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NEWS BRIEFS

BDR protests BSF move
 Khulna, Oct 7: Indian border guards tried to fence off the frontier in Satkhira district with barbed wire on Friday, but the attempt failed in the face of BDR protest. Officials said the Border Security Force (BSF) tried to erect barbed-wire fence near Gazipur no-man's land. Bangladesh Rifles (BDR) Sector Commander officially lodged a protest today, reports UNB.



City's Mahakhali area during the first day yesterday of the 32-hour hartal in five divisional headquarters. — Star photo

First day passes off : 25 hurt in Khulna

Hartal paralyses life in 5 divisional HQs

The first day of the 32-hour hartal called by the major opposition parties in five divisional headquarters passed off by and large peacefully yesterday except for clashes in Khulna that left at least 25 people injured. The shutdown paralysed normal life and disrupted business activities in the capital and the other four cities. Sporadic incidents of violence were reported in Dhaka. The hartal hours passed off peacefully in Chittagong, Sylhet and Barisal, according to reports reaching Dhaka. Awami League, Jatiya Party and Jamaat-e-Islami called the 32-hour hartal to press their demand for a dissolution of parliament and holding of elections under a neutral caretaker government. The hartal started at 6 am yesterday and ends at 2 pm today. The three parties will hold separate post-hartal rallies in the city — Awami League at the Bangabandhu Avenue, Jatiya Party at the South gate of the Baitul Mukarram mosque and Jamaat at the north gate of the mosque. Senior leaders of the parties are expected to address the rallies. Rajshahi was exempted from the hartal in view of floods in the northern districts. In Dhaka, at least two people were injured in separate incidents of bomb blasts. On Masud Rana 25, a rickshawpuller, was seriously injured when some unidentified miscreants hurled a bomb near the VIP lounge of the Kamalapur railway station. According to the railway police, which entered a GD in this connection, the bomb missed a police officer by inches and struck Rana on his legs. Rana was admitted to the DMCH. A young man was also injured when he was hit by a

Naogaon, Rajshahi situation unchanged

Fresh areas in Bogra, Sirajganj flooded

The overall flood situation improved further in the northern districts yesterday but fresh areas reeled under flood water in Sirajganj and Bogra districts. Bogra-Natore road-link was snapped yesterday as flood water washed away a culvert. The situation in Rajshahi and Naogaon districts remained unchanged. Diarrhoea claimed one more life in Bogra and another in Naogaon yesterday. Over 1000 people have been attacked with diarrhoea in Bogra and another about 200 in Naogaon, according to our correspondents' reports. A UNB report from Sirajganj quoting official source said that 11 people with snake bites were admitted to Tarash Health Complex yesterday and the day before. Five of them died. The dead were identified as Hasina, (11), Abdul Rahman (37), Abdul Mannan (48), Rahmat Ali (56), and Rawshan Ara (34) of Deshigam, Magurabinod and Char Kushbari villages of Tarash Thana. A minor boy, Belayet, 7, See Page 12 Col 8

World Chess

Kasparov nears victory

NEW YORK, Oct 7: Titleholder Garri Kasparov coasted nearer to victory in the Professional Chess Association World Championships when he drew his 16th game with Viswanathan Anand after only 20 moves Friday, reports AP. With four games remaining, Kasparov leads 9.5 to 6.5 and requires only one more draw to retain his title. The winner of the contest must accumulate 10.5 points, but match rules state that in the event of a 10-10 tie Kasparov keeps his title. "I think Vishy just wants to go home. He's demoralised," said Australian grandmaster Ian Rogers. See Page 12 Col 1

Processions, rallies in city

By Staff Correspondent
 Awami League, Jatiya Party and Jamaat-e-Islami brought out processions and staged rallies in different parts of the city yesterday, the first day of the 32-hour hartal. The activists of these parties and their front organisations assembled on the road in front of the Jatiya Press Club from morning. They chanted anti-government slogans and demanded holding of general elections under a caretaker administration. Addressing a rally in front of the Awami League central office at Bangabandhu Avenue in the evening, party's president member Abdus Samad Azad said the BNP government must hand over

Withdraw hartal on humanitarian ground, urges BNP

By Staff Correspondent
 Acting Secretary General of the ruling Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP) Abdul Mannan Bhuiyan yesterday made an appeal to the agitating Opposition to withdraw its planned 96-hour country-wide hartal on 'humanitarian ground'. The three major opposition parties — Awami League, Jatiya Party and Jamaat-e-Islami — are scheduled to go for a 96-hour hartal from 6:00 am on October 16 if their demand for holding next general elections under a non-partisan caretaker government is not accepted. Expressing concern over the possible impact of the four-day hartal on the relief operations of the government in the flood-affected areas, Mannan Bhuiyan, who is Minister for Food and Agriculture, said, "I am really concerned about the fate of relief and rehabilitation programme of the government. See Page 12 Col 1

