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# The Daily Star

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## Safety of Bangladeshi troops at stake

# Serb forces within 500 metres of city centre

BONN, Nov 23: The Mayor of Bihać said by satellite telephone today, that Serb forces were inside the besieged town and only 500 metres from the centre, reports Reuters.

Hamdiya Kabljagic told journalists that Serb troops had seized control of several districts in Bihać town.

A Zagreb report says, Serb and Muslim forces are fighting a fierce battle inside the perimeter of the Bihać town 'safe area,' a United Nations spokesman said.

There is extremely heavy fighting going on south of the town on a hill feature called Debeljaca, which is the last point of defence for the (Bosnian army) 5th corps before the town. It is going on inside the safe area, Alexander Ivanko told Reuters.

Ivanko said the UN was very concerned for the security of its 1,200-man Bangladeshi peacekeeping battalion in the Bihać pocket as well as 15 UN civilians who had been brought under the protection of the peacekeepers in Bihać town.

UN officials feared today that Serb troops might overrun the Bihać pocket in north-western Bosnia, creating a 'nightmare scenario' of thousands of refugees crammed into a tiny area without food, water or shelter.

"The Bihać 'safe area' is fairly small, but the population of the entire pocket is fairly large - about 180,000 people", said Kris Janowski, a spokesman for the UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR).

NATO warplanes today bombed Serb positions in two air raids, striking at Serb surface-to-air missile sites that had fired on British jets over

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SAARC Chairperson and Bangladesh Prime Minister Begum Khaleda Zia being received by President of Maldives Maumoon Abdul Gayoom at the Male International Airport on her arrival on a two-day visit yesterday. — PID photo

## Opposition explains its rejection of BNP plan

By Staff Correspondent

Deputy leader of the Opposition in Parliament Abdus Samad Azad yesterday explained why the Opposition had rejected the ruling party proposal for holding general elections under a multi-party interim government.

Addressing a crowded press conference, he said, that the ruling party proposal handed over to Sheikh Hasina through Sir Ninian Stephen, if implemented, would create further problems in holding free and fair national polls. Members of interim cabinet loyal to rival political camps would eventually make the proposed interim government almost inoperative. "An ineffective cabinet could contribute little to the holding of general elections in a free and fair atmosphere," Samad Azad said. Besides, the sole objective of the Opposition struggle for the holding of elections under a

non-partisan caretaker administration was to ensure the people's right to exercise their franchise freely — not securing Opposition share in the interim cabinet, he said.

The Opposition was convinced that an interim administration headed by the BNP chief Begum Khaleda Zia could not ensure fair elections, the Deputy Leader of the opposition said. "Therefore, we were left with no option but to reject the ruling party proposal for a bipartisan cabinet."

Explaining the reasons behind the failure of the Commonwealth-brokered talks, the opposition leader said, "The government has failed to address sincerely the central issue of the dialogue — a non-partisan administration for holding elections."

Referring to the pre-dialogue correspondences between

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## Hasina asks BNP to test popularity in polls under caretaker govt

From Our Correspondent

GOPALGANJ, Nov 23: Awami League chief Sheikh Hasina today called upon the BNP government to "test its popularity" by contesting elections under a non-party caretaker administration.

She was speaking as chief guest at the installation ceremony of the newly-elected office bearers of Sheikh Lutful Rahman Government College Students' Union here on her arrival from Dhaka this noon.

Referring to the failed Government-Opposition talks for ensuring free and fair elections, the Leader of the Opposition in Parliament said Prime Minister Begum Khaleda Zia was "ready to compromise on everything but her chair. She needs the chair of the head of the government to rig polls and win it by unleashing vio-

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## PM at banquet in Maldives Enhance spirit of amity among South Asians

KURUMBA (the Maldives), Nov 23: Prime Minister Begum Khaleda Zia today underscored the need for enhancing the spirit of amity among the South Asian countries to direct the nations' resources and energies for the well-being of the people of this region, reports BSS.

"We sincerely believe that peace, progress and development can be achieved only through mutual understanding, trust and cooperation," Begum Zia said at the state banquet given in her honour by the Maldives President Maumoon Abdul Gayoom and Madam Nasreena Gayoom at the Kurumba Convention Centre here tonight.

