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The Daily Star

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- Inside Today**
- Article**
- We Must Find Alternative to Hartal**
Column: The Third View
by Mahfuz Anam
Page 4
 - International**
 - Pakistan eager to buy second N-plant from China**
 - Russia deploys more troops to increase pressure on Chechnya**
Page 5 - Business**
 - Importers showing interest in newer application of jute, says Industries Minister**
 - Legislators from 18 nations call for more openness at IMF, WB**
Pages 6, 7 - Health**
 - Disability: A Profile in Rural Bangladesh; Antibiotics; Overuse and Misuse; Warmer Earth, a Serious Health Hazard; Sandhani: Upholding the Cause of the Distressed**
Page 8

Resignation of Opposition MPs Ultimatum likely today

By Staff Correspondent

The Opposition members of Parliament will resign from the Jatiya Sangsad (JS) on December 28 unless their demand for general elections under a non-partisan caretaker administration was met by the previous day.

This was decided at a meeting of the leaders of the parliamentary opposition with Sheikh Hasina in the chair at her Sangsad Bhaban office last night.

According to meeting sources, the Opposition ultimatum would be issued from separate rallies of the Awami League (AL), the Jatiya Party (JP) and the Jamaat-e-Islami scheduled in the city for this afternoon.

The meeting also discussed reducing the duration of the planned 48-hour country-wide hartal scheduled to begin at six tomorrow morning by a few hours. A final decision on this will be taken this morning, an opposition leader attending yesterday's meeting told The Daily Star last night.

"Either the length of the general strike would be shortened by a few hours Thursday, the second day, or restrictions on the movement of transports during hartal hours, especially at night, may be relaxed," the Opposition leader said on condition of anonymity.

Another leader informed this correspondent that the representatives of the opposi-

tion parties at the meeting authorised Leader of the Opposition Sheikh Hasina to settle the matter. She would let the JP and Jamaat leaders know this morning, he added.

Yesterday's Opposition meeting also resolved to revise the outline of the proposed caretaker administration announced by the opposition parties on June 27 last.

The parliamentary opposition has been boycotting JS proceedings to force the government to concede to its demand for a caretaker administration since March last.

"Once we resign from Parliament, the path for a constitutional amendment providing

See Page 12 Col 7



The visiting Foreign Minister of Sri Lanka Lakshman Kadirgamar called on Prime Minister Begum Khaleda Zia at her office in the city yesterday. —PID photo

BB's permission needed to hire and fire private bank MDs

Banking laws will be amended soon and prior permission from the Bangladesh Bank would be required for appointment and dismissal of the Managing Directors of the private banks, reports UNB.

This was disclosed by Finance Minister M Saifur Rahman at a meeting of the private bankers in the city yesterday.

"From now on, MDs of the private banks will not be left at the mercy of the directors or owners... this is required to bring about check and balance in the administration of the private banks and to safeguard people's money," he said.

Talking to the sponsors of the proposed seven newly-approved private banks at the Bangladesh Bank conference room in the city, the finance minister said the sponsoring banks are the trustees of the people's fund and they have to render trusteeship in this regard properly.

He said the government wants more healthy banking practice and there are lot to be

improved on, particularly in the private banking sector.

The proposed banks which have been approved by the government are Bangladesh Special Investment Bank, Al Arafat Bank, Dutch-Bangladesh Bank, Prime Bank, Dhaka Bank, South-East Bank, and Trust Bank.

He asked the seven new private banks to safeguard and utilize depositors' money by ensuring financial discipline and accountability.

No one will be spared in case any unhealthy banking practices leading to defalcation or misappropriation of people's money, he warned.

The Finance Minister reminded them that the banks are bound by Trust Act, Banking Companies Act and the Cr PC (criminal procedure code).

Dismissing the collateral banking practices as the most obsolete type of banking practice, the finance minister said emphasis should be given on the quality and the character of the investors and invest-

ment. He said recent survey showed that banks like Sonali Bank could not enforce collateral even in two cases out of hundred cases.

Termining the small and medium scale industries as the inherent strength of our economy, the finance minister urged the bankers to concentrate on small and medium scale investments.

The sponsors of the new banks requested permission for opening more than two branches during the first year of operation, arguing that it was necessary for the sake of viability.

Responding negatively, the Finance Minister said that "unit banking" practice was a more modern concept of banking rather than expanded banking practice with too many branches.

