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by Muhammad Quamrul Islam

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NEWS BRIEFS

MCB opens branch in city today

By Staff Correspondent
Pakistan's largest private sector bank — Muslim Commercial Bank Ltd — will open its first branch in Bangladesh today. Governor of Bangladesh Bank Khorshed Alam will inaugurate the branch at 4 Dilkusha Commercial Area in the city. Chairman of the bank,

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Mia Mohammad Maushia, President and Chief Executive Hosain Lawai and a number of directors will also be present on the occasion, says a press release of the bank. The Muslim Commercial Bank (MCB) operated in Dhaka since 1948 till the birth of Bangladesh. The MCB has now 1300 branches in Pakistan with representative offices in Beijing and London, including a branch in Colombo.

Bangladesh hails US-Haiti accord

Bangladesh yesterday welcomed the peace agreement between Haiti's military rulers and the United States to restore the democratic government in the Caribbean island. The government, in a handout, hoped that in accordance with the UN Security Council resolutions and the Governors' Island agreement on Haiti, the restoration of democracy and the peaceful return of the legitimately elected President, Jean Bertrand Aristide would be accomplished, reports UNB.

Bangladeshi jailed for murder in Japan

TOKYO, Sept 20: A 30-year-old Bangladeshi man received a 10-year prison sentence today for murdering his cousin earlier this year in eastern Japan. The Urawa district court said that Shahidul Hoque killed Mousir Ahmed, 30, with a knife at Ahmed's apartment on January 6 at Omiya, Saitama prefecture, north of Tokyo. Hoque set the apartment on fire five days after the murder in an attempt to conceal his crime, the court said, reports AFP.

BBC phone-in with DCC Mayor

The BBC Bengali Service will conduct a phone-in programme with Dhaka City Mayor Mohammad Hanif on September 27 between 8:10 and 8:30 pm. BBC listeners in Dhaka will be able to ask questions in Bengali to the Mayor of Dhaka about the city, in the live phone-in programme to be heard only on FM 100 megahertz, said a press release yesterday, reports UNB.



Shukla Sarkar and her dance troupe of the Dhrupad Arts Centre presenting a classical number at the National Museum auditorium yesterday.

— Star photo

PM leaves for Bhutan today

Prime Minister Begum Khaleda Zia leaves this morning on a two-day official visit to Bhutan at the invitation of King Jigme Singye Wangchuk, reports UNB.

A royal reception will be accorded to the Bangladesh Prime Minister when she arrives at the Paro airport in Thimpu.

The King and Queen of the tiny Himalayan Kingdom will greet the Bangladesh leader at the airport. Her arrival will be heralded by a 19-gun salute.

After inspecting a guard of honour at the airport, she will drive in a ceremonial motorcade to the Ugyen Pelri Palace.

Her 35-member entourage will include Foreign Minister A S M Mostafizur Rahman, Principal Secretary to the PM A N M Yusuf, Sirajul Islam, MP, Shahin Ara Haque, MP, Additional Foreign Secretary Kazi

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7 ministers told to supervise drought relief

Seven ministers have been given special duty to supervise relief activities and agricultural rehabilitation programmes in eight drought-hit northern districts of the country, reports UNB.

Prime Minister Begum Khaleda Zia directed the ministers to operate special programmes to assuage the woes of the affected people and recoup crop losses after her whirlwind tour of the untimely drought affected districts on September 15.

Labour and Manpower Minister Abdul Mannan Bhuiyan will supervise the special programmes in Panchagar and Thakurgaon districts, State Minister for Social Welfare Fazlur Rahman in Dinajpur, State Minister for Planning Dr Abdul Moyeen Khan in Nilphamari, Housing and Public Works Minister Barrister Rafiqul Islam Mia in Rangpur, Deputy Minister for Local Government Abdul Hye in Kurigram, State Minister for Water Resources Mosharrar Hossain Shahjahan in Lalmonirhat and State Minister for Environment and Forest

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Hasina dismisses PM's claim of development

By Staff Correspondent

Awami League chief and Leader of the Opposition in Parliament Sheikh Hasina yesterday criticised the government policies in various fields and said, "All of us think that things have not gone quite the way the nation expected under a democratic set-up."

Speaking as guest speaker at the monthly meeting of the American-Bangladesh Economic Forum, Sheikh Hasina gave an overview of the economic situation in the country and outlined her party's programmes.

Hasina mentioned that "lack of investment, rising unemployment, widespread corruption and extortion by armed thugs have shattered the economy."

The Prime Minister may

delude herself about a so-called wave of development sweeping across the country. But it is a myth," Hasina claimed.

The Awami League leader read out an eight-page paper on 'Achieving Rapid Economic Development for Bangladesh'. She lambasted the government for what she said, "its inability to solve the problems, as well as failure to implement economic reforms and arrest rising lawlessness."

She asked: "Is it not obvious today that no industry or business establishment, except those belonging to the BNP members, is safe unless it pays a toll to the armed elements?"