Begum Zia, the current chairperson of SAARC, said that the seven-nation regional forum had provided the South Asian countries with an ideal framework for achieving the goal of socio-economic emancipation of the people of this region.

The SAARC Chairperson said the South Asian countries must strive collectively to achieve the goals of poverty alleviation and liberalisation of trade in the region as envisaged in the Seventh SAARC Summit.

Side by side with its efforts to attain the goals of poverty alleviation and trade liberalisation in the South Asian region, the Prime Minister said, the SAARC was trying to forge new links with other international and regional bodies.

She said that the time between now and the next SAARC summit should be devoted to the consolidation of what has already been achieved and to prepare the ground for new initiatives before the next summit.

Lauding the contribution of the Maldives in the promotion of the SAARC Begum Zia said the commitment of President Gayoom to the principles of the SAARC had helped make this regional forum an effective one.

Bound by common religious, traditional and cultural ties, the Prime Minister said, Bangladesh and the Maldives were working together to create a brave new world free from deprivation and hunger.

"Bangladesh and the Maldives are working together to create a brave new world free from deprivation and hunger."

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## 120 killed in Nagpur stampede

NEW DELHI, Nov 23: At least 120 people were killed when a police batoncharge aimed at breaking up a protest triggered a stampede in the Indian city of Nagpur today, the Press Trust of India (PTI) reported, says AFP.

Police armed with batons and canes charged nearly 30,000 tribal demonstrators marching to the local legislature, causing the crowd to flee in panic.

The incident happened after some protestors smashed through police barricades, the news agency said.

At least 120 demonstrators, including 75 women, were killed in the stampede, which is some 700 kilometres northeast of Bombay.

## EU envoys' special meet on political situation

By Staff Correspondent

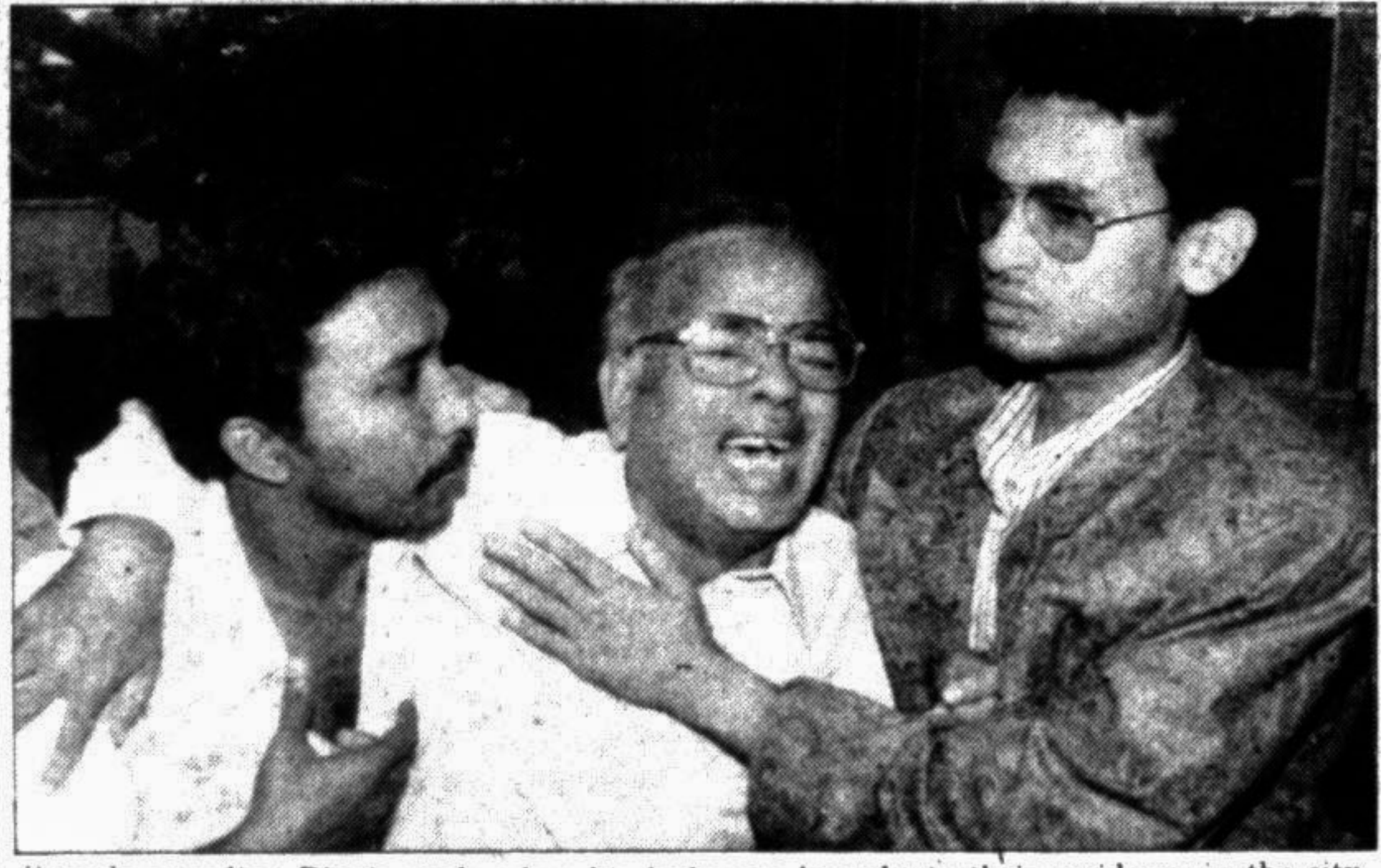
Envoys of the European Union (EU) countries held a special meeting yesterday afternoon where they reportedly discussed the local political situation following the failure of Commonwealth envoy Sir Ninian Stephen's mission.

