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NEWS BRIEFS

JS sub-committee on commitment meets

The Sub-Committee Number Two of the parliamentary standing committee on government commitment at its first meeting yesterday discussed the various aspects of implementation of the commitments given by ministers and ministers of state during the second and fourth sessions of the fifth Jatiya Sangsad.

Convenor of the sub-committee Abdul Wahab presided over the meeting held at the Sangsad Bhaban, reports BSS.

Japanese trade body due in Ctg today

From Staff Correspondent CHITTAGONG, Aug 9: A 13-member high powered industrial team from Japan is expected to arrive here tomorrow to study investment possibilities, official sources said. The team members, belonging to the Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA) led by Itaru-Mae are scheduled to visit Chittagong port, the Chittagong Export Processing Zone, and the Chittagong chamber. They will also visit the proposed separate industrial estate for Japanese investors on the other side of the Karnaphuli river.

S M Sultan's birth day today

The 70th birth day of renowned painter S M Sultan will be observed today under the auspices of the Bangladesh Shilpakala Academy at the residence of the painter at Narail. The birth day observance programme of the painter includes holding of children's rally and discussion meeting, reports BSS.

Doctors call 24-hour strike today

By Staff Correspondent

Some 8000 doctors are set to observe a 24-hour strike in all government hospitals and health care centres across the country today protesting the suspension of 12 physicians and to press for the implementation of their 21-point charter of demand.

During the strike, only the emergency services of different hospitals would be maintained. Private practices by government doctors would also remain suspended.

The strike was called by the Bangladesh Medical Association (BMA) Sunday in protest against the suspension of 12 doctors. These doctors were suspended after they

were found absent from their duties at the Tongi and Gazipur hospitals by a vigilance team of the Health Ministry on August 3.

The BMA says, the suspension was an "unjust" action especially when there was a government service rule providing for deduction of one day's salary for a day's absence. The BMA said the action was a "conspiracy of the bureaucrats" aimed to tarnish the image of the doctors, and that such action could not "go unchallenged".

The BMA will organise demonstrations and rallies at different health centres of the country today.

The central rally of the BMA will be held at the Battala of the PG Hospital at 11 am.

Today's strike is the beginning of the BMA's fortnight-long programme which includes a 48-hour strike on August 17 and 18. The BMA also criticised the government for not implementing the 21-point charter of demands.

The demands include increased budget allocation for the health sector, creating primary health care infrastructure and creating 1000 new posts at the union level.

In the face of a series of strikes called by the BMA, the Health Minister on January 20

Non-govt primary teachers begin fast unto death

By Staff Correspondent

About 250 teachers of non-government primary schools began a fast unto death in front of the Jatiya Press Club yesterday morning to press home their four-point demand.

Some of the teachers fell sick and had to abandon their hunger strike. Abul Kasem, a primary school teacher from Jamalpur, was moved to the Dhaka Medical College in a serious condition.

The leaders of the Non-Government Primary Teachers' Association said 225 teachers participated in the hunger strike programme on the first day.

Earlier, the teachers staged a sit-in in front of the Jatiya Press Club from Saturday for realisation of their demands. See Page 12 Col 3

4 top scientists honoured Formulate master plan to face challenges: PM

Prime Minister Begum Khaleda Zia yesterday suggested formulation of a master plan for the advancement of science and technology to enable the country face any future challenge of environmental degradation and attain socio-economic development, reports BSS.

A well-coordinated plan has to be formulated instead of fragmented efforts, Begum Zia said.

The Prime Minister was speaking at the award giving ceremony of the Bangladesh Academy of Sciences as chief guest at the International Conference Centre (ICC) in the city.

Four renowned scientists of the country were awarded gold

medals and Taka 20 thousand each as recognition of their contribution in various fields of science.

Award winning scientists were: Major General Mohammad Mahmudur Rahman Chowdhury (Medical Science), Prof A K M Nurul Islam (Botany), Dr Amir Hossain Khan (Applied Science) and Dr Salauddin Khan (Chemistry).

The Prime Minister congratulated the recipients of the academy gold medals for their well deserved honour.

