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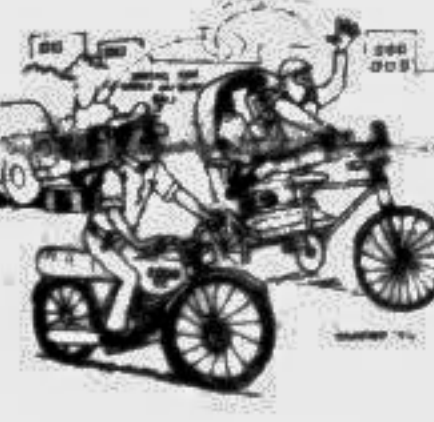
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NEWS BRIEFS

Dhaka-N'ganj road link disrupted

From Our Correspondent
NARAYANGANJ, Oct 31: Road links between Dhaka and Narayanganj remained suspended for more than two and a half hours today as high school students enforced a traffic blockade. The students put up barricade protesting price hike of newspapers. Witnesses said during the blockade, which started at 11 am, all types of vehicles remained stranded.
No untoward incident took place during the road blockade.

Crime situation reviewed

Inspector General of Police A S M Shahjahan yesterday directed the police force to strengthen patrol to check highway robbery. Reviewing the crime situation at a fortnightly meeting at the police headquarters, the IGP entrusted Criminal Investigation Department (CID) with the responsibility of investigating a few dacoity cases, reports UNB.

One shot dead in Khagrachhari

KHAGRACHHARI, Oct 31: A tribal fisherman was shot dead by an unknown assailant in Panchhari thana on Sunday evening. Witnesses told police that Shaanid Bhushan Tripura, 25, was shot by an unidentified youth of the Chakma tribe when he with his father Bir Sen Tripura was fishing in the river Baljachhara at about 6:30 pm. Shaanid Bhushan died while being taken to Khagrachhari Sadar Hospital from Panchhari thana health complex, reports UNB.

Book exhibition in Jessore from today

From Our Correspondent
JESSORE, Oct 31: A 10-day book exhibition begins here in the Town Hall from tomorrow. It will be formally opened at 4 pm. Post and Telecommunications Minister Tariqul Islam will be the chief guest.

Ninian seeks outline of BNP's proposal

By Staff Correspondent

Sir Ninian Stephen is learnt to have requested the ruling party negotiators yesterday to give him a written outline of the government-proposed mini-cabinet to be headed by the incumbent prime minister for holding the next general elections.

The government delegation, headed by Deputy Leader of Parliament Prof A Q M Badruddoza Chowdhury, met the Commonwealth envoy at 10:30 pm. The others in the team were Chief Whip Khandaker Delwar Hossain, BNP

denied the allegation saying that no reporters of the vernacular dailies concerned had even contacted him Saturday night.

Meanwhile, Sheikh Hasina's political advisor S A M S Kibria also called on Sir Ninian at the state guest house Meghna yesterday afternoon.

The contents of Sir Ninian's meetings with Sheikh Hasina and her political advisor could not be known.

Information Minister Nazmul Huda, too, visited Sir Ninian at the Meghna sometime yesterday afternoon.

The information minister is learnt to have made some observations on possible ways to ensure a fool-proof electoral process in the country. Again, the details of the discussions were not available.

The next round of the current dialogue is yet to be announced.

The BNP team had proposed an interim administration, headed by Begum Khaleda Zia, at Saturday's session of the ongoing government-Opposition dialogue.

Sir Ninian, the Commonwealth Secretary General's emissary, was present at that meeting.

Sir Ninian is learnt to have made the request following a closed-door meeting with Leader of the Opposition in Parliament Sheikh Hasina at her Minto Road residence last night.

Ruling party sources told

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Secretary General Abdus Salam Talukder and Communications Minister Oli Ahmed.

The same people had met Sir Ninian in the morning to clarify their position regarding the Opposition allegation that the BNP Secretary General had, in violation of the dialogue rules, divulged the contents of Saturday's discussions to the press.

According to sources close to the BNP, the delegation

Bangladeshi ship runs aground Cyclone kills 26 in southern India

MADRAS, Oct 31: Powerful winds toppled rain-weakened buildings and blew down electricity pylons today, killing 26 people in this south Indian port, reports AP.

Relief Commissioner Christo Das Gandhi said eight people were crushed to death in an abandoned building where they had sought shelter from the rain that lashed the city for more than 24 hours.

Two people were electrocuted and 16 others were killed by collapsing walls.

Winds of 110 kilometres per hour struck the city at 5:30 am, but weakened as they moved north into the Bay of Bengal, the weather bureau said.

The storm disrupted road and rail traffic to Madras, India's fourth largest city.

A Bangladesh-owned ship, MV Sagar, ran aground near Kasimode in north Madras after the vessel set out its anchors. Press Trust of India news agency said. One of the 40 Bangladeshi crew members suffered injuries, PTI said.

