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PM lays Jamuna Bridge foundation today

By Staff Correspondent

The first step in realising Bangladesh's long-cherished dream of closing the vast chasm between the western and eastern parts of the country by building a bridge over the mighty Jamuna will be taken today.

Prime Minister Begum Khaleda Zia will perform the ground-breaking ceremony of the Tk 3100 crore (equivalent to 700 million US dollar) Jamuna Multi-Purpose Bridge Project at 10am at Syedpur, Sirajganj. This will be followed by a similar ceremony at Bhuaipur, Tangail at 12 noon.

According to government sources, today's formal ceremonies at Sirajganj and Tangail will go ahead as planned despite the day-long hartal called by the opposition Awami League and the Jatiya Party.

Several ministers and high officials had already reached the two sites Saturday while rest are expected to arrive there today.

With the formal ceremony, work on the longest bridge and the bigger ever civil-engineering project in the country will begin. Construction of the bridge is expected to be completed by November 1997.

The World Bank, the Asian Development Bank (ADB) and the Japanese Overseas Economic Cooperation Fund (OECF) will provide US dollars 200 million each for the project. All the credits will be interest-free and repayable in 40 years with a grace period of ten years.

Already the people of Bangladesh have contributed huge sums as levy for the bridge and a total of nearly US 100 million dollars will be contributed from the country's own resources.

The 4.8 kilometer (2.9-mile) bridge with a width of 18.5 metres will have four road lanes including one break-down lane.

When completed the bridge will provide direct motorable access between the north-western regions and the rest of the country. Provision for a rail route in future will also be made.

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BNP standing body reviews situation

By Staff Correspondent

The Standing Committee of the ruling Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP) last night reviewed the country's political situation, especially in view of the major opposition parties' recent anti-government agitations.

Sources told The Daily Star last night the meeting felt that the present opposition agitation would eventually isolate them from the people.

The meeting also felt that today's hartal would definitely contribute to the isolation of the opposition parties, particularly from the people living in the northern districts, sources said.

The meeting of the ruling party's policy-planning body while discussing the ways of facing the opposition agitations including the strikes and hartals decided not to resist the opposition moves.

The standing committee meet the first since its formation on April 4 began at 7:30 in the evening and continued until 11:00 pm.

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Digging of city roads by different government agencies has started post haste, seemingly in view of the coming monsoon. Most of such yawning trenches have been dug on roads where recarpeting works had just been completed.

— Star photo

AL, JP call hartal today

By Staff Correspondent

The Awami League and the Jatiya Party have called a country-wide dawn-to-dusk hartal today to protest the alleged police excesses and the killing of two political activists during Thursday's Secretariat 'siege' by the AL.

Two students — Mustafa Aminur Rasul Paran and Habibur Rahman Milon — were shot and killed by unidentified persons near Kaptan Bazar during violence on the day of the opposition programme.

However, both the AL and the ruling BNP have claimed the deceased Paran and Habib had been their activists.

The Jatiya Party's 'siege' around the Election Commission office on the same day passed off peacefully.

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AL rally in city 'Compel this govt to step down'

By Staff Correspondent

Awami League general secretary Zillur Rahman yesterday alleged that the government of Begum Khaleda Zia had compelled his party to opt for a non-stop agitation aimed at toppling the government.

"We had to announce the Secretariat siege programme after the ruling party wiped out the last speck of democracy by rigging the Magura by-election in an unprecedented manner," Zillur told a public meeting in the capital. "We were again forced to take up a package of anti-government programmes because the police attacked the peaceful siege and the BNP gunmen killed six agitators Thursday."

Addressing the meeting at Bangabandhu Avenue, the AL leader viewed that no fair election was possible under the Khaleda Zia government after what it had done in the Magura polls.

"The vote dacoity won't end with the BNP in power," he said. "The resignation of the government and holding the

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Bomb attack on N'ganj AL rally: 7 hurt

From Our Correspondent NARAYANGANJ, Apr 9: Seven activists of the Awami League including former MP Mobarak Hossain were injured in a cocktail attack in front of the party office here this evening.

Mobarak, 45, who is also the district vice president of the AL and Jubo League leader Abdur Rashid, 35, were admitted to hospital.

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Mining Rules of '68 to be amended

By Special Correspondent

The Mining Rules of 1968 will be amended soon for which a high-level committee appointed by the government is now working.

The 11-member committee, headed by a joint secretary, is expected to finalise the amendments within a couple of months and submit the report to the Ministry of Energy and Mineral Resources. The amended rules will be effective only after these are vetted by the Law Ministry.

The amendments for updating the Mining Rules formulated 26 years ago, are very essential in the changing circumstances," said a source in the Ministry of Energy and Mineral Resources. He said the government was feeling the need of amendments because large-scale mining activities were going to be started soon in the country.

