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NEWS BRIEFS

Dinner in honour of SAARC ministers

Foreign Minister and Begum Mostafizur Rahman hosted a dinner last night in honour of the visiting members of the SAARC Council of Ministers at the Sonargaon Hotel.

Hasina visits victims of Ctg clashes today

CHITTAGONG, July 30: Awami League chief Sheikh Hasina due to arrive here tonight to apprise herself with July 26 incidents will exchange views with newsmen at the Press Club tomorrow and later visit hospital to see the victims of armed clashes between the Awami League and Jamaat activists. She will also visit the families of those killed in the clashes, reports UNB.

DMP ban around HSC exam centres

Dhaka Metropolitan Police (DMP) Commissioner has imposed a ban on assembly of more than four people around the centres of the HSC examination in the city beginning tomorrow. The DMP Commissioner issued the order as per DMP ordinance and it will remain in force during the HSC examination hours, reports BSS.

Thefts in Kanaighat thana HQs

From Our Correspondent
SYLHET, July 30: Thefts were committed in almost all the offices in the Kanaighat thana headquarters Wednesday night. The thieves entered the offices in the Thana Parishad Complex except those of TNO, cooperatives, fisheries and agriculture. They ransacked the furniture and tore a number of files.



Prime Minister Begum Khaleda Zia delivering her inaugural speech at the 14th session of the SAARC Council of Ministers at the International Conference Centre in the city yesterday. Also seen sitting on the rostrum from left are: Pakistan Foreign Minister Sardar Aseef Ahmad Ali, the Maldives Foreign Minister Fatulla Jameel, Butanese Foreign Minister Lyonpo Dawa Tsering, Bangladesh Foreign Minister Mostafizur Rahman, Indian State Minister for External Affairs RL Bhatia, Nepalese Minister for Tourism and Civil Aviation Ram Hari Joshi and Sri Lankan Foreign Minister ACS Hameed.

SAARC FMs' confce begins in city

Collective wisdom needed to face challenges: Khaleda

By Staff Correspondent

The 14th meeting of the SAARC Council of Ministers began in the capital yesterday with a call from the Chairperson of the regional forum for greater confidence-building among the member nations to face the common challenges of poverty, hunger, disease and illiteracy.

Inaugurating the two-day conference at the International Conference Centre, SAARC Chairperson and Prime Minister Begum Khaleda Zia stressed that the collective wisdom of the member-states has to be harnessed to benefit from the

opportunities of the next century.

"Today we have to face the challenges of tomorrow. Let us face it together. The creativity of our regional leadership needs to address the socio-economic ferment within our societies and the lingering psycho-political reservations among member countries," the Chairperson of SAARC said.

Begum Zia pointed out that the "achievements of the member-states seem to fall short of our common objectives."

Continuing she said "Old prejudices still hinder our ef-

orts to overcome mutual exclusion and alienation. We have common borders. But we are still struggling to put together a common dream."

The inaugural ceremony was attended by Cabinet members, diplomats, senior civil and military officials and elite of the city.

The meeting began on schedule despite a hartal called in the capital by Awami League and a combine of some student bodies.

Heavy security measures were however, taken and the invited delegates and guests

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Mostafiz for accelerating growth rate of economies

Foreign Minister ASM Mostafizur Rahman here yesterday emphasised accelerating the growth rate of the economies of South Asian nations to achieve the goal of eradicating poverty, reports UNB.

"We need to remember that whatever steps we take in our individual countries to alleviate poverty, an acceleration of the rate of growth of our economies would be important," he said.

Addressing the plenary session of the SAARC Council of Ministers, the Bangladesh Minister mentioned that an area of special interest would be further liberalisation of trade among the member countries in the framework of

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SAARC must strive to realise its potentials: Aseef

Pakistan Foreign Minister Sardar Aseef Ahmad Ali said here yesterday that the SAARC must strive to realise its full potentials for strengthening and enlarging beneficial cooperation among its member states, reports BSS.

Addressing the 14th session of the SAARC Council of Ministers at the International Conference Centre (ICC) he said, "While SAARC has contributed to the promotion of the socio-economic progress

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Shake off doubts for meaningful cooperation, says Bhatia

Indian State Minister for External Affairs, R L Bhatia, said that an increased economic cooperation on the intra-SAARC basis would be of mutual benefit, reports BSS.

In his statement at the 14th session of the SAARC Council of Ministers in Dhaka he said new vistas of economic growth and cooperation are opening up for economies in transition

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Change image of South Asia: Jameel

The Maldives Foreign Minister Fatullah Jameel has called for a collective effort to change the image of South Asia from one of poverty and despair to one of dynamism and hope, reports BSS.

Addressing the 14th session of the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC) Council of Ministers meeting at the International Conference Centre

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SAARC should do more: Hameed

Sri Lankan Foreign Minister ACS Hameed yesterday suggested amending the SAARC charter to allow for discussion on contentious issues relating to the region to help solve complex problems and develop mutual trust, reports BSS.

"We have to develop a mechanism," Hameed said while speaking at the business session of the two-day SAARC Council of Ministers which began

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Draft of report to be okayed today

The SAARC foreign ministers yesterday vetted the recommendations made by the regional finance and planning ministers on poverty alleviation, reports BSS.