The vessel discharged nearly 19,500 tonnes of fertilizer cargo more than a week ago and was waiting at the outer port for its next port of call from the owners. Two anchors broke under the fury of the cyclonic storm.

The agents of the ship said all the crew members of the vessel were safe except one who sustained a fracture was admitted to a local hospital there.

AL, JP, Jamaat rallies today

By Staff Correspondent

Three opposition parties — the Awami League, Jatiya Party and the Jamaat-e-Islami — will hold separate public meetings in the city today as part of their agitation programme for a caretaker government to conduct the next general elections.

The opposition programme coincides with a lull in the current Commonwealth-brokered dialogue with the government.

The rallies also aim at drumming up support for the Nov 9 demonstrations in front of the Prime Minister's Secretariat to mark the 40th day of a 40-day joint agitation programme.

The AL meeting will be held at the Manik Mia Avenue at 2 pm. Party chief and Leader of the Opposition in Parliament Sheikh Hasina will preside. Other leaders of the AL will also address the gathering.

The JP will hold its rally at the south gate of the Baitul Mukarram at 3 pm while the Jamaat's rally will take place at the north gate of the national mosque, also at 3 in the afternoon. Central leaders of the parties will address their respective rallies.



Miss Holland Yoshka Bon (L), Miss Germany Marte Helberg (2nd R) and Miss Czech Republic Lenka Belickova wish Miss Iceland Birna Bragadottir (2nd L) a happy 20th birthday Saturday at Sun City, South Africa before the Miss World pageant on November 19. — AFP photo

Khaleda opens Meghna-Gumti bridge today

By Staff Correspondent

Direct road link between the capital and the country's second city Chittagong is being established today with the formal opening of a 1.41km bridge over the rivers Meghna-Gumti at Daudkandi.

Prime Minister Begum Khaleda Zia will open the bridge at 10 am. Begum Zia will also be the first to cross the bridge in a motorcade.

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Hiroshi Mitsuoka, MP and president of the Japan-Bangladesh Friendship Association and Japan-Bangladesh Friendship Association, will be present at the ceremony.

A Japanese firm, Obayashi Corporation, constructed the bridge at a cost of Tk 312.94 crore 16 months ahead of schedule.

This is the second Japan-Bangladesh friendship bridge for which the Japanese government gave Tk 257 crore as grant.

With the opening of the bridge, it will now take around four hours to commute between Dhaka and the port city

Investment accord with Netherlands tomorrow

By Staff Correspondent

Bangladesh and the Netherlands will sign a treaty on protection of each other's investments tomorrow which will help increase Dutch investment in Bangladesh.

This was said by the leader of a visiting Dutch delegation at a press conference in the city yesterday.

The treaty will be a significant step forward in our bilateral relations. It is a political signal...it will now tell our investors to think about

Bangladesh, said Frans A Engering, Director General of the Foreign Economic Relations of the Netherlands.

Engering, who heads a five-member delegation, arrived in Dhaka by the inaugural flight of the Royal Dutch Airlines — KLM — on a four-day official visit.

Dutch Ambassador in Dhaka Robert Vornis was present at the press conference.

Negotiated during the last two years, the treaty will be initiated by the Dutch delegation leader and Bangladesh's Secretary of the Ministry of Industries. It needs ratification by parliaments in both countries.

Following the ratification, both the countries will treat each other's investments at par with their local investment. The issues of transfer of profit and disputes will also be settled in the accord.

Last year, the two countries signed an agreement on the avoidance of double-taxation and prevention of fiscal evasion.

In reply to a question, Engering said a business delegation will visit Bangladesh tomorrow. See Page 12 Col 8

Newsprint import allowed

The Cabinet yesterday decided to withdraw restriction on import of newsprint to ensure its availability in the market, reports UNB.

A handout said the decision was taken at the weekly regular meeting of the Cabinet held at the Bangabhaban with Prime Minister Begum Khaleda Zia in the chair.

The measure came in the wake of widespread complaints about newsprint shortage in the country.

The Cabinet approved the proposal for import of grey cloth for the use in export-oriented industries for direct export purpose against specific export orders.

Established procedures have to be followed in this regard.

The meeting also approved the newly framed Forest Policy.

Groom children as skilled citizens: PM

Prime Minister Begum Khaleda Zia yesterday called for grooming children as skilled, creative and competent citizens to build a bright future of the nation, reports UNB.

"It is the duty of all to groom up our wards because children are the resources of the future," she said while addressing an award distribution ceremony organised by the 'Amra Ziar Uttarsuri' in the evening at the Shilpakala Academy.

The organisation has introduced the 'Muktijoddha Zia Smriti Shishu-Kishore Award' for the meritorious students and artists of the country.

Begum Zia recalled Shaheed President Ziaur Rahman's care for the fledgling generation and said he had taken initiatives first in the country for the flourishing of children's merit through establishing Shishu Academy and introducing Natan Kuri and many other fora of competition.