Petrobangla has already signed contracts with Chinese and North Korean firms for coal mining in Barapukuria and hardrock mining in Madhyapara. An agreement for coal exploration and mining with foreign company BHP Minerals is also expected to be signed shortly.

"To facilitate all these mining activities, the existing rules need to be changed and new clauses added," said the source.

According to the proposed amendments, the permissible size of the lease area for mining will be increased substantially while the rates for the

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BB to issue bonds to bail BSRS

By Staff Correspondent

The government has decided to issue Treasury Bonds of Tk 175 crore to collect funds for resuming the landing operations of the Bangladesh Shipila Rin Sangstha (BSRS).

The money to be collected through the sale of the bonds will be made available to the BSRS as loan for a period of three years at six per cent interest.

The bonds will be issued on April 16 from the Bangladesh Bank and available for purchase by the banks and financial institutions.

The bonds will bear interest at a rate of five per cent and will be of Tk one crore, five crore and 10 crore denominations. The bonds would be treated as approved security and serve the statutory liquidation requirement for the banks. The bonds would be issued as promissory notes and be transferable through endorsement.

The lending operation of the BSRS was stopped in 1985 after an embargo imposed by the Asian Development Bank

(ADB) on the ground of its huge outstanding loan and poor recovery performance.

Since then, the Sangstha had confined its activities only to the recovery of its overdue loans and, later, to the BMRE (Balancing, Modernising, Rehabilitation and Expansion) of some of its projects.

A move was initiated even to privatise the BSRS keeping only a portion of its shares with the government and converting it into a commercial bank as per the suggestion of the ADB.

Accordingly, it was decided to transfer all the shares and undertakings of the BSRS to a public limited company, the Development Bank Limited which, under its Memorandum and the Articles of Association, was registered to function as a commercial bank besides financing for industrialisation.

According to the Memorandum and the Articles of Association, the DBL was supposed to provide 80 per

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Prokrichi tones down its campaign

By Staff Correspondent

The Prokrichi-BCS Central Action Council has toned down its two-month-long agitation programme announced April 5 for realisation of its 17-point charter of demands.

A platform of some 70 thousand doctors, engineers, agriculturists and 26 non-administrative cadres, the Prokrichi resumed its campaign this week but on a less belligerent note.

The two-month programme includes work abstentions and boycotting of the government's different coordination meetings at the thana and district levels.

When the earlier action programme was deferred in January 1, the Prokrichi leaders had said that they would

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Malaysia will buy rice, jute bags to cut trade gap

Malaysia is keen to import high quality rice, geo-jute and jute bags from Bangladesh to reduce existing trade gap between the two countries, according to a message received here yesterday, reports UNB.

This was disclosed by the Malaysian Deputy Minister for International Trade and Industry when a 10-member Bangladesh textile delegation led by State Minister for Textile Major (retd) Abdul Mannan met with him in Kuala Lumpur during their three-day visit.

The delegation also called on Domestic Trade and Consumer Affairs Minister Y B Dato' Haji Abu Hassan Bin Haji Omar, Deputy Minister for Human Resources Dato' M Mahalingam Jui Meng and Deputy Foreign Minister Abdullah Bin Haji Che Wan.

They discussed wide range of issues including possibilities of joint venture projects and relocation of labour intensive industries to Bangladesh.

Problems relating to recruitment of Bangladeshi workers, were also came up in

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IBM Information Technology Seminar '94

This is to inform all the invited guests to the IBM Information Technology Seminar '94 that due to unavoidable circumstances, the Opening Ceremony & Cocktail Reception are being shifted to April 11, 1994.

Similarly, instead of April 10-12, the new seminar schedule is April 11-13.

The venue and daily seminar agenda remains unchanged.

We are extremely sorry for the inconvenience caused to you.

News Analysis

Hosokawa's resignation and the coalition's rocky road

Monzurul Huq writes from Tokyo

Japanese Prime Minister Morihiro Hosokawa's abrupt announcement last Friday that he would step down in order to break the impasse created at the parliament over allegations about his own past financial dealings has not only created a vacuum within the government, but also raised questions about the future of the seven-party coalition that came to power only last August.

At a hastily called press conference, the Prime Minister said he has decided

to step down on realising the fact that he is becoming an obstacle to normal Diet proceedings.

The Diet has been deadlocked mainly over the issue of Hosokawa's borrowing of 100 million yen from the trucking firm Sagawa Kyubin. Parliamentary debate at the lower house budget committee has been stalled almost for a month due to demands from opposition Liberal Democratic

Party that the Prime Minister produce further documents or allow testimony of a former aide in connection with the issue. As a result, 1994 fiscal year began on April 1 without a full budget.

The process of designating Hosokawa's successor within the ruling coalition has already started. Leaders of the coalition partners gathered in the evening on the same day the Prime Minister offered his resignation, but failed to reach

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Application Development on AS/400		✓	
Global Networks Evolution		✓	✓
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See Page 11 for details

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