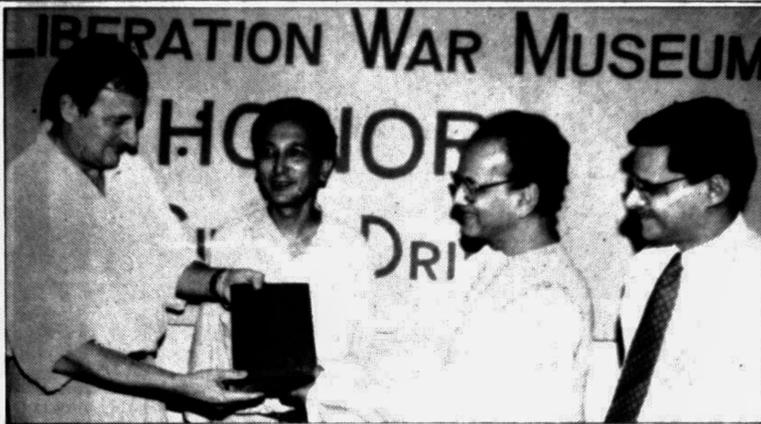


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British journalist Simon Dring being presented with a crest at a ceremony in the city yesterday organised by the Liberation War Museum. — Star photo

British journalist recalls the fateful night of Mar 25, '71

By Reaz Ahmad and Aminul Islam Sajal

"As the Pakistani Army moved in force into Dacca last week to crush Sheikh Mujibur Rahman's 25-year-old independence movement, all foreign journalists in East Pakistan, confined at gunpoint in the Intercontinental Hotel since the beginning of the fighting, were rounded up and deported to Karachi. "However, I evaded the round-up by hiding on the roof of the hotel. This is brief excerpt from a historic report filed by Simon Dring for the British newspaper, The Daily Telegraph, from Bangkok on March 30 in 1971. Dring was one of the two lucky foreign journalists among 40 who happened to be in Dhaka on the fateful night of March 25, 1971 when the then Pakistani military cracked down on the unarmed Bangladeshes. Simon Dring, now a reporter of BBC, was honoured by the Liberation War Museum in Dhaka at a simple ceremony yesterday afternoon. Dring is now on a brief visit to Bangladesh. AK Khandaker, member of the Authentication Committee of the Liberation War Museum, presented the celebrated reporter with a crest and the reporter gave a touching description of the experience he went through to a packed audience. Simon Dring flew into Dhaka on March 6 in 1971 as political tension mounted in the then East Pakistan. Dring described his memory lane to describe that he was in Vietnam and as political development was taking a fast turn in the then East Pakistan, he was assigned to cover Dhaka. "At the time there were some 40 foreign mediamen at the Intercontinental Hotel (now, Hotel Sheraton). We were mesmerized by the developments here and got chance to meet Sheikh Mujib. As a human being Mujib was a very easy man to talk with. "It was seven in the evening of March 25. One young Panjabi Captain came in the Intercontinental Hotel and told us that if we move out of the hotel we would be shot down. Simon Dring went on to add, "at around 9 pm we got report that the first column of troops moved out of the cantonment. I rang up Sheikh Mujib's residence at 9:30 pm. Sheikh Mujib told us that he was not going to leave his residence as he feared that his departure might invite burning down of the whole Dhaka. "He described further that at around 10 that night, shooting began and journalists confined inside the hotel were passing a frustrating period as they could not move out but, could see blaze of inferno. Around midnight some of them braved climbing up the rooftop. "We tried to send some first hand reports through wires but, no way because all telecommunication lines were cut off by that time. "Curfew was imposed in the city. By dawn we were meeping around the swimming pool of the hotel. Fear and uncertainty shrouded us all. At nine in the morning on March 26 we entered into a hotel suit at the 10th floor where Zulfikar Ali Bhutto was residing. With an ashtray full of burnt out cigarette butts on his table, Bhutto was visibly nervous. I was not sure whether he was in the know of the development on the Dhaka streets. "And sometime later, Dring said when militarymen took Bhutto out of the hotel he was very frightened. "At around mid-day the second round of shooting began in the old parts of the city and large areas were burnt to ground. "At about five in the afternoon the city took a barren look and Major Salek Siddiq appeared in the hotel. He told us that a war broke out as Mujib and Awami League activists began armed insurgency. "I asked him about our fate and that Major told us — if you don't leave Dhaka, we will arrange a party for you. I still wonder what the Major meant by saying arranging of a party. Dring further added, "I gave an impression to militarymen that I was packing up. But, I crawled up to the central air-condition unit on the roof. Associated Press (AP) photographer, Michel Laurent, was the only other pressman, who could escape deportation that night. The rest had to board on two army trucks and were flown to Karachi. "Dring continued, "after half an hour me and Michel went down the kitchen of the hotel. Bengalee staff of the hotel were very nice to us and tried their best in consolidating our hide-out position. "On 27th March, curfew was lifted. Me and Michel then managed to