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Inside Today

Article

Trade Liberalisation and Environment

Our regular columnist Abdul Bayes draws comparison between growth of trade and environmental degradation

Improving the Law and Order

M Arshad Ali, an educationist looks deep into the causes leading to the deterioration of law and order
Page 4

Focus

Student politics: The problem of stakes; and Higher and tertiary education in Australia.

Page 5

International

India slams US for launching missile attack on Iraq

HR abuse by govt, opponents threaten to mar Kashmir polls!
Page 8

Business

ECNEC okays four projects worth Tk 140 cr

US to delay sale of F-16 jet fighters to Indonesia
Pages 6, 7

Metropolitan

Dhaka Day by Day



Children's Parks of Dhaka
Page 3

NEWS BRIEFS

Launch passengers robbed in Khulna

From Our Correspondent KHULNA, Sept 6: A gang of armed dacoits robbed launch passengers in the Labonchora area here last night. The dacoits looted belongings of the passengers who were travelling in the launch, ML Mohican-2, when it reached Labonchora area three kilometres off the Iwta terminal ghat and fled away, police said.

3 major arms dumps found in Kashmir

SRINAGAR, Sept 6: Three major arms dumps have been uncovered in Kashmir on the eve of state elections, local government officials announced today. They said the army made the discoveries in the village of Batal Bagh in the southern district of Pulwama after arresting a truck driver believed to be acting as an arms courier, reports AFP.

Lankan refugees leaving Jaffna

RAMESWARAM, Sept 6: A fresh batch of 165 Sri Lankan refugees arrived from Jaffna and Mullaithevu to Rameswaram in five boats. This is the first time that refugees are arriving at Rameswaram from Jaffna and Mullaithevu, reports UNB.

40 civilians killed in Uganda

KAMPALA, Sept 6: Rebels of the Lord's Resistance Army (LRA) have killed about 40 civilians in attacks in northern Uganda's Gulu town suburbs, the official New Vision newspaper reported here today. The government-owned daily said that about 60 rebels on Wednesday attacked Koch Ongako and Bungatira divisions of Gulu district, about 360 kilometres north of Kampala, killing 10 people.

Formal talks this morning Gujral 'optimistic' of solving water issue



Foreign Minister Abdu Samad Azad receiving his Indian counterpart I K Gujral at the Zia International Airport yesterday.

By Staff Correspondent

Indian External Affairs Minister Inder Kumar Gujral has expressed "optimism" about resolving the water-sharing issue between his country and Bangladesh.

He also expressed his readiness to discuss any issue with Dhaka in a spirit of neighbourliness so that it enhances cooperation between the two countries.

"I have come with an open mind and open hand," he told newsmen on his arrival at the Zia International Airport in a special flight last night.

IK Gujral, who has come to Dhaka on a four-day visit, would lead a 15-member delegation at the formal talks with the Bangladesh side by Foreign Minister Abdu Samad Azad at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs this morning.

Gujral said, "We have come on a mission of friendship. We intend to build on the existing good relations."

All issues can be discussed with an "open mind" so that there is better understanding and increasing bilateral cooperation between the two neighbours.

Executives of 2 leading power, oil companies arrive soon

Star Report

Representatives of two leading power and oil companies will visit Bangladesh in the next two weeks, according to Petrobangla sources.

Chief of Midland Power of UK is likely to arrive in the city on Monday to discuss setting up of a 150 MW power plant using natural gas in Haripur.

Dick Cheny, former US defence secretary, and chief of Halibarton oil company, parent organisation of Brown Roots, now working in Bangladesh, is due in the city on September 20 to discuss investment of about 100 million US dollars in the development of Sangu-1 well in the Bay of Bengal.

The Sangu-1 well was discovered and drilled by Cairn Plc of Scotland in January last. According to a development plan of Cairn, it would invest 200 million dollars in building a platform, a processing plant and a 50-mile gas pipeline from Sangu to the Bakhrabad gas line at the Chittagong city point.

Brown Roots company is already working as an investment and technical partner.

