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The Daily Star

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Two bills passed by voice vote Parliament becomes vibrant again

The Jatiya Sangsad returned to its normal tenor and pulsated with its vibrant vigour as normal proceedings dominated a packed House yesterday. The five-day stalemate that loomed over the Sangsad ended through a consensus between the Opposition and the Treasury benches late Sunday night was reflected in yesterday's proceedings when it was business as usual. The Jatiya Party MPs who did not return on Sunday night after the understanding also came back in full strength. The House which sat after 4 pm continued till 9:15 pm with the usual recess for prayers. Leaders of the Opposition Sheikh Hasina did not appear in the House, while Leader of the House and Prime Minister Begum Khaleda Zia entered the Sangsad at 8 pm. She, however, did not seek the floor. After the usual question hour, legislative business dominated yesterday's proceedings. Two bills were passed by voice vote. The legislations, adopted by the Sangsad were the Narcotics Control (Amendment) Bill, 1993 and the Land Development Tax (Amendment) Bill, 1993. The Land Development Tax (Amendment) Bill, 1993 empowered the government to 'exempt any person or class of persons from payment of land development tax on agricultural land of such kind and such quantity as may be specified'. It also extended powers to the government to revise, enhance or reduce the rate of land development tax. State Minister for Land Mammad Kabir Hossain who introduced the bill said the scope to enhance or reduce land development taxes could provide incentive for the establishment of industries as private industries. He also expressed the hope that it could help mitigate the hardships and difficulties faced by the marginal farmers and enable them to boost production. The amount collected from the small land owners under the development tax does not play a significant role in the framing of government revenue, the minister stated. With the adoption of an amendment to the Narcotics Control Act, the Home Minister will be the chairman, by dint of his post, of the 18-member National Narcotics Control Board. Previously, the members of the board were 19 while the government was entitled to select the chairman of the board. The JS also discussed the Home Minister-sponsored amendment to the bill. The JS also witnessed two short but lively discussions on the movement for creation of a Sylhet Division and the Shikha Anirban (eternal flame) built in memory of the martyrs of the country's liberation war. Deputy Speaker Humayun Khan Panni had to expunge a comment by Jamaat-e-Islami MP Shahduzzaman regarding the 'Shikha Anirban' (eternal flame) after repeated requests from both the Treasury and the Opposition benches. A number of Awami League

NEWS BRIEFS

Smith calls on Hasina L B Smith, head of the South-East Asian Department of the British Foreign and Commonwealth office, called on Leader of the Opposition in Parliament and Awami League Chief Sheikh Hasina at her Parliament office yesterday. British High Commissioner Peter J Fowler, Deputy High Commissioner Nicholas, adviser to Awami League President S A M S Kibria, Tofael Ahmed, MP, and Abul Hussain Chowdhury, MP, were present, reports UNB.

City BNP meets today

An emergency meeting of the Dhaka city unit of the BNP will be held today at 7:00 pm at its Nawab Yusuf Market office. Food Minister Meer Shawkat Ali will preside over the meeting. General secretary of city BNP Salahuddin Ahmed, MP, has requested the presidents and general secretaries of all thanas and wards and vice-presidents of the city BNP executive committee to attend the meeting in time, reports BSS.

New 50 taka notes from tomorrow

The Bangladesh Bank will issue Tk 50 notes signed by its Governor Khurshed Alam from tomorrow. The colour, watermark, security thread, design and size of the banknote will be the same as the present one except the signature of the Governor, reports UNB.

Indian sugar seized

From Staff Correspondent KHLUNA, Nov 29: BDR personnel seized Indian sugar worth about Tk 2 lakh and 30 thousand from a godown here. One Gautam Das was arrested in this connection.

JCD Edward College unit president held

PABNA, Nov 29: Police arrested a local leader of the Jatiyatabadi Chhatra Dal (JCD) from the campus of the Edward College today, reports UNB.

