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Inside Today

Article

Trade Policy Debate: The Traditional Case for Free Trade

by Zahid Hussain
Page 4

International

Lanka steps up security for Chandrika, opposition MPs

UN peacekeeping faces ethical problems: Ghali

Page 5

Business

Five more companies likely to offer Tk 14cr shares soon

India's Supreme Court orders govt to provide lead-free petrol in four largest cities

Pages 6, 7

Education

To Acquire Knowledge; Population Education Comes of Age; Private Tutoring: An Education Malady

Page 8

Metropolitan

Dhaka Day by Day

WARD NO-3
Page 3

NEWS BRIEFS

Gas goes to Netrakona today

Netrakona district will be brought under the gas distribution network from today. Prime Minister Begum Khaleda Zia is expected to inaugurate the distribution system in the morning at the Shishu Sadan ground at Netrakona. The Prime Minister will also address a public meeting at the Moktarpara ground at the Netrakona district headquarters, reports UNB.

IU reopens Oct 29

KUSHTIA, Oct 25: The Islamic University (IU) will reopen on October 29 after 15 days of unscheduled closure. The decision was taken at a meeting of the University Syndicate held today with Vice-Chancellor Prof Abdul Hamid in the chair. The meeting also withheld implementation of the new Academic Ordinance which made Islamic Studies of 100 marks compulsory, following continued protests by the students, reports UNB.

Pirates attack fishing boats

From Staff Correspondent
BARISAL, Oct 25: Pirates attacked three fishing boats and threw overboard three fishermen in the deep sea some 60 kilometers off Khepupara in Barguna district last night. They also looted fish, cash and fishing gears worth Taka three lakh from the boats — the FB Jalraj, FB Nadim and FB Hashem. The missing crew are — Kalam, 22, Jamal, 31 and Sukumar, 29.

1315 more Rohingyas go home

From Our Correspondent
COX'S BAZAR, Oct 25: Some 1315 Rohingyas refugees were repatriated to their homes in Myanmar today. The group included members of 268 families. With today's group, the total number of Rohingyas refugees who have voluntarily returned to their homeland stands at 84,781. Over 1.5 lakh Rohingyas Muslims are still staying in some 17 camps in Cox's Bazar and Bandarban districts.

Talks fail

By Staff Correspondent

The political crisis of the country deepened following the breakdown of the Commonwealth-mediated dialogue between the ruling Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP) and the parliamentary Opposition late last night.

The two sides at the talks blamed each other for the failure of the dialogue aimed at finding a way out of the current political impasse.

After more than six hours of discussions between the parties, Opposition Chief Whip and Awami League (AL) leader Mohammad Nasim told waiting reporters at the Jatiya Sangsad Bhaban at 1:10 am, the dialogue had failed because of the BNP leaders' "obstinacy" to entertain the Opposition demand for holding general elections under a non-partisan, caretaker government.

"During the last five sessions of the dialogue, the Opposition delegation had put forward arguments in favour of the need for a caretaker administration for holding elections in a free and fair atmosphere, but the government side continues to reject the idea, which has led the talks to a dead end," Nasim said.

On the other hand, Chief Whip of Parliament Khandaker Delwar Hossain, blaming the Opposition for the failure of the talks, told newsmen immediately after Nasim that the Opposition had deliberately scuttled the negotiations.

"The Opposition walked out of the talks because their objective, it now seems clear, was not ensuring free and fair elections, rather the unseating of the elected government of Begum Khaleda Zia," Khandaker Delwar said. He added that the government still sincerely believes that any problem could be resolved through dialogue.

Explaining the reasons behind the Opposition's decision to abandon the negotiations, Khandaker Delwar said that the Opposition leaders, in breach of the agreement made earlier in the presence of talks facilitator Sir Nintan Stephen, had wanted to skip the second phase of negotiations which was supposed to have been held between smaller delegations of the two sides.

According to Khandaker Delwar, the preliminary rounds headed by the two deputy parliamentary leaders was supposed to discuss the respective positions and arguments of the two sides. These were to have been reviewed and narrowed down by smaller teams of the two sides. The recommendation See Page 12 Col 7

Case challenging FBCCI voters' list dismissed

The Court of the Fourth Assistant Judge, Dhaka yesterday dismissed the suit challenging the final voters' list of the FBCCI and seeking a permanent injunction on the October 17 elections to the country's apex trade body, reports UNB.

Mizanur Rahman, a member of the Association of Air Cargo Agents of Bangladesh, had filed the case.