The meeting was held at the residence of German Ambassador Dr Jurgen Gehl, whose country is the current president of the European Union. It was attended by all the EU ambassadors or their representatives in Dhaka, according to diplomatic sources.

British High Commissioner Peter J Fowler informed the diplomats about his discussions with Sheikh Hasina on Tuesday. US Ambassador David Merrill was also present. Fowler, however, could not be contacted to confirm this.

Another diplomat who attended the meeting said that the envoys were apprised of

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Friends consoling Dipu's uncle when his body was brought to their residence in the city yesterday. — Star photo

## ADB concerned at slow pace of reforms

By Staff Correspondent

The visiting country programming mission of the Asian Development Bank (ADB) yesterday expressed concern at the slow pace of financial sector reforms and the government's privatisation drive.

"The pace of reforms must continue — there can be no turning back," emphasised the leader of the delegation Bhanuphol Horayangura, programmes manager of the Manila-based bank.

He was addressing a press conference at the ADB resident mission office in the city.

He said the economic reforms in Bangladesh have proceeded at a fair pace in recent years. But, he noted, in some sectors like agriculture, progress has been generally satisfactory and in others it has been rather slow, such as privatisation of public enterprises and the financial sector.

Horayangura also announced that the mission and the government have identified a programme of loan totalling 1.3 billion US dollars for 25 projects over the 1995-98 period. In addition about eight million dollars would also be provided annually in technical assistance grants.

During its stay here since November 14, the mission held extensive discussions with the government, the private sector and the non-government organisations.

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## JCD activist of JU succumbs to injuries

By JU Correspondent

A Jatiyatabadi Chhatra Dal (JCD) activist of Jahangirnagar University (JU) died yesterday at the Dhaka Medical College Hospital (DMCH) eight days after he was injured by rivals within the organisation.

Shaokat Kabir Dipu, a second year student of English department, succumbed to his injuries at the intensive care unit of the DMCH in the morning.

Sources concerned said that Dipu was attacked and injured by some local JCD activists because of the long rivalry between two factions of the JU JCD. The JCD unit is divided into two factions —

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## Youngman shot dead in armed clash

By Staff Correspondent

A youngman was shot dead and a schoolboy wounded in an armed clash in the city's Mohakhali area yesterday afternoon.

Abdul Hamid, 28, hit by a bullet in the abdomen, died on the spot while Stumon, 12, a Class Four student, was admitted to the Dhaka Medical College Hospital (DMCH) with a bullet wound in his left hand.

Witnesses said, rival groups of local bullies clashed, exchanging gunfire around 1:30 in the afternoon.

