

Sophia Loren turns 60

ROME, Sept 20: Italian actress Sophia Loren, one of the last of the great European film stars, turns 60 today, reports AFP.

Her birthday will be "a day like any other," she recently said in an Italian radio interview.

"I am happy but I think that birthdays should be celebrated privately. The fact that the world is interested in my 60 years is nice but at the same time I am ashamed because I don't like to be the centre of attention," said Loren, who last went before the cameras in 1992 on a trip to Somalia as an ambassador for the UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR).

She had good words for Italy in her interview, even though she lives mainly in Geneva and Los Angeles.

Loren was born Sofia Scicolone on September 20 1934 in Pozzuoli near Naples, where she and her sister Maria were brought up by their mother Romilda Villani.

Pushed by her mother and their poverty, Loren started



early in film.

"I knew I had to find jobs. I was 15 and felt responsible for my mother and sister," she said in a recent press interview.

Her meeting with producer Carlo Ponti, who helped form her cinematic persona, launched her career.



British Prime Minister John Major (R) jokes with South African President Nelson Mandela as they pose for pictures after signing a series of cooperation agreements in Cape Town yesterday. — AFP photo

Major pledges \$150m aid for South Africa

CAPE TOWN, Sept 20: Britain will spend 530 million rand (about \$150 million) to help build post-apartheid South Africa, Prime Minister John Major told Parliament Tuesday on the first official visit of a British leader here in 34 years, reports AP.

Britain would not "stand idly on the sidelines" and wait to see how the South Africa transition to democracy developed, Major said. His speech was interrupted several times by applause.

Major said the aid would be granted over the next three years, with 350 million rand (about \$100 million) going directly to reconstruction and development programme and the rest channelled through the European Union and the Commonwealth Development Corporation.

President Nelson Mandela has promised a multibillion-rand programme to build

roads, homes and schools and provide other services to blacks who were neglected by white minority governments. Mandela became the country's first black president when his African National Congress won historic elections in April.

Travelling with a group of industrialists, financiers and sports heroes, Major arrived Tuesday on a three-day mission to strengthen relations with post-apartheid South Africa.

Proposing a "fellowship for the future" Major told Parliament his country already invested 40 to 50 million rand in South Africa.

"This is greater than our investment in the whole of the rest of Africa," he said. "For Britain, South Africa is already an export market of the same scale as India, close to the markets of Hong Kong, Saudi Arabia and Singapore."

Hasina

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business confidence in the country, she remarked.

Alleging that no honest businessman "can expect a slice of government job unless he is known to be one of the party faithfuls," Sheikh Hasina said the "motto of the BNP government seems to be: party before nation."

The Leader of the Opposition, pointing at the bureaucracy, observed: "The mindset that the bureaucrats have inherited, makes them assume that they are the only true custodians of public interest" and added, "We have paid dearly for such arrogance."

Hasina stated: "The list of their (BNP's) failures is so long that I will not have enough time to talk about our own plans, programmes and policies." She went on to describe the Awami League as representing the nationalist, secular and progressive forces in the country, "unlike the ruling party, which derives its support from communal forces."

She said her party will encourage the private sector. In the interest of the economy, the public sector will be gradually reduced in size and no new industry will be "nationalised."

Continuing, she said: "If the private sector is going to be the principal agent of growth, then we must encourage its role in the development of the economy. We must foster a climate of trust and confidence between the government and the private sector."

Sheikh Hasina said one might think that if the private sector was allowed to play a major role, the importance of the government would diminish.

The AL chief criticised the government for "willing under pressure" from pressure groups and also accused it of making an agreement and then going back on its commitment.

She said the Awami League, if it goes to power, will follow a consistent and progressive labour policy.

"Steadily rising productivity alone can justify rising wages," she emphasised.

Emphasising development of human resources she said, "We must remove the blight of illiteracy from this nation. It is not only a shame for us, it is also acting as a brake on our progress."

The Awami League chief pledged: "It may sound ambitious to many but it is our goal: if and when we go to power, we will make an all-out effort to wipe out illiteracy within ten years."

Sheikh Hasina called for the creation of a modern and efficient infrastructure for rapid economic growth. While not specifying her position on foreign investment, she pointed out that "the plight of the power sector in Bangladesh alone is enough to snuff out any enthusiasm for direct foreign investment."

