



Sandhani blood donation programme was launched at DMCH in 1978.

## A red-letter day for Sandhani

Star Report

A few drops of blood and lots of good wishes made all the difference.

A group of donors who volunteered 26 bags of their precious blood at a simple function at the Dhaka Medical College Hospital 17 years ago, perhaps never realised that one day their noble gesture would stir the conscience of the nation and people in their thousands would line up to donate their own blood for a greater cause.

Sandhani, an organisation born out of the love of a group of friends for a poor, fellow medical student and their desire to help him with some pocket money, has now become a faithful national movement and symbol of hope for the suffering humanity.

And Sandhani has rightly earned the epithet as trail blazer of the country's campaign for voluntary blood and eye donations.

Today Sandhani celebrates the 17th anniversary of that humble beginning. Today, their campaign boasts an annual average collection of 7500 bags.

Indeed, the first 26 bags collected on November 2, 1978 were worth far more than their volume in gold.

This year, the date has also become a red-letter day in the annals of Sandhani. For the first time the day is being observed as 'National Voluntary Blood Donation Day'.

Prime Minister Begum Khaleda Zia is expected to make an announcement to this effect at a function that will also mark the beginning of Sandhani's country-wide Voluntary Blood Donation and Post-humous Eye Donation Week.

With units at the country's nine medical colleges, Sandhani has created a unique slogan: "It is not just a bag of blood that you donate — it is life."

Last year, Sandhani's blood collection was 25,300 bags.

## Youths asked to take part in nation-building activities.

Prime Minister Begum Khaleda Zia yesterday summoned the youth to play a greater role in nation-building activities to build a prosperous Bangladesh through united efforts, reports UNB.

"We have to work for development of the country upholding our national tradition, culture, values and morality," she said inaugurating the National Youth Day at the Dhaka outer stadium in the afternoon.

The youth had not been properly utilised in nation-building activities in the past, Begum Zia said adding that the present government had taken up extended programmes for their development and resolving their problems.

They can be the main driving force in national development, production, innovation, invention and exploration, she said pointing out that they could be at the vanguard of the country's socio-economic and cultural progress.

The Prime Minister recalled the glorious role of the youth in the Language Movement of 1952, liberation struggle in 1971 and the anti-autocratic agitation that culminated in the ousting of the autocratic regime in 1990.

## Body recovered in N'ganj

From Our Correspondent

NARAYANGANJ, Nov 1: The mutilated body of a 25-year old woman was recovered from a slum house beside the Pousha Pond at Sasatpur under Fatula thana at 11 am today.

Police said when the local people smelled the stench from the house which looked deserted, they called the police and found the woman hanging from the ceiling of the bamboo hut.

Local people said the woman rented this house from one Milon Munshi 25 days ago. The woman was staying here with a man whom she introduced to the local people as her husband. Her husband and the owner of the house Milon were absconding.

## Eyes of alleged Sarbaharaman gouged out

From Staff Correspondent

BARISAL, Nov 1: Villagers gouged out eyes of a person, reportedly a Sarbahara Party activist at Madhyajotha of Dasmina thana under Patuakhali district last night.

Witnesses said, when three alleged members of the outlawed Sarbahara Party were challenged by the villagers they tried to escape.

The villagers caught two of them while one managed to escape. They plucked out the eyes of Belal, 24, and beat up Wahab, 20, seriously.

Later the villagers handed them over to the Dasmina thana police. Police recovered one locally made pistol and eight rounds of bullet from their possession.

## Jamaat

From Page 1 Col 5

measures of the BNP during its three-and-a-half years rule, said some 200 rallies and meetings of the opposition parties across the country were foiled by imposing Section 144.

Also blaming the government for unleashing terrorism in the educational campuses, he claimed that there was proof of the BNP's involvement in the killing of Abul Kashem Pathan, a Chhatra Shibir leader gunned down recently in Khulna.

"Democracy, independence and Islam are not safe under the present government," Khan said.

