

Repatriation of CHT refugees resumes Nov 21

AGARTALA, Oct 12: The fourth phase of repatriation of Chakma refugees, sheltered in six refugee camps in Tripura, will start on November 21, reports PTI.

The decision to resume the process of repatriation was taken after a visit to Dhaka last month by a delegation of Chakma leaders led by the President of the Jumma Refugee Welfare Association, Upendra Lal Chakma, according to the Welfare Association press release here today.

There were three earlier phases of repatriation on February 15, 1994, June 21, 1994 and March 29, 1997 during which a total of 12,300 Chakma refugees returned to Bangladesh. About 44,000 are still left in the six refugee camps in South Tripura district of Tripura.

Samad Azad hands over invitation letter to Gujral

NEW DELHI, Oct 12: Bangladesh Foreign Minister Abdus Samad Azad had a meeting with Prime Minister I K Gujral here tonight and handed over a letter to the Indian leader from Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina inviting him to attend the three-nation business summit to be held in Dhaka next month, reports BSS.

Gujral accepted the invitation and expressed his keenness to attend the Bangladesh-India-Pakistan business summit.

During the hour-long meeting, Gujral and Abdus Samad

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Khaleda protests attack on house of Majibhandari

BNP Chairperson Begum Khaleda Zia yesterday protested miscreants' attack on the residence of party leader Nazibul Basher Majibhandari and threats against his family members, reports UNB.

A press release of BNP said armed miscreants attacked the Uttara residence of Majibhandari on Saturday midnight, damaged a private car and a microbus, and threatened the family members.

Begum Zia in a statement said that the incident clearly proved that the attack was pre-planned and it unveiled the fascist character of the govern-

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Ilias, Ratan remanded again

BNP leaders Ilias Ali and Kamruzzaman Ratan and JCD worker Mamun were remanded again yesterday for further interrogation, reports UNB.

The accused, arrested during the party's barricade programme on October 5 allegedly along with arms, were produced before the metropolitan court on Thursday after the expiry of a three-day remand.

Police prayed for further seven days' remand, but the court yesterday granted one day's remand.

The Daily Star

on the Internet
<http://www.dailystarnews.com>

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15 killed, over 700 hurt as storm hits Tongi

By Staff Correspondent

At least 15 people were killed and over 700 injured in a hailstorm that hit Tongi yesterday evening and caused maximum casualties among thousands of devotees who gathered under a massive makeshift tin-shed pandal at the Biswa Ijtima ground.

Five bodies were kept at Tongi Hospital, three at DMCH while three were kept by the Ijtima organisers. Four other bodies could not be traced immediately but police suspected those were taken by their relatives.

Most of the injuries were caused by flying CI sheets as the panicked devotees were scrambling when the storm blew the massive frail structure.

DC-in charge of Gazipur A K M Abdul Awaal Majumder told reporters that at least 15 were killed and over 500 injured. "Still we do not know for sure how many people were killed and injured," he said standing on the ruins of the structures.

Acting SP of the district Mesba said "nine trucks full of dead or dying" were rushed to different hospitals.

The thunder storm, that lasted for a little over five minutes starting just before the Magreb prayers razed the massive tin-shed structure under which more than 80,000 devotees, mostly elderly people from different parts of the country, were staying for the ten-day-long occasion. Yesterday was the last night of the programme and the devotees were preparing to get back to their homes after the last monazat today.

The storm made a sound that an aeroplane makes while See Page 12 Col 1

Hailstorm with 72kph gusty wind

By Staff Correspondent

The hail storm that razed the Biswa Ijtima maidan's makeshift tin roofs struck at 3:15 pm, its windspeed in gust was recorded by the neighbouring Zia International Airport's wind vane at 72 km per hour.

According to witnesses, the storm, bursting out of the gathering grey clouds on the north- See Page 12 Col 3



Devotees at the Ijtima ground in Tongi after the storm that razed the massive tin-shed pandal yesterday evening. — Star photo

Relatives rush to hospitals

By Staff Correspondent

Worried relations and fellow devotees who escaped the storm, rushed to the hospitals.

