuddin Ahmed has joined the Zia Parishad as its adviser. Prof Emajuddin Ahmed joined the organisation after detailed discussions with parishad's Chairman Kabir Murad and Vice Chairman Syed Mesbahuddin, reports BSS.

Aman procurement drive opens

THAKURGAON, Nov 18: The Aman procurement drive 93-94 in Thakurgaon district has been launched today. Law, Justice and Parliamentary Affairs Minister Mrza Golam Hafiz opened the procurement drive at Thakurgaon Sadar LSD purchase centre this morning, reports UNB.

Ctg mayor leaves for Bombay today

CHITTAGONG, Nov 18: Mayor of Chittagong city Mir Mohammad Nasruddin leaves here tomorrow for Bombay to attend the five-day third conference on city neat beginning from November 20. Jointly organised by regional network of local authority, UNO and ESCAP, the conference will be attended by mayors and representatives of different countries, reports BSS.

Sec 144 clamped: Death toll may rise 12 killed in Wednesday's Rangamati violence

CHITTAGONG, Nov 18: The death toll in Wednesday's violent incidents at Naniarchar of Rangamati hill district rose to 12 today with the recovery of 11 more bodies, official sources said.

But according to unofficial sources, 14 people died while over a hundred were injured, including tribals and non-tribals alike.

The death toll is likely to rise further as some of the injured victims — admitted to the local thana health complex and Rangamati hospital — are reportedly in a critical condition.

Among the dead, one was identified as a non-tribal while the others are all tribal people, officials said.

A tense situation has been prevailing in the area.

Meanwhile, the authorities

From Staff Correspondent

in a bid to prevent further outbreak of clashes, clamped Section 144 in the Naniarchar area from this morning and deployed a large number of policemen, most of them in riot gear. Besides, the security force (army) at Naniarchar has also been alerted to keep a vigil and thwart any attempt to create fresh trouble.

The government has constituted a one-man judicial inquiry to probe the Wednesday's incidents that rocked the entire Rangamati hill district.

However, no other incidents of violence was reported from there. Hundreds of supporters of the Pahari Chhatra Parishad (Hilly Students' Council) paraded the roads of Rangamati town this morning and submitted a memorandum to the Deputy Commissioner

protesting the police action at Naniarchar.

Home Minister Abdul Matin Chowdhury this afternoon flew to Rangamati by a helicopter and visited the injured at the hospitals. Chowdhury, accompanied by other officials, returned to Dhaka at 4:45 pm today.

The minister assured of compensation and every possible assistance to the victims of the violence.

Wednesday's incidents occurred when police opened fire to disperse the two clashing groups in front of the Naniarchar Bazar and attempted to remove a barricade put up on the road there by the supporters of the Pahari Chhatra Parishad — the body of tribal students — demanding the withdrawal of a security

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Bill on workers' wages to be placed in JS

By Special Correspondent

A bill regarding the fixation of minimum wages for the public sector industrial workers will be introduced during the next session of Jatiya Sangsad beginning Sunday.

According to an authoritative source in the Ministry of Labour and Manpower, the bill will propose passage of the state-owned Manufacturing Industries' Workers (Term and Condition of Service) Act, 1993, to facilitate implementation of the recommendation of the National Wages and Productivity Commission.

The cabinet, in its meeting last Monday, approved the draft of the act proposed by the Labour and Manpower Ministry.

An ordinance for the fixation of minimum wages at Taka 950 plus other allowances for the workers of nationalised industries has already been promulgated on October 19.

"According to constitutional requirement, the ordinance must be placed before the session of the Jatiya Sangsad

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JS Probe body on Irrigation Ministry Primary report likely during winter session

By Nurul Kabir

The winter session of the Jatiya Sangsad (JS) is likely to hear a primary report on the fate of the parliamentary probe committee formed to investigate into the Opposition allegations of corruption against the Ministry of Irrigation and Flood Control and the minister concerned.

According to sources close to the members of the probe body, the report is likely to contain split opinions on the terms of reference for the investigations.

However, before placing the report in the Sangsad the members of the 15-member body headed by Speaker Shaikh Razzak Ali, will meet to give their individual opinions. According to the Parliament Secretariat sources, the Speaker has already asked the officials concerned to convene a meeting on November 21, the opening day of the JS winter session.

The November 21 meeting will be the ninth since the committee was formed on July 13 last.

The probe body members — seven each from the Treasury and the Opposition benches — met on eight previous occasions to discuss the terms of reference, but failed to reach agreement.

During their earlier deliberations, the Opposition members argued that the terms for the investigation should be broad, encompassing the entire activities of the ministry.

