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NEWS BRIEFS

Three Services Chiefs meet PM

Chiefs of Staff of the Three Services made courtesy call on Prime Minister Begum Khaleda Zia jointly at the Armed Forces Headquarters here yesterday on the occasion of the Armed Forces Day. The chiefs stayed with her for sometime. The Prime Minister also met the members of family of seven Bir Srestha at the headquarters. She enquired about their well-being, reports BSS.

British envoy calls on Hasina

British High Commissioner Peter J Fowler made a courtesy call on Leader of the Opposition in Parliament and Awami League chief Sheikh Hasina at her Parliament office yesterday. Tofael Ahmed MP and Ahul Hassan Chowdhury MP were present. They discussed economic, social and political affairs of the two countries, meeting sources said, reports UNB.

Two killed in road mishap

By DMCH Correspondent
Two persons died on the spot and three others were injured when a speeding truck ran over them at Kawran Bazar in the city yesterday. Witnesses said the truck went berserk after its driver lost control over the vehicle at around 8:30 am. One Abul Matin and another pedestrian, who could not be identified, immediately died on the spot. Three others — Sarwar, Amir Uddin and Ayesha — were admitted to the Dhaka Medical College Hospital (DMCH).

Three hill districts get more administrative powers

Several ministries yesterday signed some 24 agreements on a number of subjects and handed those to the local governments of the three Hill Districts, reports UNB.

Rangamati Local Government Parishad Chairman Parijat Kushum Chakma, Kha-grachhari Local Government Parishad Chairman Samiran Dewan and Bandarban Local Government Parishad Chairman Saching Pru and concerned Secretaries and Joint Secretaries of the government signed the agreements aimed at giving greater administrative responsibilities to the local bodies of the three hill tracts districts.

Under the agreement, local government parishads of the three districts will appoint all third and fourth class employees from among the local inhabitants for filling up the vacant posts under the ministries that signed the agreement. Besides, the parishads will have administrative powers with regard to their transfer, suspension, removal and any kind of punishment.

A government handout said the agreements are aimed at strengthening the structures of the local bodies of the three hill districts by way of decentralising the administration to strengthen the efforts of socio-economic development of the region.

Earlier, the government had transferred the hill tracts three subjects: primary education, health and family planning and agricultural extension.

Yesterday's agreements involved the following subjects: Industries Ministry — BSIC, Local Government Department — Directorate of Public Health Engineering and Rural Development and Cooperative Department, Cooperative Directorate, Fisheries and Live Stock Ministry — Fisheries Directorate and Live Stock Directorate.

Social Welfare Ministry — Social Welfare Directorate, Youth and Sports Ministry — Sports Department affairs.

Cultural Affairs Ministry — Concerned institutions of cultural affairs.



President and Supreme Commander of the Armed Forces Abdur Rahman Biswas placing wreaths at the 'Shikha Anirban' (the Eternal Flame) at the Dhaka Cantonment on the occasion of the Armed Forces Day yesterday. The chiefs of the Army, Navy and Air Force are also seen. — PID photo

Environment action plan delayed by two years

By A Special Correspondent

Formulation of an action plan for management of the country's environment has been delayed by nearly two years. The delay has occurred because of delay in implementation of a UNDP-funded NEMAP (National Environment Management Action Plan) project.

Bangladesh is experiencing rapid deforestation, soil depletion, industrial pollution, increase in salinity level, coastal degradation and loss of biodiversity. The country also lives under the ever present threat of floods of massive destructive power.

The interaction between environment and development and quality of life was brought to focus by Bangladesh's experience with recurrent natural calamities since the mid-Eighties. All of these were linked by experts to effects of degradation of the global environment. Experts also established that the effects of natural disaster can be reduced through prior action aimed at protecting Bangladesh's own environment. An ambitious programme of afforestation has already been launched to increase forest cover which will reduce soil depletion and coastal degradation.

Programmes such as afforestation are only a limited implementation of the natural environment policy drawn up by the Ministry of Environment and Forests. Fuller implementation of the plan will require a comprehensive understanding of the state of environment and a plan of action to improve it.

The NEMAP project is aimed at fulfilling this requirement. The overall objective of the project is to operationalise the national environment policy drawn up by the Ministry of Environment. When implemented, the government will have a comprehensive understanding of the state of environment and a plan of action to improve it.

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Elizabeth Dowdeswell

UNEP ready to help hold water talks

By Special Correspondent

The visiting United Nations Under-Secretary General Elizabeth Dowdeswell stressed the need for a dialogue for solving the problem of the Ganges water sharing and offered the UNEP's assistance and cooperation in this regard.

Addressing a press conference at the Padma State Guest House yesterday, she termed Bangladesh's water problems and the issue of sharing the waters of common international rivers as a major environmental matter in the region and said that a political will was essential to solve it.

Ms Dowdeswell, who heads two UN bodies — the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) and the United Nations Centre of Human Settlement (Habitat) — as Executive Director, arrived in Dhaka yesterday morning on a two-day official visit.

