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NEWS BRIEFS

Extended train service

Bangladesh Railway will run the Ekota and Turna Nishitha intercity trains today and tomorrow on their respective off-days. The decision was taken to facilitate journey of the stranded passengers due to hartal, said a press release, reports UNB.

Firearms licence renewal from Dec 1

Renewal of licences of all firearms of Dhaka district including the city will start from December 1 to January 31, 1996. The firearms holders have been asked to submit the main copy of the challan after depositing renewal fee with Bangladesh Bank, reports BSS.

Voter ID cards distributed

PIROJPUR, Nov 13: Laminated voter identity cards were distributed among the voters of Kawkhali thana in the district today without any date of issue. Twentyfive voters received ID cards which showed no date of issue. When contacted, the district Election Officer could not give any satisfactory clarification about the lapse, reports UNB.

Rickshawpullers protest killing

PABNA, Nov 13: Rickshawpullers held a demonstration in the town today protesting the killing of one Ramjan Ali last Saturday. Ramjan Ali, a rickshawpuller, was stabbed to death by some unidentified miscreants in the town's BSCIC area on Saturday night. His body was recovered by police on Sunday morning, reports UNB.

IU exams on hartal days

The Islamic University has decided to hold examinations during the hartal period to minimise the sessions jam and classes will be held from 12:30 to 4:30 pm.

BNP acting SG hints at press confce JS may be dissolved if Opposition declines to join by-polls

By Staff Correspondent

Acting Secretary General of the ruling BNP Abdul Mannan Bhuiyan yesterday hinted that Parliament might be dissolved if the Opposition does not agree, by November 22, to participate in by-elections to 147 vacant seats.

As per constitutional provisions, the schedule for the by-polls has to be announced by November 22.

"There would be no by-polls if the Opposition does not agree to take part in it. We're not interested in the by-polls. They (the Opposition) can participate in it provided they want a solution within the ambit of the Constitution", Mannan Bhuiyan, who is also Minister

of Food and Agriculture, told newsmen at his Bailey Road official residence in the evening.

He mentioned that the Opposition's participation in the by-polls was mandatory if they agreed to the 'five plus five formula' for an interim government, headed by a BNP lawmaker, for holding the next general elections.

The BNP leader told the hurriedly-called press conference that they would wait for the Opposition to contest the by-elections until the last day for announcement of the schedule for it.

Replying to a question on the holding of fresh general elections after Parliament

was dissolved, the BNP acting Secretary General said, "We'll decide the date in consultation with all concerned (political parties) and we hope they would contest it."

Asked what steps the government would take if the Opposition boycotted the general elections, he replied, "We've Constitutional obligation to hold general elections. We can't avoid it. We'll follow the Constitution."

Mannan Bhuiyan, however, viewed that chances of a compromise with the Opposition would remain even after the "Opportunity to utilise the by-polls was over". Explaining, he said, "We can

evolve ways to ensure free and fair elections provided the main purpose of the Opposition demand for a caretaker government was to guarantee fair polls."

At the news conference, copies of Prime Minister Begum Khaleda Zia's third letter to Awami League chief Sheikh Hasina was distributed among newsmen. The letter was sent to Hasina Sunday night.

About the letter, Mannan Bhuiyan said "We hope they (AL) would call off their harts and sit for a dialogue to find out a solution to the political crisis within the Constitutional framework." See Page 12 Col 7



Woman police picking up Awami League leader Matiya Chowdhury when she fainted during clashes at Farmgate in the city during hartal hours yesterday. — Star photo

Matia Chy, 50 others injured during hartal Pickets clash with police in city

By Staff Correspondent

At least 50 people including Awami League central leader Matiya Chowdhury were injured in clashes between pickets and police in the capital on the third day yesterday of the six-day hartal programme of the major opposition parties.

Police picked up 22 pickets in the city, 17 of them from the Farmgate area where at least 30 people were injured in a series of clashes between police and pickets, mostly Awami League activists, Matiya Chowdhury, who fainted and fell on the road during the clashes was later admitted to a near-by clinic.

The hartal hours passed off by and large peacefully in other parts of the country.

Awami League, Jatiya party and Jamaat-e-Islami called the hartal to press for holding general elections under a neutral caretaker government.

Flood-hit Rajshahi Division, however, was exempted from the purview of the country-wide hartal.

Yesterday's hartal was observed from 6 am to 2 pm in the city and from 6 am to noon in the rest of the country. The opposition will ob-

serve six-hour hartals from 6 am throughout the country everyday from today till Thursday.