Fresh timetable for floating shares by 14 insurance cos

The Government has recently formulated a new timetable requiring the 14 insurance companies, which have failed to float public shares so far, to offer shares for public subscription, in phases, by the end of next year. According to official sources, the Commerce Ministry has also framed guidelines for electing directors from amongst the public shareholders of the insurance companies and initiated steps to amend the Insurance Rules of 1958. However, the proposed amendments to the Insurance Rules faced objections from the Bangladesh Insurance Association (BIA). Earlier in September, the Controller of Insurance had issued letters to all the 14 insurance companies to float public shares by October 31 last. But none of the companies were able to comply with the deadline. The Insurance Act requires all companies to offer 50 per cent of the paid-up capital in the form of public shares within three years of registration. All these targeted insurance companies were registered between 1966-88. With poor response in meeting the October deadline, the Ministry of Commerce decided to stagger the floatation of public shares by the insurance companies. The decision was taken after discussions with the Securities and Exchange Commission, the Dhaka Stock Exchange and the Insurance Association last month. According to a Commerce Ministry source, under the new timetable the insurance companies registered on July 31 and December 31, 1986 would be required to float public shares by March 31 and June 30, 1994 respectively. And the companies registered in 1987 and 1988 would have to offer shares for public subscription by July 31 and December 31, 1994 respectively. If any of the 14 companies fail to float public shares according to this schedule, then the Controller of Insurance may cancel its registration as per the Insurance Act, the source cautioned. Meanwhile, the Commerce Ministry has formulated guidelines for electing directors by the public shareholders through a proposed amendment of the Insurance Rules of 1958, published in a Gazette Notification on August 28 last. According to the Gazette Notification, a person would be qualified to be elected, by the public shareholders, as a director of an insurance company if he holds at least Tk. one lakh worth of the public shares of the company since six months before the date of the election and provided he is not otherwise disqualified to become a director under the Insurance Act.

Shares of some good cos to be circulated in Jan: Saifur Shares of some good companies, including those in the gas sector, will be circulated through Stock Exchange in next January to facilitate investment of the liquidity of insurance companies, reports UNB. Dividends from these shares will be higher than the interest on bank deposit, said Finance Minister M Saifur Rahman at a reception accorded to him on his election as the Chairman of Board of Governors of the World Bank and IMF.

Biman may open flight to NY via Moscow

Biman Bangladesh Airlines is planning to operate its second flight to New York via Moscow as talks with KLM on traffic rights failed. Biman sources said. KLM, the Dutch national carrier, demanded four slots from Dhaka when Biman requested operation rights for two more flights from Amsterdam, which stalled the discussion last week. The KLM, executive left Dhaka without signing any agreement despite Bangladesh authorities' offer to the Dutch carrier three flights from Dhaka against the two flights for Biman. But KLM demanded rights to operate four weekly flights from Dhaka. The Dutch airlines which was the maintenance agency for Biman for several years lost last year's contract bid to Alitalia. Biman officials said that this could be one of the causes of KLM's rigid stance during talks. "Traffic movement to and from Moscow has increased considerably following the collapse of the Soviet Union which is now a potential aviation sector," a Biman executive told The Daily Star. The national carrier Biman has the traffic right from Moscow to New York since 1972 but Biman did not so far operate on this route.

NGOs plan regional campaign on Farakka

Some environmental groups and voluntary development organisations of the country are planning to launch a campaign on the Farakka issue. The organisations, in cooperation with the Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs) of India and Nepal, would try to build up people-to-people contact regionally and internationally to help reach an equitable solution to the vexed and politically sensitive issue, organisers said. The decision to launch the campaign was taken at a meeting of the Coalition of Environmental NGOs yesterday at the office of the Association of Development Agencies in Bangladesh (ADAB) in the capital. The organisers said that they have already contacted the NGOs and environmental groups of India and Nepal and other international agencies which have agreed to work together on a private initiative to help resolve the Farakka problem and chart a comprehensive regional water management policy for the benefit of the member-states. As part of the initiative, the Indian and Nepalese NGOs would visit Bangladesh in the coming dry season to have a first hand idea of the adverse impact of Farakka Barrage on Bangladesh's environment, economy, soil, fisheries, navigation and on other sectors, they said. Setting up an international NGO commission on Farakka and holding of a regional conference next year were also in the initial planning of the campaign, they added. When launched, the NGO campaign would bring about a fresh impetus to the turbulent history of the Ganges water sharing dispute between Bangladesh and India, the organisers hoped. The nearly-three-hour meeting of the coalition, chaired by Dr Kazi Faruq Ahmed, discussed at length the possible ways and means of starting the campaign involving public and private organisations, academics and experts, and the people living in the vast expanse of the Ganges-Brahmaputra basin. Explaining the objective, Dr Ahmed said that their movement would aim at organising the people of Bangladesh, India and Nepal towards a sustainable solution to the Farakka problem as well as dispelling 'some myths and mistrusts' regarding water sharing negotiation. Giving a background of the NGO Initiative, Dr Atiq Rahman