The Federation of Bangladesh Chambers of Commerce and Industry (FBCCI) filed an application for rejection of the plaintiff on the ground that under Section 12 of the Trade Organisations Ordinance 1961, no suit can be filed in a civil court challenging the election of the FBCCI and/or any action of any committee or person for and on its behalf.

Rafique-ul-Huq, Bar-at-Law, and Shaifque Ahmed, Bar-at-Law, alongwith EH Khan and Syed Mahbubur Rahman appeared for the FBCCI while Ali Ashraf and Khalilur Rahman stood for the plaintiff.

No trifling tragedy

By Staff Correspondent

A fierce gunfight over a video cassette late Monday night in the city's Wari area left a young shopkeeper, Sheikh Mahtab Uddin, dead.

Mahtab, 30, an employee of Javed Electronics of Nawab Ishtiaq Market at Nawabpur, was caught in a crossfire while returning home at Bhajohri Saha Street, Wari, around 11 Monday night.

A fatally wounded Mahtab was rushed to the Dhaka Medical College Hospital (DMCH) where he expired at 2 am early yesterday. Mahtab was hit in the head by a bullet.

Police and witnesses said, local bullies armed with sawed-off rifles and cocktails got involved in the bloody clash following an altercation between one Amir Hossain Babu and some staff of a video shop.

They said, Babu had rented a cassette from the Sikder Palace Video but his maid mistakenly returned it to Sharmeen video in the same area.

However, Babu went to video shop and claimed the cassette returned by his maid. When Babu and some staff of that video shop came to blows over the issue, it immediately took the shape of a gunfight among the local friends of the two feuding parties.

The clash, which lasted half an hour, spread to the Bhajohri Saha Street and Lalmojon Saha Street. Witnesses said the clashing groups belonged to two clubs — Udayan Club and Surjyamukhi Sangha — of the locality.

Sutrapur police picked up one Biswajit Barua and detained him for interrogation.

Police said, a murder case has been lodged with Sutrapur thana accusing six men.

Meanwhile, autopsy of Mahtab's body was done at the Dhaka Medical College Hospital yesterday and later it was buried at the Azimpur graveyard.

Students block road near New Market in city

By DU Correspondent

The students of the Dhaka College stopped the movement of vehicles on the Mirpur Road near the New Market for some hours yesterday protesting the killing of a student of the college.

The road blockade from 11 am to 2pm created a severe traffic jam at the Science Laboratory crossing, Gauchhia, Nilkhet and other connecting roads during the peak hours.

Mostafizur Rahman, an honours student of Accounting of the Dhaka College, was killed when a minibus ran over him near the Shishu Park on Monday.

Meanwhile, the students of the City College, the Ideal College, the New Model Degree College and the Mirpur Bangla College who had gathered on the Dhaka College premises yesterday morning to participate in a pre-scheduled programme, also joined the See Page 12 Col 3

Gas price for power generating units reduced by 30 pc

The government has decided to reduce the gas price by about 30 per cent for industries generating electricity for their own requirement, reports UNB.

This was disclosed by Energy Minister Dr Khandker Mosharraf Hossain during a meeting with the members of the Foreign Investors Chamber of Commerce and Industry (FICCI) at a local hotel yesterday.

The government decision to bring down the gas price to Tk 75 per 1000 cft from Tk 109 will be effective soon.

The step is aimed at encouraging self-generation as the Power Development Board (PDB) is under unprecedented pressure to ensure uninterrupted power supply, the minister told the meeting.

Representatives of the multinational companies appreciated the move even though the revised price is still higher than that being paid by the PDB.

Erratic power supply, a consequence of ever widening gap between the demand and generation of electricity, has been a major concern for the industrial sector in recent times. Load-shedding, that sometimes goes up to 500 megawatt during peak hours, is severely affecting the production.

For self-generation of power by industrial units, the private sector has been demanding the gas price be fixed at par with the rate enjoyed by the PDB.

Defending the preferential treatment for the PDB, the energy minister said this kind of subsidy is being provided by the state to ensure low tariff for general consumers.

"The PDB is getting gas at a price which is even below the economic cost of gas. This is a socio-economic compulsion of the government", Dr Hossain said. The PDB generates per unit of electricity at a cost of Tk 2.30 while it sells at Tk 1.60.

The state-owned PWD is the country's lone generator of See Page 12 Col 1

Tough security in Amman, Tel Aviv for Clinton

Peace treaty to be signed today

JERUSALEM, Oct 25: Israel braced today for possible attacks by Islamic militants, deploying up to 20,000 officers nationwide in anticipation of President Clinton's visit and the signing of the peace treaty with Jordan, report AP, Reuter.

