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Inside Today

Article

The Municipal Elections: A Test Case for Good Government
by Rehman Sobhan
Page 4

International

UN commander asks Bosnian Serbs to surrender heavy guns by Sunday



Suu Kyi won't accept exile in return for freedom
Page 5

Business

Indian farmers threaten violent attacks on multinational firms
US imposes sanctions against Japan on cellular telephone
Pages 6, 7

Education

An Unknown College that Drew Attention; Beyond Reading and Writing
Page 8

Pictorial Essay

The Chakma refugees return home
Page 9

Metropolitan

Dhaka Day by Day



Boi Mela
A Thick Crowd is not a Blessing
Page 3

NEWS BRIEFS

BNP emergency meet tomorrow

An emergency meeting of the Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP) will be held tomorrow at 3.30 pm at its central office. Party secretary general and Minister for LGD, Rural Development and Cooperatives Abdus Salam Talukder will preside, reports BSS.

Sylhet without BTV for an hr

From Our Correspondent
SYLHET, Feb 15: The people of greater Sylhet region could not enjoy the BTV programmes for almost an hour last night because Sylhet sub-station failed to relay the Dhaka programmes due to faults in the Dhaka-Sylhet T&T microwave links. When contacted, an official source confirmed that the relay of transmission had been suspended from 9-15 pm to 10-15 pm.

30 arrested in city

The Dhaka Metropolitan Police (DMP) yesterday arrested 30 people from different parts of the city on various charges. The DMP has launched a month-long special drive on Sunday to curb crimes in the metropolis. UNB.

Rmdn	Feb	Shri	Itar
04	16	5:10 am	6:00 pm
05	17	5:10 am	6:01 pm
06	18	5:09 am	6:02 pm

First batch of Chakma refugees returns



Returning Chakma refugees crossing over to Bangladesh from camps in the Indian state of Tripura at Ramgarh in Khagrachari Hill District yesterday. Photo A K M Mohsin

From Staff Correspondent

RAMGARH, Khagrachari, Feb 15: The much-expected repatriation of Chakma refugees began here with the return of their first batch from the Tripura state of India today.

In all 282 members of 77 refugee families returned to Bangladesh after about eight years of camp life in India. The beginning of the first phase of repatriation of the Chakma refugees has been termed by Bangladesh officials as a 'breakthrough' in the government's move for resolving the staggering tribal refugee problem.

The repatriation started following a tripartite understanding reached recently among the representatives of Bangladesh, India, and the Hill Tracts Refugee Welfare Association.

Communications Minister Oli Ahmed who went this morning to Kathalchhari on the Indian side of the border to receive the refugees, reiterated his government's commitment to the proper rehabilitation of the returnees in their homesteads with full security.

When Oli Ahmed crossed to Mondirhat opposite to the SDO Ghat at Ramgarh, Indian ministers and dignitaries, led by the Union State Minister for Home PM Sayeed, accorded him a warm welcome.

The Indian team included the Chief Minister of Tripura Dasarath Dev and Governor of Tripura Romesh Bhandari.

Oli Ahmed was taken to a podium erected at Kathalchhari where hundreds of refugees gathered.

A number of newsmen from Bangladesh accompanied the Communications Minister to Kathalchhari while Indian journalists also arrived to cover the historic occasion.

Speaking there, Oli Ahmed said Bangladesh wants good relations with India.

Oli said 'India can resolve' See Page 12 Col 3

Political resistance behind slow pace of reforms: WB

Star Report

The donor countries and agencies have urged the government to seek a national consensus on some key areas of its economic agenda for a more effective implementation of the ongoing reform programme.

Political resistance to economic reforms, according to a recent report prepared by the World Bank, is an important reason for the relatively slow pace of implementation, particularly in the areas of public enterprise reforms, retrenchment, privatisation and competitiveness, where organised labour is leading a strong opposition to the government plans.

'To ensure that such opposition does not lead to excessive implementation delays and a dilution of the reform measures, the Government of Bangladesh should try to reach a national consensus on some critical aspects of its economic strategy,' the report said.