"As a nation we have thousand years of history. We have a rich cultural heritage. This is why we are Bangladeshis," Begum Zia said and hoped the children and youths would get inspiration for safeguarding the nation. See Page 12 Col 7

Hasina tells new FBCCI leaders Govt's indecisiveness puts off foreign investors

By Staff Correspondent

Opposition leader Sheikh Hasina yesterday said an election under a caretaker government will help restore political stability and create a favourable atmosphere for investment and expansion of trade and commerce, reports UNB.

The Awami League president and Leader of the Opposition in Parliament was talking to the newly elected leaders of Bangladesh Federation of Chambers of Commerce and Industry (FBCCI), who met her at her Minto Road office yesterday afternoon.

Hasina said many foreign entrepreneurs had come up with investment proposal after the 1991 election, but they returned home without investing in Bangladesh because of the

government's indecision, dilatory practices and inefficiency.

Describing the industrialists and businessmen as the main force of the country's economic development, she said economic prosperity is not possible without the expansion of trade and commerce.

The Awami League leader accused the ruling party of destroying the country's economy by resorting to endless corruption, nepotism, politicisation of the administration and plundering of national wealth.

She also charged the government with "unprecedented rigging" in different elections and by-elections and said there cannot be any free and fair election. See Page 12 Col 1

Suspected Kashmir militants hold 3 Britons hostage

NEW DELHI, Oct 31: A militant group said today it kidnapped three Britons and an American and threatened to behead them unless jailed comrades are released, reports AP.

Hours after the kidnap claim was received, police said the American was found near New Delhi chained to an iron post and was unharmed.

The hostage, identified as Bela Joseph Nuss, told police he had been kidnapped 10 days before, said spokesman S K Singh.

The kidnapers said they would execute the hostages unless their jailed comrades were released.

The British Broadcasting Corp (BBC) and Voice of America (VOA) received letters containing the kidnapping claim, accompanied by photographs of the hostages being held at gunpoint.

"Our hostages are as yet unharmed," the letter to the VOA said. "Unless our brothers are released, our Western hostages, the guests of the Indian government, will be beheaded one at a time."

The BBC and VOA said the photographs were accompanied by photocopies of the men's passports.

In the note to VOA, the group identified itself as Al-Hadid, which it said was based in the tribal areas of Afghanistan, VOA bureau chief Michael Drudge said. The note listed 10 people whom it wanted released in exchange for the hostages.

The hostages were seized in New Delhi and were being held "somewhere in India," the note said. Officials said they had not previously heard of Al-Hadid, but five of the men whose freedom they sought, were from militant groups fighting in the northern province of Kashmir.

40 hurt in Gopalganj clashes

From Our Correspondent

GOPALGANJ, Oct 31: At least 40 people were injured, six of them bullet-hit, as demonstrators fought pitched battles with police during a half-day hartal here today.

Of the bullet-hit, five were hospitalised here while one — Jibrail — who was hit in the head was sent to Dhaka.

The demonstrators alleged that police opened fire as they were protesting Sunday's 'police action' on students that left 50 injured. The students brought out a procession Sunday demanding reduced price of paper.

Witnesses said arson, brick-battering and ransacking marked the half-day hartal today. Life in the district town was disrupted as series of militant processions paraded the town. See Page 12 Col 8

NGOs prepare for next year's social summit

By Staff Correspondent

Ahead of the World Summit on Social Development next year, the voluntary organisations of Bangladesh are planning a campaign aimed at helping chart world development policies with 'pro-poor' perspectives.

The ADAB, apex body of the country's NGOs, will host a meeting of the voluntary organisations in South Asia next month at Manikganj to discuss ways of incorporating their perspectives on development issues in the final summit document.

The UN-sponsored meeting on social development starts at the Bella Centre, Copenhagen in Denmark from March 6 until March 12 next year to plan a joint action on alleviating world poverty, expanding productive employ-

ment and enhancing social integration.

Delegations from different governments, international institutions and non-governmental organisations will take part in the summit.

Talking to The Daily Star, leaders of the Association of the Development Agencies in Bangladesh (ADAB) said the planned Regional Perspective Workshop at Manikganj was expected to draw maximum number of NGOs from the SAARC countries to work out a joint declaration highlighting views of the developing countries.

"We have to have our perspectives reflected in the final document of the Social Development Summit," said Rasheda K Chowdhury. See Page 12 Col 8

AL to intensify agitation for caretaker govt

An emergency meeting of the central working committee of Awami League yesterday decided to intensify the current opposition agitation for elections under a neutral caretaker government, reports UNB.

Party chief Sheikh Hasina presided over the meeting held at her official Minto road residence.

A resolution adopted at the meeting said the demand for a caretaker government is now a national demand which the ruling party cannot bypass. The meeting discussed, among other issues, arrangements of party's planned rally at Sher-e-Bangla Nagar today and urged people to make the rally a success.