They said, the bullies fought basically over extortion from the local shopping centres and garments factories as well as over the students' politics at the local Titumir Government

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## First power station in private sector okayed

Star Report

The Executive Committee of the National Economic Council (ECNEC) yesterday approved the setting up of a 60 megawatt open cycle gas turbine power station in Myensingh under the soon-to-be-floated Rural Power Company.

The decision on the Tk 280 crore project was taken in the ECNEC meeting with Finance Minister M Saifur Rahman in the chair.

The project cost would be financed under a 70:30 debt to equity ratio with Asian Development Bank funding, while the equity would be jointly financed by the Rural Electrification Board (REB) and five Pally Bidyut Samity's (PBSs), independent rural power distribution cooperatives.

The government-backed move is being seen as an encouragement for greater private sector participation in meeting the country's increasing demand for electricity. This would be the first power plant to be built outside the state monopoly, the Power Development Board.

The ECNEC also approved a Tk 191 crore crop diversification project, with the Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA) providing Tk 132 crore as grant and the government contributing Tk 59 crore for the project.

At the meeting, the finance minister directed all concerned to be very selective in

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## 2 Bills passed in JS

Parliament yesterday passed two bills — the Anti-Terrorism (Special Provision) Bill 1994 and the Acquisition and the Requisition of Immovable Property (Amendment) Bill 1994, reports UNB.

Home Minister Abdul Mann Chowdhury piloted the first Bill making provision for disposing of the cases already filed under the Anti-terrorism Act. The 2-year tenure of the act expired on November 5 this year.

State Minister for Land Kabir Hossain moved the second bill for providing compensation to 'bagdars' (share-croppers) for standing crops on the lands acquired by the government. Kabir said the interest of poor bagdars was protected by this act.

Both the bills were passed by voice vote without much discussion in the House.

## Saudi crackdown on illegal aliens, thousands held

RIYADH, Nov 23: Saudi police have detained thousands of foreign workers in a major crackdown on illegal aliens in a drive to curb a growing crime wave diplomats reported today, says AP.

One south Asian diplomat said most of the illegal workers from his country are reportedly in hiding.

This has affected small shops and the service sectors where unscrupulous businessmen hire cheap labour, he said.

The Interior Ministry announced earlier this month that foreigners without legal residence permits, or 'iqamas', could leave the kingdom voluntarily without being penalised. But no deadline was announced.

Hundreds of illegal workers, mostly from the Indian Subcontinent, Sri Lanka, Arab and African countries, have taken advantage of the amnesty and are leaving, said the diplomats, who cannot be named under embassy rules.

Travel industry sources in Jiddah said scores are leaving from that Red Sea port on Saudi Arabia's western seaboard.

But diplomats said that in the capital, Riyadh, police are arresting hundreds every day despite the grace period.

Newspapers reported long queues at the Indian consulate in Jiddah, which is issuing emergency documents for those who have volunteered to go home. There are an estimated one million Indians in the kingdom.

In Riyadh, the Indian embassy is issuing more than 450 documents a week, a four fold increase over the last few weeks. Second Secretary R M Sharma said.

The oil rich Gulf states have been a magnet for foreign workers for years, especially during the oil boom era of the 1970s and early 1980s.

But with the Gulf states increasingly facing economic constraints because of low oil prices and the cost of the 1991 Gulf War, as well as rapidly increasing indigenous populations, most are striving to curb the number of expatriate workers.

**আমরা শোকাভিত্ত**

বিশ্ববিশ্বকৃতি সন্তান, বিশিষ্ট রাজনীতিবিদ, সমাজসেবী ও শিক্ষাবিদ শিক্ষা প্রতিমন্ত্রী অধ্যক্ষ মোঃ ইউনুস খানের অকাল মৃত্যুতে আমরা শোকাভিত্ত। তাঁর মৃত্যুতে বিশাল তথা দেশের রাজনীতিতে এবং শিক্ষাঙ্গণে যে শূন্যতার সৃষ্টি হলো তা পূরণ হওয়ার নয়। তাঁর শোকসন্তপ্ত পরিবারের প্রতি রইলো আমাদের গভীর সমবেদনা।

মোঃ আহসান হাবিব কামাল  
প্ৰশাসক  
বিশিাল পৌরসভা