Snatching case Commercial asst of Beximco held

By Staff Correspondent
 Detective police arrested the commercial assistant of Beximco yesterday. He was earlier picked up in connection with the snatching of Tk 16.2 lakh of a Beximco firm from in front of Dhanmondi branch of IFIC Bank in the city on Thursday. On Friday, police arrested driver Badal of Beximco group. The arrested commercial assistant, Ahmed Golam Ehsan, is likely to be produced before the Chief Metropolitan Magistrate's (CMM) court today, police said, adding that they would pray for demand for further interrogation. Four armed men snatched the money from a microbus. See Page 12 Col 2

100 killed as massive quake hits Sumatra

PADANG (Indonesia), Oct 7: Tens of thousands of people prepared to spend the night in tents, cracked buildings and open grounds today after a massive earthquake killed at least 100 people in Indonesia's Sumatra Island, reports AP. The magnitude-7 quake that struck at 1:09 am (1809 GMT) ripped through a fertile valley in the south-central Sumatra province of Jambi, flattening houses, triggering landslides and overwhelming ill-equipped hospitals in the remote area. At least 252 people were injured, including 59 seriously, officials said. "We were all in deep sleep when the house started to shake and sway," said Ngatimin, a municipal worker. "I heard hysterical cries and screams... the lights went off and we were scrambling to get out in pitch darkness," said Ngatimin, contacted by telephone in Sungaipenuh. The town is 16 kilometers from the epicentre, and about 160 kilometers south-east of Padang, where the tremors were felt strongly without causing damage or casualties. Sungaipenuh is 750 kilometers northwest of Indonesia's capital, Jakarta. Police and civilian rescuers, hampered by heavy rains and poor communications, recovered 70 bodies from under the rubble of buildings and mounds of mud by nightfall when the search was called off. They will resume looking for more bodies tomorrow said Jambi governor's spokesman, Faud Jusuf. He said 4,280 homes and buildings have been destroyed or damaged. "We have to dig carefully, but we are racing against time," said a police official contacted by telephone in Sungaipenuh. He spoke on condition of anonymity. After the quake, most of Sungaipenuh's 40,000 people spent the rest of the night in the open as nine aftershocks shook the area, one with a magnitude of 5. Authorities later rigged up

Commentary
Time for PM's letter

By Mahfuz Anam
 Last Sunday, Prime Minister honoured us (five editors of national dailies) with an audience. At one stage of our frank and elaborate discussion Begum Zia had suggested that she would be willing to write to Sheikh Hasina if we could guarantee an honourable reply. In fact her exact words were "If all it takes is a letter from me to solve the present political crisis, then I will write one tomorrow." Well, we think time has come for that letter to be written. On Friday, speaking to the journalists at Rajshahi, Awami League Chief Sheikh Hasina said that she would reply to any letter from the Prime Minister. AL chief's statement opens up the possibility of an exchange of letters between the two leaders, that might, and we think will lead to a dialogue. Given sincerity on both sides, of course. A simple letter of invitation, asking the opposition to sit for a dialogue, is no longer enough to break the stalemate. Both sides know each other's position enough to realise that such a move will be a non-starter. The PM's letter should contain specifics about the agenda for the dialogue. This subject was also touched upon during our (the five editors) meeting with the Prime Minister. At one point Begum Zia had asked "Well if I do write, what should be in my letter? What can I say that I have not already said?" For one thing, there never has been any written invitation for a dialogue from her, we pointed out. We also ventured the suggestion that her declaration to step down 30 days

PM ends visit to flood-hit dists

SIRAJGANJ, Oct 7: The Prime Minister today said large-scale rehabilitation and food-for-work programmes would be started soon after the recession of flood waters, reports UNB. Begum Khaleda Zia gave the assurance to the flood-stricken people while visiting the vast flooded and river erosion-hit areas of the district where thousands of villagers have been rendered homeless. During her five-hour trip on board a mechanised boat, she saw the extent of damage done to houses, standing crops, and educational institutions. Distributing huge relief goods among the victims, the Prime Minister said: "I have come to stand by you at the time of your immense sufferings. We share your distress." Begum Zia first flew to Sirajganj on the last leg of her four-day tour of the flood-ravaged northern districts. See Page 12 Col 2

Govt to write off remaining agri loans upto Tk 5000

The government will write off loans of the farmers who were deprived of exemption of agricultural loans upto Tk 5,000 declared by the government in 1991, reports UNB. Official sources said the Ministry of Finance issued a directive to this effect on October 2. The Bangladesh Bank has already been asked to implement it. According to the directive, the loans which fulfilled the criteria, of the government's waiver benefit but were "mistakenly left out" would now be written off. Those who have paid their loans will not get the benefit. The measure will cost the government and banks about Tk 18 crore which would be