The clashes in the Farmgate area ensued when police picked up two pickets when they tried to damage rickshaws near the Police Box there at around 11 am. Other pickets protested the police action and brought out a procession which was led by AL leader Matiya Chowdhury.

Police resorted to indiscriminate baton charge on the processionists. At this stage, Matiya came forward and tried to prevent the riot police. The police encircled her (Matiya) and continued to beat her fellow activists. While the clash was going on, Matiya fell down and fainted.

Women police picked her up and took her to a nearby clinic where she was admitted. Attended doctors said she fainted as her blood pressure went up during the clash.

Awami League workers, later at about 11:45 am, brought out a protest procession and held a rally near the Soudia Market at Farmgate.

Police again swooped on See Page 12 Col 4

Radical group seeks ouster of US forces

Car bomb blast rocks Riyadh: 6 killed, 60 hurt

RIYADH, Nov 13: A massive car bomb today devastated a building used here by US military officials to train the Saudi National Guard, killing six people, including four Americans, and wounding 60 others, reports AFP.

The bombing was claimed by a group demanding the departure of US forces from Saudi Arabia. "The attacks will continue until the departure of the last American soldier," an anonymous caller said in two telephone calls to AFP.

He said he belonged to the previously unknown group, Tigers of the Gulf.

The explosion killed four Americans, a Filipino and another person whose nationality was not known, an interior ministry spokesman told the official Saudi Press Agency.

Most of the 60 wounded were lightly injured, he added.

"Security services began investigating the incident to determine the perpetrators of this crime and the kind of explosive used," he said.

The explosion occurred in a parking lot surrounded by residential buildings in the Alia neighbourhood.

US Embassy spokeswoman Meg Gibson said "it was probably a car bomb," describing it as a "massive explosion." "Some Americans have been killed. Some have been injured. The Saudi government is investigating," she added.

In Washington, Pentagon spokesman Lt Commander Scott Campbell confirmed the four American dead, adding: "There are a lot of See Page 12 Col 7

Rawshan seeks to stay with ailing husband in jail

By Nazmul Ashraf

Rawshan Ershad, wife of deposed president H M Ershad, has sought permission from Prime Minister Begum Khaleda Zia to stay with her ailing husband at the Dhaka Central Jail, sources close to her (Rawshan) said.

Rawshan's application seeking the permission, written in English, was sent to the PM's office through a special messenger on Saturday last, they added.

Ershad has been suffering from viral hepatitis since November 4.

In her application, Rawshan, a presidium member of the Jatiya Party, expressing her grave concern over Ershad's deteriorating health condition said, "In respect of proper nursing, which would be of vital importance for his recovery, I would like to request you to allow me to stay See Page 12 Col 1

PM has no intention to solve crisis: Hasina

By Staff Correspondent

Awami League President Sheikh Hasina said yesterday that the Prime Minister had no intention to solve the political crisis through discussion and she was resorting to various means to confuse the people and cling to power.

Addressing a meeting of the DCC word commissioners from the party and thana level leaders at the party central office, the AL chief noted that Prime Minister Begum Khaleda Zia had repeatedly rejected the proposal for a non-partisan neutral caretaker government saying that there was no

neutral and non-partisan person and if there was, he could not govern the country.

"By such statements, the Prime Minister has closed all doors for dialogue to reach a consensus," Hasina said.

"Excepting BNP, all opposition parties and the people of the country want elections under a caretaker government. Because people want to exercise their voting rights systematically and safely," she said.

But Hasina said the Prime Minister does not want to See Page 12 Col 8

Raphel in India to review Kashmir situation

NEW DELHI, Nov 13: US Assistant Secretary of State Robin Raphel today met with a former chief minister of Kashmir and senior officials for a review of the situation in the northern state, reports AFP.

Raphel, who is on her third visit to India this year, held talks with former chief minister Farooq Abdullah, who heads the regional National Conference, on the prospects of conducting elections in Kashmir.

Further details of Raphel's talks with the Kashmiri politician or other senior officials were not immediately available.

125 more 'deportees' from Pakistan held at ZIA

Star Report

Another 125 people allegedly deported from Pakistan arrived at the Zia International Airport (ZIA) yesterday morning.

According to the law enforcing agency officials, all 125 people who arrived aboard an Emirates flight from Karachi were carrying forged travel documents.

On their arrival at ZIA the immigration officials detected the forged travel documents and handed them

over to Cantonment police. They were later produced before the Chief Metropolitan Magistrate's court.

