

Inside Today

Supplement

Today's issue of The Daily Star contains an 8-page tabloid supplement on the Armed Forces Day

Article

Why Responses to Reforms are Yet to be Encouraging

by Abdul Bayes Page 4

International

9,000 PLA soldiers ready for deployment in Gaza, Jericho



Liz comes to the aid of Michael Jackson Page 5

Business

Usmania Glass Sheet Factory-2: Tariff on imported raw materials increases production cost

APEC states make concessions on reducing tariffs: EC asked to match efforts for GATT deal Pages 6, 7

Feature

Patronising painters with open arms; Keeping children fit; The fun of carpenters; and Eating for health Page 8

Metropolitan

Dhaka Day by Day



Promoting Designer Panjabis Page 3

NEWS BRIEFS

Shafi Sami envoy to S Arabia

The government has decided to appoint C M Shafi Sami as ambassador of Bangladesh to Saudi Arabia, a Foreign Office announcement said yesterday. He is at present Bangladesh Ambassador to China, reports BSS.

Medicines worth Tk 4.73 lakh seized

By Staff Correspondent Custom officials yesterday seized contraband medicines worth Tk 4 lakh 73 thousand and 620 from a passenger, who arrived in Dhaka at 5:57 pm by a Bangladesh Biman flight from Karachi. The medicines, which were made in Germany, included three items, injections, eyedrops and tablets used for inducing abortion. A departmental case was filed. A custom official said that Kashem crossed the green channel claiming that he had no contraband items with him. The officials challenged him and recovered the medicines from a basket of fruits.

546 Rohingyas go home

COX'S BAZAR, Nov 20: Another batch of 546 Rohingyas refugees voluntarily went back to their homes in Myanmar through three transit camps at Teknaf here today. Officials sources told BSS last night.

Doubts cloud Biman's Airbus buying procedure

By M Anwarul Haq

Serious questions have been raised regarding the procurement of two Airbus A310 aircraft by Bangladesh Biman. Aviation experts feel that Biman may not have followed standard technical procedures in evaluating and analysing the bids floated more than four months back.

Out of the several proposals received, the Biman authorities short-listed four companies for eligibility. In an unusual move, Biman extended the validity of the bids for another 90 days earlier this month although it had four months to evaluate the offers.

The companies who have been short-listed are — the Airbus Industrie of France, Concorde Multitrade Inc of USA, Aircraft Leasing & Management of UK and Velos Air

Lease, based in the US. Relevant questions have been raised about the offer made by one particular bidder — Concorde Multitrade Inc, registered in New York. The company is owned by one Syed Haque, a Bangladeshi born in Sylhet in 1956 and who previously worked in travel agencies in Sylhet and Kuwait.

What makes the offer of this firm unusual is the financing arrangement being offered with the bid. The company has proposed a financing arrangement of 200 million US dollar for the two aircraft which experts say should not cost much more than 100 million. The company has reportedly informed Biman that the surplus funds can be used for any purpose in Bangladesh. Against the proposed financing, the

company has also sought collateral and government guarantees for the loan.

Concorde Multitrade, in its bid, has proposed two Lufthansa aircraft for Biman. It is not clear why Lufthansa did not offer the aircraft directly. However, when contacted, Lufthansa would only confirm that they have, for a given period, authorised Concorde Multitrade to sell their aircraft but were neither aware nor involved with the financing offered to Biman by Concorde Multitrade.

The airlines industry is a highly specialised trade where experts and financiers in the business carry a lot of credibility and reputation and all the traders are quite well-known in aviation circles.

In the case of Concorde

Multitrade, the company has no past track record of doing aviation business. Besides, the financing offer proposed by Concorde involves another US company named World Capital Development Group Inc, of Tulsa, Oklahoma. However, investigations of US government agencies revealed that this company could not be located and no details of its past and current activities could be obtained.

Given the absence of any business profile in the aviation sector, informed sources raise questions about the offer and the source from which the funds would come.