A minimum consensus, it added, could be reached on the need to: Reform the public sector to make it more efficient and responsive and eliminate corruption and rent-seeking; expand the role of the private sector in the economy and reduce regulations; encourage Bangladesh exports by ensuring that the country is competitive relative to its neighbours; and maintain security and law and order.

The report also urged the government to launch an education and political campaign to explain the importance of those reforms, using examples from other countries' experiences as well as from Bangladesh's own history.

The report, reviewing the recent progress in implementing structural reforms since the Aid Group meeting of April 1993 in Paris, was presented here in a meeting with the Finance Minister last week.

See Page 12 Col 3

Makhan laid to rest

By Staff Correspondent

Abdul Qudus Makhan, a valiant freedom fighter and eminent student leader of yesteryears, was laid to eternal rest as the bugle played the Last Post Tuesday at the Mirpur freedom fighters' cemetery.

Hundreds of mourners, including freedom fighters, political leaders and admirers paid their last tributes to the late Makhan who, among others, sparked the agitation of 1969 that eventually led to the birth of Bangladesh in 1971.

Earlier, a colonel, on behalf of Prime Minister Begum Khaleda Zia, placed a wreath on the coffin of Makhan as a mark of her respect to the late freedom fighter. A contingent of freedom fighters also presented a military style salute to Makhan.

Makhan's body was brought

to his Elephant Road residence from the Birdem yesterday morning where Awami League Chief Sheikh Hasina paid her respects.

Leaders and workers of the Awami League also paid their respects.

Hasina also met the widow of Makhan, Hashmat Jahan Hashu and other members of the family and consoled them.

The body was later taken to the DUCSU Bhaban on the Dhaka University campus where leaders and workers of all student organisations placed wreaths on Makhan's coffin.

Abdul Qudus Makhan was the first elected General Secretary of the DCUSU in 1969.

Vice Chancellor Emajuddin Ahmed and teachers and officials of the DU also paid

See page 12 Col 2

No 'package deal' with Delhi unless water issue resolved: Majid

By Staff Correspondent

Bangladesh won't go for any 'package deal' with India unless the water sharing issue between the two countries is resolved, Water Development and Flood Control Minister M Majid-ul Huq told Parliament yesterday.

'Our main concern is the right of sharing the Ganges water. We can start negotiations on other issues only after the water sharing issue is resolved,' he told the House.

The minister was facing a volley of questions from the opposition and treasury bench members during the question-answer hour with Deputy Speaker Humayun Khan Panni in the chair.

The matter of a 'package deal' was stressed and advocated by former Indian Foreign Minister IK Gujral who recently visited Bangladesh to attend an international seminar.

Huq said, Indian Prime Minister PV Narasimha Rao is expected to visit Bangladesh within a month or two to discuss the water sharing issue.

The minister said, Rao had promised during the Bangladesh Prime Minister's visit to New Delhi that India would not do anything regarding the Ganges water that might cause sufferings to the

people of Bangladesh.

'During last year's SAARC summit, our Prime Minister reminded Rao of his promise he had made during the May 1992 visit of Begum Zia,' Huq said.

In reply to another question, the minister said Bangladesh drew international attention by raising the water issue at the United Nations.

Majid-ul Huq said his ministry is preparing a report on

the effects of the Farakkah barrage. The report is likely to be completed during the current session of Parliament.

The question on the Ganges water was raised by Mirza Azam of the Awami League and Abdus Shaheed and Abdus Samad Azad, of the AL, IOJ MP Obidul Huq and treasury bench member Abdul Karim asked supplementary questions on the matter.

The minister said that considering India a friendly neighbour, Bangladesh had not demanded any resolution on the issue at the United Nations General Assembly. Instead, our Prime Minister had only mentioned the issue in her address to the UNGA in November last year.

He said unanimous concern over the effects of the Farakkah barrage expressed during a general discussion in Parliament had encouraged the Prime Minister to raise the issue at the UN.

This government has been playing a vital role in resolving the issue, he said.

The minister said, Bangladesh is concerned not only over the Ganges water but also about all the 57 common rivers, 54 of which originated from India.