She announced that a grant of Taka three and a half crores would be given for the construction of the academy's own science building and the research of its scientists. See Page 12 Col 7

Tremor shakes country

By Staff Correspondent

An earthquake 'shook the capital and most parts of the country in the early hours of Tuesday.

Our correspondents from Maulvi Bazar, Sunamganj, Rangpur and Chittagong sent in reports about a mild tremor.

The Met Office in Dhaka told The Daily Star that the earthquake lasted 42 seconds from 03:09:12 am.

When contacted for the latest information, the Met Office said they were not aware of the tremor's intensity, usually measured on the Richter Scale, even 20 hours after its occurrence.

However, an official who preferred not to be identified described the earthquake 'as See Page 12 Col 8

BNP again rejects demand for caretaker govt

By Staff Correspondent

Leaders of the ruling Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP) yesterday rejected once again the demand for a caretaker administration for holding general elections and blasted the mainstream Opposition for making 'unconstitutional efforts' to unseat an elected government.

The BNP leaders were addressing a public meeting, organised by the city unit of the party, at Gulistan Square in the capital.

Party Secretary General and LGRD Minister Abdus Salam Talukder told the rally that the demand for a caretaker administration was entirely unconstitutional and unprecedented. Referring to the Opposition claim that the BNP was voted to power through an election held under a 'caretaker government headed by Justice

Shahabuddin Ahmed," Salam Talukder said that the Shahabuddin administration was not a caretaker government. It was rather an interim government formed very much under the provisions of the then Constitution, with presidential form of government.

Explaining the provisions concerned, the BNP Secretary General said, Gen Ershad appointed Justice Shahabuddin, under certain constitutional provision, as vice president of the state and then handed over power to the newly appointed vice president constitutionally.

But the mainstream Opposition-proposed outline for a caretaker government has no basis in the country's Constitution, Salam Talukder said. Leader of the Opposition Sheikh Hasina's call for unseat- See Page 12 Col 1

Student leaders may help restore normalcy at DU

By DU Correspondent

The feuding student bodies at the Dhaka University have 'agreed in principle' to help end to tense situation prevailing on the campus.

The leaders of the pro-BNP Jatiyatabadi Chhatra Dal (JCD) and the Awami league backed Chhatra League (M-I) are trying to reach a consensus on restoring normalcy on the campus, sources concerned said. They might arrive at a decision by tomorrow.

Besides, the university authorities also continued their efforts to restore a congenial academic atmosphere.

Meanwhile, a large number of students attended classes yesterday after three days of strike separately called by the teachers and students to protest Thursday's violence on See Page 12 Col 4



Prime Minister Begum Khaleda Zia presented awards of the Bangladesh Academy of Sciences at the International Conference Centre in the city yesterday. Professor A K M Nurul Islam is seen here receiving gold medal for his contribution in botany. BSS photo

Jute spinners face tough time

Star Report

The country's jute spinning industry is finding it increasingly difficult to retain its leading share of the international market as it is being cornered by 'uneven' internal and external competition.

A recent report commissioned by the Bangladesh Jute Spinners Association (BJSJA), representing 34 mills, urged the government to include the spinning mills, which are also suffering from the debt overhang problem, in the ongoing jute sector adjustment credit (JSAC) programme for the public and private sector jute mills. Taking undue advantage of the 250-million US dollar World Bank funded programme, the report charged that some of the composite or traditional jute mills are in-

creasingly switching over to producing yarn and twine, the specialised products of the spinning sector, and are thus creating an uneven playing field to the disadvantage of the spinners.

On the external front, the Indian jute industry has initiated an aggressive strategy to capture a larger share of the market and has set an export target of 60,000 tons of yarn in 1994-95 as against an actual export of only 17,841 tons even in 1990-91. The Indian initiative is strongly backed by government export subsidy and other policy measures which also allow setting up yarn mills in the export processing zones, the report noted.

Jute Minister A S M Hannan

Shah, when contacted, told The Daily Star that he was aware of the problem of the spinning sector and the ministry was trying to work out a formula to solve the problems of the sector.