Investigations have also revealed that Concorde Multitrade was incorporated by Syed Haque in New York on August

See Page 12 Col 7

Japan to review JMBP rehabilitation before committing itself

By Staff Correspondent

Japan will reassess the rehabilitation plan for the evicted people in the Jamuna Multipurpose Bridge Project (JMBP) area before making a final commitment on its 200 million US dollar contribution to the project.

Disclosing this to newsmen at a press briefing, Finance Minister M Saifur Rahman said a Japanese team will arrive here, tentatively on December 4, to start the reassessment study.

The Japanese government is fully convinced that the JMBP should go through as it is a project of national commitment," the minister, who returned from Tokyo late Friday night, said.

"Japan will participate in the project and finance it,"

Rahman insisted at his Secretariat office. "But they are now dragging their feet. However, it is only a matter of time."

The minister also mentioned that unlike the World Bank Japan also agreed to support some major gas and power generation projects. The Japanese government does not share the WB decision to stop investment in the power sector as a means to arrest system loss, he maintained, and added that Japan has agreed to rehabilitate the 109 MW Harishpur power plant and would take up a study in this regard. Japan also showed interest in expediting the rural electrification programme, he said.

"My visit has cleared up

See Page 12 Col 1

JS winter session from today

By Staff Correspondent

The Jatiya Sangsad (JS) goes into its winter session at 4 pm today.

It will be the 12th session of the country's fifth Parliament. The Business Advisory Committee, comprising representatives from both the treasury and Opposition benches, met last evening to decide the issues to be discussed in the session and its tenure.

Chaired by Speaker Sheikh Razzak Ali, the advisory body decided to take up the country's labour problem, deaths due to road mishaps and measures to prevent them, and police excesses on opposition activists on November 10 last for discussion in the House.

The opposition members in the advisory body demanded discussion on the Prime Minister's recent comment that Parliament members tell lies in the Sangsad, but the ruling party

See Page 12 Col 6



Section of a public meeting at the Government High School ground in Chakhill under- Noakhali district yesterday, addressed by Prime Minister Begum Khaleda Zia. — PID photo

Armed Forces Day today

The Armed Forces Day will be observed today with due solemnity and enthusiasm as well as a renewed pledge to safeguard national independence and sovereignty, reports UNB.

The day's programme will begin with the offering of special prayers after Fajr prayers at all mosques of cantonments, naval ships and establishments as well as airforce bases.

In the capital, President and Supreme Commander of the Armed Forces Abdur Rahman Biswas and Prime Minister Begum Khaleda Zia, who holds the Defence Ministry, will place wreaths at the Shikha Anirban (the eternal flame) to pay homage to the members of the Armed Forces who had embraced martyrdom in the War of Liberation in 1971.

Chief of Army Staff Lt Gen

See Page 12 Col 4



Awami League chief and Leader of the Opposition in Parliament Sheikh Hasina addressing a public meeting at the Bangabandhu Avenue in the city yesterday. — Star photo

JS can solve nat'l issues: Khaleda

CHATKHIL, Noakhali, Nov 20: Prime Minister Begum Khaleda Zia today reiterated the importance of Parliament in a democratic system and called for making it more effective to improve the lot of the common people, reports BSS.

Addressing a big public meeting at the local high school ground, Begum Zia said the BNP gives maximum emphasis on Parliament which, it believes, is the focal point of democracy.

She said accountability has been established under the parliamentary democracy with the united efforts of all.

Referring to the functioning of democratic government with accountability, the Prime Minister said different parliamentary committees comprising members from parties in Parliament were working to solve the na-

tional problems through discussions. The Prime Minister said national problems could be solved through mutual discussions and exchange of views only in the Sangsad.

The Prime Minister said the desired targets of development could not be achieved if everybody did not work with responsibility.

Giving the details about the on-going development programmes, Begum Zia said her government has given top most priority to the education sector. Education is the basic factor to attain development in any other sectors, she said.