Sources at the Dhaka Central Jail last night said that the returnees from Pakistan were expected to be sent to the prison some time in the night.

The first batch of 157 returnees who arrived on Saturday continued to be detained at the Dhaka Central See Page 12 Col 8

50 killed in Nigerian plane crash

LAGOS, Nov 13: At least 50 people were killed today when a Nigeria Airways plane crash-landed at Kaduna Airport in northern Nigeria and burst into flames, an official said, reports Reuter.

"There are at least 50 dead and the number is growing," said the official at the Federal Civil Aviation Authority. About 120 people were on board the Boeing 737, he added. See Page 12 Col 2

Rooppur N-power plant Project being revived after 34 yrs

By Govinda Shil

The government has decided to revive the proposed Rooppur Nuclear Power Plant Project (RNPP) after 34 years of its inception in 1961.

Three high level meetings had taken place in this regard in the last couple of months, official sources said.

The sources further said that the government had authorised the Bangladesh Atomic Energy Commission (BAEC) to find out potential investor for the project.

BAEC has been in touch with a few foreign investors and has already received a few offers. However, the search is still on for more better ones.

The country has also sought technical cooperation from the International

Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) for the implementation of the RNPP.

Being a signatory to the nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT), the country is eligible for asking IAEA's technical cooperation in this regard, the sources said.

IAEA had agreed to help the country in its initiatives for peaceful use of nuclear technology.

"The authority is now seeking foreign investments for the implementation of the proposed RNPP," said an official of the BAEC, adding that the country has no other option but to go for nuclear power in the medium and long run.

He said that considering the safety measures of the proposed plant, the govern-

ment had ruled out the possibility of buying a 550 MW Russian reactor for which Russia sent several proposals.

The country's lone and proposed nuclear project is to be revised and would be a 600 MW one instead of a 150 MW-project, the sources said.

The Power Development Board (PDB) has an installed capacity of about 2900 MW, but it is actually producing around 2000 MW against the present demand for 3500 MW approximately, sources said. Most of the plants are gas-fired which cannot utilise their cent per cent capacity as the machinery have become old.

"Again, the country, where the demand for power is increasing at a rate of 300 MW See Page 12 Col 4

Hasina to delay replying to PM's latest letter

By Staff Correspondent

Awami League President Sheikh Hasina is likely to delay replying to BNP Chairperson and Prime Minister Begum Khaleda Zia's latest letter, delivered to her Sunday night, according to party sources.

Hasina discussed with her senior party colleagues the content of the PM's letter at her Dhanmondi office last night.

Departing from the office after the meeting, Hasina told the waiting newsmen, "The PM took eight days to reply to my letter... would it be improper if I take more time?"

Earlier, the AL General Secretary Zillur Rahman told the reporters that a reply to the PM's letter would be sent See Page 12 Col 6

EC likely to fund Tk 750 cr integrated rural town development project

By R M Titumir

The European Commission (EC) envisages an outlay of about Taka 750 crore for an "integrated package of projects" to develop the rural towns in the country over the next few years.

"To this end, a study will be undertaken to investigate and analyse the key issues and problems confronting rural towns, following which actual projects and level of investment will be ascertained," according to official sources.

The study, the first of a three-phased process, is expected to start January next. It will try to find causes and

consequences of underdevelopment, institutional and management problems, and deficiencies in infrastructure and services in rural towns.

According to an EC aide memoire, initially six towns will be brought under the programme which will be for a period of two to three years. "This would constitute the practical learning phase of assistance." The project will then be expanded, said sources in the Finance Ministry.

The EC, in its aide memoire, observes that the amounts granted to the Pourashavas and Thanas and

the ways of its utilisation, have done "little" to overcome existing deficiencies, let alone to equip them to realise their full economic potential.

"It may be necessary to allocate anywhere from five to ten times more funds per year from EC assistance for a period of at least two years per town covered to make a significant contribution to urban economic take-off," says the EC aide memoire.

An EC "illustrative" estimate of investment programme of Taka 750 crore, as it adds, would permit an average allocation of Taka 7

crore per annum for two years for each of 20 smaller newer Pourashavas and an average of Taka 7 crore per annum for two years for each of about 60 Thana headquarters.

At present, the national Pourashava block grant of about Taka 120 crore comes to an average allocation of about Taka 1 crore per Pourashava. A Taka 200 crore per year block grant for Thanas comes to an average allocation of Taka 43 lakh per Thana.

Dwelling on the nature of the EC assistance, it said that it would be "unrealistic" for See Page 12 Col 3

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