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NEWS BRIEFS

Kuwaiti envoy hosts reception

Kuwaiti Ambassador in Dhaka Mohammad Ebraheem Al-Najran hosted a reception at Hotel Sonargaon yesterday on the occasion of 33rd National Day and 3rd Liberation Day of the State of Kuwait. Labour and Manpower Minister Abdul Mannan Bhuiyan was the chief guest at the reception attended by Members of Parliament, political leaders, high civil and military officials, diplomats, educationists, religious personalities and elite of the society, reports UNB.

Table with 4 columns: Rmdn, Feb, Sehri, Iftar. Rows for dates 14, 15, 16.

Jewish settlers massacre 53 Palestinians in mosque

HEBRON, Occupied West Bank, Feb 25: One or more Jewish settlers gunned down 53 Palestinians and wounded 80 during dawn prayers at a Hebron mosque today provoking clashes which left at least six more dead, doctors and Palestinian sources said, report agencies.

The 35-year-old immigrant with Israeli nationality from the anti-Arab Kach Movement lived in the nearby settlement of Kyriat Arab. The army said he acted alone and then either turned his gun on himself or was shot dead by someone else at the tomb, which is holy to Jews, Muslims and Christians alike. Azziz al-Hashmami, 40, told

AFP he was inside the tomb and saw 'four to five' gunmen open fire as Palestinians knelt in prayer. He did not know how they escaped. Hussein Iss al Rajabi, 42, said he saw a second settler feed the gunman with ammunition as he raked the worshippers. Imam Ibrahim Abdin, who was leading Friday prayers, said the shots came from 'several directions.' 'It can only be a planned operation because there were a lot of settlers inside the mosque.' See Page 12, Col 4

WB team in city to finalise report for Aid Club meet

By A Special Correspondent

The World Bank's economic mission arrived in the city yesterday to finalise its annual report on the Bangladesh economy for presentation in the Aid Consortium meeting next April. The World Bank's economic mission will stay in Bangladesh until the second week of March. During its stay the mission will discuss the draft of its annual economic report with the government. According to an informed source, the mission will be joined by a director level official from the World Bank. The senior World Bank official will interact with the Finance Minister and other senior government officials on the draft report.

nounced by the government, very few had actually been implemented. In a recent review of implementation of reform measures and the ADP held in Dhaka the donors were very critical about hesitation in implementation of reform. They said that reforms to be effective have to be implemented at the level of entrepreneurs. The World Bank recommended that organisations like EPB, Customs, DEDO etc. should be restructured to make them business friendly. The most serious implementation failure has been in the area of ADP and the World Bank has already pointed this out. Slow ADP implementation has also been blamed for the slack in economic activity. Observers say that it is this slack which is responsible more than anything else for a reform fatigue that seem to have gripped the nation. Poor ADP implementation will definitely weaken

Money market gains momentum

Star Report

The country's money market is gaining momentum with the imports showing a rising trend and foreign investments pouring in the share market.

Before the devaluation, the inter bank rate for the US dollar ranged between Tk 39.9725 and 39.9800. Now it ranges between Tk 40.0315 and 40.0355 for one US dollar.

But the absence of an active role of the Bangladesh Foreign Exchange Dealers Association (BAFEDA) is now being felt more acutely in the development of the market.

The demand for currencies other than US dollar is very poor and limited dealings are made in the British pound sterling, the deutsch mark, the yen and the Swiss franc.

In the last two months alone, 30 million US dollars were invested in the Dhaka stock market mainly through Beximco, Bata and Apex shares. The daily turnover in the inter bank market now stands at between 2.5 million US dollars and three million US dollars while the total market turnover comes to around 10 to 15 million US dollars.

Most banks barring the foreign banks are still avoiding forward cover because of the complexity of the dealing and lack of skill in treasury dealing.

Before Thursday's devaluation, the highest rate for one US dollar was quoted by the BASIC bank for importers at Tk 40.25 while the lowest rate was quoted by the Agrani Bank at Tk 40.15.