Meanwhile, the signing of two final accords with American companies UMC and Rexwood Oakland is being delayed as the Production Sharing

Rally, procession today CEC must resign, demands BNP

The Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP) yesterday demanded immediate resignation of the Chief Election Commissioner for his "partisan role" and "failure to conduct a fair election," reports UNB.

"Either the CEC has been intentionally playing a partisan role or he is unable to conduct fair elections," BNP secretary general Abdul Mannan Bhuiyan told a crowded press conference at the Mintô Road residence of the Leader of the Opposition.

The BNP will hold a rally in front of the Jatitya Press Club and bring out a procession in the capital today to protest the "mock byelection." It urged the people to stage rallies and bring out processions across the country on Sunday.

The BNP secretary general threatened to announce next course of action if the CEC did not resign immediately and re-pollings at Laxmipur and Mirersarai (Chittagong-1) were not arranged.

Replying to a question, he said the ruling party tried to rig the election in two Bogra constituencies, but failed due to resistance.

Deputy Leader of the Opposition Prof B Chowdhury, Abdu Salam Talukdar, Abdul Matin Chowdhury, Mostafizur Rahman, Barrister Rafiqul Islam Mia, Dr Khandaker Mosharraf Hossain, Khandaker Delwar Hossain, Anwar Zahid, Mir Shawkat Ali, Mirza Abbas and Amanullah Aman were present at the press conference.

Tk 10cr allocated for BIRDEM Health policy soon to integrate govt, pvt institutions: PM

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina yesterday said the government will encourage private initiatives in medicare services in its soon-to-be-announced health policy, reports UNB.

"We are formulating an integrated health policy to reach medicare facilities to the common people," she said at a memorial meeting at the BIRDEM hospital in the afternoon.

The Bangladesh Diabetic Association organised the meeting to mark the 7th death anniversary of Dr Mohammad Ibrahim, founder of the BIRDEM.

care facilities through concerted efforts of all, she said.

The Prime Minister said formulation of a policy is not enough for the improvement of medicare, the change of attitude is essential for the implementation of the policy.

The humanitarian attitude should be given top priority for bringing a change in the broken healthcare system of the country, she said. "Service for the humanity should be the aim of life," she added.

Hasina said, "We should work relentlessly for the distressed humanity following the ideals of Dr Ibrahim to show respect to him."

She recalled that Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman had patronised the BIRDEM project of Dr Ibrahim. Just after independence Bangabandhu eagerly talked to Dr Ibrahim and approved his BIRDEM project within a very short time, she said.

She said the Bangladesh Di-

abetic Association is an institution of pride of the country, which increased the fame of the nation abroad and where the patients from abroad came to receive treatment regularly.

The Prime Minister said Diabetic Association is an exceptional contribution of Dr Ibrahim. This institution is providing treatment to nearly one and a half lakh patients, she said adding that branches of this association are being established throughout the country.

Even after 25 years of independence, the country failed to ensure healthcare facilities for all citizens, she said reiterating her government's pledge to establish basic rights of the people through implementation of proper programmes.

"We want to build up a "Sonar Bangla" by completing the unfinished task of Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman," she said mentioning her



Mother of Salman Shah (inset) waiting at the FDC premises in the city where the film star's namaj-e-janaza was held yesterday evening.

Diarrhoea breaks out in flood-hit areas

By Staff Correspondent

The overall flood situation in three districts — Rajshahi, Chapainawabganj and Kushtia — has improved slightly with the gradual recession of waters from the affected areas.

The Ganges, Padma, Gorai and Mohananda recorded fall during the last 24 hours but were flowing above the danger marks.

Reports of water-borne diseases like diarrhoea and dysentery are reaching here from the affected areas.

According to BSS, at least 300 people in flood-hit Rajshahi and Chapainawabganj districts have been attacked with diarrhoea and other water-borne diseases.

Over one hundred medical teams are working in the affected areas to combat the diseases.

Our Kushtia Correspondent reports: Flood situation in the district has improved slightly as the Ganges and Gorai continued to fall.

About 50 thousand people have been marooned yet in the

Polling in Kashmir begins today

LONDON, Sept 6: Human rights abuses in Kashmir risk reaching a new peak during the forthcoming elections. Amnesty International said in a report published today, reports AP.

