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NEWS BRIEFS

Biswas, Khaleda greet Birendra

President Abdur Rahman Biswas and Prime Minister Begum Khaleda Zia yesterday greeted the King Birendra Bir Bikram Shah Dev of Nepal on the occasion of his birthday. In a message, President Biswas expressed his firm conviction that the existing traditional bonds of friendship and close cooperation between the two countries would continue to grow in depth and dimension to the mutual benefit of the two nations. In a separate message to Nepal Prime Minister Girija Prasad Koirala, Prime Minister Begum Khaleda Zia felicitated the King on the occasion of his birthday, reports UNB.

12 Sirajganj AL activists held

SIRAJGANJ, Dec 27: Police today arrested 12 Awami League supporters in connection with Sunday's clash in Chargirish union in Kaziapur thana that left a man dead and 30 others injured, reports UNB.

1.8 kg heroin seized

JESSORE, Dec 27: Police today seized 1,800 grams of heroin worth about Tk 1.8 crore from a house at Kari-garpara area in Chowgachha thana. Acting on a tip-off, police raided the house of Mafizur Rahman Shanti, 40, near Chowgachha Bazaar and recovered the heroin at about 8:00 am, reports UNB.

Prayer-Breakfast in Washington in Feb

State Minister for Establishment Barrister M Aminul Huq is likely to attend the 42nd National Prayer-Breakfast in Washington in February, officials said. Heads of state and government, ministers and dignitaries from different parts of the world join the programme to discuss various matters to promote peace and friendship among the nations. US President Bill Clinton will attend the function, scheduled for February 1-4 next year, reports UNB.

Joint Economic Commission meets today Dhaka may propose \$ 40m each way STA with Delhi

By S Y Bakht

In an attempt to off-set the huge trade deficit with India, Bangladesh is likely to propose for concluding a 40 million US dollar each way Special Trading Agreement (STA) at the Joint Economic Commission (JEC) meeting between the two countries due to begin in the capital today.

According to official sources, Dhaka would also seek tariff concessions for exporting certain local products and propose the setting up of joint venture import-substitution industries to reduce the trade imbalance.

The issue of avoiding double taxation between the two coun-

tries, which was discussed at the last meeting, would also come up for discussion, along with that of government-to-government credit.

On the other hand, India may renew its earlier request to allow transit facilities for the northeastern Indian states through Bangladesh, the sources added.

With a view to further minimising the trade deficit, the sources said, Dhaka is also likely to request India to enter into an agreement for one-way export of Bangladeshi goods without any reciprocal imports. In July last, the Trading

Corporation of Bangladesh and the State Trading Corporation of India signed a memorandum of understanding for the annual two-way exchange of goods worth 10 million dollars.

The cumulative trade imbalance with India currently stands at Tk 44,277.33 million while Bangladesh's exports to India totalled 9.8 million dollars and imports from that country was 342 million dollars during 1992-93.

Indian Commerce Minister Pranab Mukherjee, who arrived in the city yesterday, would lead a 16-member delegation at the See Page 12 Col 3

Delhi will try to cut trade gap, says Pranab

Indian Commerce Minister Pranab Mukherjee arrived here yesterday for a Joint Economic Commission meeting with assurance that his country would try to strike a balance in trade with Bangladesh by increasing imports, reports UNB.

"We'll discuss how to import more items from Bangladesh to maintain a balance in the bilateral trade," Mukherjee told newsmen on arrival at the airport yesterday afternoon.

The Indian Minister stressed the need for making the economies of the two neighbours 'complementary to each other' in the new perspective of cooperation in South Asia.

He said discussion in the JEC meeting would take place in the light of the SAPTA (South Asian Preferential See Page 12 Col 5

50 take forms for DCC mayor polls

By Staff Correspondent

Until yesterday, 50 persons had collected nomination forms from the office of the Divisional Election Commissioner to contest the mayoral election of the Dhaka City Corporation (DCC), official sources said.

Mohammad Hanif, the Awami League candidate and Manzurul Ahsan Khan, a nominee of the 10 Left-party alliance, were among the six who collected their forms yesterday.

On Sunday, the BNP nominee and incumbent mayor of the DCC, Mirza Abbas and the Jatiya Party candidate and a former mayor of the city Col (Retd) Abdul Malek took their forms to contest the polls, scheduled for January 30 next.

Nomination form for another JP candidate, Barrister Abul Hasnat, was also collected the same day.

Col (Retd) Malek clinched the support of the JP president while the detained JP leader Barrister Hasnat is reportedly backed by a rival faction of the party leadership.

The AL chief, Sheikh Hasina, formally announced the name of Mohammad Hanif after the AL central working committee approved the unanimous proposal of the party's thana units in the city Sunday.

