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NEWS BRIEFS

Khaleda returns

Prime Minister Begum Khaleda Zia returned to Dhaka last night at the end of her 26-hour hectic Dhaka-Chittagong train march. Begum Zia also addressed a public meeting at the Outer Stadium at the port city of Chittagong after the train march, reports BSS.

UP member chopped to death

SIRAJGANJ, Dec 1: A UP member was allegedly chopped to death by his rivals in Sadar thana today. Police said unknown miscreants called Mokaddas Ali, 42, the member of Kaliaharipur Union Parishad, out of his residence at about 9 am and killed him beside a pond nearby his residence, reports UNB.

Phensidyl seized

SIRAJGANJ, Dec 1: Police recovered 800 bottles of Indian phensidyl from Syeedabad ghat in the river Jamuna on Thursday night. Acting on a tip-off, police challenged a boat hired by a group of alleged smugglers and recovered the contraband worth about Tk 1 lakh. Boatman Shahidul Islam said that they were heading towards Dhaka with the smuggled goods from India through Jamtoli railway station, reports UNB.

Hartal observed at Kulaura

From Staff Correspondent
SYLHET, Dec 1: A dawn-to-dusk hartal was observed at Kulaura thana headquarters under Moulvibazar district yesterday demanding an automatic telephone exchange in the area. All shops were closed, vehicles were off the roads and the trains were detained at the station for several hours. However, there was no untoward incident.

Woman crushed under wheels of minibus

From Staff Correspondent
SYLHET, Dec 1: A woman was crushed under the wheels of a speeding minibus at Patharia on Dera-Madanpur road in Sunamganj yesterday. The agitated villagers put barricade on the road for two hours.

Some 4000 vehicles stranded at Aricha Bus services with 36 dists suspended

From Our Correspondent

MANIKGANJ, Dec 1: The inter-district bus services between Dhaka and 36 northern and southern districts were suspended for three-days from today to ease the congestion at Aricha Ghat.

The congestion has been created after disruption of ferry services in the river Jamuna.

The ferry services were disrupted on Nov 27 due to rapid fall in water level and emergence of shoals in Padma-Jamuna.

Some 3500 trucks and 200 buses with over 20,000 passengers including women and children remained stranded today at Aricha-Daulatdia and Aricha-Nagarbari Ghats.

UNB adds: The ferry service connects the capital with 36 northern and southern districts through the three ghats.

Sources said 1,081 vehicles were ferried today on Aricha-Daulatdia and Aricha-Nagarbari routes as each roll-on-roll-off ferry carried 15

vehicles instead of 25. Normally 2600 vehicles are ferried everyday.

Local people said many passengers were crossing the rivers Jamuna and Padma by engine boats risking their life.

The ferry communication was disrupted for five hours on November 27 after two ferries ran aground in chars in the Jamuna, three kilometres off Aricha ferry ghat. It was also disrupted for six hours on Wednesday night.

See Page 12 Col 3

1200 rly wagons stranded on both sides of Jamuna

More than 1200 railway wagons, laden with cargo, got stranded on both sides of the Jamuna after ferry services between Bahadurabad Ghat and Teestamukh Ghat were suspended last week as a result of falling water level, reports UNB.

Railway sources in Dhaka said that the congestion at the two railway ferry terminals occurred as new wagons were queuing up every day for crossing the river.

The ferry services were suspended on November 25 following a drastic fall in water level of the Jamuna. As a result, railway communication was disrupted.

See Page 12 Col 7

Macro-economic stability may be reversed World Bank resumes public expenditure review

By RM Titumir and Inam Ahmed

The World Bank (WB), after a break of six years, has resumed the public expenditure review (PER) against the backdrop of expansionary current expenditure which, it says, may reverse the macro-economic stability.

Underscoring the urgency of the review, the WB says that recent developments in the country have 'slowed down' the progress in checking the current expenditure and channelling resources to poverty linked projects.

The government's expenditure is now inching towards an upward trend and at the same time the locally funded projects have increased significantly which, according to the WB, requires a close monitoring of the capital investment programme.

"With the expansionary trends, the fiscal deficit

could rise in FY 96 to seven per cent of GDP, reversing the gains of the past few years", the Bank says.

The proposed PER will be "forward looking" and focused on the programmes for FY 96 and 97, reinforcing the 'gains' under the Bank's Public Resource Management Adjustment Credit (PRMAC) of 1992 initiated after the last PER in 1989.

Since the prospects for soft term foreign lending and competition in the field intensifies, the review, See Page 12 Col 1

BNP factions clash in N'ganj: 30 injured

From Our Correspondent

NRAYANGANJ, Dec 1: At least 30 people were injured, six seriously, in an armed clash between activists of two rival factions of BNP and Juba Dal here this morning.

More than 100 gunshots were fired and over 150 cocktails blasted during the clash that lasted for about two hours from 10:30 am which created panic in Mondolpara, Jimkhana, DIT Market and No 2 railgate areas of the town.