KL to hire Bangladeshi workers thru' BOESL

KUALA LUMPUR, Oct 7: Malaysia announced new regulations for hiring workers from Bangladesh and Indonesia today. The rules will go into immediate effect, reports AP. New regulations for workers from Pakistan, Myanmar, Thailand and other countries were being negotiated with their respective embassies and governments. Deputy Home Affairs Minister Megat Junid Megat Ayob told a press conference. The new regulations were aimed to curb worker exploitation, Megat said. One of the regulations stipulate that Bangladeshi and Indonesian workers can be hired only from their respective countries. He said Bangladeshi workers could only be hired through the Bangladesh Overseas Employment and Services Limited (BOESL) and Indonesian workers via PT Binajasa Abadikarya (PT Bjak). He said at present many agencies here and abroad handled the recruitment of these workers and sometime on arrivals they found they had no jobs, were not given the jobs, they were hired for or were given less pay. There are about 800,000 foreign workers in Malaysia with work permits, and another 300,000 illegal immigrants. See Page 12 Col 3

Rajuk Commercial Plot Auction Notice
 Most ideally located Residential-Commercial Plot No. 6 and 7 measuring more or less 334.57 Sqr. Metre (5 Katha) each on Road No 113/A at Gulshan, Dhaka will be allotted for 99 years lease on open auction. Applications on prescribed form to be obtained with terms and conditions from Janata Bank, Rajuk Bhaban Branch, Dhaka on payment of Tk. 500 (Five hundred) only in cash for each set (non-refundable) and will be received by the Deputy Director (Estates) from the intending bidders up to 2:00 PM on 22-10-95. The auction will be held on 23-10-95 in the Conference Room, 3rd floor of the Rajuk Bhaban, Dhaka at 10:00 AM.
 Chairman
 DFP-24215-4/10 Rajdhani Unnayan Karttripakha Dhaka.
 G-1459

Tough time for illegal immigrants in US

From Masud Hasan Khan
 WASHINGTON, Oct 7: Life is getting tough for the illegal immigrants in the United States. Those who are now planning to enter or stay in America illegally, earn green-backs and return home rich, may take a deep breath and think of choosing any other country. The US Immigration and Naturalisation Service (INS) is conducting a nationwide drive against illegal immigrants, and those arrested are being fast deported to their countries. Besides, the Congress is now considering bills that would reduce illegal immigrants' ability to get job in the US. Things are getting difficult for the Bangladeshi illegal immigrants too. Ten Bangladeshis have been deported since August last year, according to the INS. They were arrested between August 1, 1994 and August 31, 1995 in various sweeps against illegal immigrants, INS officials said. No Bangladeshi, however, arrested or deported in the Operation SouthPAW, the latest and largest immigration enforcement drive in the southern states, INS spokesman in Washington Daniel Kane, reportedly said. INS Commissioner Doris Meissner said Operation SouthPAW (PAW-Protecting America's Workers), removed more than 4,000 illegal workers from 45 foreign countries. Nearly all of them were deported, press reports quoted her as saying. The SouthPAW drive was conducted between June 5 and June 29, 1995 in Georgia, Alabama, Tennessee, Arkansas, Florida and Mississippi states. "The objectives (of the SouthPAW) were to ensure job opportunities to legal workers... and remove illegal workers from work sites and from the United States," the INS Commissioner told a news conference in Washington recently. Nearly 4,00,000 people enter the US illegally each year, according to a private centre for immigration studies. But the INS put the figures at roughly 3,00,000 a year. Meanwhile, Tennessee newspapers widely reported

3 more items banned for import under PSI

After cigarette, three more items — powdered milk, cumin seed and black pepper — have been banned for import under Pre-Shipment Inspection (PSI) amid growing suspicion about manipulations under the system, reports UNB. The National Board of Revenue (NBR) has already issued a notification to this effect, said a senior NBR official. The restriction will, henceforth, allow import of the items only under traditional systems where duties are charged on the basis of tariff values. The ban signals the authorities' concern about alleged evasion of revenue on imports under the PSI. The government allowed all imports under the system since November last year expecting that it would help to plug revenue leakage. When contacted, NBR chairman Dr Akbar Ali Khan told UNB last night that the PSI restriction on four items came after finding evidences of dubious invoice values. Sources at the NBR said Customs officials at the entry points were detecting increasing number of dubious invoices in imports under the PSI. The Board is now evaluating the impact of import operations under PSI in view of increasing allegation of malpractices, they added. Recently, the BCS (Customs & Excise) Association also resented the system saying it provided scope for evading revenue legally. In a memorandum, prepared for submission to the higher authorities, the association said the introduction of PSI resulted in huge revenue loss to the exchequer. In imports under the PSI, inspection companies, registered with the NBR, inspect quality, quantity and prices of importables prior to shipment, and then issue certificates against service charge. Customs authorities collect duty and tax on the value quoted in the PSI certificate. Five internationally reputed inspection agencies are now registered with the NBR. Importers have shown increasing interest in the PSI, specially for imports of higher duty items, apparently to avoid harassments by Customs.

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