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# The Daily Star

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**Notice**

Today's *The Daily Star* contains a 4-page December '93 Star Computer Special. We are, therefore, obliged to either reduce or drop some of our regular features. We sincerely regret the inconvenience to our valued readers.

**NEWS BRIEFS**

**Hasina shocked**

Chief of the Bangladesh Awami League and Leader of the Opposition in Parliament Sheikh Hasina yesterday expressed her deep shock at the death of Mrs Kohinor Nizam, wife of Shaheed journalist Nizamuddin Ahmad. In a condolence message, Sheikh Hasina prayed for the peace of the departed soul and expressed her sympathy for the members of the bereaved family. In another condolence message, Sheikh Hasina expressed her deep grief at the sudden death of freedom fighter Noor Hossain Khan alias Baqul Banerjee in a road accident on the Victory Day, reports BSS.

**Postal stamps on SAF Games**

The Postal Department will release a set of commemorative stamps of Taka two and four today on the occasion of the 6th SAF Games '93. A Taka five in-aural stamp and a special canceller would be used. The commemorative stamps and in-aural envelope will be available in all main post offices including four GPOs. Later on, these postal stamps would also be available in other post offices, reports UNB.

**Vehicles checking starts today**

The Metropolitan Traffic Department (MTD) will check the registration, licence and related papers of Rickshaw and other motor vehicles of the city from today. MTD requested all vehicle drivers, rickshaw owners and pullers to keep related papers with them. Check posts will be set up at some important places of the city and mobile squad will conduct the operation. The special drive will continue until further instruction, reports UNB.

## NCBs given Tk 3330 crore as fresh capital since '90

Since 1990 the government has injected over Tk 3330 crore as fresh capital to bail out the nationalised commercial banks (NCBs). Questions are being raised in the recent times in the Finance Ministry itself about whether such capital infusion to keep the NCBs afloat should continue.

According to a Finance Ministry source, there is an increasing anxiety among senior officials that continuous infusion of funds to meet capital adequacy and bad debt provisioning standards could be encouraging laxity on the part of the bank management.

The government has also come to realise that unless the public sector debt overhang is cleared, the NCBs will never be able to stand on their feet.

The recently concluded agreement with the World Bank about a jute sector restructuring operation will clean the state for the NCBs so far as the jute sector is concerned. Experts are hoping that this will be followed up by steps to relieve the banks of the textile sector debts gone bad.

Under the Banking Compa-

ny Act which was amended in 1991, the capital base of the commercial banks was doubled to a minimum of Taka 20 crore. Banks are required to account for bad debt and to make appropriate allowances for this in their loan pricing and financial statements.

The process of cleaning up of the NCB's investment portfolio led to classification of 25 per cent of loans as bad debt. According to a senior Finance Ministry official, this had gone up to 30 per cent as of June 30 this year.

The official explained that this increase has occurred because loans which were of marginal quality had become bad during the last two years as the debtors failed to service them.

Bangladesh Bank sources said that this problem is limited to loans made before the financial sector reform programme was launched. New loans made after the reform programme was begun in 1991 are performing and the recovery target for these loans are being met, the source added.

With the recent steps to provide the NCBs with greater

autonomy, the government has moved to greater reliance on supervision of banks by the Bangladesh Bank (BB).

The BB's power to supervise and discipline the banks has been beefed up. The central bank can undertake special audit whenever it wants to and is empowered to impose penalty for breach of banking rules and regulations.

According to a senior NCB official, the BB is not very happy with the results of recent inspection of some private banks either. The source said that a significant number of irregularities were discovered. The banks have been instructed by the BB to correct them.

Senior Finance Ministry officials refused to comment on this but said that the private banks, which command a 25 per cent market share, are inexplicably staying away from term lending.

The source also added that the government is not very happy with the recent assessment of the private banks as well as its past experience regarding privatization of some of the nationalised banks.

## CEC meets BNP, some other MPs

By Staff Correspondent

The Chief Election Commissioner (CEC) Justice Abdur Rouf yesterday met some leaders of the BNP and some other parties, having representation in Parliament, to exchange views on the ensuing city corporation elections.

The BNP delegation comprising Works Minister Barrister Rafiqul Islam, Food Minister Lt Gen (retd) Mir Shawkat Ali, BU, Major (retd) Quamrul Islam, MP and Salahuddin Ahmed, MP called on the CEC at his office at 11 am.

Another delegation of some parties led by Rashed Khan Menon, MP of the Workers' Party, called on the CEC at 11 am.

## PM may visit Malaysia in Apr

Prime Minister Begum Khaleda Zia is expected to pay a visit to Malaysia sometime in next April, reports UNB.