She called upon the guardians to send their children to schools.

Emphasising the importance on the education of women Begum Zia said the government

had introduced free education upto class eight for women and it was contemplating introducing free education for women upto class ten.

Begum Zia said poultry and dairy farming were the major sectors, identified by the government for development. She said loans would be provided on easy terms for setting up dairy and poultry farms.

The Prime Minister said the government would give special benefits for setting up dairy farms to reduce the people's dependence on powdered and tinned milk and save a huge amount of foreign exchange.

Begum Zia said crop diversification programme should be made successful to attain the target of self-sufficiency in food sector.

She said family welfare pro-

See Page 12 Col 1

Saifur critical of NGOs

By Staff Correspondent

Finance Minister M Saifur Rahman yesterday was highly critical of the NGOs' role in promoting the social issues concerning different projects, saying that these unnecessarily escalate the project costs.

"The resettlement issue on the Jamuna Multipurpose Bridge Project (JMBP) has now become a critical issue because of the role played by some NGOs," Rahman told the newsmen at a press briefing after returning from Japan.

"These issues only reduce the economic rate of return of the projects and are costing a burden for the Third World," the minister maintained.

"The question of child bondage was raised by the West

See Page 12 Col 8

PM guilty of contempt of JS: Hasina

By Staff Correspondent

Sheikh Hasina yesterday accused Begum Khaleda Zia of contempt of Parliament and observed that the Prime Minister had lost the moral right to continue as Leader of the House, especially after accusing Sangsad members of telling lies.

Hasina, chief of the Awami League (AL) and Leader of the Opposition in Parliament, also questioned the Prime Minister's integrity and called upon the rank and file of the ruling Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP) to 'look for alternative leadership for the party's benefit.

Sheikh Hasina was addressing a public rally in the city yesterday in observance of the third anniversary of the 1990 Joint Declaration of the then three major political alliances.

Referring to the Prime Minis-

ter's November 7 speech at a city rally, Sheikh Hasina said, "Her accusation of falsehood against Parliament members clearly indicates that the Prime Minister does not believe in the sovereignty of the people and their Parliament."

However, the Opposition leader herself accused ruling party members of telling lies and, in a bid to substantiate her allegation, told the rally that the Prime Minister denied the fact that her government had terminated the jobs of hundreds of industrial workers.

The AL activists listening to their party chief, when asked by Hasina for comment, loudly supported her views. The AL chief then left the 'issue of punishment for the liar' with the people.

Sheikh Hasina, then turning to the local-level elections of the country, accused the gov-

ernment of rigging the polls and observed that there could be no neutral elections under the BNP government.

The AL chief strongly demanded that the next parliamentary polls should be held under a 'neutral, caretaker government'. She, however, added that elections should be the only way for transfer of power.

The AL chief once again accused the ruling party of having staged a 'subtle rigging' during the last parliamentary polls, held in Feb 1991 under the caretaker government headed by Justice Shahabuddin Ahmed.

Criticising the government, Hasina said "The BNP has given us dolatantra which patronises the ruling party activists only. But the promise of the nine-year long mass struggle against the autocratic regime of Ershad

See Page 12 Col 2

7 thana magistracies to remain

By Special Correspondent

The government has decided to maintain magistrate's courts in seven thanas considering their location, distance from the district headquarters, communication facilities and other relevant matters.

The thanas are: Paikgachha and Koira in Khulna, Chokoria in Cox's Bazar, Banskhali in Chittagong, Amtali and Pathargata in Barguna, and Lama in Banderban district.

The issue of maintaining magistrate's courts in some thanas of remote areas was thoroughly reviewed at an inter-ministerial meeting which recommended in favour of those seven courts. A proposal from

the Cabinet Division in this regard has been approved recently by the highest level of the government.

Following the abolition of the Upazila system, the government last year ordered shifting of the thana magistracies to the district headquarters, except those established in some remote areas under the 'chowki' system. Accordingly, almost all the magistrate's courts in thanas were shifted by 30 June last while transfer of a few were under process.

