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NEWS BRIEFS

Khaleda returns home today

Prime Minister Begum Khaleda returns home this evening ending her three-day official visit to Nepal. The Prime Minister is visiting Nepal at the invitation of Nepalese Prime Minister Girija Prasad Koirala, reports BSS.

Begum Zia had an audience with the King of Nepal, Birendra Bir Vikram, at the Narayanghi royal palace in the evening yesterday.

The Prime Minister held exclusive talks with the King for an hour.

Later the King and the Queen hosted a private dinner in honour of the Prime Minister.

Svensson calls on Hasina

Visiting Swedish Minister for International Development Cooperation and Human Rights Issues Alf Svensson had a meeting with Leader of the Opposition in Parliament and president of the Awami League Sheikh Hasina at her Parliament office yesterday. They discussed various issues relating to economic, social and political affairs of the two countries, reports BSS.

10 injured as train derailed

Ten people were injured when a train derailed between Borokata and Hatibandha in Lalmonirhat district yesterday, disrupting rail communication in the route. Railway Control Room sources here said five wagons of the Lalmonirhat-bound mixed train with passengers and cargo from Burimari went off the track at 2:15 pm, causing minor injuries to 10 people. A relief train from Lalmonirhat rushed to the scene, but train service could not yet be restored, reports UNB.

Tripartite cooperation on regional waters emphasised

Kathmandu urged to uphold Dhaka's interests in its accords with Delhi

KATHMANDU, Nov 23: Bangladesh and Nepal today emphasised close cooperation among the countries of the region for development and management of water bodies for better utilisation of the untapped water resources. During a two-hour official talks here, Prime Minister Begum Khaleda Zia, leader of the Bangladesh delegation, requested the Nepalese government to keep in view the interest of Bangladesh as the lower riparian in any bilateral understanding or accord with India to exploit the water resources of Nepal, especially of the eastern rivers, which jointly contribute about 70 per cent of the flow of

the Ganges. The talks were held at the Singha Durbar, the office of the Nepalese Prime Minister Girija Prasad Koirala who represented his country. A member of the Bangladesh delegation told BSS after the talks that Begum Zia had underlined the need for a tripartite framework of regional cooperation for development and management of water resources. The solution of the problems on a regional basis, she said, would significantly enhance the optimal use of water. The Nepalese Prime Minister welcomed the Bangladesh leader's stand. During the talks, the two

sides discussed the entire gamut of bilateral and regional issues of common concern. The two countries also emphasised the importance of development of tourism and the enhancement of trade between Nepal and Bangladesh. The Bangladesh side proposed that joint venture projects could be set up in Nepal in the private sector for manufacture of readymade garments, jute carpets and jute goods. Prime Minister Begum Zia offered scholarships in leather and textile technology to Nepalese students. Bangladesh also offered to export rice to Nepal. The Nepalese side expressed

its willingness to impart training to Bangladeshis on hotel management and tourism. It also offered to export 'Dat' (pulses) to Bangladesh. The two sides expressed identical views that no development strategy could achieve success without eradication of poverty in the region. They also stressed the need for population control and development of education to remove poverty. In this regard, Prime Minister Begum Khaleda Zia gave the outline of the programmes taken up by her government to eradicate poverty in Bangladesh. Prime Minister Koirala began

South Asia must give priority to women's status, says Khaleda

KATHMANDU, Nov 23: Prime Minister Begum Khaleda Zia said here today that development policies in the countries of South Asia must give priority to raising social and economic status of women, reports BSS.

"Concerns for women need to be incorporated within the framework of national development planning in a comprehensive manner," Begum Khaleda Zia said while making the closing statement at the SAARC ministerial conference on women and family health at the International Convention Centre here.

The Prime Minister said adequate resources should also be allocated for development of women community. She pointed out that it was not enough merely to formulate programme objectives and allocate resources.

