

Wars kill 15 lakh children from Laos to Somalia

LONDON, Nov 17: Wars have killed 1,500,000 children from Laos to Somalia over the past decade and injured four million, aid charity Save the Children said on Wednesday, reports Reuters.

Millions have been raped, seen their parents killed, been made homeless and forced to become soldiers themselves, it said in a report painting a nightmare vision of war across the globe.

More than four million children have been disabled, maimed, blinded and brain-damaged. More than 12 million children have lost their homes, the charity said.

Nine out of 10 people killed or injured in war are civilians, many of them women and children.

Children were often innocent victims, caught up in events they did not understand.

In the last decade, a million and a half children worldwide met violent deaths and four million sustained agonising and permanently damaging injuries as a result of bombs, bullets, land mines, chemical weapons and even machete attacks, it said.

Hundreds of thousands have been forced to become child soldiers, often kidnapped and trained to kill while 10 million carry the emotional scars of wartime experiences.

Helping launch the report, Terry Waite, the former envoy

for the Archbishop of Canterbury and a former hostage in Beirut, blamed the world's arms trade.

"We've got to go beyond first aid," he said. "In some ways I think we've probably got to have a stronger look at the whole arms export market."

The report did not address this issue, although it cited land mines as causing some of the most horrific injuries, and in huge numbers.

In Laos a young girl and her brother were killed on their way to graze buffalo, when the girl saw an object lying in a ditch that looked like a ball and tossed it to her brother. He was unable to catch it and it exploded, killing him instantly. His sister died two days later in hospital, it said.

One of the worst instances cited by the charity, which rescues, feeds and shelters children suffering in wars or natural disasters, was in Sudan, where 250,000 children are estimated to have died of war-related causes since war started in the southern part of the country 11 years ago.

Children also fall victim to rape and other brutalisation. The report tells of a 12-year-old Angolan orphan named Maria who was raped during the war there and became pregnant. After a forced 200 mile (320 km) march, she gave birth prematurely.

The baby survived for just two weeks. Maria died a week later ill and under-nourished.



A devastating fire gutted some 200 dwellings in the Tikkipara slum of Mohammadpur in the city yesterday, leaving hundreds destitute. — Star photo

BNP standing body

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lier submitted written replies to the charges against them.

The other non-conforming BNP MP, Nazmul Huda, who was asked to explain why disciplinary action should not be taken against him for speaking against the official party line

Opposition demand for a caretaker government before the next general elections, was heard in person by the committee on Nov 11. Huda, reported to have later apologised for speaking out of turn, gave an interview with a Bengali daily on Nov 4 which led to his sacking as information minister the following day.

Akhtaruzzaman and Moni, too, made unauthorised press statements on the subject which irked the BNP high command.

UNB adds: When contacted, Major Akhtaruzzaman told the news agency that he had admitted his mistakes and that everything was now cleared.

"I've been told to go to my constituency and work," said the MP from Kishoreganj. He also quoted the Prime Minister as having told him: "Don't make any such statements in future without consulting the party."

Nurul Islam Moni was not available for comment. But it was learnt that the MP from Barguna who was elected as an independent but later joined the BNP, had defended his position before the committee.

Jatra festival

The Bangladesh Shilpakala Academy will arrange a 17-day National Jatra Festival from December 29 at its auditorium, reports UNB.

200 houses gutted in Mohammadpur

By Staff Correspondent

A big fire in a shanty suburb in the city's Mohammadpur area left over one thousand people homeless yesterday morning. However, no casualties were reported.

The fire broke out around eight in the morning and gutted over 200 houses while more than a hundred dwellings were damaged when fire-fighters broke through them to douse the raging flames.

Some 200 families who lost their homes and belongings were now staying on the debris under the open sky.

A Class Two student Nazma Akhter, 7, was bewildered at the devastation. Wearing her school uniform, the only dress she had left, was slumped on what used to be her home shivering in the evening breeze of late autumn.