make an extensive tour of the burning city and to see first-hand the extent of the slaughter the government of Pakistan was trying to hide. "We visited Mujib's residence, Rajarbagh and counted 30 bodies in the Hall of Dhaka University. Smelling our presence army made three surprise raids in quick succession at the hotel. Credit goes to the Bengalee staff of the hotel who made us remain in hiding inside the kitchen. "Michel said he managed to send seven out of 20 rolls of photographs to Frankfurt through German Embassy in Dhaka. "I hide my notes inside my waist-belt and socks. We succeeded in getting on a plane to West Pakistan. "Murthy person suspected me seeing four maps of Bangladesh in my possession. He was going to inform Major Siddiq about the maps. But I humbly surrendered all the maps to him and caught the plane as immediately as I could. "At Karachi Airport I was twice stripped and my baggage thoroughly searched. I got through with my notes intact to Bangkok to file my report. "Simon Dring described in an interesting way how he managed to keep his notes intact. "When securitymen asked me to put my clothes off at Karachi, I took out notes from my socks and hide those beneath a carpet stretched on the floor. "He recalled that at the time air flights from Dhaka went to Karachi via Colombo and he also ventured a bid to take an asylum there but could not. Then, on March 29 evening, Dring took a flight from Karachi to Bangkok. "That evening champagne tasted really good," Dring replied. "Dring also replied to a number of queries made from the audience. He said he had been in Dhaka also on December 16 in 1971 and again on January 10, 1972, the day the national hero, Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, returned to independent Bangladesh. "Ten years later, when I was on a visit to Pakistan again, I saw that Major Siddiq was in President Zia-ul-Haq's office but, this time he was wearing a badge of Brigadier," smiled Dring. "Simon Dring, aged 52, covered as many as 22 wars and "revolutions" throughout the globe in his 30-year career in journalism. Fresh from war-torn Bosnia, Dring told the Dhaka audience yesterday that he would come to Dhaka again in November next to film a documentary on today's Bangladesh for BBC.

Bill to reform JTI body ready for a approval

By Mizan Ali

The government has prepared Judicial Training Institute Amendment Bill 1996, to curtail involvement of the minister concerned in the functioning of the Institute, according to official sources. The bill would be placed in today's cabinet meeting for approval, the sources said. Minister of State for Law, Justice and Parliamentary Affairs, Abdul Matin Khasru, talking to The Daily Star last night, said, "the changes in the Judicial Training Institute Bill has been proposed with a view to delivering the best to the people. "The Chief Justice was the appropriate person to head the Judicial Training Institute, said the minister, adding that this would help improve the overall service and management of the courts across the country. The proposed amendment bill seeks to restructure the governing board of the Judicial Training Institute (JTI) comprising 14 members, the sources said. "Instead of the Law Minister heading the governing board of the JTI, the bill suggests that the Chief Justice of the Bangladesh Supreme Court should head the governing board of the Institute," an official said. Some changes have been suggested for constituting the board members of the JTI in the amendment bill, the sources added. The suggested changes include, induction of the secretary, ministry of finance in place of Registrar, Supreme Court and replacement of the provision of two eminent advocates by that of the attorney general and the vice chairman of the Bar Council, the sources said. Under the existing law, the Chief Justice is authorised to nominate two judges of the Supreme Court in the governing board, of them the senior judge is to serve as the vice chairman of the board. While in the proposed amendment bill its has been suggested that the said nomination can be made either from existing or retired judges. The bill relating to the JTI was passed by parliament in 1994. The Institute, however could not be made functional as the previous government could not appoint its Director General and other officials. Meanwhile, international agencies like the World Bank and other organisations had already offered funding for its infrastructural development.