On the other hand, the treasury bench members argued that the inquiry should be conducted only into specific areas since the committee was formed following definite allegations. They also maintained

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Municipal polls Hearing on city boundaries from tomorrow

A week-long hearing on objections regarding in fixing the boundaries of 90 wards of Dhaka City Corporation will begin tomorrow, reports UNB.

The area-wise hearing will be held at the office of Additional Commissioner of Dhaka division at Segun Bagicha (2nd Floor in the 1st 12-storied building) at 10 am. The hearing will continue up to November 27.

The primary list in fixing the boundary of the 90 wards has already been published. A number of written objections and suggestions have been filed by the residents of the concerned areas after publishing the list.

The area-wise dates of hearing are: Lalbagh, Kotwali and Sutrapur — November 20, Ramna, Motijheel and Sabujbagh — November 21, Mohammadpur, Dhanmandi and Tejaigon — November 23, Mirpur, Cantonment and Pallabi — November 25 and Demra, Uttara and Gulshan — November 27.

The petitioners are requested to present during the hearing in the mentioned dates and time.

Bus passengers go on rampage

By Staff Correspondent

Angry bus passengers went on a rampage yesterday afternoon and damaged some four buses at Kamalapur in the city.

According to police, the trouble began when the driver of a Gulistan-bound Route No 6 bus from Gulshan chose a different route to avoid a traffic jam.

The bus conductor asked the passengers to get down near the Notre Dame College but four of the passengers demanded that they should be dropped at Gulistan, thus starting an altercation.

At one stage the passengers started manhandling the driver and the conductor. The driver, however, managed to take his vehicle to the nearby Kamalapur depot but the passengers inside damaged some other buses parked at the bus terminal.



An Afrikaner Volks Unie (AVU) delegate raises a hand yesterday to reject a proposal at the World Trade Centre, Kempton Park, Johannesburg, where South Africa's political leaders formally endorsed a constitutional blueprint that will end 300 years of white minority rule.

— AFP photo

SA leaders endorse blueprint to end white minority rule

JOHANNESBURG, Nov 18: South African political leaders early today formally endorsed a constitutional blueprint that is to end 300 years of white minority rule and set the country irreversibly on the road to democracy, report AFP, AP.

The constitutional package — which includes laws for multiracial elections April 27 — goes to the white-dominated Parliament for approval next week at what would be its final session.

If it passes as expected, it would end the era of white-minority regimes that denied human rights to blacks, jailed black leader Nelson Mandela for 27 years and gunned down Soweto schoolchildren in their struggle to maintain white power and privilege.

For the first time since Dutch traders came to the southern tip of Africa in 1652, the Zulu, Xhosa, Tswana and San tribes could claim equal rights with their English and white Afrikaner exploiters.

President F W de Klerk,

Mandela and other political leaders approved the constitution after two years of contentious negotiations and a final day of frantic bargaining about the powers of South Africa's post-apartheid government.

"We are at the beginning of a new era," said Mandela, president of the African National Congress, at the signing ceremony attended by international observers.

De Klerk — who shared the Nobel Peace Prize with Mandela earlier this year for leading the transition to majority rule — said the agreement marked a starting point for building a true democracy.

"We had the determination and the courage to accept the challenge of transforming our society," the president said shortly before the session ended early Thursday morning. "South Africa will never be the same again."

The new constitution would give all adult South Africans the right to vote, pay restitution for land seized

from blacks and try to give diverse ethnic groups a voice in how their country will be run.

Opponents who boycotted the talks, including white extremists trying to prevent black rule, contend a future ANC government and its Communist Party allies will ignore the constitution's ideals of justice and equality.

"Today is the beginning of confrontation ... mark my words," neo-Nazi leader Eugene TerreBlanche warned on state-run television.

Absent from the session were leaders of the Freedom Alliance grouping the Zulu-based Inkatha Freedom Party and the nominally independent Black Homelands of Bophuthatswana and Ciskei, an the white far-right Conservative Party and Afrikaner Volksfront.

The conservative groups had walked out of the talks on July 2 to press their demands for federalism to be entrenched in a final constitution drawn up by the negotiators, rather than finalised by the assembly to emerge from the April vote.

US House okays NAFTA

WASHINGTON, Nov 18: President Clinton headed to a meeting with Asian leaders in Seattle Thursday buoyed by House passage of the trade pact to fuse the United States, Mexico and Canada into the world's largest free-trade zone, reports AP.

Clinton said he expects final approval by the US Senate and the Mexican Senate next Tuesday and would send Vice-President Al Gore to Mexico to discuss its implementation.

Detailed Story on Page 7

Canada has already ratified the pact but it still needs to be officially proclaimed by new Prime Minister Jean Chretien.