"We are also required to generate mechanisms and instruments responsive to the gender dimension of development activities. An approach sensitive to the rights of women is not just a political imperative but a basic condition for sustained economic and social progress she said, adding: "It calls for a radical change and a commitment to people-centred development."

The Prime Minister said we are all aware that women account for more than half of the population of South Asia and

16 killed in Dhamrai bus plunge

At least 16 people were killed and 40 others injured — a score of them seriously — when a minibus plunged into a 30-foot deep ditch tearing the guard rails of a bridge at Dhamrai on the Dhaka-Aricha Highway yesterday evening. Eleven passengers died instantaneously while five others succumbed to their injuries at the Manikganj Sadar Hospital, both police and hospital sources said. Witnesses said the Ghoribound bus met the tragic fate when it swerved at full speed, to give the right of way to another bus coming from the opposite direction on the bridge at Daudia under Dhamrai Police Station in Manikganj district. The surviving passengers blamed the driver for reckless driving. The minibus which started from the Dhaka Gabtali

terminal, was over-loaded, they added. Of the dead, nine people were identified as Shukur Ali, 30, of Sutipara; Kader, 35, of Savar; Jogesh, 45, of Satturia; Delwar, 35, of Daudia; Mukul, 25, of Ghor; Hasina, 45, of Manikganj; Abu Taleb, 32, of Dhamrai; Abdul Aziz, 70, of Lalmatia, Dhaka; and Rawshan Ara, 45, of Manikganj. Twenty critically injured passengers were admitted to the Manikganj Sadar Hospital while five others were sent to Dhaka last night. Other injured passengers were rushed to different hospitals at Savar, Dhamrai and Manikganj. Villagers, police from the Savar and Dhamrai stations and fire service personnel from Manikganj rushed to the spot and rescued the passengers trapped inside the bus.

Bodies of the passengers who died on the spot were taken to the Dhamrai police station while five other bodies were kept in the Manikganj hospital morgue, hospital sources said. Ironically, only the day before, the Inspector General of Police (IGP) A S M Shahjahan, at a meeting with senior police officers at the Police headquarters in the city, instructed the officers to take stringent measures against bus drivers who carry excess passengers. UNB adds: In another accident on the Aricha highway, two people died and five others were injured when a fish-laden truck plunged into an eight-feet ditch at Hemayetpur in Savar. The accident occurred at about 8 am yesterday when the driver of the Dhaka-bound truck from Nayarhat lost control. Fish trader Manik Mia, 40,

Police action on Nov 10 Hasina leads brief walkout in protest

The Awami League (AL)-led Opposition yesterday staged a brief walkout in the Jatiya Sangsad (JS) to protest the government's alleged violation of the Opposition's constitutional right to hold public rallies. Chief of the Opposition in Parliament Sheikh Hasina announced the walkout a few minutes before the conclusion of a 'one-hour' discussion on

Matin denies charge

Home Minister Abdul Matin Chowdhury expressed his readiness to resign if anybody could prove he was ever a 'razakar'.

He posed the challenge after a number of Awami League MPs, during a general discussion on the November 10 incidents around the Secretariat, dubbed him a 'razakar of Tk 6'.

Branding the Home Minister a 'razakar' (collaborator of the Pakistan army during the 1971 Liberation war) some of the AL members said that Matin Chowdhury should in fact become the home minister of Pakistan.

JS to discuss PM's remarks Monday

Discussion on the Prime Minister's reported comments relating to Parliament will now be held on Monday instead of Sunday, Speaker Shaikh Razzak Ali informed the House yesterday.

The discussion has been postponed at the request of the Prime Minister who called the Speaker from Nepal and said she had a prior programme in Cox's Bazar on that day (Sunday).

The members accepted the fresh date for the debate. Speaker Shaikh Razzak Ali, in a ruling Monday, accepted the notices for breach of privileges of the MPs by the comments ascribed to the Leader of the House Prime Minister Begum Zia who reportedly, during her speech at a city rally on November 7, said that "untrue statements are made in the House by some members."