The Agrani Bank, Standard Chartered, City Bank and Bank Indosuez are the most active banks in the market.

On the other hand, the highest rate for exporters was quoted by the Janata Bank at Tk 39.8362 per dollar while the lowest was quoted by the BCCB at Tk 39.7503.

Sources said, the BAFEDA has the scope of playing a vital role in promoting the forex market which it is not doing. Dealers feel that BAFEDA should have a written guideline now for commission and charges.

But in the last three months, BAFEDA did not hold any meetings to take measures to this effect. The country's central bank seems to be more active in the market at this moment than the market runners, dealers feel.

Dhaka condemns massacre

Bangladesh last night strongly condemned the inhuman massacre in the occupied West Bank yesterday where nearly 60 Palestinians were gunned down by Jewish settlers during prayers in a mosque, reports BSS.

A Foreign Office spokesman while commenting on the incident said, 'This will have a serious setback for the Middle East peace process.' The massacre in the holy month of Ramadan has deeply shocked the peace-loving people of Bangladesh, he said.

Bangladesh demands immediate enquiry into the matter by the international community, the spokesman said adding, the culprits should be brought to justice. The people of Bangladesh once again reiterated their solidarity with the brotherly people of Palestine, the spokesman said.

BNP discusses reforms polls debacle

By Staff Correspondent

The standing committee meeting of the Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP) continued for the second day yesterday with the party leaders in charge of the city corporation polls speaking in self defence and trying to identify the causes of debacles.

Education Minister Jamiruddin Sirkar, State Minister for Textiles Abdul Mannan, State Minister for Environment and Forests Goyeshwar Chandra Roy and Kamrul Islam MP appearing before the standing committee expressed their views regarding the debacles and put forward suggestions for strengthening the organisation. Prime Minister and party chairperson Begum Khaleda Zia presided over the one and a half hours meeting at her Tejgaon office. Twelve standing committee members, except M Majid-ul Huq, were present. See Page 12 Col 2

Opposition can do anything for power: Salam Talukder

By Staff Correspondent

The Awami League is engaged in the politics of expediency rather than the politics of ideology and principle the ruling party Secretary-General and LGRD Minister Abdus Salam Talukder said yesterday reacting to the latest opposition agreement in Parliament. 'Yesterday's meeting of the opposition parties prove they can do anything for power.' See Page 12 Col 1



Chinese Vice Premier and Foreign Minister Qian Qichen and Bangladesh Foreign Minister A S M Mostafizur Rahman led their respective sides at the official talks held at the State Guest House Meghna in the city yesterday. — PID photo

Accord on \$8.5m loan today Dhaka, Beijing to expand ties in economic fields

By Staff Correspondent

Bangladesh and China have decided to further enhance bilateral cooperation in all sectors, particularly in the fields of trade and commerce.

At the official talks held in the city yesterday, the two sides agreed on holding the next meeting of the Bangladesh-China Joint Economic Commission (JEC) in Dhaka sometime this year. Yesterday's talks between the visiting Chinese Vice Premier and Foreign Minister Qian Qichen and the Bangladesh officials continued for nearly one and a half hours. The Chinese Vice Premier led a 14-member delegation while Bangladesh Foreign Minister Mostafizur Rahman led an 11-member team at the parleys held at the state guest house Meghna.

Later speaking to newsmen, Bangladesh Foreign Secretary M R Osmany said 'The discussions were excellent.' The two countries he said have agreed to further strengthen economic cooperation with particular emphasis on trade and investment. Osmany said the two sides had exchanged views on matters of common concern and discussed regional and international issues. The talks also dealt with the question of peace, stability and security of Asia, with particular stress on the South Asian region. China has agreed to extend an interest free loan of 8.5 million US dollars to Bangladesh. The credit agreement will be signed today.

Further discussions on increasing trade between the two countries will be held when the Bangladesh Foreign Minister pays an official visit to China in April next at the invitation of the Chinese Foreign Minister. The Chinese Foreign Minister, during the talks, lauded the progress of Bangladesh and emphasised that 'China's traditional ties with Bangladesh will continue to grow.' He also appreciated the role of the SAARC and the

part played by Bangladesh in the development of this region.