Hundreds gathered at the DMCH, Mitford and Tongi hospitals to know the fate of the injured or identify the dead.

Emergency services rushed 190 people to the Dhaka Medical College Hospital (DMCH), Mitford hospital and other clinics in the city after the storm flattened the makeshift tin-shed pandal at the Biswa

Ijtima ground in Tongi yesterday evening.

Three of them were declared dead on arrival, forty released after first aid and 91 admitted to the DMCH till 10:30 pm. The Mitford hospital treated 48 people and admitted eight others, hospital sources said.

At Tongi Sadar Hospital, 77 people were admitted. The small hospital which bore the initial rush of the casualties in See Page 12 Col 2

DCC dismantles 4 more illegal structures

By Staff Correspondent

The Dhaka City Corporation (DCC) dismantled four illegal structures used as offices by different party yesterday in Mohammadpur area but spared several others amid confusion over ownership of lands on which those offices are built.

On the third day of its demolition programme yesterday, a DCC team led by a magistrate and assisted by about thirty policemen demolished three offices belonging to Awami League and one to BNP. With these three, a total of 27 such offices have now come under DCC's pay-loader in Mirpur, Pal-

labi and Mohammadpur areas. Confusion arose when the team tried to dismantle the BNP office situated in a small park demarcated by a fence near the 'Human Hauler' taxi stand at Mohammadpur. A large signboard read that it was the main office of all BNP organisations in Mohammadpur thana area.

The building was spared as local party leaders verbally convinced a police officer that it was situated on a land belonging to the housing. When this correspondent asked the name of the housing, none could answer. See Page 12 Col 4

Joshi to deport Bangladeshis from Mumbai

By Staff Correspondent

NEW DELHI, Oct 12: The Chief Minister of Maharashtra, Monohar Joshi, said here Friday that his government wanted to deport "foreign nationals including Bangladeshis" from Mumbai, reports BSS.

Speaking at a meet-the-press programme at the Press Club of India he said, "neither the Shiv Sena nor the alliance government is against foreign nationals... but we cannot tolerate any nonsense whether it is a Bangladeshi or a Pakistani indulging in law and order problem." Many of the people, he said, were deported for overstaying without valid papers.

Answering to a question Joshi said his government would accept Bengalis from West Bengal "as they are our people" but not the people from Bangladesh or Pakistan.

When a correspondent drew his attention to the migration of Nepalese to Mumbai the Maharashtra Chief Minister said they had nothing to say as the Nepalese did not require any passport or visa to enter into India.

Replying to another question Joshi said the state government might accord industry status to Bollywood to help it come out of the clutches of underworld financiers.

The Chief Minister said his government had a positive attitude towards the problem of Bollywood, which was trying for industry status for a long time.

NBR withdraws order on DSE members

By M Shamsur Rahman

The National Board of Revenue (NBR), responding to brokers' demands, has agreed to withdraw its earlier decision to bring the members of the Dhaka Stock Exchange (DSE) under one of its tougher tax collection mechanism, official sources said.

This was decided at a meeting between a NBR team led by its Chairman Shah Abdul Hannan and a DSE members' delegation led by Abdul Haq Hawlader.

The NBR has however asked the Dhaka Stock Exchange members to submit their tax returns by the 15th of this month, according to DSE sources.

Earlier, the newly-created Investigation and Intelligence Zone of NBR had asked the DSE members to submit their tax returns. Since then, the DSE members held several meetings with the NBR, trying to persuade them to withdraw the order.

"We have agreed to withdraw the order... in the greater interest of the capital market," NBR Chairman Shah Abdul Hannan told The Daily Star.

"NBR seemed very reasonable," a senior member of the DSE said.