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BNP chairperson Begum Khaleda Zia speaking at a meeting with Jatiyatabadi Krishak Dal leaders at her Minto Road residence in the city yesterday. — Star photo

Water treaty with India 100 protesters held in Kathmandu

KATHMANDU, Sept 22. More than 100 people were arrested as protesters clashed with police today during a one day strike called by four extreme left factions to denounce the ratification of an Indo-Nepal water treaty, reports AFP. Today's strike was jointly called by the extreme left National Democratic Front-Nepal (NDF-N), the Nepal Communist Party-Unity Centre (NCP-UC), NCP-Mashal (burning torch carriers), Nepal Workers' and Peasants' Party (NWP) and other small groups. The strike was partially successful in Kathmandu as main shopping centres were closed while shops in the inner lanes were open, witnesses said. The groups also organised burning torch protests on Saturday evening in the Kathmandu valley area to protest the ratification. Nepal's joint houses of parliament ratified the controversial Mahakali River Integrated Development Project treaty late Friday after the main opposition party, the Nepal Communist Party United Marxist and Leninist (NCP-UML) gave its support. The NCP-UML had earlier handed a list of revisions to the government saying unless the treaty was revised, it would not be ratified. It agreed to support the project after Nepal received a letter from Indian Foreign Minister Inder Kumar Gujral expressing willingness to talk on the Mahakali package and other issues.

Gold ornaments worth Tk 35000 snatched in city

Muggers snatched gold ornaments worth about Tk 35,000 from a businessman and his wife near the Notre Dame College under Motijheel thana in the city yesterday. The muggers who were in an auto-rickshaw attacked ATM Nazmul Haq Bhuiyan when he was returning home at RK Mission Road residence from a clinic in Motijheel area, said sources quoting family members. The gang of four snatchers armed with deadly weapons intercepted the rickshaw in which the businessman was travelling with his wife at about 7:30 pm and took away two gold chains, rings and bangles. A case has been filed with Motijheel thana, police said.

Khaleda

grammes for the development of agriculture sector and improvement of the condition of farmers. Addressing the meeting, President of Krishak Dal and Secretary General of BNP Abdul Mannan Bhuiyan said the BNP government could be close to the common people due to its sincere efforts for development. The meeting was also addressed by Acting President of Krishak Dal Mahbubul Alam Tara, General Secretary Shamsuzzaman Duda, former whip Ashraf Hossain, Alamgir Kabir MP, Mirza Alamgir, Ehsanul Kabir, Mofiqul Hasan Tripti, Lokman Hossain Bhuiyan, Anwarul Haq and Shahjahan Samrat.