Nazma's mother Marzina Begum, 30, told The Daily Star that they had eight huts, six of which were late out on rent.

"I had everything, including a TV, but now I have no money even to buy a bread for my three children," she sobbed.

Some of the local people said the fire broke out from a kitchen in the southern part of the slum while others said it was due to an electric short circuit.

However, Fire Service officials are yet to ascertain the cause of the flame.

A Fire Service spokesman said, four fire engines battled for over an hour to extinguish the flames.

Meanwhile, different organisations have started distribut-

ing food among the affected people.

Mohammad Hanif, mayor of Dhaka City Corporation, visited the slum adjacent to the Joint Quarters in Mohammadpur yesterday to see the extent of damage.

The mayor assured the fire victims of all possible assistance.

Shantibahiniman surrenders

CHITTAGONG, Nov 17: A self-styled sergeant of the outlawed Shantibahini has laid down arms to the security forces in the Hill Tracts, reports UNB.

Officials said Shimul Chakma of Dighinala in Khagrachhari district, along with his wife, surrendered to security forces at Gooimara, handing over one SMC and ammunition to them.

Shimul Chakma, who joined the outlaws in 1985, had in fact collected illegal tolls from different types of vehicles on RMMK road in Laxmichhari, Naniachhari areas.

Extortion by the outlaws on the road has increased, creating panic among the transport workers and passengers.

Transport workers had gone on strike several times demanding measures to check road robbery and illegal toll collection.

Some 25 Shantibahinimen have surrendered to the security forces during the current year.

Bhasani's death anniversary observed

The 18th death anniversary of Maulana Abdul Hamid Khan Bhasani was observed yesterday, reports BSS.

Different socio-cultural and political organisations held separate programmes. The day's programmes began with the offering of feteah at the mazar of the late Maulana at Santosh in Tangail, where thousands of people gathered to pay their respect.

Besides discussion meetings organised in Dhaka and elsewhere in the country, day's main functions were held in Santosh.

Tangail district BNP leaders and workers placed wreaths at the mazar early in the morning. The BNP team was led by Labour and Manpower Minister Abdul Mannan Bhuiyan. The parties which took programmes on the day were Workers Party, National Awami Party (Bhasani), Jatiya Party, Zia Parishad, Bangladesh Jattatabadi Krishak Dal, People's League, Jatiya Janata Party, NDA, National Democratic Party, Bhasani Jatiya Sangsad, Tamuddun Majlish, Rishij Shilpi Goshthi and Shapia Kali Shishu-Kishore Sangathan.

Tk 1846cr trade deficit with 4 SAARC states

Commerce Minister Sham-sul Islam told the Jatiya Sangsad yesterday that Bangladesh had a trade deficit of more than Taka 1846 crore with four SAARC countries during the 1993-94 fiscal, reports BSS.

Replying to a question from the ruling party member Abdur Rouf Chowdhury (Kushtia-2), he said Bangladesh had trade deficit of Taka 1567.97 crore with India, Taka 233.37 crore with Pakistan, Taka 32.21 crore with Bhutan and Taka 13.36 crore with Sri Lanka.

The commerce minister said the government had undertaken a strategy for narrowing down the trade imbalance through the increase of export. He said the exporters had been provided with a number of facilities under the export policy of 1993-95.

The facilities offered included increased allocation of foreign exchange for trips abroad, special bonded warehouse facility, issuance of multiple visa to importers and foreign investors, and increased facility for sending samples abroad.

Replying to another question from BNP member Begum K J Hamida Khanam, the minister said there was no plan to stop import of powdered milk for the time being.

Two Indians

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Security personnel detained the girl and her companion Ashfaq Hossain.

Ashfaq identified himself as Meena's maternal uncle. They came to Parliament to see yesterday's session with two valid passes.

When interrogated by the Special Branch and Tejgaon police, Meena and Ashfaq said they were Indian nationals.

They also said they live in Burdwan district of West Bengal. They came to Dhaka last month to visit their relatives at Sher Shah Suri Road, Mohammadpur, in the city.