The ministry is fully aware of the problem, I have endorsed the report and forwarded it to the finance minister," he said, adding that he is trying to arrange a meeting with the finance minister soon. On providing export subsidy similar to those given in India, the minister said it is up to the finance minister. But he asserted that the performance of the country's jute sector is not lagging behind that of India.

The World Bank suggested See Page 12 Col 3

Bonds for T&T oversubscribed

Star Report

The Tk 335 crore treasury bonds issued by the government Sunday were oversubscribed by the commercial banks of the country, according to sources.

Some 14 banks applied for purchasing the bonds. Their subscription reached about Tk 800 crore, more than double the value of the bonds issued by the Bangladesh Bank.

The bonds were, however, distributed as per the ratio of their demands.

The bonds were issued to collect funds for the Telegraph and Telephone Board for the commissioning of 1 lakh 30 thousand digital telephones.

Similar bonds worth Tk 275 crore were issued by the See Page 12 Col 7

Dhaka-KL JC meet begins Aug 17

The forthcoming meeting of Bangladesh-Malaysia Joint Commission (JC) is expected to usher in a new era of cooperation between the two countries, particularly in the economic field, diplomatic sources in Dhaka said yesterday, reports UNB.

The three-day meeting will begin in Kuala Lumpur August 17.

Foreign Minister A S M Mostafizur Rahman will lead the Bangladesh team at the meeting while the home side will be headed by his Malaysian counterpart Dato Abdullah Badawi.

This will be the second meeting of the JC constituted

in Dhaka in August, 1989. The first meeting was held in Dhaka in February, 1993.

Circles concerned attach importance to the forthcoming JC meeting as it is likely to decide on recruiting more Bangladeshi manpower to be employed in various industries, including rubber plantation, in Malaysia. More than one lakh Bangladeshis are now working in that country.

Diplomatic sources said the meeting will cover the entire gamut of bilateral relations with special emphasis on increased trade, investment and joint venture industries in Bangladesh. See Page 12 Col 2

US shelve plan to hand over F-16 to Pakistan

NEW DELHI, Aug 9: A controversial US proposal to hand over F-16 warplanes to Pakistan has been shelved, the new US Ambassador to India was quoted today as saying, reports Reuters.

Washington had offered to release 38 of the warplanes to Pakistan provided Islamabad capped production of weapons-grade radioactive material that could be used to build a nuclear weapon.

But dispatch of the planes — which Pakistan has already paid for — is no longer practical, US Ambassador Frank Wisner told the Times of India newspaper in an interview.

"At some point there was some consideration in the White House that to slow the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction and their delivery systems there was a need to strengthen the conventional strength of Pakistan," he said.

Govt may fall if opposition demand not met: Azam

Jamaat leader Golam Azam yesterday feared the downfall of the BNP regime if it declined to meet the Opposition demand for a caretaker government to conduct next general elections, reports UNB.

"Fall of the government is a must, like that of Ershad, if it does not concede to the demand," he told the members of the OCAB (Overseas Correspondents' Association of Bangladesh) at the Jamaat central office in the afternoon.

Speaking at his first press conference after his citizenship was restored by a Supreme Court verdict, Azam touched on various aspects of Islam and replied to a volley of questions on political and religious issues.

The Jamaat chief said his party was the first to raise the demand for a caretaker government to institutionalise democracy as 'there is no precedent for free and impartial voting being held under a party in power.'

He blamed the Prime Minister for blocking the way for the Opposition's return to Parliament by ignoring the demand. In her interview with BSS, the PM invited the Opposition to join Parliament but rejected their demand.

"She (PM) closed the door for the Opposition to return to the See Page 12 Col 6

WASA checking lines at Baddanagar

By Staff Correspondent

The Dhaka Water and Sewerage Authority (WASA) personnel yesterday started working in Baddanagar Lane area under Lalbagh thana in the city to find out why the local people were getting dirty and stinking water for about a month.

"They have started checking the water supply line," a resident told this correspondent.

Some 50 families in the area have been suffering due to the supply of contaminated water.

Water line and sewerage line in the area might have leaks somewhere, local people thought.

The Daily Star published a report in this regard yesterday following allegations from a number of residents that they had failed to draw the attention of the authorities concerned despite their best efforts.