Meanwhile, some ministers, MPs and other quarters have requested the government to

See Page 12 Col 8

Death toll rises to 23

Four more bodies recovered from Naniarchar lake

From Staff Correspondent

CHITTAGONG, Nov 20: The recovery of four more bodies today from the Naniarchar lake raised the death toll in Wednesday's violence there to 23.

But the search for more bodies is still on in the lake and adjoining jungles, officials said. However, Section 144, clamped on Thursday morning at Naniarchar under Rangamati hill district, was withdrawn following an easing of tension, official sources informed.

Meanwhile, the authorities, fearing a fresh outbreak of vio-

See Page 12 Col 8

ADB-govt deal likely on \$ 80m BR project

After a long delay, the Asian Development Bank (ADB) is likely to sign an agreement with the government worth US 80 million dollars to support the Bangladesh Railway (BR) recovery programme next month, sources said.

The agreement was expected to be signed earlier this year but was delayed when the BR failed to fulfil some of the conditions imposed by the bank.

The sources informed, an ADB representative, now in the capital, was reviewing the rail sector and was quite satisfied at the BR's performance of the Railway Recovery Programme (RRP) initiated by the government in 1991-92.

The 80 million dollars loan will be disbursed in two tranches of 40 million each. The BR is negotiating for an increase of the first tranche amount to 45 million dollars from 40 million; the sources disclosed.

The ADB teams for the loan stipulate that the BR should reach the break-even point against its working expenses by 1993/94 and it should fully recover its depreciation and working expenses by the end of 1996-97.

The rail sector has incurred a loss of over Tk 2185 crore since the independence of the country and has lost 50 per

See Page 12 Col 7

Pakistan won't roll back N-plan unilaterally

KARACHI, Nov 20: Pakistan will not roll back its nuclear programme unilaterally, Prime Minister Benazir Bhutto said here today, reports AFP.

"A roll-back is neither possible nor feasible," Bhutto told reporters here.

"The nuclear programme has been capped and frozen since July 1990, but there will be no roll-back, she said, calling for an open debate on the issue.

She said the Presler Amendment, under which the US suspended aid to Pakistan in 1990 for suspicions that its programme was weapon-oriented, was one-sided."

If India was willing to bilaterally or multilaterally work towards regional non-proliferation, the Pakistan would follow suit, Bhutto said.

She cited the Kashmir dispute as the single greatest obstacle to improving relations with neighbouring India.

Two of the three wars between Pakistan and India since their independence from Britain in 1947 have been fought over Kashmir.

Though the relations with India were not normal, Bhutto said she would consider attending a UNICEF summit in New Delhi in December if she saw

that meaningful talks with India on the Kashmir issue were possible.

Talking of domestic problems, Bhutto said her government was giving priority attention to the impending energy crisis, a high population growth rate, infant mortality and unemployment.

She underlined the need for cooperation between the government and the opposition led by former Premier Nawaz Sharif on issues of national security and national interest.

Bhutto ruled out amnesty for her brother Murtaza Bhutto, who is in jail here facing trial on

assorted charges of involvement in terrorism.

She said she regretted that he was in jail after returning home after a 16-year exile, but that he had to face the due process of law.

Bhutto said she was not in favour of special courts for speedy trials, set up during the Sharif government, but added they could not be dissolved since the situation in the country was still not normal.

Her brother who is being tried by a special court, has charged that those courts were unconstitutional.

CHT talks Nov 24 8 border outposts withdrawn

From Staff Correspondent

CHITTAGONG, Nov 20: The authorities last night relaxed security measures by withdrawing eight outposts from the frontier villages of Panchhari thana under Khagrachhari hill district after the tribal Shantibahini leaders agreed to a sixth round of peace talks on November 24.

The decision withdrawing the army outposts five days ahead of the dialogue is in

See Page 12 Col 3

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