See Page 12 Col 6

PM's letter yet to be delivered

By Staff Correspondent

Awami League chief Sheikh Hasina was yet to receive a letter from the Prime Minister until 9 pm yesterday, according to a party source. Meanwhile, Jatiya Party acting Secretary General, Anwar Hossain Monju had talks with Hasina and other top AL leaders at the Awami League office last night.

Ershad writing memoirs

Star Report

H M Ershad has started writing memoirs. According to his family sources, the book will contain some untold stories of historic importance besides anecdotes and incidents during his nine years' rule. Ershad started writing the book for sometime, till he fell ill on November 4. He is now suffering from viral hepatitis at the Dhaka Central Jail.

Elect BNP to prevent enchainment: PM

From Staff Correspondent

CHITTAGONG, Dec 1: Prime Minister and BNP chief Begum Khaleda Zia today called upon the people to vote her party to power in the coming elections to prevent "renewed enchainment of the nation" and uphold the independence and sovereignty.

The next elections will be the 'most crucial' for the nation as it is being held in the 25th year of the independence, she noted.

The Prime Minister was addressing a public meeting at the Outer Stadium at the end of her whistle-stop train march to the port city from Dhaka that began on Thursday. On her way, she addressed a series of public gatherings.

The train carrying the PM reached Chittagong railway station at 1:30 PM.

Begun Zia said that the opposition was afraid of elections as they knew what might happen to them if elections were held.

"They (the Opposition) will have explain to the people at the time of seeking votes how they have destroyed the economy by calling hartals for six hours to six days, how many vehicles they damaged and how the old men were assaulted on the roads," she said.

"They even did not agree See Page 12 Col 4

New budgetary process awaits 'pilot test'

By Govinda Shail

A new process in which ministries will prepare their budgets is going to be 'pilot tested' from next fiscal year (1996-97).

The goal of the proposed budgetary process is to improve financial management by introducing a cost-effective process, according to official sources. If the pilot project is successful, the process will be fully implemented in fiscal 1997-98.

The project, styled 'Reforms in Budgeting and Expenditure Control (RIBEC)' is being jointly financed by the British Overseas Development Administration (BODA). The BODA is providing 15 million US dollars for the project.

Officials of the RIBEC said that they had a meeting with the finance ministry on November 28, where the ministry agreed to install computers in the different ministries, preferably from January next.

The officials told The Daily Star that the new budget procedure would be more transparent and informative and focus on managerial responsibility within ministries and divisions. The process would also ensure better use of planning tools to allocate resources at the optimum See Page 12 Col 8

Bangabazar fire: Big bang raises questions

By Reaz Ahmad and Mizan Ali

The committees formed to probe last Monday's fire incident at Bangabazar in the city have not taken any sample of the ruins for testing, although experts on fire incidents did not rule out the possibility of a sabotage.

Many people in the area including fire brigade personnel heard a big bang just after the four markets there had caught fire.

Local people and fire fighters had said that the sound appeared to be like that of a transformer explosion. But Fire Service and Civil Defence (FSCD) authorities later confirmed that no transformer burst in the locality on that day.

The experts, on the other hand, ruled out the possibility of any sort of dust explosion, saying, such incidences usually occur in big jute or yarn mills where much heat is generated within a set aero-atmospheric pressure.

The Home Ministry formed a one-member committee while the FSCD constituted a five-member committee to investigate the fire incident, the biggest in the city in recent times.

Chemical analysis of fire ruins is usually done to find out causes of fire. The FSCD authorities, however, conducted a search in the locality on that day.

See Page 12 Col 8

Elephants raid 7 Netrakona villages

NETRAKONA, Dec 1: A herd of wild elephants in a series of nocturnal raids caused extensive damage to crops and property in the seven border belt villages of Kalmakanda thana under Netrakona district during the last one week, reports BSS.

The seven border belt villages are Pasgao, Hathibara, Chanralinga, Bethgara, Langura, Kongcathi and Cengre.

The reports reaching here from the remote villages said, the wild elephants damaged standing crops including aman paddy and vegetable on about 600 acres of land and over a dozen of kutcha houses in their night raids in the

See Page 12 Col 6

CIA funding fundamentalists in Pakistan, says Benazir

ISLAMABAD, Dec 1: Pakistani Prime Minister Benazir Bhutto in an escalating conflict with Islamic fundamentalists today accused parts of the Muslim clergy of being "Western agents" in a frontal attack against extremism, reports AFP.

The prime minister, who until now has avoided a direct confrontation with Muslim extremists, said many of the Islamic groups operating in Pakistan were indirectly supported by the US Central Intelligence Agency (CIA).

The real Western agents are these so-called elements totting their guns bought with Central Intelligence Agency funds and running their groups through CIA

money given for 'Jihad' in Afghanistan. Benazir told an international writers' conference on Thursday.