The meeting of the American-Bangladesh Economic Forum was presided by Forrester E Cookson and conducted by Executive Secretary A Gafur. Among others, S A M S Kibria, a member of the Awami League Advisory Council, and Abul Hasan Chowdhury MP, US Ambassador David N Merrill, US and local businessmen were present.

Students protest

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The students burnt a US flag in front of Madhu's Canteen of Dhaka University at 2 pm, according to the organisation's press release.

Later at a rally in front of the Press Club, student leaders said the military government of Haiti could be ousted by the Haitians themselves.



Norwegian Minister of Aid and Development Karil Wordheim-Larsen (L) receives Bangladeshi author Taslima Nasreen at the minister's office Monday. Nasreen will participate in a symposium on freedom of expression in Stavanger later this week. — AFP photo



Gano Forum president Dr Kamal Hossain addressing a public meeting at Purana Paltan in the city yesterday. — Star photo

Protest against economic reforms Indian communists block trains: 10000 arrested

NEW DELHI (India), Sept 20: More than 10,000 communist protesters were arrested Tuesday during a nationwide blockade of trains to protest the federal government's pursuit of free-market reforms, reports AP.

Trains were held up in dozens of places across the country after the protesters squatted on railroad tracks. No violence was reported.

The All India Central Council of Trade Unions, an umbrella body of leftist groups that organised the protest, said Prime Minister P V

BR to demand compensation from CU

From Staff Correspondent

CHITTAGONG, Sept 20: The Bangladesh Railway (Eastern Zone) is expected to submit to the Chittagong University authorities tomorrow a claim for compensation for the damage caused to its property, allegedly by students, during violence on Saturday.

Talking to this correspondent, the General Manager of Railway, Eastern Zone, M A Matin said "We will write to the CU authorities tomorrow about our claim for compensation against the damage of railway property."

Asked about the extent of damage the GM said "So far we have made an assessment, which puts the extent of damage at Taka 20 lakh, except the damages to locomotives."

Asked when the train service on the Chittagong city-university line would resume, the GM said, the service could not be resumed before the repair of the damaged systems.

Meanwhile, the university officials have held a series of meetings with the Railway authorities demanding immediate restoration of the shuttle train service to facilitate the movement of students to and from Chittagong University. Another meeting, scheduled to be held tomorrow, has been postponed because the Vice Chancellor of Chittagong University is out of the country.

Nazmul Huda

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Shamsul Alam Chowdhury, the council session was also addressed by BNP leaders Prof Abul Kalam Chowdhury, M A Latif, Mohammad Kamaruddin and Mohammad Shahid Miah.

The council elected Mohibur Rahman and M A Malek as president and general secretary respectively of the UK branch of the BNP.

Dr Kamal

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Dr Kamal termed the present political crisis as the crisis of confidence and observed that only through friendly discussions between the leaders of the Awami League and the BNP the crisis could be removed.

The Gano Forum chief suggested the representatives of the two parties to formulate their agenda so that the dialogue might start in a week. Dr Kamal said the Prime Minister has logically presented her statement on the issues of present political crisis. The Leader of the Opposition should also be given the opportunity to place her statement on these issues through the government controlled media.

Dr Kamal also suggested formation of an independent commission as a second option to settle the present political crisis.

He proposed that if the two parties failed to sit in discussion in a week an independent commission should be formed comprising neutral and respectable personalities with the consent of the two parties.

Dr Kamal said this independent commission will accumulate the demands and proposals of the political parties and prepare recommendations for the consideration of the political authorities towards solution of the political problems centring the election system.

Dr Kamal said the people want to uphold their rights of franchise. But they cannot accept the anti-liberation and the ousted autocratic forces in the name of political unity towards protecting their rights.

"No noble task is possible in alliance with the communal and anti-liberation and the autocratic forces," he said.

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The Midnight File

Two militants to die in Egypt

ALEXANDRIA (Egypt), Sept 20: An Egyptian military court sentenced two Muslim militants to death today for leading a group which the prosecution said planned to occupy the ministries of defence, the interior and information. One of them, Ahmed Mohamed Gomma, described himself as leader of the International Jihad Organisation. The other man sentenced to death, Sharif Mohamed Hassan, is on the run and did not attend the trial in the port city of Alexandria, reports Reuters.