Twenty-seven MPs from the Awami League, the Jatiya Party and Jamaat-e-Islami submitted the notices on which the Speaker allowed a two-hour discussion.

AL says Rafiq violated rules of procedure

The Jatiya Sangsad yesterday witnessed a brief but heated discussion on a privilege motion brought by Works Minister Rafiqul Islam Miah at some reported comments by Opposition leader Sheikh Hasina.

Barrister Rafiq submitted the notice saying that Hasina's comments on November 19 regarding the Prime Minister and her cabinet colleagues had breached his privileges as a member of Parliament.

The Awami League chief, on her return from China, reportedly told newsmen at the airport that "The Prime Minister and other ministers frequently tell lies in the House."

AL member Sheikh Selim said that Barrister Rafiq has violated Article 280 of the Rules of Procedure by passing the notice to the press before it was accepted by the Speaker in the House.

Article 280 does not permit disclosure of the subject matter of a notice before its acceptance by the Speaker.

Sheikh Selim, displaying a copy of the notice, which he reportedly collected from the press, said that since the minister violated the Rules of Procedure, his notice should not

Electricity Amendment Bill passed

The Jatiya Sangsad last night passed with minor amendments the electricity Amendment Bill, 1993, enhancing punishment for offences like meter bypass, theft of energy, unauthorised power supply and malicious wasting of energy, reports BSS.

The bill, piloted by Energy Minister Dr Khondoker Mo-sharraf Hossain, was passed by voice vote after rejecting the amendments moved by the opposition members seeking that the bill be sent for eliciting public opinion and sent if to the select committee. Provisions were made in the bill to award highest punishment of five years jail term and fine of taka 10,000 for theft of energy.

Experts for studying feasibility of a Ganges barrage in Bangladesh

Water experts at the second conference on the Eastern Himalayan Waters yesterday agreed on undertaking studies regarding the feasibility of a Ganges barrage in Bangladesh, a multi-purpose barrage in Tipaimukh, India and a hydro-electric plant in Nepal. The experts who attended the two-day meet which concluded in the city yesterday, hoped implementation of the findings of these studies would help optimise the use of common waters and benefit the people of the region. At a post conference press briefing yesterday evening, chairperson of the Bangladesh Unnayan Parishad (BUP) Dr QK Ahmed said, the water experts from Nepal, India and Bangladesh, among other things, agreed on full transparency and sharing of data and information in the region. The two-day non-government conference was organised by the BUP and the Global Infrastructure Fund (GIF) Research Foundation of Japan and attended

by five experts from India, five from Nepal, ten from Bangladesh and 13 from the GIF. The press briefing, addressed by Ahmed, was also addressed by Anjad Hossain Khan of Approtech Consultant Ltd., Dhaka, BUET Professor Ainun Nishat, former Secretary of India Ramaswamy R Iyer, BG Verghese and Advisor to the Nepalese Planning Commission Dr K Rijal. The Managing Director of GIF Dr N Yamamoto, RS Basi of Alaska Pacific University, USA, GIF advisor Dr AH Shibusawa and GIF Director T Ueki were also present. Ahmed said, the conference discussed the trends in contemporary international water law development, equitable sharing of international waters, and balancing of environmental and water management issues. The conference recommended a feasibility study of the Ganges barrage project should be undertaken near Pangsha in Rajbari district. It

also agreed on a study of the adverse impacts and benefits of the Tipaimukh multi-purpose project on the river Borak in India. "The detailed engineering study of the Tipaimukh project has already been completed," Ahmed said. "Now we should see what will be its impact on Bangladesh, where the river flows in and is known as the Meghna with its tributaries—the Surma and the Kushiyara." The experts also agreed on a detailed engineering study of the West Seti hydro-electric project in Nepal. The conference requested the GIF to facilitate funding for these projects. The participants of the conference also discussed an institutional arrangement to deal in the eastern Himalayan waters. They agreed that the BUP and the Centre for Policy Research (CPR) in India would act as the secretariat in the two countries. Nepal would propose the name of an institution as its

DU students observe strike

Some students yesterday kept the Dhaka University under lock and key protesting the killing of one of their comrades.