This has been eroding the

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Doctors begin strike today

By Staff Correspondent

Doctors belonging to the Bangladesh Medical Association (BMA) begin an indefinite strike today to press home their demands for better health services and ending the government's "repressive measures" against them.

The strike call was given at a press conference organised by the BMA in Dhaka yesterday.

Some 9,000 members of the BMA are now on campaign trail demanding removal of the Health Secretary, cancellation of vigilance team, making effective the health service committee headed by the MPs and withdrawal of suspension order against doctors at Tongi and Gazipur hospitals.

The strike will be observed in all government hospitals, health complexes and other health offices, BMA official

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Eggs for DMCH patients looted

By Staff Correspondent

Extortionists looted eggs from a supplier of the Dhaka Medical College Hospital (DMCH) as they were refused tolls yesterday.

The looters snatched all 1400 eggs bought for the DMCH patients.

The egg supplier Mansoor alleged that some local bullies, who used to demand money from him, had looted the eggs.

Witnesses said some extortionists carrying knives waylaid a rickshaw van carrying the two baskets full of eggs and looted them near the gate of the DMCH around 10 in the morning.

5 drown as boat sinks in Meghna

From Our Correspondent

BRAHMANBARIA, Sept 20: Five persons including three members of a family, drowned when an engine boat capsized in the river Meghna near Ashuganj ghat today.

According to witnesses, the boat, coming from Ratanagar village under Nathinnagar thana of the district, was overloaded. The victims are identified as Jhunurnessa (75), Sayeda (12) and Abeda (7), members of the same family, Sultan Mia (1) and Meherunnessa (65).

The other passengers were rescued by local people.

Stepmother held for infanticide

By Staff Correspondent

A 17-month-old girl was reported to be killed by her stepmother in the city yesterday. The stepmother did away with the child by throwing her in to a ditch in the city's Khilbari Tek area under Gulshan police station.

Police arrested the woman, Aleya, and her alleged accomplice, one Motiur Rahman, who are expected to be produced before the Chief Metropolitan Magistrate (CMM) today.

Police recovered the body

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US troops to stay in Haiti for months

WASHINGTON, Sept 20: The US military occupation of Haiti, which entered its first full day Tuesday, "will be measured in months and not in weeks," said the chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, Gen John Shalikashvili, reports AP.

President Clinton won plaudits from Republicans and Democrats — and a boost in his poll ratings — for avoiding an outright invasion of Haiti with a last-minute peaceful settlement.

But before the glow of success had worn off Monday, lawmakers of both parties already were voicing worries about this new commitment of US forces in Haiti.

And former President Jimmy Carter, who helped negotiate the agreement that averted a US attack, sharply criticised the Clinton administration's handling of Haiti.

Carter said he had made a "very emotional speech" to Haiti's military leaders to win the agreement for them to step down.

"One of the things was that I was ashamed of my country's policy," the former president said on his return to Atlanta Monday night.

Shalikashvili, appearing on ABC, said Tuesday that he expected Cedras and the other leaders to continue to work with the US military.

"It's not a matter of trust. We need to be dealing from strength," he said. "We need to understand what kind of person he is, but I think right now our efforts are best served if we cooperate together."

Even with cooperation,

Students protest US intervention in Haiti

By Staff Correspondent

A group of students of Dhaka University yesterday burnt a US flag protesting "American aggression in Haiti" and denounced the Bangladesh government for sending troops to the Caribbean island state.

At the call of the Samrajyabadi Bidrohi Chhatragano Samabesh some students at noon Tuesday brought out a protest procession from the Dhaka University campus. The procession ended at the Jatiya Press Club.

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Shalikashvili predicted "you will see reduction (in troops) over time, but the overall period will be measured in months and not in weeks."

He added that, "I think everyone from the United Nations mission in Haiti will leave no later than February or March of 1996."

Sen Sam Nunn, the Senate Armed Services Committee chairman who helped broker the deal that averted a US invasion, said Tuesday that "We should not in any way underestimate the difficulties we still face there."

"Building democracy in a country that has not had democracy is not a short-term proposition," Nunn said on NPR.

On Monday, the House voted 353-45 for a resolution calling for the orderly withdrawal of all American forces "as soon as possible."

"With this resolution we are not endorsing President Clinton's Haiti policy," said Rep Dave McCurdy. "I opposed an invasion of Haiti and am equally concerned about the dangers of a long-term occupation."

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Dozens of Haitians sitting on a boat moored in the Port-au-Prince harbour wave to a US helicopter as it approaches the docks in order to land US troops Monday.

— AFP photo

Partial response to Sharif's strike call

KARACHI (Pakistan), Sept 20: A general strike called by Pakistani opposition leader Nawaz Sharif closed many shops and markets today but failed to bring the country to a standstill, reports Reuters.

Witnesses said transport, industry, ports, airports, schools and government offices continued to function more or less normally in the cities of Lahore, Rawalpindi and the capital, Islamabad.