The meeting at the conference room of the Bangladesh Bank was attended by the Bank Governor Khorsheed Alam and Finance Secretary Nasimuddin Ahmed.

Lankan FM meets Prime Minister

The visiting Sri Lankan Foreign Minister at a meeting with Prime Minister Begum Khaleda Zia yesterday expressed Colombo's willingness for stronger ties with Bangladesh, reports UNB.

"We know your government had a very excellent relationship with late Sri Lankan President Premadasa. President Chandrika is also eager to have a much closer relationship with your country, Lakshman Kadirgamar, told Begum Zia during the talks at her office in the city.

The Sri Lankan Foreign Minister said the new government in Colombo is firmly committed to the peace initiatives with the LTTE while the people of Sri Lanka gave a clear mandate to it.

Kadirgamar sought support of the SAARC member-countries for success of the peace initiatives.

Begum Zia, the current chairperson of the seven-nation South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation, underlined the significance of the regional body in the next meeting of the Joint Economic Commission (JEC)

See Page 12 Col 7

Dhaka, Colombo agree to bolster political ties

Bangladesh and Sri Lanka yesterday agreed to bolster their existing close political cooperation for peace and security in the region, reports UNB.

The two countries decided this at the official talks held at the state guest house Meghna in the city.

During the talks entire gamut of bilateral relations in the fields of trade and economic cooperation as well as regional and international issues of common concern was discussed.

Foreign Minister ASM Mostafizur Rahman led an eight-member delegation at the meeting. The new Sri Lankan Foreign Minister, Lakshman Kadirgamar, who flew in the capital Sunday night on a three-day official visit, headed his country's four-member team at the talks.

The two sides at the meeting, which lasted about two hours, also decided to hold next meeting of the Joint Economic Commission (JEC)

Editorial on page 4

some time early next year. Established in 1985, the Bangladesh-Sri Lanka JEC had so far held three meetings.

The meeting, held in a friendly and cordial atmosphere, stressed the need for formation of a business council comprising the chambers of the two countries with a view to accelerating trade in private sector.

On the host side were also Foreign Secretary M R Osman, Commerce Secretary Mofazzal Karim, Additional Foreign Secretary Kazi Anwarul Masud, Director General (SAARC) at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs Ashfaqur Rahman, Bangladesh High Commissioner to Sri Lanka Shamsur Mobin Chowdhury and Director (South Asia) at the Foreign Ministry FA Shamun Ahmed.

The Lankan team included Foreign Secretary RCA Vandenberg, Sri Lankan acting High Commissioner in Bangladesh CR Jayasinge and

See Page 12 Col 7

Democracy Day today

BY Staff Correspondent

Today is December 6, the day soldier-turned-president HM Ershad was forced to resign four years ago at the height of a mass agitation, ending his nine-year autocratic rule.

The ruling Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP) and the opposition Awami League, Jamaat-e-Islami and different smaller parties will observe the day as 'Democracy Day'. Ershad's Jatiya Party will, however, observe the day as 'Constitution protection day'.

In observance of the Day, the parties will hold public meetings in the capital as well as in other parts of the country.

President Abdur Rahman Biswas, Prime Minister and BNP chairperson Begum Khaleda Zia and Leader of the Opposition Sheikh Hasina will attend the meeting.

President Biswas, Prime Minister and BNP chairperson Begum Khaleda Zia and Leader of the Opposition Sheikh Hasina will attend the meeting.