Habiganj-2 by-polls Preparations taken to hold fair polling: EC

The Election Commission has taken all preparations to hold by-election in Habiganj-2 Constituency scheduled for October 15 in a free, fair, and peaceful atmosphere, reports BSS. A press release of the Election Commission Secretariat said all election rules would remain in force as per the existing code of conduct, and criminal and penal code. Meanwhile, the electoral enquiry committee comprising two officials of the judiciary has been formed to observe pre-election irregularities. The press release said that the Election Commission is discussing with the relevant officials of the law enforcing agencies to hold the election in a peaceful atmosphere. Adequate member of the law enforcing agencies, it said, would be deployed in each polling centre. Deployment of the armed forces during the Habiganj-2 parliamentary by-polls is also being considered, it added. It said that both domestic and foreign observers would be given permission to observe the coming by-election. The matter of appointing the high government officials to JCD: Agitation

Foreign liquor seized from Farooq's house

Narcotics Control Department yesterday seized 19 bottles of foreign liquor and 21 cans of beer from the DOHS residence of Col (ret'd) Syed Farooq Rahman, police said, reports UNB. A case was filed with Cantonment thana in this connection. Farooq is now on a five-day police remand on the November 3, 1975 jail killing case. He is being interrogated in CID custody.

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Shahjalal Varsity incident: Probe begins today

From Staff Correspondent SYLHET, Sept 22: The enquiry committee formed to investigate the incidents that took place in and around the Shahjalal University of Science and Technology here on September 12 will begin its work from tomorrow. Some thirty persons were injured and property worth Tk one crore damaged in the incidents. The 3-member committee is headed by the Additional Divisional Commissioner. The two other members are the representatives of the Vice-Chancellor of the University and the Deputy Inspector General of Police.

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JCD: Agitation

The JCD took the decision at the joint meeting of JCD, Chhatra League and Ganotantrik Chhatra Oikya with the Vice Chancellor of the Dhaka University in the chair. The meeting continued from 8 pm to 10:30 pm at the residence of the VC. The meeting decided that the provosts of Sir A F Rahman and Mohsin Halls of the university would vacate the legal seats of the JCD workers by 10 am today and would rehabilitate them in their respective seats at 4 pm in the presence of VC, proctor and the provosts of the concerned halls.

7 killed

Police and witnesses said a Dhaka-bound coach ran over two policemen at Satchhari area in Madhabpur thana on Dhaka-Sylhet Highway at about noon yesterday. Police constable Belayet Hossain, 30, died on the spot. Havildar Badrul with serious wounds was rushed to Sylhet Sadar Hospital. Police seized the bus, but its driver escaped. Earlier on Saturday, a tempo passenger was killed and five others injured when a speeding coach hit the tempo on Habiganj-Shaistaganj road at Ratanpur area at about 8 pm. The victim, identified as Mannan, 25, a student of Law, died on the spot. In another accident, a teenaged boy was seriously injured when he was hit by a microbus at Madhabpur thana Sadar yesterday afternoon. Seriously injured Paritosh Sarker was taken to Dhaka Medical College Hospital.



Protesters belonging to the party of late Murtaza Bhutto burn tyres to block the main highway between Larkana and Neudaro yesterday. — AFP photo

PM: Cultural arena

From Page 1 want such a democratic system in which people's participation in state power would be ascertained," she added. She said that the government had already taken some steps to fulfill its pledges to the nation. In this connection she said that a committee had already been formed to give autonomy to Radio and TV. She said that renowned cultural personalities Kalim Sarafi and Ramendu Majumder would be included in the committee to ensure better representation of the cultural bodies in the committee. She also assured them that a national theatre and a cultural complex would be set up. The Prime Minister said that although it was very hard task to rectify the distorted and polluted culture her government would take all possible measures to free the national culture from alien influence. "Culture should proceed on its own course without interruption," she said. She made it crystal clear that there was no contradiction between religion and culture. Two are perfectly separate from each other, she said adding that the religion is not a barrier in the way of expansion of cultural activities. Turning back to the history of War of Liberation the Prime Minister said that it was natural that we might have good relations with any country of the world. But it has no link with genocide, mass killing and other atrocities committed during the War of Liberation in 1971. "It is an inseparable part of the national history. There is no scope neither any need to erase these from the pages of the nation's history," she said.