Kashmir goes to the polls tomorrow for the state's first local election since 1987. The Indian government hopes a successful election will shift attention away from an ongoing Muslim-led rebellion and back toward democracy and the rule of law in Kashmir.

However, Muslim rebels, fighting for an independent Kashmir from predominantly Hindu India, have vowed to block the voting as part of their ongoing battle against the Indian government.

The elections are expected to take place in four stages on 7, 16, 21 and 30 September.

Politicians, journalists and human rights campaigners are most at risk of attack by security forces and government-controlled militias, the London-based human rights organisation said.

Ward commissioner shot dead

JHENIDAH, Sept 6: Unidentified gunmen shot dead a ward commissioner of Jhenidah pourashava at Arappur bus stand in the town tonight, reports UNB.

Shahadat Hossain, 30, commissioner of word No 1, who sustained three bullets in his chest, succumbed to his injuries at the Sadar hospital soon after admission.

See Page 12 Col 8

Hurricane kills 11 in Carolina

WILMINGTON (North Carolina), Sept 6: Hurricane Fran killed at least 11 people in the Carolinas as it carved a path of devastation along the US east coast, officials said today, reports AFP.

Tom Ditt, a spokesman for North Carolina Emergency Management, said nine storm-related deaths had been confirmed in his state and two others in neighbouring South Carolina. Most of the deaths occurred in traffic accidents.

We have trees down everywhere, houses badly damaged. We have flooding all over," Hunt said in Raleigh, describing the scene 192 kms inland.

Hunt has declared a state of emergency in all 100 counties in North Carolina.

Emergency centre officials at Wilmington, or the North Carolina coast, said damage along the beach was extensive. The storm knocked out power in most of the city, the official said.

The storm dumped more than six inches of rain on already swollen rivers, raising fears of flooding throughout much of North Carolina, officials said. Storm surges of up to 16 feet were also expected along the coast.

By late Thursday, officials had only sketchy details of damage and two deaths were linked to the Hurricane in the Carolinas.

An elderly motorist died on a rain-slicked South Carolina highway on Thursday after

SL-Australia final today

Sports Reporter

Hosts Sri Lanka will take on Australia in the four-nation Singer World Series final at the Premadasa Stadium in Colombo this morning.

Sri Lanka, the World Champions, reached the final with three thumping wins against India, Australia and Zimbabwe earning full six points.

On the other hand, Australia, ensured their berth in the final yesterday defeating India by three wickets in their last first round matches.

Star Sports will air the match live from Colombo beginning at 10 am (BST)

(See details on page 10)

Film star Salman Shah commits suicide

By Staff Correspondent

Popular film star Salman Shah died at his 10th-floor flat in Eskaton area in the city yesterday noon.

Police suspected that Salman had committed suicide by hanging himself from the ceiling fan in the dressing room of his flat at the multistoried Eskaton Plaza at about 11:45 am. He was about 30.

The reason behind the reported suicide could not be known immediately. However, police suspected that Salman had feud with his wife Samira Shariat which could have been a cause for the tragic incident.

The conflict between the film star and his wife emerged centering over his alleged relationship with a popular actress of Dhaka film industry, police suspected.

Chowdhury Md Shariat alias Imon, better known as Salman Shah in the film industry, is the son of Kamaruddin Ahmed Chowdhury and Nila Chowdhury, former leader of Jatitya Party's women front.

Salman left behind his parents, wife, a brother and a host of admirers to mourn his death.

CPA incurs loss as forklift truck goes out of order

Star Report

The Chittagong Port Authority (CPA) suffered huge losses in revenue as one of its forklift trucks remained out of order for three weeks due to mechanical fault. The fault could not be mended during the period as the spares supplied by the manufacturer did not match the equipment, according to CPA sources.

The CPA had commissioned four forklift trucks procured from an Italian firm, Fantuzzi, in November 1995. But one truck developed fault in its hydraulic pump on August 8, within its guarantee period.

The engineering department of the CPA tried to replace the faulty part with another from the stock of spares supplied along with the machine. But it was found that the supplied spare part did not fit into the truck.