See Page 12 Col 8

NEWS BRIEFS

- Advice to change one-taka notes**
By Staff Correspondent
Bangladesh Bank in a press release Monday asked the people to change their one-taka notes with the newly introduced coins from the scheduled banks.
- The press release signed by FM Mokammel Hossain, Joint Director of the bank, said the one-taka notes, now in circulation, are unusable and harmful to health.
- Dhaka to take part in Doha exhibition**
Bangladesh will participate in an exhibition to be held at the Qatar university, Doha, from December 10-16. The exhibition is to project cultural aspects of the participating countries. The Bangladesh stall will display Bangladeshi handicraft silverware, art, jamdani saris, embroidery work, books, and food items, reports BSS.
- 60pc cast votes in Andhra Pradesh**
NEW DELHI, Dec 5: Millions braved threats of violence by Maoist guerrillas to vote today, as the curtain ran down on staggered Indian elections considered crucial for Prime Minister PV Narasimha Rao. More than 60 per cent of the 22 million eligible voters cast their ballot across half of Andhra Pradesh state amid unprecedented security, after the rebels threatened voters and contestants alike with death, state officials said, reports AFP.
- Demonstrators kill magistrate in Bihar**
PATNA, Dec 5: Demonstrators angered by the killing of five political party workers stoned to death a district magistrate in the eastern Indian state of Bihar today, police and witnesses said. Witnesses said supporters of the Bihar People's Party (BPP) dragged G Krishnaiyah out of his car in Muzaffarpur town and smashed his head with bricks and stones, reports Reuters.
- Thai envoy hosts reception**
The Thai ambassador in Bangladesh Saunthon Bidhyameth yesterday hosted a reception at his residence in Gulshan on the occasion of 67th birth anniversary of the King of Thailand Bhumibol Adulyadej and the National Day of Thailand. Ministers, political leaders, diplomats, high civil and military officials, journalists and elite attended the reception, reports BSS.

Political, power disruptions cost industries Tk 2766 cr a year

By Staff Correspondent

The industrial sector every year incurs an estimated loss of Tk 1656 crore due to repeated power failure and Tk 1110 crore for political disruptions, according to a survey by the Dhaka Chamber of Commerce and Industry (DCCI) released yesterday.

The survey conducted during the months of July and August last, covering 103 different types of industries, revealed that 87 per cent of the respondents felt normal production was hampered due to frequent power failure in the country.

At the same time, 72.8 per cent believed hartals and demonstrations were the major factors hindering production. As a solution to the power sector problems, 86 per cent favoured privatisation of the power sector.

The survey covered all sizes of industries and of various types such as garments, textiles, pharmaceuticals, jute mills, flour mills, engineering products and dry cell units.

While 44 per cent of these industries identified March to June as the peak months of power failure, 27.18 per cent

identified January to March as the peak months for disruption of production due to political disturbances.

Some 77 per cent of the entrepreneurs expressed their concern over unscheduled interruption of power supply. 66 per cent said they could not use the full capacity of the enterprises because of power failure.

Shortest sitting of JS

By Staff Correspondent

The current session of the Jatiya Sangsad (JS) had its shortest sitting yesterday with the Chair disposing of almost all the items on the order of the day within only about 45 minutes.

Deputy Speaker Humayun Khan Panni entered the House at 6:40 pm and adjourned the sitting at 7:25 pm.

Although the sitting was a brief one and the presence of MPs also comparatively less,

See Page 12 Col 1

Every month the industries lose more than five working days or 42 hours (8-hour day), because of power failure, resulting in an average production loss of 9.9 per cent at the same time. Due to political disruption, industries incur an estimated loss of 6.51 per cent of the total output, the survey said.

Nearly two thirds of the respondents (exporters) stated that they missed the delivery deadline due to power failure and 47 per cent lost their contracts due to the same reason.

While some one fourth believed that the power sector officials were corrupt, some 41 per cent found the officials to be unfriendly. A large number of entrepreneurs said that they had to pay 'extra' for getting power connection for their enterprises.

The respondents also felt that equipment and machinery were damaged for the poor power system and they had to bear unproductive labour cost — about 10.3 per cent of the total labour cost — due to the same reason. At the same time, political disruptions were

See Page 12 Col 8



VP Singh quits parliament

NEW DELHI, Dec 5: VP Singh, whose anti-corruption crusade drove the late Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi from office, has quit Parliament, complaining that corruption is still rife, reports AP.

Singh, who was prime minister for 11 months in 1990, gave a two-line resignation letter to Shivraj Patil, the speaker of the lower house of Parliament. He listed no reasons in the letter.

But at a news conference, Singh said his leadership is no longer needed. He claimed that the coalition of opposition parties that he launched five years will win elections that concluded Monday to two state legislatures in southern India. Results will be announced Friday.

Rebel Ansars unlikely to face court-martial

The rebellious Ansars, forced to surrender in a combined army, BDR and police operation Sunday, may face stringent legal action, official sources hinted yesterday, reports UNB.

But they are unlikely to be court-martialed as they are not under military rules, the sources said.

The Officer-in-Charge of Sabujbagh police station yesterday filed general diary under Section 54 against 630 of the Ansars yesterday.