Soon after arrival, Ms Dowdeswell met Prime Minister Begum Khaleda Zia and discussed with her issues of mutual interest, including the water-sharing problem. This is the first visit of the senior UN executive to Bangladesh since she took over the charge of the posts early this year.

Dowdeswell also met other ministers yesterday, including Foreign Minister A S M Moustafizur Rahman, Works Minister

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Regional water confce in city from today

By Staff Correspondent

An international conference on eastern Himalayan waters will begin in the capital today, bringing together water experts from India, Nepal and Bangladesh to discuss and find possible solutions to the problems of water sharing.

State Minister for Irrigation, Water Development and Flood Control Mosharraf Hossain Shahjahan will inaugurate the conference as chief guest at Hotel Sonargaon at 9:30 this morning.

The two-day conference, convened jointly by the Bangladesh Unnayan Parishad (BUP) and the Global Infrastructure Fund (GIF) Research Foundation Japan, will be presided over by chairman of the BUP Dr Quazi Kholiuzzaman Ahmed.

The occasion will be participated by a five-member delegation from India, seven delegates from Nepal, 10 from Bangladesh and 13 from the GIF, Japan, the co-sponsors of the conference.

This conference is a follow up of the Eastern Himalayan Waters Conference, New Delhi held on March 22-23 last. At that meeting water experts from India, Nepal and Bangladesh recognised that inter-country collaboration was essential for proper water management in the eastern Himalayan region.

The experts also put emphasis on the economic development of the region, detailed empirical studies at the grassroots level, and immediate action suited the socio-economic conditions of the regions.

The Delhi conference stressed the need for developing an institutional structure of regional or international character using modern or new formulae to deal in the water-related problems.

The experts, laying importance on the environmental issues of the Himalayan region, viewed that the ecological concerns must be integrated with economic development. They all agreed that there should be no misplaced imposition of Western models on South Asian problems and social realities.

The Dhaka conference will focus on specific water-related problems like the Farakka issue, and would try to move towards action.

The Bangladesh delegation includes Kholiuzzaman Ahmed, Prof Sajjad Rashid, Prof Ainun Nisbat, Amjad Hossain, M Altaf Ali, M Siddique and others.

The Indian team includes George Verghese, CD Thatte, and Raj Gopal while the Nepalese delegation consists of Dr Bhatta, Dr Kamal Rijal, NK Lal and JC Pokharel.

Dr M Yamamoto of the GIF, H Shibusawa, E Noda and T Ueki will also participate in the conference from Japan.

JS winter session begins Discussion on PM's remarks demanded

By Staff Correspondent

The winter session of the Jatiya Sangsad began yesterday with the Opposition demanding a general discussion on the reported comments of the Prime Minister regarding Parliament.

Rising on a point of order just a few minutes before the Speaker adjourned the House, Opposition Chief Whip Mohammad Nasim said that the comments of the Prime Minister and leader of the House had spoiled the sanctity of the House.

"Her comments have tarnished the image of the MPs as well as Parliament," Nasim said while other Opposition members shouted "shame, shame!"

Prime Minister Begum Khaleda Zia told a rally on November 7 at the Gulistan Square that "untrue statements are made in the House by some members."

"Being the Leader of the House, should she make such comments?" Nasim asked of the Speaker. Both Begum Zia and Opposition leader Sheikh Hasina were present during Nasim's speech.

As many as 28 notices seeking a discussion on the issue were submitted to the Parliament Secretariat.

Speaker Shaikh Razzak Ali cut short Nasim's speech by saying that he would give a decision regarding the notices today.

The Speaker took his chair at 4 pm and started the proceedings with the customary recitation from the Holy Quran, election of a panel of chairman and adoption of a condolence

JS probe body yet to agree on its terms of reference

By Staff Reporter

The parliamentary committee to probe into the Opposition allegations of corruption against the Irrigation and Flood Control Ministry and the minister concerned yesterday once again failed to reach an agreement on the terms of reference for its investigations.

However, the body, at its ninth meeting since its formation on July 13 last, agreed to submit a 'primary report' on their points of differences regarding the terms to the House during the current session of the Jatiya Sangsad(JS).

The meeting of the 15-member body headed by Speaker Shaikh Razzak Ali was held yesterday morning.

Set Page 12 Col 3

Banks asked to reduce interest rates further

Finance Minister M Saifur Rahman yesterday asked the commercial banks to reduce interest rates further, by 1 to 2 per cent, reports UNB.

"Banks can still reduce their interest rates... they should cut down the interest rates by 1 to 2 per cent," he said while addressing a reception accorded to him on his election as the Chairman of the Board of Directors of the World Bank and IMF.

The Bangladesh Jute Association (BJA) accorded the reception at a local hotel. The function was also addressed by Commerce Minister Shamsul Islam, BJA Chairman Md Rezaul Karim MP and Vice Chairman Abdul Mannan.

The Finance Minister said the banks should take necessary steps in order to make them profitable in the changing economic perspective and suggested them to reorganise their structures.

Speaking on the allegation that banks are not lending money, he said the nationalised banks more or less provide loan while the private sector ones end money only to the relatives of the directors.

Foretelling a very good and tremendous future of jute, Rahman underscored the need for more promotional work for diverse and sophisticated use of the environment-friendly product.