According to sources, the brokers had feared that they would be subjected to pay a much higher amount of income tax under the system the NBR sought to introduce. They also feared scrutiny by tax officials of their incomes during the stock market boom when they

'Deep-seated' structural weakness Climate not conducive to higher private investment: WB

By Toufique Imrose Khalidi and Inam Ahmed

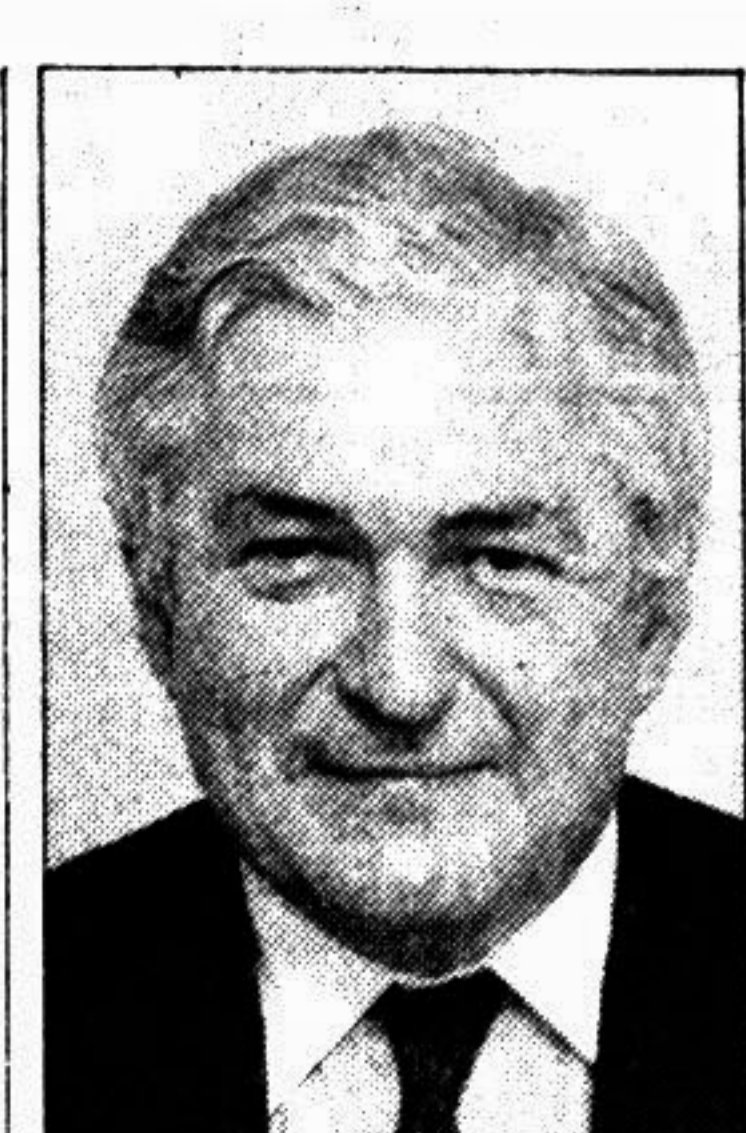
The Bangladesh economy is plagued by 'deep-seated' structural weaknesses, accompanied by poor policy reforms and a business climate that does not support private sector-led high growth, the World Bank said.

"Uncertainty regarding the future scope and pace of changes in trade and industrial policies and banking reforms have created an environment which is not conducive to the high level of private investment the coun-

try needs to sustain a rapid economic growth," the Bank said.

In its Annual Economic Update 1997, previously called Country Economic Memorandum, the World Bank put the spotlight on "Economic Performance, Policy Issues and Priority Reforms".

An annual exercise for years, the report, coming ahead of the annual meeting of the donor's consortium scheduled See Page 12 Col 7



James D. Wolfensohn
WB President arrives today

World Bank President James D. Wolfensohn arrives in Dhaka today for a high-profile visit which is expected to shape up the donor's future programmes and policies for Bangladesh, reports UNB.

Finance Minister Shah A M S Kibria will receive the Bank's chief executive at the Zia International Airport in the afternoon.