The two were not carrying their passports at the time. Tejgaon police went to a house at Sher Shah Suri Road to seize their passports late last night. They were yet to collect those till the writing of this report at 00:30 hours.

Meena told police that she was carrying the dagger for her security on the Dhaka streets, the duty officer of Tejgaon police station said last night.

The Special Branch handed over the two foreigners to the Tejgaon police at 10:30 pm after interrogating them at the Sangsad Bhaban.

Police said Meena and Ashfaq were taken into custody on suspicion under Section 54 of the Criminal Procedure Code (Cr PC).

No Jatiya Sangsad official was available for comments as to how the two had obtained passes to enter the high security building.

'Jago Sylhet' rail blockade today

From Staff Correspondent

SYLHET, Nov 17: An organisation calling itself 'Jago Sylhet' will observe a rail blockade programme tomorrow in protest against lack of minimum facilities in the railway in greater Sylhet region.

The members of the organisation will barricade the rail tracks at South Surma rail gate in Sylhet town at 5:00 a.m. to prevent the movement of trains tomorrow.

A rally was held at the south Surma railgate this afternoon. Sabrul Hossain Babul and Moulana Abbas Jalali spoke at the rally chaired by Fakhrul Hassan.

The Midnight File

UNITA team pulls out of truce talks

LUSAKA, Nov 17: A military UNITA rebel team pulled out of ceasefire talks with Angolan army chiefs in the Zambian capital Lusaka today. UNITA delegation head General Eugenio Manukavola announced. He said the national Union for the Total Independence of Angola (UNITA) could not continue negotiations because of fighting, alleging that government troops were breaking a truce between the two sides that took effect on Wednesday, reports AFP.

Algerian govt refuses talks with opposition in Rome

TUNIS, Nov 17: Algeria's government rejected an invitation by a Catholic group to attend talks with opposition groups in Rome next week, the official Algerian news agency APS reported today. "Algerian problems... should only be treated inside Algeria" APS, monitored in Tunis, said, reports Reuters.

BNP has set example

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which they had created must be resolved within the constitutional framework.

She said her government is always ready to resolve problems under the purview of the Constitution. "Nothing would be allowed outside the constitutional framework."

She told the meeting that her government had proposed strengthening of the Election Commission and introduction of identity card, so that none can cast the vote of dead one and there be no scope of rigging.

Begum Zia said the people had established parliamentary democracy after nine years of struggle and sent their representatives to Parliament to speak for them.

But the Opposition MPs are not performing their responsibility given by the people. They are now demanding an unelected government violating the Constitution, she said.

"In fact, they want to run the state by an unelected government instead of elected representatives," she said and questioned "which is more democratic — elected or unelected?"

Going back to the famine of 1974, the Prime Minister said the then food minister had admitted in the House that thousands of people died without food.

"They will again kill people and resort to loot if they get chance again," Begum Zia told

DCC commissioners

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Zerin Jhunu, Zoly Kabir, Selima Akhtar, Shahida Huq, Halima Huq, Nasreen Ahmed and Nasima Montu.

Ninety ward commissioners of the corporation elected the women commissioners on October 15, says a city corporation press release.

The oath taking ceremony was attended by the high officials of the Ministry of LGRD and Cooperatives, executive officer and other high ranking DCC officials.

Later, Mohammad Hanif planted a rubber sapling in front of the Nagar Bhaban.

Grameen Bank

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sources derived from the state of the bonds would help GB achieve its target for fiscal 1994-95.

The bonds for three to 10 years bearing four to six per cent interest are guaranteed by the government and would be transferable in nature. Finance Ministry officials told The Daily Star.

The GB had lent about Tk 1250 crore last year and plans to lend Tk 1825 crore this year, Dr Yunus said.

The bank is also trying to take telephone facilities to the doorsteps of the rural poor to help increase their income-generating activities, he said.