Fundamentalists have labelled Benazir an "American agent", a derisive term in religious circles where being associated with the West is a kin to being anti-Muslim.

Benazir had been avoiding a clash with religious parties who despite holding just eight seats in the 217-member National Assembly are capable of mobilising the masses against the government.

The prime minister's late father Zulfikar Ali Bhutto was overthrown in 1977 after the Islamic clergy rallied Muslims among Pakistan's

130 million population against his government.

She has also been steering wide of confrontation with the country's most powerful political and religious organisation, the Jamaat-e-Islami, which has support in parliament, followers in the army and numerous overseas links.

Benazir survived a reported coup attempt in September when dozens of army officers were arrested.

The verbal assault comes after a recent crackdown against Islamic extremist parties.

Hundreds of party leaders and militants have been arrested and a Karachi court on See Page 12 Col 7

Plantation at Ramna Batomul

By Morshed Ali Khan

The lush green open space in front of the Ramna Batomul, a traditional open-air dais, for cultural functions, has been covered by planting saplings.

A total of 117 saplings have been planted at the open space, at a corner of the Ramna Park in the city, by the Department of Arboury Culture under the Public Works Department. The work was completed recently.

This has created anger among many including cultural activists. The Batomul (the shade of a banyan tree), has been used for various cultural activities.

See Page 12 Col 1

Biman's weekly flight to Barisal from tomorrow

Star Report

Bangladesh Biman and Aero Bengal, the only private airline operating in some domestic routes, are poised for a competition in domestic air service.

Aero Bengal started STOL (short take off and landing) service in the Dhaka-Barisal route on July 16 this year. Aero Bengal got provisional air transport operating licence (PATOL) from the Civil Aviation Authority of Bangladesh (CAAB) more than two years back.

Bangladesh Biman is going to start a weekly flight to Barisal tomorrow with a one-way fare of Taka 600 against Aero Bengal's Taka 950.

When contacted, Dr H M B Iqbal, chairman of the Aero

Bengal said it is not fair on the part of the authorities to start Biman flight in the route where we are already operating.

After starting flight, in Dhaka-Barisal and Dhaka-Shamshernagar routes, Iqbal said, "we sought the authorities' permission to expand our services to Chittagong and Cox's Bazar but recently the authorities denied us permission."

Meanwhile, sources in the CAAB also confirmed to The Daily Star that the Civil Aviation Authority recently denied permission to Aero Bengal to start flights in the routes, where the national flag carrier is already in operation. See Page 12 Col 7



Plantation around Ramna Batomul.

— Star photo

Fair polls far cry as PM using state machinery for BNP: Hasina

By Staff Correspondent

Awami League chief Sheikh Hasina yesterday said there cannot be a fair election under the BNP because Prime Minister Begum Khaleda Zia is using the state-owned Radio-TV and the administration for campaigning for her party.

"She is heading an interim government after dissolution of Parliament but is using the whole government machinery for campaigning for the party," Hasina said. How election can be fair under the BNP? she asked. In a statement yesterday, the AL chief also alleged that the PM was also using the state-owned transports at will for party See Page 12 Col 3

Young man shot dead in city

By DMCH Correspondent

A young man was shot dead at South Goran under Shabujbagh thana in the city on Thursday night.

Anwar Hossain Sikder Montu, 25, son of one Ismail Sikder of Mirjaganj, Patuakhali, died on the spot when a group of unidentified gunmen shot him in his chest and back at about 11 pm. Montu was resident of 4/1 Meradia at Sipahibagh in the city.

Sources alleged that Montu, a contractor, was murdered sequel to a previous enmity with his rivals in business. However, police investigation could not ascertain the actual motive of the killing till last night.

The armed gang called Montu from his relative's house at South Goran at about 10:45 pm. Later police recovered Montu's body from near his relative's residence.

No one was arrested in this connection till last night. Montu's brother Habibur Rahman filed a case with the Shabujbagh thana, sources said.

One held with arms near White House

WASHINGTON, Dec 1: The secret service arrested a man claiming to be a preacher near the White House on weapons charges today after a rifle, knives and ammunition were found in his car, reports Reuters.

The secret service identified the man as Melvin Doyle Glover, about 60, who a spokesman said appeared to have been living in his car.

He was stopped in the car with Texas plates after it went through a prohibited zone near Pennsylvania avenue in front of the White House.

The avenue has been blocked to motor vehicle See Page 12 Col 5

Spanish FM Javier Solana new NATO Secy-Gen

BRUSSELS, Dec 1: Spanish Foreign Minister Javier Solana was appointed as Secretary-General of the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation today. Spanish ambassador Carlos Miranda told reporters, reports Reuters.

"The 16 support Solana," Miranda told reporters after an informal meeting of the alliance's ambassadors. "This is a very good and important day for Spain."