Debate on demand for Sylhet divn

A brief debate took place in the Jatiya Sangsad yesterday on Prime Minister Khaleda Zia's reported comment on the demand for converting Sylhet district into a division. The 15-minute unscheduled debate was confined mainly between the Deputy Leader of the Opposition Abdus Samad Azad and the Information Minister Barrister Nazmul Huda. Samad Azad, who hails from Sylhet, initiated the discussion as soon as the session resumed. See page 12 Col 1.

36-hour hartal begins in Sylhet

SYLHET, Nov 29: A 36-hour hartal has begun at 6 am this morning throughout the four districts in the greater Sylhet region to press home the demand for immediate formation of a new administrative division comprising Sylhet, Moulavibazar, Habiganj and Sunamganj. The hartal was called by the Sylhet Division Implementation Committee. All kinds of vehicles were off the roads today. No trains ran to and from Sylhet. All the Biman flights were also suspended. A number of processions paraded through the streets in the town. Processions and rallies were also organised in Sunamganj, Moulavibazar and Habiganj districts.

Cabinet approves draft of Companies Act, 1993

The cabinet yesterday approved the draft of the Companies Act-1993 by repealing the Companies Act of 1913, reports BSS. The approval was given at the regular weekly meeting of the cabinet held at the Banghaban with Prime Minister Begum Khaleda Zia in the chair. The step has been taken in line with the declaration of the Prime Minister to modify the Companies Act of 1913 to make it more amenable to the principles of market economy. The previous BNP government had initiated the re-structuring of the Companies Act of 1913, an official handout said adding, but no progress was made in this regard during the last regime. The new Companies Act is aimed at making the law more effective and updated to suit the demand of the hour. Besides, it will help avoid unnecessary bureaucratic control in running companies, create more profit and ensure accountability and transparency in the management of the companies. It will also facilitate private foreign investment in the companies and strengthen the share-market. The cabinet also approved the proposal to repeal the scheduled Dargah (Maintenance and Management) Act 1990.



PLO representative in London, Afif Safieh (L) and assistant Saida Nusseibeh watching from a window of the Palestine Liberation Organisation office yesterday as the PLO flag was raised for the first time in the UK.

SAARC FMs' meet to focus on poverty alleviation

Poverty alleviation among member states of South Asia is likely to dominate the two-day SAARC Council of Ministers meeting beginning in Dhaka on December 4. The conference, which will be inaugurated by Prime Minister and current chairperson of the SAARC, Begum Khaleda Zia, will also deliberate at length on collective measures for economic development of the region. The participating foreign ministers will also discuss the Integrated Programme of Action (IPA) and other related issues. Briefing newsmen on the eve of the SAARC Council of Ministers meeting yesterday, Foreign Secretary Reaz Rahman described the conference as 'very significant' and said that it was being held at the mid-point of the last summit held in Bangladesh and the next one that will be held in India. 'Poverty alleviation is a crucial and common element of the SAARC countries and poses the greatest challenge to the member nations,' Reaz affirmed. He also said the conference shall endeavour to reach broad-based understanding for greater economic cooperation. Reaz said that all the foreign ministers of the SAARC countries will be attending the conference, which will be the 13th such meeting since the incep-

Clarification Concorde Multitrade states its case

The Daily Star received a fax from M/s Concorde Multitrade Inc located in New York authorising Mr Kazi Tajul Islam Faruque based in Dhaka to issue a rejoinder to the front page item printed in our Daily of November 21 under the headline, 'Doubts cloud Biman's Airbus buying procedure.' The rejoinder does not address the points that were raised in the article. It goes into great length describing the technical merits of the offer, which has not been the subject of our correspondent. The relevant portion of the letter which See Page 12 Col 7.