Conference sources said the foreign ministers discussed all the 12 agenda items and entrusted the task of redrafting the report to a group, to be approved today.

The report will also contain

Dawa Tsering for a vibrant SAARC

Bhutanese Foreign Minister Lyonpo Dawa Tsering has reiterated his country's firm support and commitment to the principles and ideals of the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC), reports BSS.

Addressing the 14th session of SAARC Council of Ministers meeting at the International Conference Centre (ICC) in the city yesterday,

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News Analysis

The CHT: So far, so good

By Asiuzzaman & Chandrashekhar Das

A sense of contrived peace has been prevailing in the troubled Chittagong Hill Tracts in the south-eastern part of Bangladesh since late 1992 when the leaders of the so-called Shantibahini, an outlawed tribal organisation comprising militant Chakma youths, and the Bangladesh authorities started a dialogue to end the dispute in the hills.

Hostilities abated and signs of an elusive peace have been sprouting there with the beginning of the repatriation of the tribal refugees from the Indian camps since last February following a ceasefire spanning more than two years now between the government troops and the rebels.

The lull in violence and the subsequent steps in a seemingly right direction have, however, failed to eradicate lingering doubts and suspicion in some circles.

This may be a planned game of the Shantibahini who are possibly planning to launch a long-term struggle by letting their people to repatriate," said one observer.

The cynical reservations about the good intentions of the rebels have not stemmed from mere prejudice. Most, if not all, of those who have returned so far are elderly males, women or children, leaving enough causes to suspect that the able-bodied tribal youths are staying back on the other side of the border to keep the bellicose option open.

Resettlement of more than 50,000 tribal people of ten thousands families would be of strategic value for the rebels to resume the armed campaign should the present truce come a cropper.

Nearly sixty per cent of the 9,50,000 people in 1005-sq mile area of the CHT are tribal.

The rest are Bengali-speaking settlers.

The Shantibahini had been waging a bush war in the three hill districts — Khagrachhari, Rangamati and Bandarban for more than 15 years now.

The road to a long-awaited repatriation has been a culmination of cumulative causes.

Inter-cine bickerings among the different rebel factions and the inherent problems of waging warfare based on a hit-and-run policy have definitely tided on the zest of the Shantibahini, but the more decisive deterrent, according to some, has been the unwillingness of the Indian government to provide shelter any more to the tribal fighters.

With the tribal unrest gaining new momentum in that country the Indian authorities appear to have decided to be a little less hospitable at long

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Govt seeks help from all

The government has sought cooperation from all quarters in its bid to maintain law and order and protect the lives and property of the public, reports BSS.

In a Press Note issued in Dhaka last night by the Ministry of Home the government warned that any illegal activity would be resisted with an iron hand and stern measures would be taken for restoring peace and security in social life.

The Press Note said, the government has noticed with deep concern that some unruly people, at the end of several rallies held by some political parties and groups on Friday, threw bombs and cocktails without any provocation whatsoever towards the members of the police force on duty.

The organisers of a rally of the Anti-Communist Students' Action Committee in front of the Jatiya Press Club, while proceeding towards the Yemni Market near the 'Muktangan' towards the end of

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100 hurt in clashes : 3 offices ransacked Countrywide hartal observed

By Staff Correspondent

A dawn-to-dusk hartal protesting Tuesday's killings in Chittagong was observed across the country yesterday amid sporadic clashes, bomb blasts and other stray incidents.

At least 100 people were injured in the clashes, according to reports received in Dhaka from different parts of the country.

Police arrested at least 53 pickets from different areas during the hartal (general strike) hours.

Awami League and the Sampradayikota Birodhi Chhatra Samaj — a combine of student bodies opposed to communal politics — called the hartal to protest the incidents on Tuesday in the port city that left six people killed and dozens wounded. The AL called hartal from 6am to 2pm while the Chhatra Samaj gave the call for a dawn-to-dusk hartal.

Different political parties and their front organisations extended support to the general strike.

In the capital, the hartal

was marked by ransacking of the offices of three organisations, cracker blasts and picketing.

All educational institutions, private offices, business establishments, shops and market places remained closed during the day-long hartal.

Attendance in the government offices and those of autonomous bodies was thin.

Banks and other financial institutions worked behind shuttered doors with skeleton staff.

All modes of vehicles remained off the roads during the hartal, barring rickshaw and rickshaw-vans.

The pedicabs were seen ferrying commuters in the city streets except in those areas strongly picketed by the hartal activists.

Witnesses said that pro-strike activists ransacked the press office of the Bangla Academy. Some unidentified young men broke the bamboo-made gate of the Academy press, shattered the window panes and damaged furniture. None was, however, injured

in the incident that took place at about 12.45pm.

Some Academy officials said that the attack was made when the office was functioning during the hartal hours.

Besides, the offices of the National Democratic Alliance and the Jatiya Ganatantri Party (JAGPA) were ransacked by a mob at about 3pm.

The mob stoned the window panes and damaged furniture, witnesses said.