Jamaat Secretary General Matjur Rahman Nizam MP brushed aside the government's proposal for strengthening the Election Commission and strict application of the code of conduct for ensuring free and fair election.

"These are not realistic in Bangladesh perspective. The ruling party (here) always use the government machinery and the state media, and also make the administration ineffective for bringing the election result in their favour," he said.

"It is impossible to ensure the right of voters keeping a party government in power," he said, adding that democracy and voters' right were very much interrelated.

Nizam, the leader of the Jamaat parliamentary party, said the present political crisis lasting over seven months was the result of the BNP's 'inefficiency and obstinacy' in conducting parliamentary affairs.

Chaired by city Ameer A T M Azharul Islam, the rally was also addressed by party leaders Mohammad Quamruzzaman, Abdul Kader Mollah, Mojibur Rahman, M M Taher and Jasimuddin Sarkar.



Prime Minister Begum Khaleda Zia formally opened the Meghna-Gumti Bridge at Bau-bia Ghat in Munshiganj yesterday. President of the Japan-Bangladesh Parliamentarians Association Hiroshi Mitsuzuka (L) is also seen among dignitaries attending the function. — Star photo

## Meghna-Gumti Bridge opens

From Page 1 Col 8

economic impact.

"This marks the fulfilment of a long cherished dream of the people of this region," she said, while thanking the Japanese government for the assistance. "This friendship bridge is yet another symbol of their friendly gesture towards us... which will remain as the milestone in the friendship between Bangladesh and Japan."

Thousands of men, women and children gathered at the Baushia ghat end of the bridge to witness the colourful opening ceremony while a large number of people also gathered on the other side at Daudkandi. Begum Zia later addressed the gathering.

Flags of Bangladesh and Japan bedecked the entire length of the bridge while festoons and banners were also hung at both ends.

Construction of the bridge was completed by the Japanese firm Obayashi Corporation in 38 months, 16 months ahead of schedule. The foundation stone was laid on September 3, 1991 by Begum Zia.

Speaking of her government's thrust on the communications sector, the Prime Minister said that with this bridge 223 bridges have been built during the past three-and-a-half years.

Begum Zia noted that work has already started on the second bridge over the river Buriganga in Dhaka while the foundation for the Rupsha bridge in Khulna would be laid this year and the feasibility of a bridge on the river Padma at Paksey is under study. Plans are also underway to build bridges over the river Meghna at Ashuganj, a third Buriganga bridge and at Doarika and Shikarpur on the Faridpur-Barisal highway.

Work has also been undertaken to build bridges over the Kushiara at Fenchuganj and at

Beanibazar while a plan has been taken up to construct a tunnel under the river Karnaphuli. The construction work of the bridge over the river Dhaleshwari on the Dhaka-Mawa highway is also progressing, the Prime Minister pointed out.

"The day is not far away when there will be no ferries on the national highways from Tetulia to Teknaf and from Tamabael to Bhetkhali," Begum Zia declared. "But political and social stability is necessary for the realisation of these goals of public welfare. I seek cooperation of all circles in this matter."

If this trend of development continues unhindered, she said, then Bangladesh would emerge within the next decade as one of the developed countries of Asia in economic and social sectors including road communication.

Speaking on the occasion Hiroshi Mitsuzuka, a former foreign minister in the LDP government, said: "The sight of this bridge rising over the mighty river is truly magnificent and will remain in my memory for many years to come, as will the warm welcome of the Bangladesh people that has been accorded to us during our short stay here."

He noted that the Meghna bridge, also funded under

## Mitsuzuka leaves for home

Hiroshi Mitsuzuka, member of parliament and president of the Bangladesh-Japan Friendship Association, left Dhaka yesterday for home, ending a four-day visit to Bangladesh.

"This has gone off very well — this has enabled me to know Bangladesh closely," he told BSS at the airport about the visit, first by him to this country.

Japanese grant assistance, was inaugurated in 1990 in the presence of the then Japanese Prime Minister Toshio Kaifu. "I am sure that this bridge, together with the Meghna bridge, will become a symbol of friendship between the two countries," he said.