Jordanian authorities, faced with condemnation of the peace treaty with Israel, also clamped down on protests today and deployed jeep-mounted machineguns for Clinton's visit to the capital following the signing.



Jordanian workers raise the national flag yesterday in preparation for the signing ceremony today of the peace treaty between Jordan and Israel at the Arava check point north of Eilat. — AFP photo

No progress in probe into Shumon murder

By Staff Correspondent

Police yesterday failed to make any headway in their investigations into the murder of a college student Shumon at Bangladesh.

Police believe Shumon was murdered because of a rivalry among local youths. But they are yet to find any clue to the reason or nature of the rivalry.

Sutrapur police, investigating into the murder, said they had interrogated some people in connection with the crime but no arrest had been made until midnight last night.

Shumon, 18, who sat for this year's HSC examinations from the Dr Maleka Science College, was found murdered with black scars on his neck and bruises on several parts of the body near his home at 5/1 Haji Abdur Rashid Lane Bangshal Monday night.

IJC session opens Plea to develop global jute economy

Jute Minister ASM Hannan Shah yesterday urged IJO member-countries to explore every possibility to develop a 'global jute economy' for the sustenance of this renewable source of environment-friendly natural fibre, reports UNB.

Opening the 22nd session of International Jute Council (IJC) in the city, the jute minister said Bangladesh government had been committed to extending all-out support for realisation of the goals and aspirations of the International Jute Organisation (IJO) since its inception.

He said Bangladesh had undertaken a vigorous programme on the production of paper pulp from green jute See Page 12 Col 2

BNP will adhere to Constitution: PM

JHENIDAH, Oct 25: Prime Minister Begum Khaleda Zia today asserted, the BNP would protect democracy, earned through a protracted and painstaking struggle, by adhering to constitutional provisions, reports UNB.

"We have together restored democracy in a nine-year-long struggle. We'll do everything to continue the democratic process and must uphold the Constitution," she told two mammoth public meetings at the Hatgopalpur High School ground in Sadar thana and at the Hartnakunda thana football ground this afternoon.

However, Begum Zia repeated that her party was always ready to resolve all problems through discussions because it pursued the policy of peace and development.

She said the politics and programmes of her party aimed at the welfare and advancement of the people and ensuring a bright future for the new generation.

"We are working towards changing the society. We want to change the old trend wherein the children of a farmer would become farmers, the wards of a day-labourer become labourers and the son of a rickshawpuller take up his See Page 12 Col 4

DU student drowns

By DU Correspondent

A student of Dhaka University drowned at the varsity's swimming pool Moriday afternoon.

The victim, Khondker Md Anwar Sadat, 19, was a first year honours student of Mathematics.

His friends, who had also gone to the swimming pool, first took him to the university medical centre and later to the Dhaka Medical College Hospital but all efforts to save him failed.

His namaz-e-janaza was held at the university's central mosque at about 3.30 pm yesterday.

Later his body was taken to his house at Mirpur.

ARAVA, Israeli-Jordanian border, Oct 25: Israelis and Jordanians sought heavenly help today when a sand storm interrupted the dress rehearsal for their treaty signing to be witnessed by Clinton, reports Reuter.

The peace treaty is due to be signed tomorrow in a ceremony attended by Clinton.

Israeli Police Minister Moshe Shahal told the Maariv daily it was the largest security operation in Israel since Egyptian President Anwar Sadat visited 17 years ago.

Clinton plans to attend tomorrow's treaty signing, on a plaza paved over a minefield, and on Thursday will address Israel's parliament and walk the violence-prone alleys of the Old City of Jerusalem.

Israeli police have assigned See Page 12 Col 4



The visiting Tagore song exponent of West Bengal Kanika Bannerjee rendering songs at the Shilpakala Academy in the city yesterday — Star photo

Workers Party activist's leg chopped off

From Our Correspondent

JHENIDAH, Oct 25: Unidentified armed miscreants today chopped off one leg of a political activist and broke both the legs of another here at Kaliganj thana.

Witnesses said the miscreants attacked Omar Ali and Shamsul Alam, activists of the Workers Party, at about 10 am when they were coming to Kaliganj by a rickshaw.

The attackers beat them mercilessly and then chopped off the left leg of Ali, they said.

The attackers also broke both the legs of Alam before they left the spot.

The wounded were rushed to the local health complex and later to the Jhenidah Sadar Hospital in a critical condition.