About China's policy towards South Asia, Qian said Beijing's primary goal was to see normal relations among the countries of the region.

Qian mentioned that his country's ties with India had become normal following the visit of the late Premier Rajiv Gandhi's to China in late 1980's.

Earlier, the visiting Chinese Foreign Minister and the Bangladesh Foreign Minister had exclusive talks at the latter's residence.

The visiting dignitary is scheduled to meet President Abdur Rahman Biswas and Prime Minister Begum Khaleda Zia. He will also meet the leader of the Opposition in Parliament and Awami League chief Sheikh Hasina tomorrow. Qian Qichen will also address a press conference at the Padma state guest house on Sunday. He leaves Dhaka the same day.

JS probe body on corruptions meets

By Staff Correspondent

The Special Parliamentary Committee set up to probe the alleged corruptions of the Irrigation and Flood Control Ministry and the minister concerned met for the 14th time yesterday morning.

The chairman of the committee Speaker Shaikh Razzak Ali adjourned the meeting until March 2 at the request of Deputy Leader of the Opposition Abdus Samad Azad.

Out of seven opposition members of the 15-member body, Samad Azad alone attended yesterday's meeting which was supposed to be the last meeting.

However, Samad Azad, requesting the Speaker to adjourn the meeting, informed the treasury bench members of the probe body that almost all the concerned opposition MPs were out of the city.

Speaker Razzak Ali then adjourned the meeting until March 2.

Of the seven treasury bench members, Works Minister Rafiqul Islam Miah, Education Minister Jamiruddin Sirkar and State Minister for Civil Aviation Abdul Mannan attended the meeting.

However, the members present at the meeting did not officially deliberate on the agenda.

Bangladesh's number up in ICC Trophy

Sports Reporter

Bangladesh batsmen nearly performed an amazing atonement for an appalling display by the bowlers and fielders but in the end the hiatus of run-ball equation proved insurmountable and Bangladesh were made to forsake their ambition of entering cricket's big league with a 13-run defeat to hosts Kenya yesterday.

The final set back which smothered all hopes of playing in the 1996 World Cup since three top finishers of this meet will by a recent provisional ICC proclamation play in instant cricket's biggest competition along with nine Test playing countries marked the culmination of an unexpectedly poor run by tournament's top-seeds Bangladesh in this tourney.

Bangladesh who badly needed to win yesterday's match to be in with some chance for a semifinal berth of the 20-team meet for the associate members of the ICC, were badly let down by the fielders and bowlers who were seemingly at their wit's end in the face of planned aggression by the Kenyan batsmen.

For the first time in this tourney Bangladesh batting clicked when they went out to battle for a seemingly lost cause but the pity of it was that the bowling and fielding in the earlier part of the day had left too many loose ends to the

tightened up. Yet they kindled the hopes of a near miracle as Aminul Islam, Jahangir Alam and Minhazul Abedin batted splendidly but a climbing asking run rate coupled with a cheap and vital dismissal of hard-hitting batsman Enamul Huq Moni snuffed out the lambent lamp.