Alok Kanti Pal, a third-year student of Political Science of the university, was shot dead in the Shaheed Titumir Hall of the Bangladesh University of Engineering and Technology (BUET) late Monday night.

Labagh police said that no progress was made in the investigation and the killers are yet to be traced.

Alok was shot dead from close range near the BUET hall while he was leaving along with two other companions who fled the scene immediately after the incident.

Police suspect the two persons, yet unidentified, who were with Alok were responsible for the murder.

Alok belonged to a dissident group of the Bangladesh Chhatra League (BCL) led by Mostafa Mohsin Mantu, a former Awami League leader who has joined the Gano Forum

CHT talks today

CHITTAGONG, Nov 23: The stage is set for the sixth round of peace talks between the parliamentary committee headed by the Communications Minister Oli Ahmed and the Shantibahini leaders tomorrow at the Khagrachhari Circuit House. Official sources said, the closed-door dialogue, scheduled to begin at 10 am, is expected to be attended by a five-member Shantibahini team led by J B Larma alias Shanto Larma, president of the Parbattya Chittagram Jana Sanghati Samity (PCJSS), the parent organisation of the armed tribal rebels. An MA degree holder, Shanto Larma, aged over 50, took over the leadership of the PCJSS as its president after his elder brother Manabendranath (MN) Larma, the founder-president of the organisation, was killed on November 10, 1983, during infighting involving a splinter faction of the Shantibahini (Priti group) led by Priti Kumar Chakma. Most of the members of this break-away group later surrendered to the government en masse on June 29, 1985. But the main group of the

NBR launches survey to expand tax-base, curb evasion

The National Board of Revenue (NBR) has launched a nationwide income tax survey aimed at enlarging the country's tax-base from the existing six lakh taxpayers to about 20 lakh over the next five years. According to official sources, the initial thrust of the survey would be to curb tax evasion, which is suspected to be quite widespread, by cross-checking the sources of income of individuals and businesses with their income tax returns of previous years. Initiated on October 16, the

first stage of the survey, to be completed by March next, would include collection of information about the incomes of government officials, professionals, home owners, shops and business establishments, private schools and even medical clinics. A highly-placed NBR source pointed out that members of the elite recreational clubs and car-owners in Dhaka and Chittagong are also being targeted, for the first time, under the income tax survey. "The difference in this

year's income tax survey is that the programme began with checking of the tax return documents of the NBR officials themselves and is being expanded to other government officials," he said. The government officials have been served notices to provide information about their tax returns along with the general index registration (GIR) number by October 30. If they fail to meet the deadline, the NBR source added, tax officials would carry out investigations and take legal

actions against them. Under the existing income tax laws, all individuals with an annual earning of over Tk 40,000 are required to pay income tax. Individuals, including government officials, are required to file their own income tax returns, even if it is deducted at the source of payment. During the first stage of the survey, income tax officials would collect information from the taxpayers. They would be issued notices to furnish their GIR numbers and if they fail to

do they would be liable to prosecution after investigations, the source said. Tax commissioners are going to conduct the survey in all the five divisions of the country and would counter-check the tax return information forwarded by the taxpayers. Tax officials are also preparing lists and collecting information about all Kindergarten and other private schools, medical clinics and all types of shops and business establishments. These measures are de-

signed to broaden the tax-net and to curb tax evasion, the source noted. During the initial survey, he said, a total of about 373 shops located in the Baitul Mukarram and Dhaka Stadium areas could not provide their tax return papers. Members of the elite Dhaka Club, the Gulshan Club and Chittagong Club have all been served notices to provide information about their tax returns, the NBR source added. "It is being suspected that