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Cabinet okays formation of Infrastructure Development Company

The Cabinet approved the proposal for forming a new company to finance all major infrastructure projects in private sector, as per suggestion from the World Bank, reports UNB.

The approval was given at a cabinet meeting held last night at the Prime Minister's Office with Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina in the chair.

Styled Infrastructure Development Company, the new enterprise in government ownership will facilitate private investment in key sectors like power, telecommunications, water and transport management.

The World Bank, which is formulating a project titled Private Sector Infrastructure Development Project, had suggested constitution of a special-purpose company to deal with private investment proposals.

The Bank, the country's main multilateral development partner, said.

Maintain water flow as per accord, Dhaka urges Delhi

Dhaka has emphasised upon Delhi the need for maintaining the flow of Ganges waters to Bangladesh as per the provisions of the Indo-Bangladesh Water Treaty signed on December 12, according to official sources.

Bangladesh's concern was conveyed to Indian officials at the senior official level meeting on water against the backdrop of "continued low flow pattern", much below the agreed water level stipulated in the Treaty since the last one month, the sources said. The two-day meeting held at the office of the JRC here ended yesterday.

At the meeting, Bangladesh officials failed to get any specific assurance from the Indian officials about increasing the Ganges flow to Bangladesh, particularly during the current critical period of the dry season which began in early March.

The Indian officials said they will convey the concern and the outcome of the meeting to their government.

The Indian side mentioned that slow melting of Himalayan ice, scarce rainfall, and withdrawal of water at the upper reaches had caused drop in the water level at Farakka point below 50,000 cusec. This did not allow discharge of sufficient quantum of water as per the treaty, they said.

Two main gas pipelines to be connected today

The Ashuganj-Bakhrabad gas pipeline, which is now nearing completion, will be connected with the Bakhrabad-Chittagong pipeline, today, reports UNB.

The installation work of a hook-up line to connect the two main gas pipelines began yesterday.

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Govt asked to pay Tk 1 lakh compensation to each High Court orders release of four BNP leaders



BNP leaders (From R-L) Mirza Abbas, MP, Mosharraf Hossain MP, and Abdul Mannan MP after their release from the Dhaka Central Jail yesterday. — Star photo

By SC Correspondent

The High Court yesterday asked the government to free four BNP leaders who were detained under the Special Powers Act in the early hours of March 21.

Three of the leaders were released last night.

A Division Bench of the High Court comprising Justice Mohammad Mojaheedul Huq and Justice Hasan Amin, also directed the government to pay compensatory cost of Taka 100,000 to each of them for the "malafide intention and political victimisation."

Ordering their release forthwith if not wanted in any other case, the Judges turned aside the government's contention that they were involved in "subversive" activities like dismantling pylons to disrupt power transmission.

The four BNP leaders are former energy minister Dr. Khandaker Mosharraf Hossain MP, former state minister for See Page 12 Col 1

20 indicted for murder of Bangabandhu

By Staff Correspondent

The trial of the Bangabandhu murder case formally commenced at the court of the District and Sessions Judge, Dhaka yesterday with indictment of 20 people accused of the 1975 killing.

The District and Sessions Judge, Kazimul Alam, fixed April 21 for examination of the prosecution witnesses.

Charges framed against the accused include criminal conspiracy (under Section 120 B of the Penal Code), murder (under Section 302/34 of the Penal Code), and destruction of evidence following the murder (under Section 201 of Penal Code).

After hearing both the defence and prosecution sides during the four-hour-long proceedings, the judge read out the criminal charges framed against the accused. The 14 state appointed defence counsels also pleaded innocence on behalf of the absconding accused in the case.

The arrested accused are: Lt Col (dismissed) Syed Farooqur Rahman; Lt Col (relieved) Sultan Shabir Rashid Khan; Taheruddin Thakur, former minister of state for information; Lt Col Mohiuddin Ahmed, Acting Director, BNCC, Dhaka; honorary Capt Abdul Wahab Joarder and Begum Zobaida Rashid, wife of Lt Col (dismissed) A Rashid Khan-daker.