Discussion on vote of thanks begins

By Staff Correspondent

The Jatiya Sangsad (JS) yesterday began general discussion on the vote of thanks to President Abdur Rahman Biswas for his address in the House on the opening day of Parliament's current session on February 5.

L K Siddiky of the ruling party on February 13 moved the motion thanking the Head of State for his address to Parliament.

The treasury and Opposition benches, while deliberating on the presidential

See Page 12, Col 1

Proposals for reforms in power sector placed before cabinet

By Staff Correspondent

The Finance and Economic Affairs Committee on Sunday last passed proposals for large-scale reforms in the power sector, to be approved by the Cabinet, according to the Minister for Energy.

The reforms aim at creating an environment which will attract private capital and entrepreneurs, both local and foreign, to supplement public sector investments. Energy Minister Khandaker Mosharraf Hossain said this while addressing the members of the Metropolitan Chamber of Commerce and Industry (MCCI), Dhaka at the Chamber building yesterday morning.

The occasion, chaired by MCCI President Latifur Rahman was also addressed by the chamber Vice President Azimur Rahman, Energy Secretary Faizur Razzak and Chairman of the PDB.

'The reforms, according to the Energy Minister, aim at achieving complete commercial characteristics and efficiency in the power sector in increasing the production and distribution of electricity for the 85 per cent population of the country currently deprived of power facilities and to meet the growing demands of industry, commerce and agriculture. The reforms would also aim

to increase operating efficiency of the existing public sector entities through greater competition, managerial autonomy and accountability and full corporatisation.

'These would also aim to improve the reliability and quality of the existing power supply system,' Hossain said.

The minister told the MCCI members that the PDB or DESA structures were likely to change in accordance with the Companies Act of 1913.

Osmany's death anniversary today

The 10th anniversary of death of General Mohammad Ataul Ghani Osmany, Commander-in-Chief of the Liberation War of Bangladesh, will be observed today with respect and solemnity, reports BSS.

On this occasion the nation will pay homage to the memories of this illustrious son of the soil who was known as a great patriot, idealist and exponent of democratic values and spirit.

Various political and socio-cultural organisations have chalked out elaborate programmes to observe the day in a befitting manner. Seminars, symposia, memorial meetings, discussions, milad mahfil and Qurankhwan are the highlights.

See Page 12 Col 8

68 units lose Tk 54cr for power failure

By Staff Correspondent

Due to power failure sixty eight industrial units incurred a production loss equivalent to Tk 54 crores in six months from January, 1993.

At a meeting with the Energy Minister Khandaker Mosharraf Hossain yesterday, Dhaka Metropolitan Chamber of Commerce and Industry (MCCI), Dhaka president Latifur Rahman while expressing concern at frequent power disruption cited an MCCI survey in 68 industrial establishments where the amount of cumulative power failure was 20,000 hours in six months.

See page 12 Col 2

Govt wants educated workforce: PM

Prime Minister Begum Khaleda Zia yesterday termed education as the path to national progress and sought everyone's support for development of education in the country, reports UNB.

'We want to spread education as the means of employment generation and poverty alleviation. We want to produce an educated workforce,' she said at the closing ceremony of the 'National Education Week 1994' at the Osmany Memorial Hall in the morning.

The Prime Minister urged the people, irrespective of party affiliation, to supplement government efforts towards expansion and development of education, which is a national issue.

Organised by the Ministry of Education the function, telecast live, was also addressed by Education Minister Jamiruddin Sircar, Secretary Mohammad Irshadul Huq and Additional Secretary of the ministry Begum Khodeja Azam.

Begum Zia distributed awards among 24 best institutions and 34 best teachers. Seventy-two students of different schools also received awards for extra-curricular ac-

tivities. Competitions in 12 items were held in two age-groups.

The Prime Minister lamented that the nation had fallen behind due to a slack education sector. 'We will not be able to attain respect as a nation if we cannot change the situation and spread the light of knowledge everywhere.'

'We can prosper and increase our importance in the world if we can transform the population into human resource,' Begum Zia said.

The Prime Minister said education, both a birth and constitutional right of the people, ensures responsibility and accountability in social as well as national life.