The two governments have been working out the details of the proposed visit, diplomatic sources here said yesterday.

The visit will take place at the invitation of her Malaysian counterpart Dr Mahathir Mohammad.

Khaleda is also scheduled to visit Japan in March.

## Dinesh Singh may be dropped as Indian FM

NEW DELHI, Dec 18: India's External Affairs Ministry is heading for changes at the top and Foreign Minister Dinesh Singh may be on his way out, local reports said here, reports Xinhua.

Dinesh did not attend Friday's meeting of the consultative committee of the members of the parliament attached to his ministry without any reasons being given.

More significant has been the cancellation of his proposed visit to Brussels next week to meet the EC troika of Foreign Ministers of past, present and future EC president.

Officials here said that the Prime Minister has now begun to think of relieving Dinesh Singh of his responsibilities in See Page 8 Col 1

## Tax lawyers deplore Saifur's call

By Staff Correspondent

The Bangladesh Tax Lawyers' Association (BTALA) yesterday said that the Finance Minister's assessment of minimum income tax at Tk. 1500 was contrary to the prevailing law.

Addressing a press conference at the Jatiya Press Club, the lawyers said that the low income group among the traders would be seriously affected by the decision and many of them would even be unable to run their businesses.

Finance Minister M Saifur Rahman, addressing the income tax officials at the NEC committee room on November 9, asked tax officials to assess the minimum income tax at Tk. 1500.

The press conference was addressed by the BTALA president M A Salam Talukder, BTALA secretary general Syed Ahmed, deputy secretary of the association Sarder Jinnat Ali and its organising secretary Mosharraf Hossain.

There is no term called a 'minimum tax' in the Income Tax Laws, the Finance Minister is either ignorant of the law See Page 8 Col 6

## Adulterated paracetamol syrup 4 drug co. men sent to jail

By Staff Correspondent

City Special Branch (SB) of police yesterday arrested four top executives of three pharmaceutical companies and sent them to the Dhaka Central Jail. All of them were slapped with 120 days' detention orders under the Special Powers Act (SPA), 1974.

The arrested persons are Alhaj Monir Hossain and Mohammad Shahjahan Sarker—Managing Director and a director of the BCI Pharma Bangladesh Limited, respectively. — Shudhir Chandra Bhawmik, a chemist of Rex Pharma Bangladesh Limited — and Mizanur Rahman, a director of Ad-Flame Pharmaceutical Limited.

A top level source of the Health Ministry, on condition of anonymity, told The Daily Star that the ministry had lodged cases against several pharmaceutical companies, including the above-named three, under the SPA, 1974, for using diethylene glycol as a solvent in paracetamol syrup.

prescribed by doctors for young children.

Earlier, a research by two doctors at the Shishu Hospital indicated that diethylene glycol was responsible for causing renal failure among children given paracetamol syrup, even leading to many deaths.

Later a special Jatiya Sangsad body including the Speaker Shaikh Razzak Ali and Deputy Leader of the House Badruddoza Chowdhury recommended legal measures against the companies responsible.

Last year a widespread outcry was made by the media and the public against paracetamol syrup containing diethylene glycol.

The four persons were arrested yesterday morning by a special team of city SB led by an assistant superintendent of police. They were sent to the Dhaka Central Jail in the evening.

The cases lodged by the See Page 8 Col 7

## CJ repeats call for an independent judiciary

By Staff Correspondent

The Chief Justice, Shahabuddin Ahmed has reiterated the need for the independence of the Judiciary to ensure fair and equitable justice.

He was speaking as chief guest at the inaugural ceremony of a training course on legal education organised by the Bangladesh Bar Council at the Supreme Court Bar Association Building premises yesterday.

"The quality, standard and independence is undermined unless the judiciary is made separate from the executive," Justice Shahabuddin emphasised.

Justice Shahabuddin Ahmed also underlined the need for the training of judges. While he was

the acting President, he said, he had recommended setting up a training institute for judges and also for four law colleges in the then four divisions of the country.

Barrister Amirul Islam, Chairman of the Legal Education Committee of the Bangladesh Bar Council, in his speech, made a plea for developing the standard of legal education under the auspices of the Bar.

He said that in order to bring efficiency and competitiveness in our economic development, we should have a legal order. "Delay in getting speedy justice is one of the causes of inertia in See Page 8 Col 6

**VI SAF GAMES**  
 Dhaka 1993

## One more day to go

**Sports Reporter**  
 Dhaka Stadium yesterday epitomised the mood of a country entering a week-long sporting carnival as the full dress rehearsal for the opening ceremony of the Sixth SAF Games was carried out 48 hours before the actual meet.