China a tested friend: PM

Prime Minister Begum Khaleda Zia said yesterday that China is a tested friend of Bangladesh and the people of the two countries were enjoying deep friendship from time immemorial, reports BSS. She said this when the visiting Chief of General Staff of the People's Liberation Army (PLA) of China General Zhang Wannian called on her at her office. 'As a friendly country we are happy to see the present trend of development in China', the Prime Minister said. Begum Zia conveyed her greetings to Prime Minister Li Peng and extended an invitation to him to visit Bangladesh at a convenient time. General Wannian, also the head of the three forces, said China and Bangladesh were centuries old and tested friends. He said the existing friendship between China and Bangladesh would have to be consolidated not only for the peoples of the two countries but also for the establishment of peace in South Asia. General Wannian said China had always attached importance to its friendship with Bangladesh. Chief of Army Staff Lieutenant General M Noor Uddin Khan, PSO to the Prime Minister Major General S A Bhuiyan, Chinese Ambassador in Bangladesh Zhang Xujiang and some senior PLA officers were present. It meet at DU resolves to expel terrorists A joint meeting of the Dhaka University authorities and leaders of different student organisations here yesterday requested the political parties to expel the terrorists, reports UNB. Vice Chancellor Prof Emajuddin Ahmed chaired the meeting which was attended, among others, by the Pro-Vice Chancellor, Provosts of different halls, the Proctor and Assistant Proctors of the university. The meeting resolved that the student organisations have

Fatah activists announce armed struggle in Gaza

KHAN YUNES (Occupied Gaza Strip), Nov 29: Guerrillas from Yasser Arafat's Fatah Movement announced today they were taking up the armed struggle in Gaza again after Israel stepped up the hunt for them, reports AFP. Arafat ordered a ceasefire following the signing of the September 13 PLO autonomy accord and his Fatah Hawks had observed it until today. 'We are announcing this because Israel has broken the agreement and as revenge for Ahmad Abu Rish,' a masked militant told a press conference. Abu Rish, one of about 30 Fatah men who turned himself to the Israelis and was taken off the wanted list, was killed along with a bystander Sunday night. Two other fighters, who are still wanted, came to his house in Khan Yunus refugee camp chased by elite Israeli undercover troops, Palestinian sources said. Brothers Rajah and Amar Abu Sita, accused of killing a Jewish settler, managed to escape, but Abu Rish died after being hit by army gunfire in the shootout. Palestinian sources reported that three Hawks, one of whom was also recently taken off Israel's wanted list, attacked troops on the edge of the Khan Yunus military base.

গণপ্রজাতন্ত্রী বাংলাদেশ সরকার জাতীয় রাজস্ব বোর্ড সেকেন্দাবাগিচা, ঢাকা। সতর্কীকরণ বিজ্ঞপ্তি এতদ্বারা ট্যাক্সি ক্যাব হিসাবে রেয়াতী হারে আমদানীকৃত গাড়ীর আমদানীকরণের দৃষ্টি আকর্ষণপূর্বক জানানো যাইতেছে যে, বাহারা 'ট্যাক্সি ক্যাব' হিসাবে ব্যবহারের জন্য রেয়াতী হারে শুল্ক-কর প্রদানের সুবিধা গ্রহণ করিয়া গাড়ী আমদানীকৃত পরবর্তীতে উক্ত গাড়ীর উপর প্রযোজ্য স্বাভাবিক শুল্ক-কর ইত্যাদি পরিশোধ না করিয়াই গাড়ীগুলি 'ব্যক্তিগত গাড়ী' হিসাবে রেজিস্ট্রেশন করাইয়াছেন বা ব্যবহার করিতেছেন তাহাদিগকে শেষবারের মত আগামী ১০-১২-৯৩ইং তারিখের মধ্যে উপরি-উক্তরূপে নিবন্ধনকৃত বা ব্যবহৃত গাড়ীর উপর প্রদেয় স্বাভাবিক শুল্ক-কর ইত্যাদি সংশ্লিষ্ট কাষ্টম হাউস/শুল্ক স্টেশনে পরিশোধ করিয়া গাড়ীগুলি নিয়মিতকরণের সুযোগ প্রদান করা যাইতেছে। এই সুযোগ গ্রহণে ব্যর্থ হইলে সংশ্লিষ্ট গাড়ীর নিবন্ধন বাতিল, গাড়ী বাজেয়াপ্তিকরণসহ সরকারের প্রাপ্য শুল্ক-কর আদায়ের লক্ষ্যে তাহাদের বিরুদ্ধে প্রয়োজনীয় আইনানুগ ব্যবস্থা গ্রহণ করা হইবে।