Ambassador Takenaka pointed out that this is the longest bridge ever constructed under Japanese grant assistance programme anywhere in the world and it is also the largest grant aid project implemented in Bangladesh.

Hoping that the bridge would be remembered as a landmark in the history of friendly ties between Bangladesh and Japan, Takenaka concluded by thanking Obayashi Corporation, Pacific Consultants International, Nippon Koei Co Ltd and the local sub-contractors for their efficient work.

Communications Minister Oli Ahmed said that the opening of the Meghna-Gumti bridge would usher a new era in the country's trade and commerce.

Termining Japan as a partner in the national development of Bangladesh, Oli Ahmed expressed his gratitude to the Japanese government for the friendly cooperation.

He also sought Japanese assistance for building the Paksey road bridge, the second Meghna bridge at Ashuganj, the tunnel under the river Karnaphuli and the second Dhaleshwari bridge on the Dhaka-Mawa highway.

The other members of the Japanese delegation attending the opening ceremony included Shin Sakurai, vice president of the Japan-Bangladesh Parliamentarians Association and Takeo Kawamura, secretary general of the association.

Chief engineers of the Roads and Highways Division read out vote of thanks.

## The Midnight File

### US diplomats meet Myanmar junta chief

YANGON, Nov 1: Senior US diplomats met with Myanmar junta chief Lieutenant-General Khin Nyunt today in the first high-level discussion between the two countries in six years, embassy sources said. Details of the talks, which were described only as "lengthy," were not immediately available. The four-member US delegation, led by Deputy Assistant Secretary of State Thomas Hubbard, also met with Yangon's Foreign Minister, Ohn Gyaaw, reports AFP.

### 5 held for kidnapping three Britons

NEW DELHI, Nov 1: Indian police who freed three Britons and an American held hostage by alleged Kashmiri militants have arrested five men in connection with the kidnapping, a senior official said today. K Tadrmanabhaiah, the top official in the Home (Interior) Ministry, told reporters two of those arrested were suspected to be Afghans, reports Reuter.

### 20 hurt as JCD, BCL activists clash at Feni

FENI, Nov 1: The student activists of the ruling BNP and opposition Awami League fought a fierce gunbattle in the town today leaving at least 20 injured, most with bullet, reports UNB.

Witnesses said the clash erupted when a group of Chhatra League activists allegedly attacked the BNP office at the Panchagachhia road at about 1 pm blasting crackers.

They stormed the office and ransacked its furniture, windows and the party signboard. The adjacent Lucky restaurant was also ransacked during the attack.

The two groups then locked in a street battle, using sawed-off rifles, guns, country-made revolvers, rods and kirish. Some 100 shots were reported fired and 300 crackers exploded during the fighting.

Sequel to an earlier clash, today's trouble lasted about three hours.

### Ninian

From Page 1 Col 8

an's aide Chris Childs yesterday went to the house of SAMS Kibria, Political Adviser to Sheikh Hasina. Childs was learnt to have handed to Kibria a written outline of the ruling party's proposal for an interim government.

After the breakdown of the formal dialogue on October 25, talks at the deputy leader-level were held on October 27 and 29 at the State Guest House 'Meghna' in the presence of Sir Ninian.

But the meeting suffered yet another jolt when the Opposition rejected the ruling party proposal for a multi-party interim government headed by the incumbent Prime Minister to conduct the next parliamentary elections.

Sir Ninian Monday night met with Leader of the Opposition Sheikh Hasina and exchanged views with her on possible solution to the lingering crisis through dialogue.

### 25 hurt

From Page 1 Col 6

ganj to the AL rally in Manik Mia Avenue in Dhaka. When the trucks reached the Jurain railgate, some 15 to 20 teenagers hurled 20 to 25 cocktails at the trucks.

The cocktails, which exploded on five trucks, caused burn injuries to some 25 AL supporters who were given first aid later.

The teenagers fled the spot as the AL activists got down from the trucks and chased them.