Following this, the CPA asked the supplier to provide with the "actual" spares part which was flown in and fitted on September 1, according to a senior official concerned.

However, the officials are now in a doubt whether the other 182 line items supplied with the trucks will fit into the machines and any objection regarding this will be void after

Export target fixed at Tk 18396 cr for '96-97

By Govinda Shil

The target for export earnings for the current financial year (1996-97) has been fixed at Tk 18,396 crore (4,380 million US dollars), according to the Export Promotion Bureau (EPB).

The target was Tk 15,200 crore (3,800 million dollars) in the last financial year (1995-96) but export earnings stood at Tk 15,879 crore (3,882.42 million dollars), showing a growth of more than 11 per cent over the previous fiscal (1994-95).

"If we can achieve this target this year, it will be a 21 per cent growth over the earnings of fiscal 1995-96," said an official of the EPB. He expressed the hope that it would be possible to achieve the target if political stability continues.

The official also hoped that export of traditional items

BNP briefing misleading, says AL

Awami League's Assistant Publicity Secretary Abdul Mannan yesterday protested BNP Office Secretary Nazrul Islam Khan's press briefing on Thursday's by-election, reports BSS.

In a statement, Mannan termed the BNP briefing as "misleading" and urged that party to accept the people's verdict.

Mannan alleged that the BNP for the past several days was trying to foil the by-elections in 15 constituencies through different provocative activities.

He said the Awami League was all-through-out vocal against rigging and unfair means in polls and struggled along with people to realise their rights for "vote and rice."

Mannan said when the foreign and local poll observers and the major newspapers had observed that the Thursday's by-election was held in a free and fair manner, the BNP was trying to mislead the people about it.

He said for the first time in the history of Bangladesh, the head of the government and the ministers did not take part in election campaigns and Bangladesh Betar and Television refrained from broadcasting news in favour of ruling party candidates. They have set a unique example in the electoral history of the country, Mannan maintained.

Laxmipur-2 No action for obstructing voting, allege BNP, AL

Mizan Ali back from Laxmipur

Local leaders of both Awami League and BNP have alleged that the administration in Laxmipur, despite complaints, failed to take any action for what they called preventing their voters from casting votes in the by-elections.

Both the parties also accused each other of "obstructing their voters" during the by-elections in Laxmipur-2 constituency.

There are 1,82,508 voters in the constituency comprising 14 unions and a municipality under Laxmipur and Raypur thanas.

The leaders claimed that in some centres, the authorities had caught some people while attempting at forged voting. "Some others were also caught by the magistrate on mobile duty and the personnel of law enforcing agencies for creating obstruction to the voters. But none was taken into custody," a leader said requesting anonymity.

Some voters giving reasons as to why they were resisted, told this correspondent. "In this

India ratifies chemical arms ban treaty

The HAGUE, Sept 6: India has ratified the chemical weapons ban treaty, the preparatory commission for the Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons said here today, reports AFP.

India, which formally handed the United Nations Secretary-general the instruments of ratification on Tuesday, has become the 62nd country to ratify the UN chemical weapons convention, which needs the ratification of 65 countries to go into force.

The commission, in a prepared statement, noted that India's ratification was especially significant because of its large chemical industry.

The convention, which bans the production, stockpiling and use of poisonous gas and agents, was set up on January 13, 1993 in Paris and has so far been signed by 160 nations.

The signatories are regarded as a token form of approval and the treaty will only come into effect 180 days after 65 countries have formally ratified it.

Last month, Russia indicated it was prepared to ratify the treaty, which is also expected to go before the US senate before September 14.

By-polls peaceful: Indian observers

A five-member Indian election observer team has said the September 5 byelections to 15 vacated seats to parliament were peaceful and well-organised, reports UNB.

The team members, who visited different bypolls centres, in a statement yesterday said, "There was no interference by the government through the district administration or security forces."

The team, sponsored by People's Union for Civil Liberties of India, visited Kurigram and Chittagong districts.

Led by Justice Rajinder Sachar, the other members of the team included Nikhil Chakrabarty, Dr RM Pal, Dr Bhakant Sen Gupta and Seema Mustafa.