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The Daily Star

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President visits
2 more venues,
Mayor's talks
with parties
Saturday

President Shahabuddin Ahmed yesterday visited the Osmany Udayan and the National Square to see for himself whether these places are suitable for holding public meetings, reports UNB.

President Shahabuddin advised the City Mayor Mohammad Hanif, who accompanied him during the visit, to initiate fresh dialogue with the opposition political leaders so as to reach a consensus on the question of suitable venues for holding public meetings.

The City Mayor assured the president that he will hold meeting with the leaders of opposition political parties with a view to finding a suitable solution to the problem, said an official handout.

Another report says Mayor Hanif will hold talks with the city unit leaders of different political parties on Saturday to exchange views on the selection.

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Rain mars BNP programmes

By Staff Correspondent

BNP could not stage its planned demonstration in city wards due to downpour yesterday afternoon.

The BNP had planned demonstrations at different wards in the city and at districts and thanas outside Dhaka yesterday as part of its four-day nationwide agitation programme to protest government 'repression' on Opposition activists, ban on street rallies in the capital, attempt on BNP chief Begum Khaleda Zia's life and removal of the floating bridge over Crescent Lake leading to Sheeted Zia's mazar in the city.

However, demonstrations in districts and thanas were held, a party source said.

BNP is scheduled to bring out torch processions across the country today. The four-day agitation will culminate in a nationwide dawn-to-dusk hartal tomorrow.

Tk 93 lakh gold seized at ZIA

By Staff Correspondent

Smuggled gold worth about Tk 93 lakh was seized from an Indian national at the Zia International Airport (ZIA) Monday night.

Customs sources said they seized 75 gold bars weighing 10 to 15 kg each, and 8,534 grams of gold ornaments from the luggage of a Calcutta bound transit passenger Abdul Aziz. The gold was concealed inside four packets of electronic goods.

Aziz, who hails from Rajkot in India had arrived from Singapore by a Biman flight.

CHT truce extended till Dec 31

By Special Correspondent

The Government and the Parbatya Chattagram Jana Sanghati Samity (PCJSS) have agreed to extend the ceasefire in the three districts of the Chittagong Hill Tracts (CHT) till December 31, an official announcement said in Dhaka last night.

The ceasefire was due to expire on September 30.

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Supplement

Today's issue of The Daily Star contains a two-page special supplement on 'Multinational Banks in Bangladesh' Pages 8, 9



The third temporary pontoon bridge on the river Khawai at Shayestaganj is nearing completion. The pontoons have been taken from Dhaka, where those spanned the Crescent Lake to the mazar of late president Ziaur Rahman. It's mid-night removal on September 17 added fuel to the current confrontation between the government and the major Opposition BNP. Engineers hope to complete welding the pontoons together today to open it for people soon, beside the wooden bridge for pedestrians. Another pontoon bridge is used only for ferrying vehicles. — Photo: Anisur Rahman

Privatisation of state-owned enterprises Donors' aid for shouldering long-term liabilities sought

By Staff Correspondent

yesterday told the donors of a government plan to undertake the long term liabilities of enterprises to be privatised and sought their assistance in this regard.

Some eighteen representatives from different donor organisations and countries were present in yesterday's meeting. They include the ambassadors of USA, Italy, the Netherlands, Australia, Denmark, high commissioner of UK, representatives of USAID and IMF.

The donors were also briefed about the 'success' of the AL government's privatisation effort. 'Before I joined the board, one mill was sold and after my joining, privatisation process for 28 more units has been completed,' he told reporters.

He said one way out of it could be inclusion of long-term

liabilities in the price of such units.

This plan can be a good success if the donors assist the government for undertaking liabilities,' he said.

At present, the government takes the current liabilities and buyers take the long term liabilities.

This dissuades good buyers on the one hand, and on the other, the government also suffers because most buyers ultimately do not pay the long term liabilities,' Chairman of PB, Kaz Zafarullah said at a press briefing yesterday following the meeting with donors at his office.

The donors were also briefed about the 'success' of the AL government's privatisation effort. 'Before I joined the board, one mill was sold and after my joining, privatisation process for 28 more units has been completed,' he told reporters.

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Three units have already been handed over to the buyers and six others are in the final stage of sale. The buyers have already paid their money for these six,' he said.

He expects these will also be handed over within a month.

The already sold three SOEs — IK Industries, Ferzoe Ata Dal Mill, and Bangladesh Cold Storage — fetched Tk 6.20 cr.

The six others are Hafiz Textile Mills, Royal Textile Mills, Deshbandhu Sugar Mills, National Ice Factory, Ashrafia Oil Mills, and Bangladesh Can Company. These units would fetch over Tk 38.72 cr.

He said the donors were impressed by the government's performance.

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Hasina yesterday expressed the confidence that UNCTAD would come forward in developing the poor nations further, reports UNB.

'We have adopted free market policy, liberalised trade and created the opportunity for foreign investment,' she told the visiting UNCTAD secretary general Rubens Ricupero who called on the Prime Minister at her office yesterday morning.

Hasina said the main objective of her government is poverty alleviation and referred to the reply of her letter from US President Bill Clinton, where he has assured to do everything for alleviating poverty.

The UNCTAD secretary general praised the development efforts in Bangladesh under the leadership of Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina.

Ricupero particularly lauded the government steps to liberalise trade.

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They were among a group of 450 who were travelling to various destinations in Western Europe and Italy. The illegal travellers were arrested from Gopchikoy city in Turkey.

The report also said that each traveller paid 5000 US dollar to five different agencies to reach their destinations. The agency officials were also arrested.

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