Wolfensohn will be accompanied by his wife Elaine, World Bank Vice President for South Asia region Mieke Nishimizu and Director of International Finance Corporation's Asia Department Rashad Kaldany.

This will be the World Bank chief's second official visit to South Asia region, but first to Bangladesh. The trip will also take him to Pakistan on October 18.

The tour is billed by government officials very important in framing policies for the Bank's future lending activities and related matters in Bangladesh which requires supports from the donor

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Cooperation for strong local govt sought Union Parishad office to be turned into complex: PM

The government has decided to set up a complete Union Parishad complex from where the rural people will get all types of services, reports UNB.

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina disclosed this yesterday, seeking cooperation of all in her government efforts to build a dynamic and effective local government system.

She was talking to a delegation of Jatiya Samajtantrik Dal (JSD-Inu) which called on her at the Secretariat and discussed with the Prime Minister various socio-economic and political issues.

Hasina said her government was advancing on the basis of proper policies and taking effective and realistic steps for overall development of the country.

"We are trying to run the country taking suggestions from all and exchanging views with the political parties in this regard," the Prime Minister told the delegation led by Hasanul Huq Inu.

About the local government, Sheikh Hasina further said the government was taking steps to form a strong local government system with people's represen-

tatives for the uplift of rural people.

The government has taken steps to introduce village council which will take decisions to be implemented by the government mechanism working there, she added.

"We are taking decisions on the proper policies for rapid development and all should work unitedly for the interest of the nation," she said, calling upon the pro-liberation forces to work unitedly.

The JSD leaders resented that the main opposition BNP entered an alliance with rightist groups and was doing politics with the fundamentalists.

The main opposition is carrying on a politics of "conspiracy to topple an elected government", they observed in the meeting.

They said the present government is pursuing a different type of politics and continuing its reform measures.

The JSD leaders suggested the Prime Minister to continue reforms process and give a permanent political shape to reforms for ensuring stability. They also stressed unity of pro-

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3 more urea factories to be set up: Tofael

CHITTAGONG, Oct 12: The government will set up three more urea fertilizer factories to meet the growing demand for urea and phosphate manure in the country, reports UNB.

Commerce and Industries Minister Tofael Ahmed made the disclosure while addressing a gathering of labourers, workers and executives of the state-owned enterprises (SOEs) at the premises of Chittagong Steel Mills Ltd at Patenga here today.

At present, six urea fertilizer factories of the country are producing about 21 lakh metric tons of urea against the local demand for 25 lakh tons a year. Natural gas is the only raw material used in producing urea.

In the twin process of globalisation and liberalisation, Bangladesh also has to go for disinvestment of the SOEs, he added.

In this context, he said the formation of task force to find out the reasons of loss incurred by Chittagong Steel Mills and measures to be taken to make it profitable.

The minister mentioned that a government can not survive for long by incurring annual loss of Tk 2500 crore in the SOEs.

Foreign experts indicated that Bangladesh is floating on gas with a reserve of 60 to 80 trillion cubic feet, he said, mentioning that investors from America, Britain and other developed countries have invested generously in Bangladesh as they found much favourable

environment to invest in the country, especially in its gas and energy sectors.

"We are out to exploit the potentials in gas sector by establishing fertilizer factories, power stations and other petrochemical industries through joint-venture and production sharing contracts," the Industries Minister said.

Presided over by the chairman in charge of Bangladesh Steel and Engineering Corporation, the meeting was addressed, among others, by Rafiqul Anwar MP, CBA president of all the SOEs and executives of the corporation.

Earlier, the minister visited Chittagong Dry Dock, Pragati Industries, Eastern Cables, General Electric Manufacturing Company, Chittagong Steel Mill and Gazi Wires. He also addressed the labourers and workers of all the units.

Development-8 Executive Director Hyan Kemal arrives in the city today on a three-day visit to Bangladesh, a member of the newly floated forum, reports UNB.