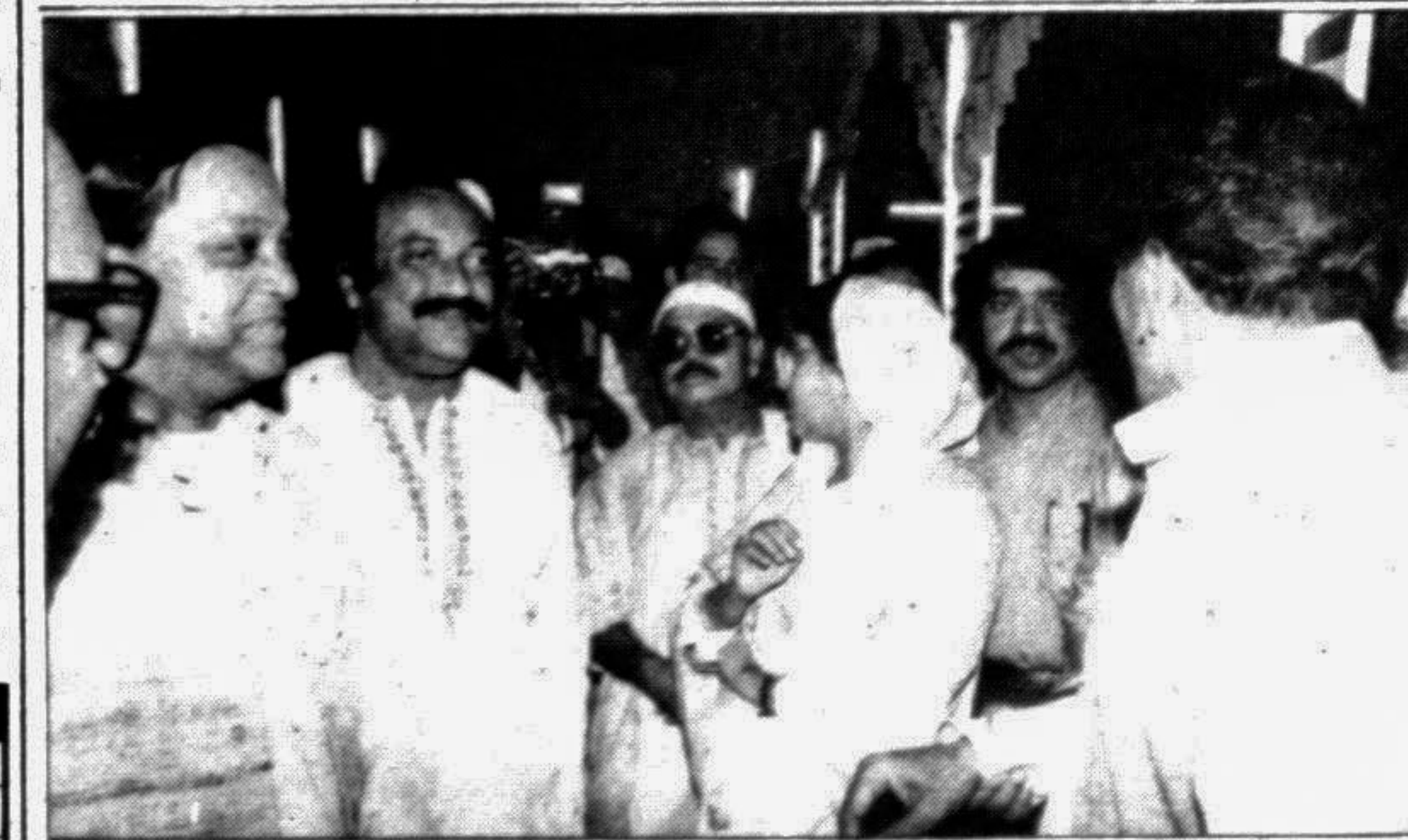
Bangladesh have one more quarterfinal engagement left against Hong Kong on Sunday but it holds only academic interest for the sports lovers of the country who grabbed cricket as some kind of a last straw for the time being after the dismal, disappointing show by country's footballers in the Sixth SAF Games last December. That's luck, that's sports. 'If it be now, 'tis not to come.'

Detailed Report on P-7

Hasina takes iftar with politicians

Awami League president and Leader of the Opposition in Parliament Sheikh Hasina yesterday hosted an iftar party at 29 Minto Road in honour of politicians and high officials, reports UNB.