Law enforcing agencies arrested 664 Ansars from the headquarters Sunday after quelling the 4-day revolt. They were sent to different prisons, including Gouripur and Sherpur sub-jails.

Meanwhile, 93 rebel Ansars of the 34 battalion in Nalitabari surrendered to the Sherpur district administration early yesterday.

The Ansars revolted for their seven-point demand, including regularisation of their job, raise in their low pay and retirement of the army men serving in lower posts of the force's command.

Police are reportedly looking for some BCS officers of Ansar cadre. Some officers

were arrested Sunday both from Shaifur Academy and Khilgaon HQ for allegedly fuelling the revolt.

A police source said three Ansar officers — Kazi Anwar Hossain, Rahmatullah and Azizur Rahman — arrested Sunday from the Ansars HQ, are in custody of Sabujbagh thana. "They will be charged," he said.

Security personnel are still reportedly guarding the Academy and all the 1800 female Ansars left the Academy after the revolt was crushed.

Ansar's DG, Major General Syed Baduzzaman, who visited the HQ yesterday, instructed all civilian staffers to join their duties from today.

Nowhere in important installations like Sangsad Bhaban, Hotel Sonargaon or in patrol duty alongwith police were seen any Ansar today.

Meanwhile, Home Minister Abdul Matin Chowdhury, who returned home Sunday night from Myanmar ending a 4-day official visit, passed a busy day yesterday holding talks with Directors General of BDR and Ansars.



A general view from the opening of the ninth. Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe summit in Budapest. — AFP photo

Bosnia tragedy shows the need for a secure Europe: Clinton

BUDAPEST, Dec 5: President Bill Clinton called on Bosnia's warring factions today to "stop spilling blood and make peace" and urged the Serbs to come to the negotiating table, reports Reuters.

"End your aggression, agree a ceasefire, settle your differences around the negotiating table," he told a security summit of more than 50 world leaders.

He said the need to build a united, free and secure Europe to which the United States was committed was demonstrated by the tragedy in Bosnia only some 300 miles away from the Hungarian capital where the summit is being held.

"We must act on its lessons. We must work to prevent future Bosnia," he told fellow heads of government and state at the opening ceremony of the 53-nation Conference on

Security and Cooperation in Europe.

Earlier, Clinton said that no nation would be allowed to veto plans to expand the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (NATO) eastwards.

No country outside will be allowed to veto expansion, Clinton told the security summit a day after Russian president Boris Yeltsin attacked plans to expand NATO.

Clinton said NATO was the 'bedrock' of European security but was changing as Europe changed with the growth of democracy and market economies in central and Eastern Europe.

We are concerned about the developments taking place in NATO — what is this going to mean for Russia? Yeltsin said.

Why sow the seeds of mistrust? After all, we are no longer enemies," Yeltsin said.

"Europe is in danger of plunging into a cold peace."

He suggested NATO was planning to take in Moscow's former satellites as a precaution against the possible collapse of democratic reforms in Russia.

"It is too soon to bury democracy in Russia," Yeltsin said.

Meanwhile, Ukraine formally renounced nuclear arms and ended a long dispute over the former Soviet atomic arsenal when it joined the Nuclear Non-proliferation Treaty (NPT) today.

Ukraine President Leonid Kuchma, in exchange for his country's adherence to the 1970 NPT, received security assurances from major powers, including the United States and Russia, at a ceremony attended by president Clinton and President Yeltsin.

Sunamganj boat mishap 20 bodies handed over to relatives

FROM Staff Correspondent

SYLHET, Dec 5: Twenty bodies recovered from the river Bouai in Jamalganj thana in Sunamganj district have been handed over to relatives last night by the district administration.

A mechanised boat carrying about fifty passengers from Bhatrab to Badaghat of Jamalganj thana collided head on with another boat and sank near Beguni Sunday.

The identified dead were Nanna Begum, 25, and her two sons — Saddam, 8, and Nasir Miah 2. — Karim Ali, 65, and Anama, 70, of Barohal village in Taherpur Dighi Khatun, 65, Ujjal Miah, 9, Narul 9 months), Palan Mia 9, Piyara Begum 22, and Bagam 95, of Yunuspur village. Sajeda Khatun 25 of Biswambarpur thana, Rubel 9, Rupun Nesa, 13, Alema Khatun 13, Zainal

See Page 12 Col 6