Traffic was thinner than usual and attendance at workplaces and schools was down in violence-prone Karachi, where people burned tyres to block roads in some parts of the southern port city.

Sniper fire wounded a man in the Landhi industrial area.

Many large markets were completely or partly closed and some shopkeepers shut to support the strike or because they feared violence. Food shops stayed open.

Sharif, leader of the main opposition Pakistan Muslim League (PML), called the stoppage as the latest tactic in his drive to bring down Prime Minister Benazir Bhutto's government, which came to power after a general election in October 1993.

The government has promised not to disrupt the strike but will crack down on any attempt at coercion. Riot police, some in flak jackets, were out in force on the streets.

PML leaders complained of police harassment and scattered attacks on pro-Sharif demonstrators.

Ejaz Jatoli, PML leader in Sindh province, said police wounded five people when they baton-charged a opposition procession in the town of Mehr in central Sindh. More than 80 PML officials and supporters had been arrested in night raids on their homes, he said.

Jatoli said the authorities had cut the telephone lines of a dozen party leaders in Sindh and had sent many police to prevent the strike being observed in Bhutto's home town of Larkana.

Apart from some shuttered shops and markets, it was business as usual in the industry.

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Hasina wants caretaker govt to rig polls: Huda

Information Minister Nazmul Huda has said that opposition leader Sheikh Hasina wants a caretaker government as there is ample scope of rigging in election under such a weak administration, reports UNB.

He was speaking as chief guest at the council session of UK branch BNP at the Hotel Britannia International in London on Sunday, according to a message received in Dhaka yesterday.

Huda said the Awami League was trying to come to power by any means before 1996 to renew the 25-year slavery pact with India as the pact, which expires in 1996, would not be renewed if the BNP remained in power.

The Information Minister said the Awami League calls harsh to hinder the development efforts of the government as it does not want economic emancipation of 12 crore people of Bangladesh.

"(AL) wants to make the country a market of Indian goods," he alleged.

Presided over by Joint Convenor of UK branch BNP

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Iranian diplomat dies in Beijing shooting

BEIJING, Sept 20: Eight people, including an Iranian diplomat and his son, were killed when a man fired a rifle at vehicles and pedestrians on one of Beijing's main streets early Tuesday, an official report said, according to AP.

Dozens of people were injured when the man ran down the middle of the road shooting intermittently, witnesses said.

The motive for the shooting was not immediately known and police killed the gunman at the scene, the official Xinhua News Agency said.

One witness described the gunman as a member of the PLA, the paramilitary armed force, who had an argument with a superior.

The shooting was very unusual for Beijing, where authorities have imposed tight security ahead of October 1 National Day celebrations.

Officials at the Iranian Embassy said an attaché there, Yousef Mohammadi Pishkarni, and one of his sons were shot to death. Another of Mohammadi's sons was shot in the leg. The Xinhua report said two of Mohammadi's daughters, who earlier had been reported missing, had been rushed to a nearby hospital.

There was no indication that Mohammadi, who was driving his children to school and may have been caught in the cross fire with police, had been singled out in the shooting.

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No alternative to dialogue, says Kamal

Gono Forum chief Dr Kamal Hossain yesterday said there is no alternative to dialogue between the two major political parties to build up a strong election structure to ensure free and fair polls in the country, reports BSS.

Addressing a public rally at Purana Paltan crossing in the city, Dr Kamal said effective election laws need to be enacted and the Election Commission should be strengthened to remove the obstacles towards developing a smooth and fair election process in the country. "If required, necessary changes in the Constitution might be brought about too in this regard," he said.

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Junta leaders meet Suu Kyi

BANGKOK, Sept 20: Myanmar's military rulers met opposition leader Aung San Suu Kyi today in her first high-level encounter with the ruling junta since she was placed under house arrest five years ago, reports Reuters.

Myanmar state television showed pictures of Suu Kyi, the 1991 Nobel Peace Prize winner, meeting junta leader General Than Shwe and military intelligence chief Lieutenant-General Khin Nyunt at an army guest house in Yangon.

Suu Kyi, daughter of Myanmar's independence hero General Aung San and leader of the opposition National League for Democracy, has been under house arrest in Yangon since July 1989.

In talks earlier this year with US Congressman Bill



Aung San Suu Kyi

Richardson, she said she was always ready to meet leaders of the junta that seized power in 1988 after killing hundreds of pro-democracy protesters.

Myanmar Television, which said the talks were cordial but

gave no details, showed pictures of the three sitting around a flower-decked table and smiling.

Suu Kyi, 49, was dressed in traditional flowing Myanmar dress and looked healthy and relaxed.

Members of the State Law and Order Restoration Council (SLORC), the ruling junta, have said in the past that Suu Kyi would be released on condition she agreed to leave Myanmar.

Suu Kyi, who is married to British academic Michael Arns and has two children, has ruled out leaving her country voluntarily but said she was ready to discuss anything else.

Despite her detention, her National League for Democracy won a landslide victory in a general election in 1990 that was ignored by the SLORC.