In the evening, an AL press release issued by Town AL general secretary Shamim Osman accused government-backed terrorists of the attack.

It claimed that, in order to foil the truck procession, police raided the houses of AL, Jubo League and Bangladesh Chhatra League leaders in Narayanganj last night.

### N-programme

From Page 1 Col 3

duce enough plutonium for several nuclear bombs a year.

The Foreign Ministry also said it has shut down a 5-megawatt reactor and decided not to reload it with new fuel rods. In May, the North removed 8,000 spent fuel rods from the reactor and threatened to produce plutonium from them. That prompted the United States to threaten to end the negotiations in Geneva.

Meanwhile, US and South Korean troops began a major field exercise Tuesday.

### Yeltsin fires Dy defence minister

MOSCOW, Nov 1: President Boris Yeltsin today dismissed a controversial general as first deputy defence minister.

Col Gen Matvei Burlakov, the former chief of the Russian armed forces in Germany, has been accused of corruption by Russian newspapers. Most recently, media reports linked his name to the bomb killing of a Moscow investigative reporter.



The three Britons and an American rescued by Indian police from Kashmiri Muslim separatists address a press conference in New Delhi yesterday. From-L to R: Paul Ridout, Miles Croston, Bela Josef Nuss (USA) and Rhys Partridge. — AFP photo

## Hasina's public meeting in city

From Page 1 Col 4

workers and supporters from different townships and thanas. The rally and the vehicles parked around the meeting venue displaced the city's traffic system.

Sheikh Hasina in her 40-minute speech said the opposition parties demanded an amendment to the Constitution to insert the provision for a caretaker government to supervise election which the ruling party repeatedly termed as unconstitutional.

"Even a layman would understand that if there were any provision in the Constitution we would not have demanded its amendment," she added.

The Constitution can always be amended for the greater interest of the people, she said, referring to the 11th and 12th Amendments which restored parliamentary system of government.

Hasina charged the Prime Minister with extravagance, saying that she (Begum Zia) alone requires Tk 700 crore to maintain her residences and offices. "A poor country like Bangladesh cannot afford such a sheer wastage of tax-payers

of capturing by power violating the Constitution. "Under which constitutional provision, had Zia grabbed power by promulgating martial law?" she asked.

She said constitutional amendments from the 5th to the 7th were made "only to serve the personal interests of General Zia and General Ershad."

Urging the people to intensify the current agitation for a caretaker government, the Opposition leader called for making a success of the Opposition's November 9 sit-in programme in front of the Prime Minister's Secretariat.

Bringing serious charges of corruption against the ruling party, the Opposition leader quoted an IMF report that there was no trace of some Tk 570 crore from the two previous budget accounts (1992-93 and 1993-94).

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## Taslima Nasreen case

From Page 1 Col 8

yesterday.

The defence lawyers referred to their previous arguments saying the plaintiff did not have proper authorisation from the government before filling the case against Taslima.

Two solicitors, Zahirul Islam and Sara Hossain, appeared for Taslima.

A case was filed against Taslima Nasreen on June 4 by the Officer-in-Charge of the Motijheel Police Station for hurting the religious sentiments of the Muslims through an interview with a Calcutta English language daily. Taslima left the country August 9.

Taslima Nasreen was sued under Section 295 (A) of the Bangladesh Penal Code (BPC). If proved guilty, she might face

## 40 pilgrims feared drowned in India

VIJAYAWADA, Nov 1: About forty pilgrims were feared drowned when a tourist bus went out of control and fell into the Pumberlu river near Gudur in the early hours today.

Nellore District Collectorate sources told PTI over telephone that the bus was carrying 61 passengers, most of them belonging to one family who were going to Tirupathi to perform the 'Thirukalyanam' of lord Venkateswara, the presiding deity at Tirupathi.

The sources said 21 persons swam to safety.

Five bodies had been recovered.

The bus was proceeding from Palkol on its way to Tirupathi.

Editor: Mahfuz Anam