The nomination of Mirza Abbas was formally announced by the BNP city president and Food Minister Lt Gen (Retd) See Page 12 Col 1

AL, left parties may discuss city polls

Awami League is planning to call a meeting of the leaders of 10 left-leaning opposition parties shortly to discuss the country's overall political and economic situation, reports UNB.

Awami League president member Amir Hossain Amu was learnt to have contacted the leaders of the parties who have agreed to sit and discuss the prevailing situation.

The date of the meeting is expected to be finalised in a couple of days. Awami League Chief Sheikh Hasina may chair the meeting, party sources said.

The sources said among other matters, the forthcoming city corporation elections might dominate the agenda of proposed meeting.

They said a proposal for common Mayor candidates for four metropolitan cities from like-minded opposition parties might also come up for discussion.

In Chittagong, like-minded opposition groups have already supported ABM Mohiuddin Chowdhury of Awami League as Mayor candidate to contest the Chittagong city corporation election.

Nomination paper of Momtaz valid

CHITTAGONG, Dec 27: The nomination paper of Prof Momtazuddin Chowdhury, a contestant for the mayorship of the Chittagong City Corporation was declared valid by the Election Commission (EC) here today, commission sources said, reports BSS.

The nomination paper was earlier cancelled on the ground that his name was not found in the voter list. The contestant made an appeal against the cancellation of his nomination paper.

On scrutiny, the name of Muhammad Momtazuddin Chowdhury was found in the voter list. Chowdhury is a nominee of the Bangladesh Islami Front.

Manmohan evades reporters

NEW DELHI, Dec 27: India's Finance Minister Manmohan Singh, who tendered his resignation last week following severe criticism of his ministry by an MPs' panel probing a 1.3-billion dollar stocks fraud, maintained a studied silence on Sunday, reports AFP.

Singh refused to speak to reporters at an award ceremony here, his first public engagement since he offered his resignation to Prime Minister P V Narasimha Rao on Thursday, the Press Trust of India said.

Singh did not attend a scheduled meeting with tax officials in the morning.

The former academic and World Bank official evaded all questions on his future plans and Rao's response to his offer. Rao has not yet accepted Singh's resignation.

Our economy best managed one, says Saifur

Finance Minister M Saifur Rahman yesterday described the economy of Bangladesh as the best managed one in this part of Asia despite depression in other parts of the world, reports BSS.

"Bangladesh is really fortunate in this regard with the macro-economic measures, undertaken by the government to restore discipline in all key sectors and put the economy on a solid footing," he said.

"Rahman was addressing as the chief guest a reception, given to him by the Institute of Chartered Accountants of Bangladesh here on his becoming the Chairman of the Board of Governors of the IMF and World Bank.

With the institute's president M A Halim Gaznabi in the chair, the function was also addressed by immediate past presidents Jamahuddin Ahmad and K Z Islam, vice-president of the institute. Howlader Mahfuz Huq gave the vote of thanks.

Saifur Rahman, who is a past president of the institute, expressed the hope that his fellow professional colleagues would try to become entrepreneurs as the present government has given due importance on the growth of private sector with increased incentives. He said the government was contemplating more stimulus activities in future for the betterment of the national economy.

Curtain comes down on SAF Games

By Chandrashekhar Das

Sight, sound and fury of some kind of an unreal cosmic cataclysm engulfed the night sky as the closing ceremony of the Sixth SAF Games was enacted at the Dhaka Stadium yesterday.

"Delightful, deafening fireworks held the 'black-out', jam-packed Dhaka Stadium in a spell of awe and amazement. For ten minutes of uninterrupted exhibition executed by experts from Singapore, the benighted skies of the north-western and northern part of the Dhaka Stadium turned into spaces of sidereal explosion as particles of green, red, violet, yellow, and blazing white burst into many flashing forms before vanishing in the darkness.

See also page 10

The sixth biennial sporting congregation of the seven SAARC nations that rustled up over nine hundred sports aces and officials here in Dhaka, was formally closed, freeing a city and its denizens from a salubrious fever.

The valedictory rituals began with Bangladesh Olympic Association president Gias Kamal Chowdhury declaring the Games closed and the Olympian flame, a symbol of Promethean defiance, that had been atop the northern gate of the Dhaka Stadium since December 20, the inaugural of the Games, was put out. The flag bearing the 'Chanchala Chhay' or 'Vibrant Six', was lowered and six gun fires sounded off the culmination of the eight day carnival.

Sheikh Ahmed Al-Fahd Al-Sabah, who attended the function as a special guest, made a brief speech followed by a

thanksgiving one by Finance Minister Saifur Rahman, who was the chief of the organising committee of the Sixth SAF Games.