Dr Yunus pointed out the success of an export-oriented weaving project of the bank — Grameen Check — and said the bank had received an export order of about five million US dollars although its initial target was two million dollars. The foreign buyers were showing great interest in Grameen Check, he added.

Bosnia

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plainclothes personnel working for the CIA were in Bosnia training Muslims in tactical operations and providing satellite intelligence and controlling air traffic.

"They are teaching the Bosnian Muslims how to fight the Bosnian Serbs," a Defence source told the newspaper.

"We are talking about the Americans taking sides. They have in fact joined the war," the sources added.

The European said senior American officers led by General Charles Boyd sealed the deal when they met an important Bosnian army commander in the central Bosnian town of Gornji Vakuf.

"The result was a US decision to launch a covert plan to help the Bosnian Muslims, thus becoming for the first time an active participant in the ground war in Bosnia", the newspaper said.

Govt urged to recover arms from JU campus

By JU Correspondent

The Jahangirnagar University Syndicate at an emergency meeting yesterday called upon the government to ensure security for the teachers and students and recover illegal arms from the campus immediately.

Vice-chancellor, Professor Amirul Islam Chowdhury, chaired the meeting.

Meanwhile, the Awami League-backed BCL leaders of the JU unit at a press conference demanded immediate arrest of the outsiders from the residential halls and recovery of illegal arms.

Train derails

CHITTAGONG, Nov 17: Rail communication was disrupted for hours in the Dhaka-Chittagong route as a train derailed near Shashordi station today, reports UNB.

Official sources here said the engine of the Dhaka-bound container train from the port city slipped off the track at about 9:00 am.

The line was cleared for traffic at 4:55 in the afternoon.

Nepalese polls

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re-election in one of them if they win both. That's what happened to Prime Minister Girija Prasad Koirala, who narrowly won the two seats he contested, defeating communist rivals in both.

Manmohan Adhikar, chairman of the Communist Party of Nepal (Marxist-Leninist), won the one House seat he contested in the capital.

That and the overall election results prompted Madhav Kumar, secretary-general of the party, to say: "We are hopeful that we will end up with a comfortable majority in the House."

The Nepali Congress won a majority in the 1991 elections, the first in 31 years after King Birendra relinquished absolute power to become the figurehead in Nepal's new democracy.

But after that economic problems and a rebellion by 36 governing party lawmakers pulled down Koirala's government and forced elections 18 months ahead of schedule.

Koirala's government was discredited because of the lack of performance in the economic field and intra-party dissension.

The Nepali Congress supported candidates running for all 205 seats, and the Communists backed politicians competing for 196.

Irish Premier Reynolds quits

DUBLIN, Nov 17: Embattled Irish Prime Minister Albert Reynolds resigned today hours before he was expected to be toppled in a no-confidence vote, reports Reuters.

The Irish leader said he was standing down "in the interests of stability," to ensure that the Northern Ireland peace process, which he helped to shape 11 months ago, could continue unhindered.

"I have taken the decision to ensure the continuity of the peace process," Reynolds told parliament.

He said his government, a coalition of Fianna Fail and Labour Party members, had tendered their resignations to President Mary Robinson and he would consult her later.

Reynolds said he would not be seeking early general elections. It was expected that Robinson would ask the opposition Fine Gael or another opposition party to try to form a new government.

Tk 6 cr compensation for acquired land at Baridhara

A meeting of the Works Ministry yesterday decided to send Tk 5,80,61,038 immediately to the Deputy Commissioner, Dhaka, as temporary compensation for the structures of 'J' block of Rajuk land at Baridhara, reports BSS.

The meeting chaired by Housing and Works Minister Rafiqul Islam Miah decided that the compensation is being given in the light of the recommendation of the parliamentary standing committee and the petition committee and also on the basis of comments of the Ministry of Law, Justice and Parliamentary Affairs.

The meeting was held for the evaluation of loss and compensation to be given on the existing houses and structures in the acquired 'J' block of Rajuk at Baridhara.