The absconding accused are: Lt Col (dismissed) Khandaker Abdur Rashid, Maj (ret'd) Md Bazul Huda, Lt Col (ret'd) SHMB Nur Chowdhury, Lt Col (relieved) Shariful Huq Dalim, Lt Col (ret'd) Md Aziz Pasha, Lt Col (relieved) AM Rashid Chowdhury, Maj (relieved) SKM Mohiuddin Ahmed, Risalder (ret'd) Moslehuddin alias Muslemuddin alias Hiron Khan alias Muslemuddin Khan alias Rafikul Islam Khan, Maj (relieved) Shariful Hossain alias Shariful Islam, Capt (relieved) Md Kismet Hashem, Capt (ret'd) Nazmul Hossain Ansar, Capt (ret'd) Abdul Majed

Dafader Marfat Ali, LD Abul Hashem Mirdha.

Before reading out the charges against the accused, the court observed that none from the defence or the prosecution said that the murder of Sheikh Mujibur Rahman and his family was committed by one person alone.

Involvement of more than one person and from their discussion or consultation or conspiracy led to the occurrence of the incident, he added. Besides, none from the defence or the prosecution denied the murder, he pointed out.

An application for witnessing the trial by the relatives of the accused person was made by Khan Saitur Rahman, Farooq's counsel, which was supported by others from the defence side. No orders were passed immediately in that regard.

The court observed that it was an open trial and had there been sufficient room he would have allowed as many people as See Page 12 Col 3

Share market scam Hearing on bail petitions of 4 resumes today

By Staff Correspondent

The hearing of the bail petitions of four accused in the share market scam case, Sohail F Rahman, Salman F Rahman and two others of the Beximco Group, continued in the High Court yesterday.

Barrister Rafiqul Huq represented the petitioners while Attorney General KS Nabi opposed the bail petitions.

The hearing resumes today at the division bench comprising Justice Mahmudur Rahman and Justice Mohammad Iftakhar Rasul.

Earlier on Thursday the four were granted ad-interim bail till passing of the order after hearing of their respective petitions.

Twenty-five out of 32 people accused of fraud and manipulation in the share market in cases filed on Wednesday last by the Securities and Exchange Commission (SEC), obtained ad-interim bail so far.

Later on Wednesday, the Chief Metropolitan Magistrate granted warrants of arrest against the accused. The cases were filed after a three-month See Page 12 Col 8

NBR announces guidelines for investing untaxed money

The National Board of Revenue (NBR) yesterday announced the modus operandi for investing untaxed money in new manufacturing units pursuant to recent government decision allowing such investment in industry, reports UNB.

The government has decided to waive tax on investments in the new manufacturing industry and accept it without any question if any entrepreneur invests money in the next three years from January 1, 1997.

But in such cases, the industrial units concerned will not get the facility of tax holiday.

There is, however, an alternative. Any industrial units set up with untaxed money can enjoy the tax-holiday facility if tax is paid on the money to be invested at a flat rate of 7.5 per cent.

As the three-year indemnity will be applied from January this year, the government, commonly known as black money, to be invested from See Page 12 Col 6

Kidnapped share trader found dead in city

By Staff Correspondent

A share trader who was kidnapped from Motijheel commercial area on March 29 was found dead inside a well at East Bashabo in the city yesterday.

Police recovered the body of Zahurul Islam, 28, from the well at about 1.30 am yesterday during a raid on the house of one Saiful Islam in Kadamtola, Bashabo.

The motive behind the killing could not be known immediately. The body has been sent to Dhaka Medical College Hospital (DMCH) for autopsy.

Hospital sources said the decomposed body bore an injury mark in the head, and its hands and legs were tied.

Police said Zahurul Islam, son of late Faiz Uddin Pramanik, had been missing since See Page 12 Col 2

Pirates attack ship, loot valuables

From Staff Correspondent

CHITTAGONG, Apr 7: At least 30 passengers were injured when a group of armed pirates attacked a Barisal-bound ship in the Bay of Bengal this noon, police said.

The injured were rushed to Sandwip hospital after the ship anchored at Sandwip channel. The ship sailed from Sadarghat of Chittagong with about 2,000 people on board.

About 40 pirates, who were travelling in the ship in the guise of passengers, looted cash and valuables worth about Tk 50 lakh from the passengers at gunpoint.

The pirates opened fire and stabbed some passengers when they tried to resist them. One person sustained bullet wounds. The pirates fled decamped with the booties by a fishing boat.