NICVD— an apology for a specialised hospital

By Inam Ahmed and Masud Hasan Khan

In a dark corner of a ward at the National Institute of Cardiovascular Diseases (NICVD), Nazimuddin was lying flat on his bed, gasping hard for breath. He has been in this state for the last two years.

A deep incision scar of an earlier surgery on his emaciated chest — a six inch-long straight line — was heaving up and down with every tortured effort to breathe.

A tube was plugged into Nazimuddin's nose bringing him the precious life of breath from an oxygen plant in a distant part of the hospital.

The 15-year-old patient from Manikganj urgently needed medical attention but there was none around to shift him to the Coronary Care Unit (CCU) of the hospital.

Only a few days back, when Nazimuddin's condition deteriorated, a group of visitors had to shift him to the CCU at their own risk. The doctor and the handful of nurses on duty were busy with another serious patient.

This time nobody could say if he would survive or not. This is a typical scene at the NICVD, the lone heart hospital of the country.

Except for a few 'privileged' patients, nursing in this sensitive hospital is disappointing and it is evident at every stage — from the doors of the emergency unit to the cockroach-infested beds in the

wards. Not far from the emergency unit of NICVD's newly built complex, a half-conscious Noorjahan Begum was leaning on her husband who was looking around for a trolley or stretcher. She was brought from Mirpur section 12 after she complained of severe chest pain.

Two attendants, idling near the reception counter of the institute, remained where they were. So the husband had to carry the wife all the way. The attendants saw it but again engaged in gossiping.

At the emergency unit, several patients brought from different parts of the country were lying on the beds and their relatives were seen frantically looking for the nurses and doctors.

A doctor at the NICVD told The Daily Star that the emergency section of the hospital needed more equipment for critical coronary cases.

The emergency unit of the NICVD earlier worked in conjunction with the Suhrawardy Hospital. Now shifted to the new complex, it faces an acute shortage of stretchers and trolleys to shift emergency patients.

Patients alleged that the environment and house-keeping of the institution is one of the most serious problems requiring urgent action by the See Page 12 Col 1



For want of proper nursing services patients often have to be handled and cared for either by their relatives or hired help. This picture was taken at the city's Suhrawardy Hospital. — Star photo

LDF suggests alternative to caretaker govt

The Left Democratic Front (LDF) yesterday proposed formation of an advisory council comprising neutral and non-partisan persons by the President to conduct free and fair polls, reports BSS.

Such a council, to be formed following dissolution of Parliament by the President after election date is announced, would do routine work of the state and give necessary directives to the Election Commission for conducting polls, LDF leaders said in Dhaka yesterday.

Announcing a package of suggestions, including constitutional measures and ethical standards for conducting free and fair polls, CPB president Manzurul Ahsan Khan said money and muscle power had

in the past more or less determined election results. He alleged that use of arms have deprived the people of their right to franchise.

The cabinet including the Prime Minister shall be deemed to have resigned on the day of such appointment of council of advisers, the suggestion said. After the election is over and the appointment of a prime minister is made under constitutional provision, the advisory council would cease to exist. The provision should remain operative for 15 years or three elections, it was suggested.

The LDF in its suggestions called for annulment of all black laws that hinder fundamental rights, demanded ban- See Page 12 Col 4

One shot dead in city clash

By Staff Correspondent

A person was shot dead when two groups of armed men clashed in the city's Mohakhali area last night.

The rival groups fired a number of gunshots and exploded crackers in Amtoli area, Mohakhali, around 10:30 pm.

Gulshan police said their emergency force rushed to the spot and brought the situation under control.

No details were available and no case was lodged with police till the filing of this report at midnight last night

Asst Secretaries' ultimatum

By Staff Correspondent

The assistant secretaries of various ministries at a rally in the city yesterday gave an ultimatum to the government to accept their demand by August 14.

They are demanding promotion of 14 cadres in 4148 posts to Grade-6.

The rally was held inside the Secretariat under the banner of 'Assistant Secretary Forum'.

The forum also handed over a memorandum to the Cabinet Secretary.