Kemal, coming here as part of his tours of the member countries of the new economic bloc, will hold talks with State See Page 12 Col 1

D-8 Executive Director due today

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Govt firm to go ahead with reforms: Kibria

By Staff Correspondent

Finance Minister Shah A M S Kibria has expressed his determination to press forward the reform process without which, he said, the investors' interest in the country may evaporate.

"If we become hesitant in reforms, the progress achieved in economic and social sectors will be foiled," he said while speaking as chief guest at the fifth founding anniversary of Eastern Bank Ltd (EBL) at a city hotel yesterday.

Dwelling on the current economic situation, the finance minister said inflation rate is below five per cent but there is a tendency for it to rise.

"The government is trying to keep it under control," he, however, asserted.

Kibria further said bank credit has increased by about 13 to 14 per cent in the last 12 months which is satisfactory and export has grown by 20 per cent in the last three months while import has increased at a slower rate.

He also said revenue collection is now at a satisfactory level and slide in foreign exchange reserve has been arrested. He said the government is now stressing ways of increasing export.

BDR, Nasaka resume joint demarcation work along border

By Staff Correspondent

CHITTAGONG, Oct 12: The joint demarcation work along Bangladesh-Myanmar border resumed today after a five-day suspension, sources concerned said.

The resumption followed removal of mines by Myanmar border security force — Nasaka. Bangladesh border security force BDR suspended the demarcation work on Tuesday last fearing possible mine explosions in some portions of the land border from Rejupara to Lembuchhari, a 20km stretch See Page 12 Col 2

Body to suggest amendments to Administrative Tribunal Act '80

By Staff Correspondent

A three-member committee was formed in the Ministry of Law, Justice and Parliamentary Affairs yesterday to suggest amendments to the Administrative Tribunal Act, 1980, according to highly placed official source.

The committee headed by the secretary of the ministry has been asked to submit its report by the end of November, the source said.

The committee will study the Act and suggest necessary amendments for quick and effective disposal of the cases.



DCC bulldozed an unauthorized structure of a political party near Mohammadpur bus stand in the city yesterday. —Star photo

Ten bypass roads to ease traffic jam planned in city

Ten new bypass roads will be constructed at a cost of Tk 255 crore to ease pressure on city traffic of the inter-district transport passing through the metropolis, reports UNB.

The proposal under Dhaka city infrastructural development programme of RAJUK is under active consideration of Planning Commission.

The initiative to construct bypass has been taken for long-term and permanent solution of the city's traffic-jam problem.

This was disclosed in the 8th meeting of a high-powered co-ordination committee of service organisations of Dhaka City Corporation areas yesterday.

Local Government, Rural Development and Cooperatives Minister Zillur Rahman presided over the meeting at the ministry.

The meeting was informed that Premium bus service became popular by extending transport facilities to the city residents and more 40 such air-conditioned buses would be pressed into service in Mirpur-Gulistan route very soon.

To protect the city environment, the meeting also decided that the concerned agencies would fix target of converting government vehicles to gas-driven ones gradually.

Motivational programme will be taken for changing private transport into gas-consuming ones as it is also economic.

The meeting expressed concern over the environment pollution in the capital due to illegal connection of industrial waste with sewerage line.

To stop the illegal drainage of industrial waste, the Dhaka WASA and Environment Directorate will jointly identify concerned industrial units, factories very soon and take effective measure to set up waste-treatment plant in the compound of industries.

It also decided that setting up of industries and factories in the residential areas would not be allowed.

The meeting was also informed that steps had been taken for the development of 1000 lanes and bylanes of the city. Drive is on to demolish unauthorised offices of political parties and shops erected on roads. It will complete soon.

To solve the city's slum problem, emphasis was laid on expediting the programme of shifting and rehabilitating the slums.

The meeting was told that Dhaka City Corporation had made about arrangement for keeping the capital clean and in this regard stress was given on building awareness among government agencies, NGOs and the people.

It was also decided that Mass Communication Department would conduct campaign in mahallas and localities to in-

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