Saifur Rahman hit out at the International Jute Organisation (IJO) for its alleged failure to do anything for promotion of the natural fibre, dubbing it as a Set Page 12 Col 7

Biman rejoinder on Airbus buying

Following is the rejoinder issued by the Biman Bangladesh Airlines yesterday in response to our Sunday's front page item titled "Doubts cloud Biman's Airbus buying procedure".

"Our attention has been drawn to a news-item headlined 'Doubts cloud Biman's Airbus buying procedure' published in your esteemed daily on Sunday, November 21, 93. Since the newsitem is not based on actual position, the same is being clarified to dispel any misgiving that may have arisen in the mind of the readers.

"Tender for Airbus was floated on two-envelope system, which is a common practice. Set Page 12 Col 2

115 killed in Macedonian plane crash

SKOPJE, Nov 21: One hundred and fifteen people were killed when a plane crashed into snow-covered mountains near Ohrid airport in southern Macedonia on Saturday night, Radio Macedonia reported today, says AFP.

Only one passenger survived, a young man in his twenties, the radio said quoting a policeman, Goce Trajanovski, who had just returned from the scene where the plane burst into flames.

Earlier, an official at Ohrid airport spoke of several survivors and Radio Macedonia had reported that three people had been pulled out of the burning wreckage.

The plane, a Soviet-built YAK-42, operated by the Macedonian domestic airline Avio Impex, took off from Geneva and should have landed in the Macedonian capital Skopje. It was diverted to Ohrid because of fog.

Licences of 14 recruiting agencies cancelled

The government has cancelled licences of 14 recruiting agencies and suspended function of 21 others for misbehaviour and irregularities under the Immigration Ordinance of 1982, reports UNB.

Cancelled agencies are: M/S Depon Trading Corporation, Palash Enterprise, Popular Trade(BD) Ltd, Al Farid Trade International, Alan International, Al Nakir International, Al Maher International, Babubhai and Company, Alf International Agency, N Hossain and Company, MAF International Enterprise, Winner International, Unique International and Masat Enterprise Ltd.

The suspended agencies are: Set Page 12 Col 5

গণপ্রজাতন্ত্রী বাংলাদেশ সরকার
জাতীয় রাজস্ব বোর্ড
ঢাকা।

বিড়ির আবগারী কর তথা ব্যান্ডরোল ফাঁকির বিরুদ্ধে সতর্কবাণী

- ** ইদানীং গভীর উদ্বেগের সাথে লক্ষ্য করা যাচ্ছে যে, কিছু সংখ্যক বিড়ি প্রস্তুতকারক ও বিক্রেতা ব্যান্ডরোলবিহীন বিড়ি বাজারে বিক্রয় করে কর ফাঁকি দিয়ে যাচ্ছে। উল্লেখ থাকবে যে, প্রতিটি বিড়ির প্যাকেটে ০.৪৮ টাকার ব্যান্ডরোল লাগানোর বিধান রয়েছে।
- ** সকল বিড়ি প্রস্তুতকারক ও বিড়ি বিক্রেতাগণ ব্যান্ডরোলবিহীন, ব্যবহৃত ব্যান্ডরোলযুক্ত ও নকল ব্যান্ডরোলযুক্ত বিড়ি বিক্রয় পরিহার করুন।
- ** ব্যবহৃত ব্যান্ডরোল সংগ্রহ, পুনঃব্যবহার, ব্যান্ডরোল ক্রয়-বিক্রয় ও হস্তান্তরের মাধ্যমে তাহা ব্যবহার করা থেকে বিরত থাকুন।
- ** বিড়ি উৎপাদনে আবগারী আইন ও বিধিমালা এবং সঠিকভাবে ব্যান্ডরোল লাগানোর মাধ্যমে আবগারী কর প্রদান বাধ্যতামূলক। তা অমান্য করা আইনত দণ্ডনীয় অপরাধ। এতে জেল ও জরিমানাসহ বিড়ি উৎপাদনের আবগারী লাইসেন্স এল-৪ সাপেক্ষে এমনকি বাতিল হতে পারে।
- ** বিড়ির আবগারী কর তথা ব্যান্ডরোল ফাঁকির বিরুদ্ধে বিশেষ স্কেয়াড ইতিমধ্যেই দেশের সর্বত্র তাদের অভিযান শুরু করেছে।
- ** ব্যান্ডরোলবিহীন বিড়ি, ব্যবহৃত ব্যান্ডরোলযুক্ত ও নকল ব্যান্ডরোলযুক্ত বিড়ি বাজারে বিক্রয় হতে দেখা গেলে নিকটস্থ কাপ্তানস, একসাইজ ও ভ্যাট অফিসকে অবহিত করার জন্য জাতীয় রাজস্ব বোর্ড সকল সচেতন নাগরিকের প্রতি আহবান জানাচ্ছে এবং জাতীয় রাজস্ব আয়ের স্বার্থে সকল দেশপ্রেমিক নাগরিকের সহযোগিতা কামনা করছে।

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জাতীয় রাজস্ব বোর্ড