None was inside the offices during the attacks.

During the hartal hours, the activists of the Awami League and the Chhatra Samaj brought out processions in the capital.

They also held small rallies in different parts of the city.

Speaking at a rally near the Jatiya Press Club, the AL leaders accused the Jamaat workers of killing their activists in Chittagong.

They also blamed the government for supporting the attacks by the Jamaat in the port city.

Abdur Razzak, Mofazzal Hossain Maya and some other

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The Bangabandhu Avenue in the city during hartal hours yesterday. — Star photo.

Koirala may call Indian troops, fears NCP

KATHMANDU, July 30: Some 10,000 leftwing activists from all six factions of the Nepal Communist Party (NCP) staged a rally here today to denounce interim Prime Minister Girija Prasad Koirala, party sources said, reports AFP.

Leaders of the six included MM Adhikari, Madhav Nepal from the NCP (United Marxists and Leninists), Lilamani Pokharel from the United People's Front, Dina Nath Sharma from the NCP (flaming-torch-bearers), B B Manandhra from the NCP (Democrat), the Nepal Peasants and Workers' Party (UPF) and the NCP (United).

The name of defending democracy."

He said Koirala had brought 'musclemen' to Kathmandu from his native province and other districts outside Kathmandu in a show of strength, paid for by the public purse.

The country's recently won democratic system "has now been put in jeopardy by getting the elected Parliament dissolved for the purpose of serving Koirala's personal interest," he alleged.

NCP (United) leader Bishnu Bahadur Manandhar called on the people to unite and support the movement to oust Koirala.

"Koirala has ill-advised the King to dissolve the elected house of representatives to serve his personal interest. He wants a two-thirds majority in the November mid-term polls so that he can amend the Constitution and handover all natural resources of Nepal to India," he claimed.

SAPTA will usher in new era: Joshi

The Nepalese Minister for Tourism and Civil Aviation Ram Hari Joshi said here yesterday the successful implementation of the South Asian Preferential Trading Arrangement (SAPTA) and the plan of action for eradicating poverty would usher in a new and promising era for effective regional cooperation in South Asia, reports BSS.

Addressing the 14th session of the SAARC Council of Ministers

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Govt should quit: Hasina

Awami League President Sheikh Hasina (thanked the people for spontaneously observing the half-day country-wide hartal yesterday protesting the dastardly killings in Chittagong, reports UNB.

People, by observing hartal, have expressed their no-confidence in the 'autocratic and corrupt BNP government' which patronises anti-liberation Jamaat-Shibir forces, she said in a statement.

"If the government has any respect to public opinion, it should resign immediately," Hasina continued.

She alleged that BNP government is conspiring to confuse the current movement by provoking anti-liberation forces. But people would not be misled whatever conspiracy is hatched by the government, she said.

Two industries charged with stealing gas

NARAYANGANJ, July 30: Two top private sector industries here have been sued for allegedly stealing gas worth an estimated Tk 1 crore during the past 10 months ending in July 1994, police said, warning the scam could be just the tip of an iceberg, reports UNB.

The two companies charged with pilfering a huge volume of gas from the Titas Transmission system for running their plants are Star Particle Board Mills, and Star Vegetable Oil Mills.

Police, fearing more such cases of gas pilferage, said they

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Saifur leaves for China

Finance Minister M Saifur Rahman left Dhaka yesterday for Beijing on a week long visit to China at the invitation of the Chinese government.

Talking to BSS at the Zia International Airport, the finance minister said during his visit to China, he will hold talks with Chinese leaders for further improving the existing friendly bond of relationship particularly in the economic field between the two countries.

The finance minister re-

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Chhatra Samaj to agitate for Golam Azam's trial

By Staff Correspondent

The Sampradayikota Birodhi Chhatra Samaj, a combine of some student bodies, yesterday announced a month-long agitation programme including a demonstration in front of the Prime Minister's Secretariat on August 30 in demand for trial of Jamaat leader Golam Azam as a 'war criminal'.

The programme was announced at a post-hartal rally in front of the Jatiya Press Club. The hartal was called to protest the July 26 killings in Chittagong.

The programme includes demonstrations on the campuses of universities on August 6 for the removal of 'razakars' from the university administrations and student-body gatherings at the district and divisional headquarters from August 10 to 27. Central leaders of the component organisations of the Chhatra Samaj would address the rallies.

Besides, student rallies would be held in all the thanas in the capital and workers' conferences at the former districts during the period.

Chaired by Ragib Ahsan Munna of Chhatra Moitri, the rally was addressed by Moinuddin Hasan Choudhury of Chhatra League (M-I), Ruhul Kuddus of Chhatra League (B-K), Kazi Sajjad Zahir of Chhatra Union, Rajekuzzaman of Chhatra Front, Uday Pal of Chhatra Federation, Md Shahidullah of BSD-backed Chhatra League and Saleh Ahmed of Chhatra Samity.

The student leaders said that the people, by observing hartal yesterday, expressed their hatred towards the 'killer Jamaat-Shibir axis and their protector — the BNP government.'

They said that the goal of the Jamaat and other fascist forces was to capture state power.