Mayor of Dhaka City Corporation Mirza Abbas formally handed over the torch to Education and Sports Minister of Tamil Nadu, Professor K. Boonhusamy, Madras, the capital of Tamil Nadu, will play hosts to the seventh Games, an event destined to have a different title because of the inclusion of central Asian country Uzbekistan and Afghanistan.

"Adanya," the Royal Bengal Tiger cub chosen as the mascot of the Games, then entered the stadium on an automobile with the in-field sound system blaring music typical of Bangladesh, India, Pakistan, Nepal, Bhutan, the Maldives and Sri Lanka.

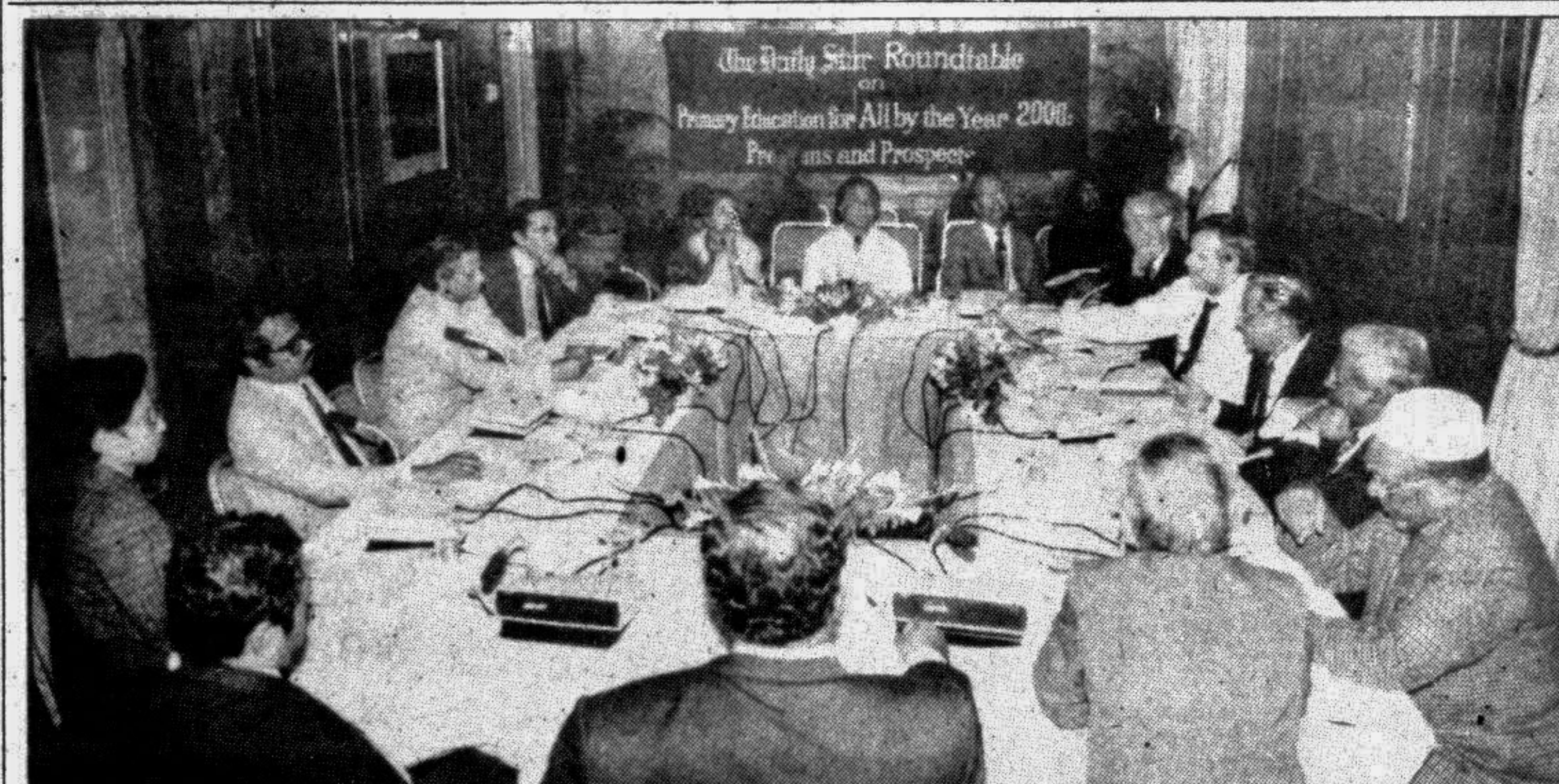
The different national contingents then entered the ground only to march out for the last time. Ace shooter Ateequr Rahman led the hosts with the national flag, India's record-breaking athlete Bahadur Prasad had the honour of leading his country, Asgar Ali Chengizi led Pakistan out, Syed Ali, the Maldives, Prem Rai Bhutan, Daya Ranasinghe Sri Lanka and Kiran Sreshtha bore the Nepalese flag.