Workers Party, Jhenidah unit accused the armed activists of the outlawed Biplobi Communist Party for the attack on their workers.

Section 144 imposed JCD, Shibir clash in Khulna again

From Our Correspondent

KHULNA, Oct 25: Section 144 has been imposed on the Khulna metropolitan area with effect from 11 this morning following serious clashes between supporters of the pro-Jamaat Islami Chhatra Shibir and the pro-BNP JCD during a half-day hartal called by both the rival students' organisations.

At least five people were wounded, one of them seriously, in front of the BNP office adjacent to the Kotwali police station. The rival groups used pistols, sawed-off rifles, pipe-guns, hand bombs and machetes during the clash.

The clash, marked by brick-battling at the beginning, took an alarming turn when Shibir activists tried to proceed towards the BNP office at KD Ghose Road at about 8 am. The JCD activists fired shots to repulse them in which Shibir activist Sagir Ahmed, a part-time worker of the Bangladesh Match Company, was hit by a bullet in the abdomen. He was later admitted to the Sadar Hospital in a critical condition.

UNB adds: Witnesses said three policemen were also injured as the rivals exploded more than 100 crackers.

Police lobbed at least a dozen teargas shells to disperse the feuding groups who were apparently preparing for a gunfight at about 10:30 am.

As the situation worsened at See Page 12 Col 8

One held in Ctg for killing wife, daughters

From Staff Correspondent

CHITTAGONG, Oct 25: Police here today arrested a day-labourer, Abu Siddique, for allegedly killing his wife and two minor daughters Sunday night.

Abu Siddique was arrested from his village home at West Gomdandi under Boalkhali thana, 15 miles from the city while the body of his wife, Feroza Begum, 22, was recovered by the police from the Karnaphuli river this morning.

Earlier on Monday, the Chittagong GRP police recovered the bodies of his daughters — Jyotana, 3, and Ferdousi, 1, — from near the Kalurghat bridge.

See Page 12 Col 8

Prokrichi's 'mass leave' programme begins today

By Staff Correspondent

Some 70,000 members belonging to 26 non-administrative cadres of the Prokrichi-BCS will observe 'mass leave' programme today and tomorrow for realising their 17-point demand.

Members of the Prokrichi-BCS will also hold a rally today at 10 am at the Institution of Engineers to chart their next course of action.

Widow of Dissanayake to run for Lankan presidency

COLOMBO, Oct 25: The widow of Sri Lanka's top opposition leader was chosen today to replace her slain husband as a candidate for presidential election, reports AP.

Investigators, meanwhile, found evidence possibly implicating Tamil tiger rebels for the suicide attack that killed her husband Gani Dissanayake and 53 others.

Srima Dissanayake, 50, mother of three, was chosen by her husband's United National Party to contest the Nov. 9 presidential elections, party officials said.

Mrs. Dissanayake was not immediately available for comment, but the UNP's central committee took the decision.

Government investigators, meanwhile, picked up lead that can link Tamil Tigers with Sunday's assassination. Investigators found pieces of a cyanide capsule at the bomb site.

The Tigers, who are waging a violent separatist campaign, wear the poison capsules around their necks and bite them to prevent being captured alive by soldiers. But the Tigers have denied responsibility.

Earlier story on Page 5

The government refuses to fix blame for the blast that killed Dissanayake, the main opposition candidate for the presidential elections, at an election rally just after midnight Sunday.

Forensic experts scooped up tiny shards of glass from the debris at the venue of the rally police said.

Investigators said the assassin could have been a woman, whose severed head was found about 30 meters from the stage where Dissanayake had just finished speaking.

Two of the 74 hospitalised died today, raising the death toll to 54, police said.

The United National Party debated all day about its nominee for next month's presidential election and chose Mrs. Dissanayake to stand for the president. The party also elected former Prime Minister Ranil Wickremasinghe as leader of opposition.

Mrs. Dissanayake, who is a member of a local governing body, has little experience in politics. But observers feel that she can pose a tough challenge to the governing party because of growing public sympathy.

As the government lifted the overnight curfew today, thousands of mourners dressed in white filed past the body of Dissanayake.

A state funeral is planned for Saturday.

Anger turned against the government of Prime Minister Chandrika Kumaratunga following the suicide bombing.

Handwritten posters were plastered on walls in the capital blaming Mrs. Kumaratunga's peace moves for Dissanayake's death.

Chandrika is talking peace with murderers, read one poster. 'Is Chandrika satisfied? Her greed for the presidency knows no end,' said another unsigned poster.