Hartal in Pabna town today

PABNA, Apr 7: Local people called an eight-hour hartal in the town for tomorrow protesting the killing of Pabna pourasava chairman on Saturday, reports UNB.

They also demanded immediate arrest and trial of the killers. One person has so far been arrested in this connection.

Pourasava employees today brought out a protest procession in the town.

Hasina renews call for dialogue with Khaleda

By Staff Correspondent

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina yesterday reiterated her proposal for a dialogue between herself and Leader of the Opposition in Parliament Begum Khaleda Zia on various issues of national interests.

"Our door is open for discussion. We urge you again not to play with the fate of the people. Don't inflict misery on the people," Sheikh Hasina said without naming the BNP Chairperson.

Hasina also president of the ruling Awami League, was delivering her presidential speech at a mammoth party rally in the city's broad Manik Mia Avenue yesterday afternoon.

The AL president said, "We urged her (Begum Zia) to come up with what she had got to say. If necessary, we will sit before the TV cameras. Renowned journalists will ask us questions and we will give reply. We

will discuss openly so that the people of the country can hear us."

Sheikh Hasina regretted that Begum Zia did not accept her proposal. "Rather she went for ideological unity with anti-liberation forces. I wonder how could she safeguard country's independence and sovereignty with the help of those who had murdered people and raped women in 71."

The rally was also addressed by visiting Deputy Prime Minister of Australia Tim Fischer, and some of Sheikh Hasina's cabinet colleagues and senior party leaders. Throngs of people carrying portraits of Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman and Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina converged at the rally venue from early afternoon chanting 'Joy Bangla' slogan. This was AL's second rally at the Manik Mia Avenue since

it took over power in June last year. The rally was organised to protest what the party claimed, attack on Yasser Arafat's motorcade during his recent visit to Bangladesh, destructive activities in power and other sectors and attempts at creating anarchy in the country.

Speakers at the rally were critical of the BNP leaders' holding of a 'national solidarity conference' with 'Rajakers and Al-Badr's and urged people to remain vigilant against "conspiracies against the country."

In her 30-minute speech, Sheikh Hasina covered issues ranging from power shortage to transit to India and JS committee formation to the Special Powers Act (SPA).

The Prime Minister claimed that her government inherited See Page 12 Col 7



A partial view of the Awami League public meeting at the Manik Mia Avenue in the city yesterday. — Star photo

Dhaka backs NAM resolution UN may discuss ME deadlock

NEW DELHI, Apr 7: The UN Secretary General said today the General Assembly may meet in an emergency session to discuss the Middle East deadlock following an appeal by Palestinian leader Yasser Arafat, reports agencies.

Arafat said he sought a meeting of the General Assembly because the United States had vetoed two Security Council resolutions in 10 days that were critical of Israel.

Secretary-General Kofi Annan, attending a meeting of Non-Aligned Movement countries in the Indian capital, said "it is quite possible" that the assembly would convene in special session.

"Arafat's request has been reiterated among member-states," he told a news conference after he addressing the foreign ministers' conference. Half the United Nations members must agree before the assembly can be summoned to an emergency meeting, he said.

Arafat, a guest speaker at the

same conference, earlier accused Israel of declaring war on the Palestinians and on the Mideast peace process. He urged the meeting to support his call for a General Assembly meeting to consider action to force Israel to abide by its obligations.

Bangladesh today supported a resolution moved in the NAM conference on Palestine asking the UN Secretary General to convene an emergency special session of the UN General Assembly to deal with the present Palestine problem.

Foreign Minister Abdus Samad Azad, who is leading the Bangladesh delegation, extended Bangladesh's support to the resolution during his speech at the meeting of the NAM committee on Palestine.

Earlier, during the brainstorming session of the NAM foreign ministers meeting on the issue of reform of the UN and the Security Council, Azad said the reform and revitalisation of the functions of various See Page 12 Col 7

Shahabuddin tells regional seminar Provision for caretaker govt shows distrust among parties

By Staff Correspondent

President Shahabuddin Ahmed has said the provision for caretaker government is itself an "evidence of mutual distrust" among political parties in Bangladesh.