Hearing

From Page 1 The Bureau on September 16 also filed a case with Ramna thana under section 409/109 of the Penal Code read with section 5 (2) of the Prevention of Corruption Act against Lutfor Rahman Khan and Md Giasuddin Al-Mamoon, allegedly a business-partner of Tareq Rahman, eldest son of Begum Khaleda Zia. The contents of the FIR, in short, is that beyond the purview of the Ministry for Relief and Rehabilitation, Lutfor Rahman Khan in collusion with Giasuddin Al Mamoon received Tk. 4.20 crore by purchasing 1,000 metric tons of corrugated CI sheet. In the case of Tareq Rahman, Syed Iskander Mirza and Md. Giasuddin Al-Mamoon it was alleged that in the name of M/s Dandy Dying Ltd. they sought loan of Tk. 15 crore and 30 lakh, but the equity was fixed at Tk. one crore only instead of Tk five crore and 60 lakh and they also showed the value of the mortgaged land at Tk. 18 lakh, but the real value of the land is about Tk. one lakh and 20 thousand. Barrister Maudud Ahmed, on behalf of the petitioners, submitted that as the cases are politically motivated there is apprehension for not getting fair trial in the magistrate courts and the petitioners will be harassed by the police. Barrister Jamrudin Sirker moved for MA Mannan.

Benazir not involved in Murtaza killing: Nusrat

LARKANA (Pakistan) Sept 22: Demonstrators clashed with police outside the house of Murtaza Bhutto, the slain brother of Prime Minister Benazir Bhutto, blocking a condolence call by President Farooq Leghari, report agencies. Witnesses said the demonstrators chased away police as Leghari's motorcade approached the area in Larkana in Sindh province, forcing the President to withdraw. They said about 250 supporters of Murtaza accused Benazir's husband of conspiring in the death of their leader in a shootout with police on Friday. The demonstrators attacked police with sticks and stones, chanting anti-government slogans. Police retaliated in kind, but there was no gunfire. Benazir has ordered a judicial inquiry into the shooting that also left seven of her brother's supporters dead, according to AP. Karachi police chief, Shoaib Suddle, has been reassigned and several senior police officers present at the shootout have

Japan may help modernise BTW

Japanese Ambassador to Bangladesh Yoshi Kazu Kaneko yesterday said his country would consider the issue of rehabilitation and modernisation of the Bangladesh Television on priority basis, reports BSS. The ambassador said this when he called on State Minister for Information Prof Abu Sayeed at his secretariat office in the city. Kaneko said necessary arrangements would be made in this regard during the visit of a Japanese mission to Bangladesh at the end of this month. Prof Sayeed told the Japanese ambassador that the government had taken up various measures for running the electronic media including the BTW for the greater interest of the people. He said in view of these measures, the BTW and Betar are rapidly regaining their credibility and acceptability among the people. Yoshi Kazu Kaneko said Japan would continue to provide assistance and promote investment in Bangladesh.

Jubo League leader

From Page 1 rolls of fabrics from a truck at 2:30 am last night. While the muggers were loading the fabrics into their microbus, local people surrounded them and caught three of them. The others escaped, the witnesses said. The three arrested persons were identified as: President of City Committee of Jubo League Jahangir Alam and his accomplices Kibria and microbus driver Alek. Narayanjanj Sadar thana ASI Mizan told this correspondent that he along with a police patrol team went to the spot and took the three alleged muggers to the Sadar thana at 3 am and handed them over to the Officer-in-Charge (OC). But at 6 am, the OC decided to free the muggers under pressure from a local influential politician, police sources said, without identifying him. In the evening today, the OC was asked by the ASP for explanation why the muggers were released.

Blue Panel

From Page 1 Acting Vice Chancellor of the university Prof Shahiduddin Ahmed had earlier called a special session of the Dhaka University Senate on September 25 as per Article 11(2) of the Dhaka University Order, 1973, to elect a three-member VC panel. The Chancellor of the university will then appoint the Vice-Chancellor from the three-member panel elected by the Senate.

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