The biennial minuscule Olympics of the seven member nations of the regional body SAARC will be formally declared open by President Abdur Rahman Biswas tomorrow afternoon.

The official announcement will be followed by a splendid pageantry highlighting the rich cultural heritage of the country.

Meanwhile all but the Nepalese contingent are in the city. India, the traditional force in the regional meet, has sent the largest contingent comprising See Page 8 Col 7

## MOU with WB: Jute workers demonstrate today

Patkal Sramik Karmachari Action Council yesterday criticised the government for signing a Memorandum of Understanding with the World Bank, saying that the accord tantamounts to a severe blow on the country's jute sector, reports UNB.

It called for rallies and demonstration in nationalised jute mills today to protest the MOU. The action council will declare its next programme at its sit-in demonstration in Dhaka on December 29.

Under the MOU signed on December 15, World Bank will provide Bangladesh with a 250 million US dollar jute sector aid. See Page 8 Col 1

## Prokrichi leaders review situation

By Staff Correspondent

There was no further negotiation between the government and the leaders of the professionals yesterday, sources said.

On the day, the leaders of the Prokrichi-BCS Central Action Council held a meeting to review their on-going en masse resignation programme. The meeting also discussed the points that came up in their talks with the government on Friday.

The holding of a meeting with the members of the opposition in Parliament were also mooted.

## Bangladeshi shot dead by BSF

SHERPUR, Dec 18: A Bangladeshi citizen was shot dead and four others were kidnapped by the Indian Border Security Force (BSF) from a village in Jhenaigathi thana here today, reports UNB.

Police and witnesses said BSF men fired on a group of people near border pillar number 1108 in village Nakshi at about 5 pm without any provocation, killing Abdul Halim, 30, on the spot.

The BSF members later entered the Bangladesh territory and took away the body. They also abducted four others whose names could not be known.

## President, PM greet Yeltsin

President Abdur Rahman Biswas and Prime Minister Begum Khaleda Zia have felicitated Boris Yeltsin, President of the Russian Federation, on the successful adoption of the new constitution for the federation and for holding free and fair parliamentary elections, reports UNB.

In a message of congratulations, President Abdur Rahman Biswas said, "Excellency, on behalf of the government and the people of Bangladesh and on my own behalf I convey to your excellency our heartfelt congratulations on the occasion of introduction of the new constitution for the Russian Federation and for the success See Page 8 Col 2

## Islamic Common Market: Saifur speaks some home truths

By Staff Correspondent

Finance Minister M Saifur Rahman on yesterday said the idea of an Islamic Common Market could not be materialised without effective cooperation among the Muslim countries.

He said that he had become frustrated after attending a number of Islamic conferences and government-level meetings because in most cases the deliberations ended without any tangible outcome.

The Europeans and the Americans are today better treated in the Muslim world, particularly in the oil-rich Arab countries, but the people from the poor Muslim countries are neglected, he lamented while addressing the inaugural function of the seminar on 'Islamic Common Market' at the Inter-

national Conference Centre in the city yesterday.

"The more and more I am getting involved in the affairs of the Islamic world, the more and more I am being disenchanted. I don't want any rhetoric, I believe in action", Saifur said with a deep sense of disappointment.

He said, the only successful institution of the Islamic world is the Islamic Development Bank (IDB). Otherwise, anything that starts with the name of Islamic Ummah is a failure, he added.

Saifur Rahman said, rich Muslim countries are putting trade barriers on imports from the poor Muslim countries. These trade barriers are more rigid than those imposed by other countries. There is a lack of faith and firm commitment towards cooperation among the Muslim countries, he pointed out.

## AL to ensure people's representation in dist level admn: Hasina

By Staff Correspondent

JAMALPUR, Dec 18: Leader of the Opposition in Parliament Sheikh Hasina today said her party will ensure people's representation in the district and thana level administration if it returns to power, reports UNB.

"Awami League introduced District Governors to ensure people's representation in the district administration," she told a huge public gathering at Ballyjuri High School ground in Madarganj Thana here this afternoon.

Criticizing the ruling BNP, Hasina said it has failed to keep its election pledges and implement joint declaration of the three alliances. Besides, she said, the Indemnity Ordinance has not yet been repealed and

demands of workers and students were ignored.

"During its two and a half years of rule, the BNP government could not set up a single mill or factory. On the contrary, thousands of workers and employees lost their jobs," she observed.

Turning to the country's agriculture sector, the AL President accused BNP of destroying the country's agro-economy. The prices of agri-inputs like fertilizers and pesticides were raised several times but fair prices of agri-produces were not ensured, she said.

Time and again we brought proposals in Parliament to bring down the prices of agri-inputs See Page 8 Col 6