He was inaugurating a four-day workshop of Commonwealth chief election officers of Asia and the Indian Ocean region at Hotel Sheraton in the city yesterday. The workshop has been organised jointly by the Commonwealth Secretariat and the Election Commission of Bangladesh.

The President said that if the government lacked people's confidence, the people would not accept an election held with the help of personnel provided by the government. "That is why demand is raised for a caretaker government to run the affairs of the state during a general election on the dissolution of the parliament," he said.

Whether or not the institution of caretaker government for holding election was con-

ducive to the growth and consolidation of democracy in the long run, it has been accepted as a proper machinery for arranging general elections, he said.

"For this purpose our Constitution has been amended providing for formation of a caretaker government on dissolution of Parliament."

"Monitoring of elections by neutral agencies such as Commonwealth observer groups become necessary," the President said. Their (observers) presence was helpful during the pre-election campaign. The polls and counting the votes, he said.

The task of conducting elections has been given in Bangladesh, as elsewhere, to the Election Commission which is an independent authority. The Election Commission, therefore, must discharge its duties including conduct of elections in such a way as to inspire people's confidence in it.

"If, for one reason or other, people have got no confidence in the Election Commission,

the election held by it, even if it is held in a fair manner, will not be accepted by them," President Shahabuddin said.

In his address of welcome Chief Election Commissioner Mohammad Abu Hena said the workshop will give the scope for learning from each other. "Through the exchange of opinion and experiences, it will be possible to develop fresh insight and identify the best practices," Abu Hena said.

Speaking on the occasion Indian Election Commissioner GVG Krishnamurthy said that man's capacity for doing justice makes democracy possible. In a democratic society, the government is for serving the people as there is nothing to rule.

"In India, there are 625 political parties. Of them, 209 parties participated in the last general election. This is a major problem," Krishnamurthy termed it 'A problem' and stressed the need for serious political parties and candidates for the betterment of the people.