After a pageantry depicting indigenous and tribal culture, Sabina Yasmin, the leading singer of the country, entered the bowl on a mobile stage to act to the tune of a pre-recorded song of her, composed by Dr Moniruzzaman and set to tune by Samar Das.

A flimsy version of Adanya was sent up in the air with a See Page 12 Col 2



Balloons tied to Adanya, the mascot of the week-long Sixth SAF Games which concluded in the city yesterday, being released during the impressive closing ceremony at the Dhaka Stadium. — Star photo



Participants at The Daily Star round-table on 'Primary Education for All by the Year 2000: Problems and Prospects', held at the Sheraton Hotel in the city yesterday. — Star photo

Capitalism in crisis, Left leaders say

By Staff Correspondent

Left-wing politicians from home and abroad at a seminar in the city yesterday said the capitalist system was now facing a severe crisis across the world and the people were now left with no option but to pursue socialism.

The left wing leaders of India, Nepal and Bangladesh were addressing the seminar on "Contemporary World Situation and Socialism," held in observance of the birth centenary of the leader of the Chinese revolution Mao Zedong in the city yesterday.

The speakers also observed that the downfall of socialism in

former Soviet Union and East European countries was a temporary phenomenon.

Disillusioned with the newly-introduced capitalist system that resulted in high rate of inflation and unemployment in their countries, the people of the now-defunct socialist bloc began opposing capitalism, the speakers said.

The proponents of socialism also maintained that fascism and religious fundamentalism have emerged alarmingly throughout the world to fill up the ideological vacuum arising out of the collapse of communism in different countries. Ex-

pressing deep concern over the issue, the leaders said the communists worldwide will have to take up the challenge unitedly.

However, the speakers at the seminar, while evaluating the reasons for the collapse of communism, said bureaucratisation of the state machinery, alienating the communist parties from people, ignoring the importance of ideological motivation and the governments' failure to cope with the technological revolution taking place in the West had been the major causes for the fall of socialism.

The Marxism, a universal

theory for the well being of the mankind in general and the oppressed people in particular, should now make a thorough assessment of the factors responsible for the failure of the Soviet model of socialism," the speakers pointed out.

Central leader of the Communist Party of India (Marxist) and chairman of the ruling left front of West Bengal Shailen Dasgupta gave an introductory speech on the topic while Anil Biswas, central leader of the CPI (M) and editor of the Calcutta-based daily Gono Shakti, presented his party opinion on See Page 12 Col 3

The Daily Star Round-table Education system should be decentralised

By Staff Correspondent

Participants at a round-table on universal primary education organised by The Daily Star in the city yesterday said political will and a national consensus were essential to achieve the goal of education for all by the year 2000.

They observed that the present educational infrastructure could not alone achieve the objective of universal education.

"To accomplish success in the programme, they said the education system should be decentralised immediately by empowering the local bodies in the management and control of schools.

The round-table on "Primary Education for All by the Year 2000: Problems and Prospects"

was moderated by The Daily Star Editor, Mahfuz Anam.

It was participated by Director, Campaign for Popular Education Dr Abdullah Al-Muti Sharfuddin, Deputy Leader of the Opposition in Parliament Abdus Samad Azad, Resident Representative, UNDP, Eimi Watanabe, Chief of Mission, World Bank C R Willoughby, Executive Director, BRAC, Fazle Hasan Abed, President of Gano Forum Dr Kamal Hossain and Secretary to the Prime Minister, Dr Kamaluddin Siddiqui, former secretary Kazi Fazlur Rahman, Secretary, Primary and Mass Education Programme, Kazi Rakiuddin Ahmed, Proshika Executive Director, Dr Quazi See Page 12 Col 7

Prokrichi discusses future action programme

By Staff Correspondent

A meeting of the Prokrichi-BCS Central Action Council yesterday discussed the possibility of launching a greater movement, including a non-stop strike, to press home their 17-point charter of demands.

The strike programme, if decided, likely to begin on February 1 or after the month of Ramadan, meeting sources said.

However, the meeting of the Council, a platform of some 70 thousand doctors, engineers, agriculturists and the non-administrative BCS cadre mem-

bers, ended inconclusively to resume on Friday (December 31) at 6 pm.

The programme for greater movement of the professionals would be finalised at that extended meeting and be formally announced on January 1, 1994, the sources said.

Presided over by Dr M A Majed, Convenor of the Prokrichi-BCS Central Action Council, the meeting was attended by all the central leaders, as well as some district representatives of the See Page 12 Col 6