Speaking to a crowd on the White House lawn before departing for Seattle, Clinton thanked the House for voting Wednesday night "for America to continue to compete and win in the global economy." The House approved the North American Free Trade Agreement 234-200.

Reaction in Dhaka NAFTA may become a bane for poorer countries

By Inam Ahmed

Bangladeshi economists and business circles foresee a constricted trade future for Bangladesh and other developing countries after the US House of Representatives passed the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) Bill paving the way for a bullish regional trade bloc of the American nations.

The NAFTA would eliminate tariffs among the United States, Canada and Mexico over 15 years, opening a vast new Mexican market for American industries as well as giving Mexico a new leverage in world trade.

But Bangladeshi observers Thursday said the NAFTA, evoking much euphoria for the American nations, may turn out to be a-bane for the poorer nations of the world.

"We would face a substantial threat of losing foreign direct investment and prospects of exports," Ayeubur Rahman Bhuiyan, Professor of the Economics Department, Dhaka University felt.

"We should campaign for freer world trade rather than the regionalised trade strategies, as planned by the US and the European countries," he observed.

Former president of the Metropolitan Chamber of Commerce and Industry (MCCI), Morshed Khan, said with the adoption of the NAFTA, countries like Bangladesh would face steeper competition in its exports and major products like garments may face some stifling markets.

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Welcome drizzle sooths city life

By Staff Correspondent

Some parts of the capital and its adjoining areas yesterday evening experience unexpected but welcome showers which helped clear the city smog and also left behind a cool, pleasant night for the city dwellers.

The 20-minute drizzle started without warning at around 5:45 pm in the Gulshan, Maghbazar, Shantinagar, Gulistan, Topkhana Road, Motijheel and parts of Dhanmondi as well as at some other places.

The Met Office, however, recorded no rainfall because the drizzle did not occur over the Agargaon area, where the office is located.

A forecasting officer of the Met Office termed the rainfall "a surprising event" and informed that the rain had originated from the Netrokona area as reported in a north-northeasterly direction.

The weather forecast for the next 24 hours, commencing at 6 am today, says the sky will remain partly cloudy over the country while drizzles and light rainfall may occur at one or two places over the Dhaka Division.

PM tells public meet in Rajshahi Govt's welfare drive now opposition's headache

TANORE (Rajshahi), Nov 18: Prime Minister Begum Khaleda Zia today rebutted the opposition's allegation that the BNP government has failed in running the country, saying her government has been working for the people's welfare and it is a cause of headache for the opposition, reports BSS.

Addressing a huge public meeting at the Dakbungalow field here, she said that the 'failure of the BNP government' was that it had succeeded in increasing production and the people were now getting their food regularly, rice was available at Taka 7 to 8 per seer and it had been constructing roads, bridges, culverts, schools and supplying electricity throughout the country.

The Prime Minister further said that the opposition might not feel it good that her government was considering the export of rice and did not create 'famine' yet and kept the price of salt at Taka save per seer instead of Taka seventy.

On the contrary, Begum Zia said that the 'success' of the opposition was that it had kept the people in starvation, plundered relief materials, created famine, repressed the innocent people by creating special 'bahinis'.

The Prime Minister said the opposition did not favour development and production and that is why they had resorted to hartals, destruction of public property, setting vehicles on fire, hurling bombs for making the poor people poorer.

Presided over by convener of Tanore thana BNP Mansur Rahman, the meeting was addressed also by Energy and Mineral Resources Minister Dr. Khandaker Mosharrar Hossain, State Minister for Land Kabir Hossain, State Minister for Establishment Barrister Aminul Huq, BNP standing committee member Imran Ali Sarkar, Mayor of Rajshahi Mizanur Rahman Minu, Azizur Rahman MP, Syed Manzur Hossain MP and Begum Lutfunnesa Hossain MP.

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Hasina returns today

Leader of the Opposition in Parliament and Awami League chief Sheikh Hasina will return home today at the end of her fortnight visit to China, reports BSS.

Sheikh Hasina and other members of her delegation will arrive at Zia International Airport at 8:55 pm by a Biman flight.

The other members of the delegation are Abdus Samad Azad, S A M S Kibria and Abul Ahsan Chowdhury, MP.

Sheikh Hasina went to China on November 5 at the invitation of the Communist Party of China. Hasina's daughter Sayma Wajed is also accompanying her.

Another report says: A meeting of the Awami League Parliamentary Party (ALPP) will be held tomorrow at the 6 pm at the Sangsad Bhaban conference room of the Leader of the Opposition.

Sheikh Hasina will preside over the meeting.

An emergency meeting of the Central Working Committee of the Awami League will also be held tomorrow at 11 am at the Minto Road residence of Sheikh Hasina.