The Deputy Commissioner, Dhaka would make immediate arrangement for payment of compensation.

Drought-hit North

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a yearly phenomenon during the months of September and October, considered "off season" for them.

This year, local people said, the crisis period had begun earlier -- late August -- since the drought had claimed the aman paddy.

While visiting the northern region recently, this correspondent learnt that the poverty rate in eight northern districts -- Rangpur, Kurigram, Lalmonirhat, Gaibandha, Nilphamari, Bogra, Panchagarh and Thakurgaon -- is much higher than in other parts of the country.

The unemployment problem is turning serious day by day with thousands of farmers, mostly marginal, becoming landless due to unabated erosion by the major rivers -- the Jamuna, Teesta, Brahmaputra, and Dharala. These landless people mainly live by selling their labour to the well-off farmers. But damage or failure of crops due to natural calamities render them jobless. They cannot manage any alternative jobs also since the region lacks industrialisation.

Except the tobacco industries in Rangpur, there are no major industries in the eight districts. The BSCIC estate in Lalmonirhat has so far failed to attract investors because of alleged harassment to eager entrepreneurs and corruption. Small and cottage industries are yet to flourish in the region.

Although Burimari in Lalmonirhat has been a major business centre, other areas of the district lack business activities which may create employment opportunities.

The farmers are not getting modern irrigation facilities to fight drought because power supply is reportedly inadequate and irregular. Farming in the large char areas is done only on a limited scale.

Grabbing of newly-emerged char lands by the jotedars is

also contributing to the growing landlessness of the poor who are unable to claim their lands once devoured by the rivers. The cultivable lands are mostly owned by the jotedars who exploit the poor.

The activities of the NGOs are confined to a particular groups or localities. The government's programmes for the vulnerable people are also very limited.

Experts and others concerned suggest long-term plans to alleviate poverty in the region by creating job opportunities, checking erosion by rivers, setting up industries and taking steps to face natural calamities.

10-megawatt radio station being set up in Barisal

BARISAL, Nov 17: A 10-megawatt medium wave radio station is being set up at Rupatali, three kilometres from the main town with an involvement of Tk 18.65 crore.

Official sources told BSS that 18.77 acres of land has been acquired for the purpose.

The boundary of this radio station was demarcated and pillars with red flags have been posted around the project area at a simple ceremony yesterday in presence of a three men team led by project director Mububur Rahman.

The work of the project is expected to be completed by the end of 1996-97 fiscal.

New formula

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and fair elections. The BNP plan also said that this parliamentary committee would suggest measures to make the Election Commission practically independent of the executive wing of the state and formulate a code of conduct to be observed by the political leaders and activists during the polls.

Sharif's father released

ISLAMABAD, Nov 17: Opposition leader Nawaz Sharif's ailing father, Mian Mohammad Sharif, has been released from jail for health reasons, Pakistani Interior Minister Naseerullah Babar said today.

"We have released him on parole on humanitarian grounds because of his ill health," Babar told Reuters. The elder Sharif was freed on Wednesday night.

Pirates

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Utrail Hat at around 4:00 pm. They exploded crackers to create panic among the passengers and then shot dead sentry Mohiuddin.

The attackers also snatched the rifles of four other Ansars, including their commander, Siraj, who has been missing since the incident.

All the miscreants managed to escape before the officer-in-charge of Shibchar thana reached the spot nearly an hour later. The OC recovered one rifle from the cabin of the launch. The sarak or manager of the vessel was admitted to the Shibchar hospital with shrapnel injuries.

Foreign bankers see signs of progress in country

By Staff Correspondent

The Bangladesh economy is showing visible signs of progress and stability and the winds of change now sweeping this part of Asia is also making its effect felt in the country.

This view was expressed by Standard Chartered Bank's London-based directors, David Brougham and AWP (Cob) Stenham at a press conference at a city hotel yesterday.