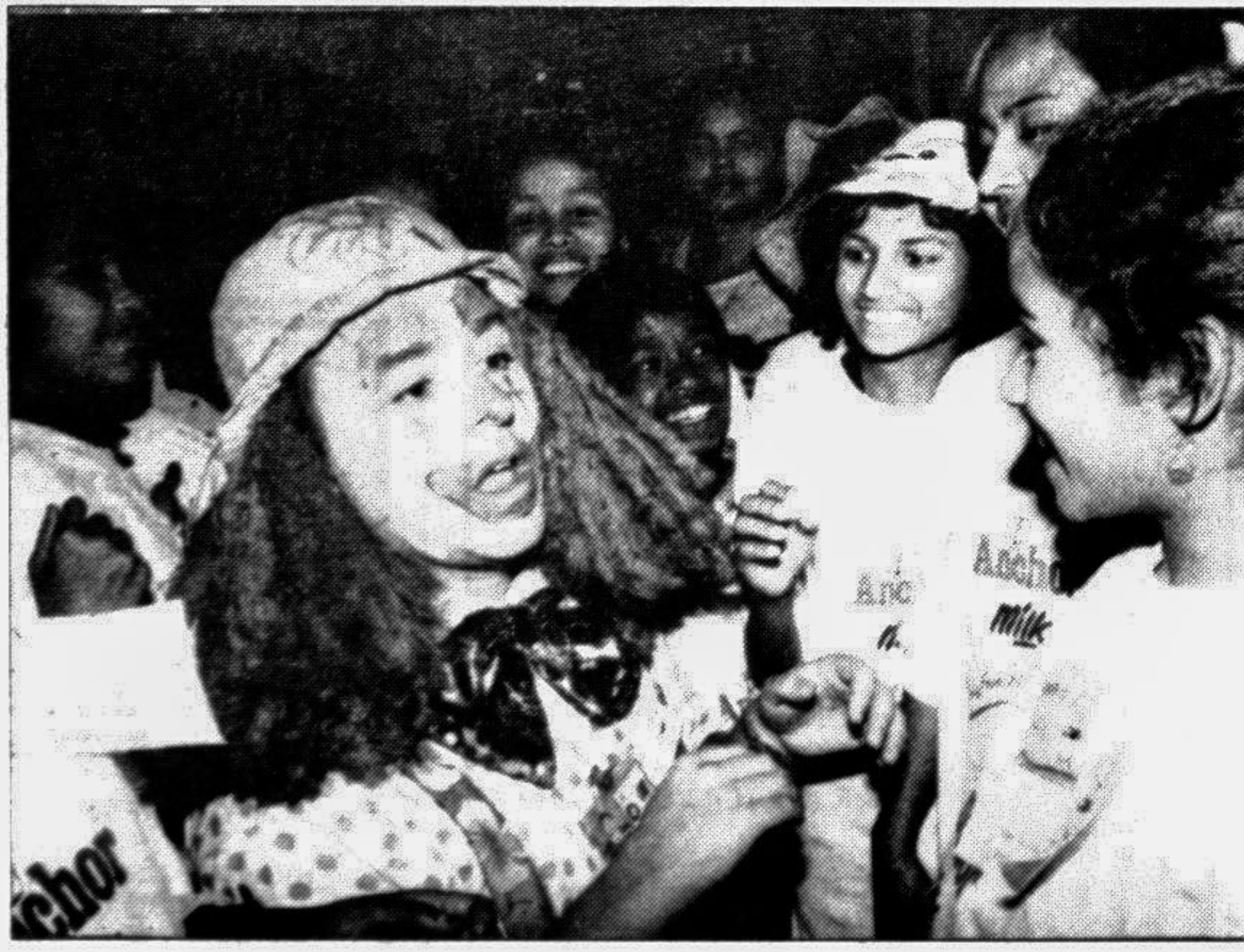


Bangladesh meet Scotland in semifinal today

Sports Reporter

The country's cricket-crazed fans will be on the edge of their seats when Bangladesh meet Scotland in the second semifinal of the ICC Trophy in Kuala Lumpur today.

The winners will join Kenya in the April 12 finale. The Africans booked their berth with an exciting seven-run victory over Ireland yesterday. See Page 12 Col 2



British Airways Country Manager Richard Engelmann, dressed as a clown, entertaining children on board the Fantasy Flight yesterday. — Star photo

'Fantasy flight' for 210 poor children

It was a dream come true for them as 210 children plucked from orphanages and slums flew across the sky in an hour's flight, reports UNB.

With a vision to be a good neighbor for the community and the environment wherever it flies to, the British Airways organised the 'flight of fantasy' for the underprivileged children yesterday.

The children along with their escorts boarded the BA 747 Jumbo from Dhaka airport and were taken on the flight around the Bay of Bengal.

The event, coinciding with the 25th anniversary of the British Airways' services to Dhaka, was organised to give the children the experience of their lifetime.

Children with T-shirts checked in for their flight and were taken to a specially decorated holding lounge where they were joined by a host of entertainers and celebrities who performed for the children.

Among the 210, eight are terminally ill from varying forms of cancer. "I feel so good See Page 12 Col 5

MTF may be merged with ord factory

By Morshed Ali Khan and Rafiq Hasan

The government is considering a proposal for merging the Machine Tools Factory (MTF) in Gazipur with the adjacent Ordnance Factory, sources concerned said.

Following a proposal from the Ordnance Factory in which it was stated that the MTF could also produce 'civilian products' under its ownership, the industries wing of the Planning Commission has submitted a report for ECNEC approval.

"Now it is under consideration as to who will pay up the accumulated liabilities of Tk 308 crore of the MTF," said an official source.

The MTF, termed a 'white elephant' was closed down in 1994 as it suffered persistent losses since its inception in the mid-sixties.

A number of former officials and experts of the MTF interviewed by these correspondents came up with several suggestions as to how the MTF could be run better.

Azizul Haq, a former Director (1965-1968) of the depart-

ment concerned which ran the MTF, said that the giant industry, in the first place, was a planning error. It was set up with the concept that the mines and other sectors in Pakistan would be provided with machine tools from here, he said. "The MTF should have been diversified long ago to produce other things," he said.

When asked what he thought about the proposal of the Ordnance Factory, Aziz replied, "Anyone interested in running it, should be welcome provided it is realistically planned."

Another top official of the Steel and Engineering Corporation pointed out that one of the reasons why the MTF was all along a losing concern was the problem related to labour. "Whatever the government does, one has to bear in mind the labour problem in our country. Look at the state-run industries, they all have identical problems," he said. Political interference in the running of the industry was also identified as

See Page 12 Col 8