Japan's lower house okays reform bills

TOKYO, Nov 18: Japan's powerful lower house of parliament passed Prime Minister Morihiro Hosokawa's package of political reforms today, report Reuter, AP.

The 511-seat lower house approved the legislation 270 to 226, brining to an end years of haggling over how to clean up the corruption that has long plagued Japan's politics and often brought debates on policy to a standstill.

Only 496 lawmakers voted, with 15 others abstaining or boycotting the proceedings.

Hosokawa's seven-party coalition has the votes to pass the package in parliament's upper house, which is expected to vote on it next month. The bill passed its biggest hurdle when it won a lower-house committee vote Tuesday.

The vote enabled Prime Minister Morihiro Hosokawa,

whose coalition government took office Aug 9, to keep a promise to voters fed up with repeated scandals during the 38-year-rule of the ousted Liberal Democrats.

It also is expected to transform a political landscape long dominated by the Liberal Democrats, perhaps encouraging a two-party system resembling those in the United States and Britain.

Analysts expect a year or two of confusion and reshuffling before the new party structure emerges. In the process, many expect the Liberal Democrats to split between reformists who generally support Hosokawa and old-line conservatives who think he is moving too fast.

More than a dozen reformist Liberal Democrats, including former Prime Minister Toshiki Kaifu and former Justice

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Bangladeshi cabbies feel unsafe in NY

By Staff Correspondent

The immigrant 'Yellow Cab' drivers in New York are becoming more and more vulnerable to attacks from muggers and harassment by fellow US taxi drivers, especially at night.

In the past ten months, 40 immigrant taxi drivers including four from Bangladesh were killed in such incidents in the city, according to a message received in Dhaka over telephone.

In New York city, about 12500 yellow cab drivers operate, of whom 5500 are Bangladeshi immigrants.

In the latest of such assaults, two Bangladeshi cabbies were killed on November 15.

Since police could not yet arrest anyone in connection with the series of assaults, 60 per cent of the drivers are now staying off the roads at night to avoid encounters with the muggers.

JMBP symbol of Dhaka-Tokyo ties, says top Japanese official

By A Special Correspondent

Japanese Chief Cabinet Secretary Masayoshi Takemura, who shoulders the duties and responsibilities of the Prime Minister when the PM is away from Japan, was totally convinced of the significance and import of the 700 million dollar-plus Jamuna Multipurpose Bridge and has reportedly termed it as a 'symbol' of Dhaka-Tokyo friendship.

Takemura, who met Finance Minister M Saifur Rahman — now in Tokyo on a five-day trip — yesterday told Rahman that Japan would send a representative to Washington DC to attend the World Bank-sponsored meeting on the Jamuna Bridge Project on November 29 and simultaneously send a team to Dhaka for firming up the co-financing of the project, sources in Tokyo

told this correspondent yesterday over telephone.

Takemura, however, did not give any clear green signal for funding the Jamuna Bridge Project as a co-financier along with the World Bank and the Asian Development Bank.

The senior Japanese cabinet minister acclaimed the leadership of Prime Minister Begum Khaleda Zia and her government's economic successes and said the Japanese government was eagerly waiting to receive Begum Zia in Tokyo early next year.

Takemura, who visited Bangladesh in the wake of the devastating cyclone of April, 1991, also lauded Rahman for his economic reforms and congratulated him on his being elected as the Chairman of the Board of Governors of the

World Bank-IMF for fiscal 1993-94.

Rahman also had a meeting with Parliamentary Vice Minister of the Ministry of International Trade and Industry (MITI) Otahiko Endo, who said: "We are looking forward to the forthcoming visit of Prime Minister Begum Zia to Japan."

Although Endo reportedly indicated that Japanese overseas investment would flow into Bangladesh at an increasing rate in the coming years, yet he stopped short of making any commitment on any specific proposals of Dhaka, it was learnt.

Rahman, who is leading a high-powered six-member Bangladesh delegation to Tokyo, has spent four hectic

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AL accuses BNP of ignoring people's will

Awami League Working Committee in a meeting yesterday accused the BNP of ignoring people's will and neglecting their demands, reports UNB.

"BNP government didn't implement any recommendations of the historic joint declaration of three alliances, excepting establishment of parliamentary system," it said.

Presided over by Awami League Acting President Abdul Mannan, the emergency meeting adopted several resolutions on the eve of "Three Alliances' Joint Declaration Day" today.

In a resolution, the meeting said people would express their vow to eliminate the politics of killing, coup and conspiracy through implementing the Joint Declaration of the three alliances and autonomy of Radio and TV, separation of the judiciary, establishment of rule of law and, above all, establishment of the spirit of Liberation War.