'Our educational arena is not yet completely free from session jams. Progress of studies is being hampered by terrorist activities in a few places,' Begum Zia said calling upon all to exert sincere efforts for removing such problems.

The Prime Minister hoped that discussions on the theme of this year's Education Week, 'Employment-Oriented Education', will help expand the horizon of education in the country.

Clinton praises Dhaka's strides towards democracy

American President Bill Clinton had words of praise for Bangladesh for its 'giant strides towards democracy and economic reforms.'

Welcoming Bangladesh's new ambassador to the United States, Humayun Kabir, the American leader also praised the good relations and cooperation between the two countries, according to a USIS release here yesterday.

The president said the United States will continue to encourage American companies to invest in Bangladesh. 'I hope Bangladesh will do all it can to assist these firms. Increased economic and commercial ties will do much

to strengthen our bilateral ties,' Clinton said.

'Bangladesh and the United States enjoy particularly good relations, and I believe this reflects the fact that our citizens share many of the same ideals and goals — those of freedom, democratic government, and economic opportunity for all,' Clinton said as he accepted the new ambassador's letters of credence on Monday.

He commended Bangladesh's contributions to the United Nations' worldwide peacekeeping mission, its offer of assistance to American flood victims, as well as the 'fortitude and courage displayed by

See Page 12 Col 1



Morning Sun Editor Anwarul Islam dead

By Staff Correspondent

Anwarul Islam Bobby, founder-editor and publisher of The Morning Sun, died yesterday morning at a hospital in Dubai. He was 54.

Bobby was on his way to London for treatment after doctors here said he was suffering from leukaemia. During the flight his condition became critical when he started vomiting blood. He was off-loaded at Dubai airport and rushed to the Al-Rashid Hospital where he expired in the intensive

See Page 12 Col 7

We mourn

We, in The Daily Star, including the members of the Board of Directors of its owning company, Mediaworld Ltd., deeply mourn the sad, sudden and most untimely death of Anwarul Islam Bobby, the founding editor-publisher of The Morning Sun (Innaillallah...)

He was among the most dynamic and determined newspaper entrepreneurs that this country had ever seen. He founded, perhaps the highest number of dailies and weeklies compared to any other newspaper publisher in the country.

His crowning glory was, of course, The Morning Sun, which he brought out in mid-1990. It, at once, caught the imagination of the innovation-starved readers of English language press in the country. The paper's punchy style, refreshing get-up and penchant for giving news that others failed to — all of which bore the imprint of its ever-alert editor — won it instant appreciation in

See Page 12 Col 8

Rain again holds Bangladesh up

Sports Reporter

An incomplete *deja vu* was a rather poor perception of the eager, local cricket fans last night as rain once again reportedly held up Bangladesh's victory march against East and Central Africa in one of the ICC Trophy engagements billed for yesterday.

Bangladesh were 30 for one from eight overs when rain, as it had done in the previous match against Argentina Feb 13, took over the reins rendering any further play

impossible at the Impala Sports Club ground in the Kenyan capital Nairobi.

Earlier, Bangladeshi bowlers, spearheaded by left-arm paceman Prince, bowled East Africa out for 98 in 36.2 of the stipulated 50 overs to pave the path for a second successive win for second-seeded Bangladesh in the 20-team fray of the ICC's Associate Members.

'Bangladesh, who beat Argentina by seven wickets, should comfortably collect the required 69 runs for victory with nine wickets in hand and 42 overs to spare. No match, statistically, if the weather does not deem it fit to make a match of it with unfair interference. In that case the teams would split the points equally.

Detailed report on Page 10

Disaster awareness task force formed

A disaster management training and awareness task force was formed here yesterday to serve as a consultative committee for planning, implementation and community mobilization, reports UNB.

The committee was formed at a meeting of the Inter-Ministerial Disaster Management and Co-ordination Committee (IMDMCC) at the conference room of the Relief Ministry with State Minister for Relief Harun Al-Rashid in the chair.

The task force comprising 35 members of various ministries, directorates, training academies and other organisations will be headed by director general of the Disaster Management Bureau.