Aid flights to Sarajevo suspended

SARAJEVO, Sept 20: The UNHCR suspended its aid flights to the besieged Bosnian capital today for the second time in 24 hours after a plane was struck by a round of small arms fire, officials said here. The French C-130 transporter was hit in the tail shortly after landing here just after midday, said Lt Colonel Bernard Labarsouque, reports AFP.

Saifur: Legal system

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entrepreneurs are also not getting loans, he added.

After the deregulation of the banking sector, the government has little scope to interfere in the matters of the banks although, he said, efforts are being made under the Financial Sector Reform Project to improve the situation.

Some improvement has, however, been made in this regard, the Finance Minister said. The deteriorating situation in the financial sector has been arrested and awareness created against the 'default culture'.

A former mayor of the Chittagong City Corporation and now Chairman of the Janata Bank Mir Mohammad Nasiruddin, Awami League MP Abul Hasan Chowdhury, Governor of Bangladesh Bank Khorshed Alam, former minister Dr Fashuddin Mahtab, MCCI President Latifur Rahman, former Governor of Bangladesh Bank S B Chaudhuri, team leader of the consultants of the Financial Sector Reform Project Forrester E Cookson, Division Chief of the South East Asia and Pacific Department of the International Monetary Fund (IMF), Washington DC John Hicklin, World Bank Resident Representative P Landell Mills, former civil servant, Dr A M A Rahim, Senior Financial Analyst of the WB Zamir Hossain and Chairman of the Equity Resources Limited Anwarul Amin took part in the dialogue. Executive Chairman of CPD Rehman Sobhan was the moderator.

Mir Nasiruddin said the law departments, of the NCBs are not strong enough to deal with the default cases. The courts also give very little time for the commercial cases, he alleged. Nasiruddin, however, stressed the need for looking into the backgrounds of the borrowers before sanctioning loans.

Abul Hasan Chowdhury said the situation in the banking sector has improved in perception but not in reality. The banks have been facing a 'nightmare problem' in the recovery of loans he said, adding that the issue of loan defaulting was not raised in any meeting of the parliamentary committee for Finance.

He said loans do not become bad overnight. The poor monitoring system of the banks is responsible for the poor performance in loan recovery.

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Troops in Haiti

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Another report from United Nations says, the UN special envoy for Haiti has resigned, a day after Jimmy Carter accomplished what had been Dante Caputo's mission for almost two years — persuading Haiti's army leaders to step down.

Caputo took a parting shot at the United States in his Monday letter of resignation to Secretary-General Boutros Boutros-Ghali.

"The total absence of consultations, and even of information from the government of the United States of America, makes me believe that this country, in fact, has taken the decision to act unilaterally in the Haitian process," Caputo's terse letter said in French.

A spokesman for Boutros-Ghali said the secretary-general accepted the resignation with deep regret.

Grameen Bank denies report

The Grameen Bank, in a rejoinder yesterday, contradicted a news item headlined "Grameen Bank at Kanaighat set on fire" published in The Daily Star on September 18.

The rejoinder signed by the bank's Deputy Managing Director Muhammad Khaled Shams said the Grameen Bank (GB) has no branch in Umagharh under Kanaighat thana of Sylhet, as reported in the news item. In fact, a centre of the bank in the area, set up by the borrowers in a thatched hut was set on fire Friday night and a case was also lodged with the local thana in this regard, he said.

The GB has a branch in Zakiganj thana of the district called "Barhal Zakiganj" and the centre in Umagharh was one of 70 centres set up under that branch, Khaled Shams said and added that the GB has about 60 thousand such centres all over the country.

Govt college teachers token strike today, tomorrow

By Staff Correspondent

Teachers belonging to the BCS general education cadre will observe a two-day token strike from today protesting attacks on their colleagues and to press home their 16-point demand.

The BCS General Education Association in a press release said that during the last HSC examinations principals of the Mijura Shaheed Suhrawardy College, Nilphamary College and Meherpur College and the family members of the teachers of Rajshahi New Degree College were attacked by terrorists.

The association also extended its support to the Prokrichi-BCS Central Action Committee's call for strike tomorrow to press home its 17-point demand.

The demand of the teachers includes withdrawal of certain appointments from the education department and stoppage of intervention of DCs, ADCs and magistrates during examinations.

7 ministers

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