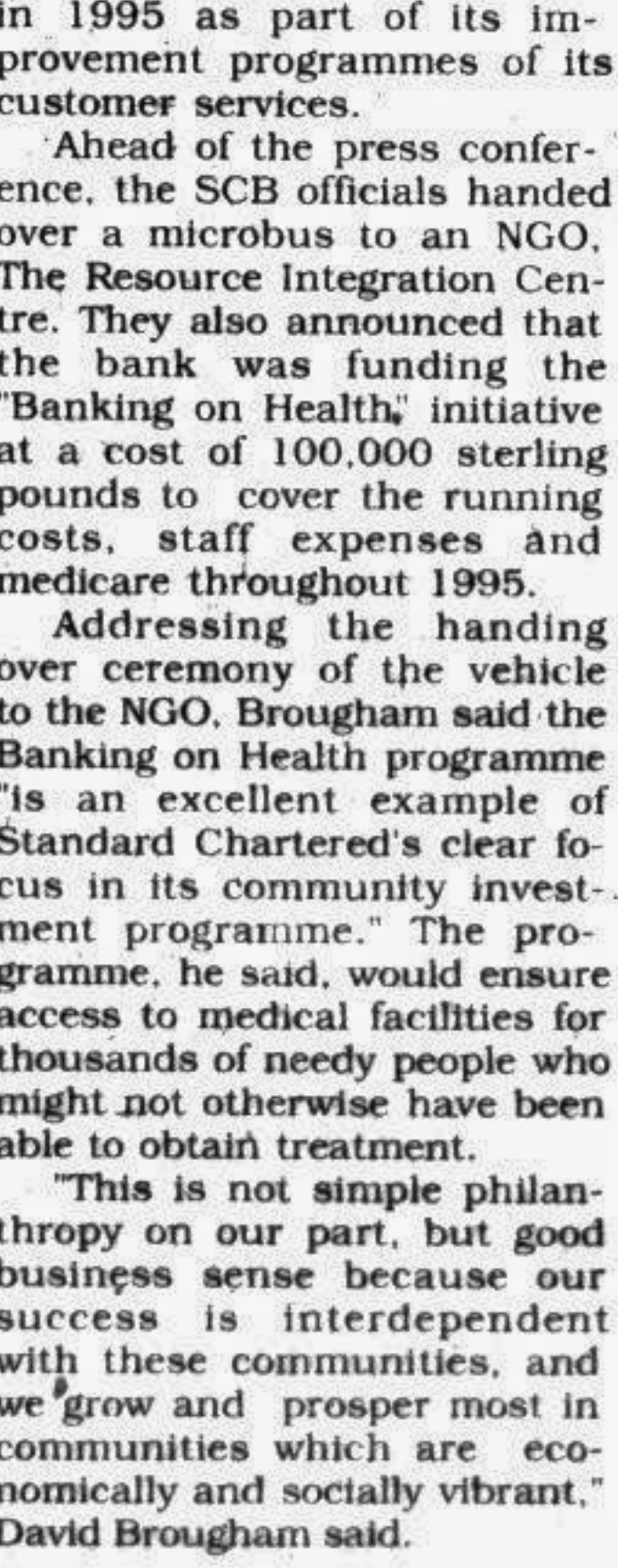
The two directors who arrived in Dhaka Wednesday after attending the Standard Chartered Bank's group's Board meeting in Bombay, inaugurated the bank's second "Moneylink", Automated Teller Machine (ATM), at the Motijheel branch earlier yesterday morning. SCB is the first bank to introduce Automated Teller Machines in Bangladesh.

David Brougham, addressing the press conference said the Bangladesh economy is on the upbeat and added that the bank is encouraged to expand its operations in the country.

Chief of the Standard Chartered in Bangladesh Stephen McCarthy who was also present at the press conference said the SCB is going to expand its product line further

Standard Chartered

You're at the centre of everything we do



Executive Director of Standard Chartered plc David Brougham (C) speaking at a press conference in the city yesterday. Director of the group Cob Stenham and Chief Executive, Bangladesh S M McCarthy (left) are also seen. — Star photo