Speaker Shaikh Razzak Ali, Deputy Speaker Humayun Khan Panni, Chief Election Commissioner Justice Abdur Rouf, Communications Minister Col (Rtd) Oli Ahmed, Works Minister Barrister Rafiqul Islam Miah, Health Minister Kamal Ibne Yusuf, Red Crescent Chairman Shahidul Haq Jamal, MP, Mizanur Rahman Chowdhury, Barrister Maudud Ahmed, Khaledur Rahman Tito, Kazi Aref, Hasanul Haq Inu, Haider Akbar Khan Rono, Nirmal Sen and Maimuddin Khan Badal, Advocate Gazul Haq and See Page 12 Col 7



Awami League chief and Leader of the Opposition in Parliament Sheikh Hasina exchanging pleasantries with political leaders at an iftar party at her Minto Road residence yesterday. — Star photo

High C&F rates hit importers, exporters

By Inam Ahmed

A sudden increase in the rate of commission of the country's clearing and forwarding (C&F) agents has put the importers in a difficult situation.

Importers and sector corporations in place of the lower rates under the existing contracts.

The C&F move has mostly affected the sector corporations as they are to make huge extra payments for their consignments.

According to sources in the Bangladesh Chemical Industries Corporation, the BCIC alone will have to pay an additional amount of Tk 49 lakh on general cargo now lying for clearance in the port if the extra payments on account of bulk and export cargoes are added, the amount would be more than Tk one crore.

The C&F Agents Association in a sudden move had fixed their minimum charge at one per cent for the imports of the first five lakh taka, 0.75 per cent for the next five lakh, 0.50 per cent for the next five lakh and 0.25 per cent for the next five lakh on import bills.

Similarly, the BTMC, the Bangladesh Sugar and Food Industries Corporation and private importers are faced with the same problems. 'Our three year contract

Freedom fighter Mahfuz dead

By Staff Correspondent

Sheikh Mahfuzur Rahman, a distinguished freedom fighter and a former Chairman of the Bangladesh Mukti Joddha Sangsad Central Command Council died yesterday of cerebral haemorrhage at the Mymensingh Medical College Hospital. He was 57.

Mahfuzur Rahman played a very commendable role in the Liberation War. After his training at the Meghalaya Training Centre in India under Sector No 2, he took part in battles in several strategically important fronts including Narayanganj and Munshiganj against the Pak occupation Army.

Mahfuz was actively associated with the Mukti Joddha Sangsad since its creation. He dedicated the rest of his life in organising the Sangsad and for the welfare of the freedom fighters. He was one of the See Page 12 Col 6

NWFP placed under direct federal rule

By Staff Correspondent

ISI AMARAD, Feb 25: President Farooq Ahmad Leghari today removed the Chief Minister of the North West Frontier Province (NWFP) and suspended the provincial assembly, an official decree issued here said, reports AFP.

Under the order, the provincial government ceased to function and the administration in the region, bordering Afghanistan, was placed under direct federal rule.

The president, politically close to Prime Minister Benazir Bhutto directed the province's governor, Major General (retired) Khurshid Ali Khan, to assume control of the provincial government.

He ordered that Chief Minister Sabir Ali Shah and his cabinet, who are allied to the main opposition leader Nawaz Sharif, would cease to hold office with immediate effect.

The order came after the Speaker of the assembly refused to comply with the provincial governor's earlier order to summon the assembly in the provincial capital Peshawar on Saturday.

Over 100 shops gutted in Ctg

From Staff Correspondent

CHITTAGONG, Feb 25: Over 100 shops were gutted in a devastating fire that broke out at the city's Jahur Hawker Market here before dawn today. Fire Brigade sources said.

The loss of property was estimated at around Taka one crore. The cause of the fire could not be known immediately.

Sources said 14 fire units fought the blaze for about five hours from 3 am to bring the blaze under control.

BCCI scandal: One found guilty

LONDON, Feb 25: Mohammed Baqi, a former oil executive, was found guilty today by a London jury of fraud charges linked to the BCCI banking scandal, reports Reuters.

Baqi, 68, had been on trial for the past seven weeks for conspiring with senior executives of the now collapsed Bank of Credit and Commerce International (BCCI) to deceive the bank's auditors by providing false accounting information.

The Bank of England and other banking regulators around the world forcibly closed BCCI in July 1991 after the discovery of widespread fraud.

Baqi, a naturalised Briton of Pakistani origin who used to be Managing Director of a London-based oil company Attock Oil Co Ltd, had pleaded not guilty.