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Cabinet finalises memo for Aid Group meet

The Cabinet at a special meeting yesterday finalised a memorandum to be presented in the Bangladesh Aid Group meeting in Dhaka November 4-5, reports UNB.

In the coming donors' consortium meeting, for the first time in Dhaka, the country's development partners will make aid pledges for the next fiscal.

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina presided over the meeting at PM's office, officials said.

Ministers, State Ministers, chairman of the Privatisation Board, Cabinet Secretary, Principal Secretary, secretaries concerned and the Governor of Bangladesh Bank attended the meeting.

Cargo handling at Ctg Port suspended

From Staff Correspondent
CHITTAGONG, Oct 16: Loading and unloading of cargo at the ships inside the Chittagong port jetties were suspended from this morning as stevedores refrained from gang-booking following a dispute with winchmen, port sources said.

The dispute arose when the winchmen refused to carry out loading and unloading of cargo.

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Ferry services from Aricha ghat disrupted

By Staff Correspondent
Ferry service from Aricha ghat which handles about 3000 vehicles a day, further deteriorated yesterday and traffic jam at the three ghats — Aricha, Daulatdia and Natakola — continued to worsen.

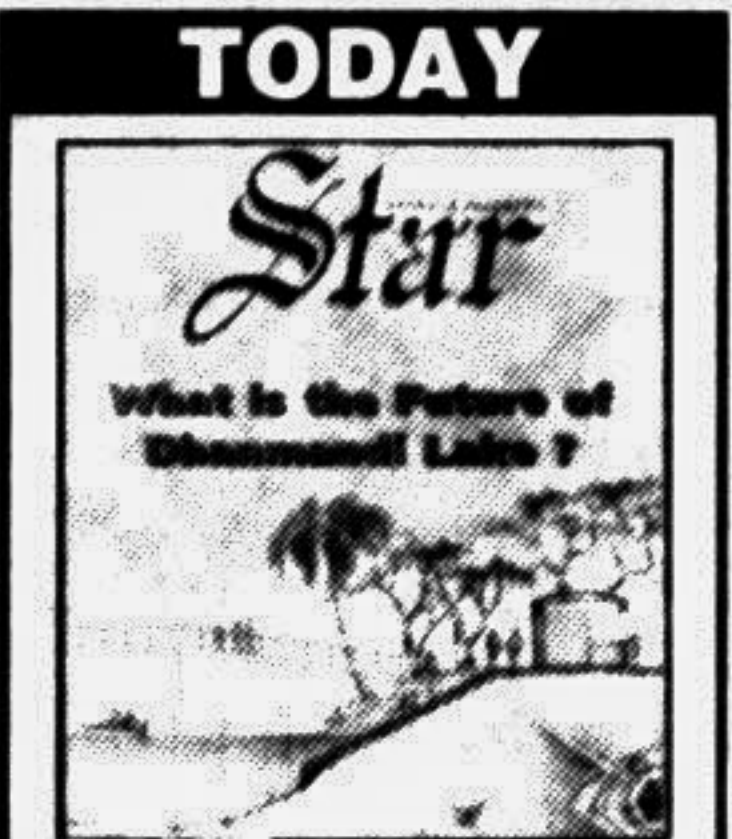
Officials apprehend that road link between the capital and the southern and northern districts may be cut off in a day.

See Page 12 Col 5

BB branches to remain open on Saturdays

Bangladesh Bank has decided to keep open its branches on Saturdays from October 18 to facilitate transactions of the commercial banks, reports UNB.

Branches of the central bank in Dhaka, Chittagong, Khulna, Bogra, Sylhet and Rajshahi will remain open from 8.30 am to 1 pm to pay money and receive deposits only from the commercial banks, said a BB press release yesterday.



Read Star Weekend Magazine's cover story this week on a project to revive the dying Dhanmandi lake or the necklace of Dhaka city as it was once said to be.

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

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No JS standing body even after 16 months: President 'Dialogue among political parties abortive so far'

By Staff Correspondent

President Shahabuddin Ahmed yesterday expressed his concern over the non-formation of parliamentary standing committees 'even after 16 months' and said it is through such committees that Parliament asserts its authority.

"Even after 16 months, our parliamentary standing committees could not be formed, and dialogue and discussions among the political parties in the matter have been abortive so far," said the President while inaugurating a two-day international workshop on Electoral Law Reform at Hotel Sonargaon

Pan Pacific Hotel.

The workshop has been organised by the Fair Election Monitoring Alliance (FEMA) in collaboration with the Study and Research Group of Manabik Shahajay Sangstha (MSS).

The workshop is being attended by BK Mainali, President of the Jurist Council, Nepal; Damso G Magbual of NAMFREL, The Philippines; Rajandar Sachar, former chief justice of Delhi High Court; Jeevan Thiagarajah, Director of ICES, Colombo and Hussain Naqi, freelance columnist, Pakistan.

President Shahabuddin Ahmed said electoral reform

should originate from parliament and seek to correct any impediments to access, eligibility and transparency in ballots, polling stations, candidates and voters.

He said a parliamentary government runs a country through meaningful debate and

Text of speech page 5

dialogue. "Unfortunately, we have had very limited opportunity to see positive interaction in our Parliament."

"Elections in societies, such as ours, have wide dimensions. Election-centred controversies have intensified social unrest

for years together," resulting in so much sufferings to the commonman, he said.

Election laws should undergo periodic changes to keep pace with time and situation. An election will become meaningless if it is dominated by money—black or white—spent far exceeding the limit fixed by law. The law is neither strictly enforced nor is stringent enough to punish persons who violate it glaringly, the President said.

He continued, "Law should be amended requiring every candidate in a parliamentary election to submit daily statement

See Page 12 Col 1

Ruling party to initiate fresh talks with BNP

By Reaz Ahmad and Nazmul Ashraf

The ruling Awami League will initiate a fresh dialogue with the main Opposition BNP to narrow down differences between the two sides ahead of the next session of the Jatiya Sangsad beginning November 2.

The ruling party plans to extend the offer tomorrow while BNP says it will respond positively if a conducive atmosphere is created.

Talking to The Daily Star yesterday, Minister for Telecommunications Mohammad Nasim said he would telephone BNP leaders tomorrow inviting them to a dialogue to break the current impasse over the main opposition party's joining the upcoming session of the Jatiya

Sangsad.

He said the ruling party is now willing to accommodate all 113 MPs belonging to BNP in the parliamentary standing committees on various ministries.

Much time has already elapsed. We will put all-out efforts so that the standing committees could be formed in the coming session of the parliament," asserted Nasim.

Asked about any initiative from the President in resolving the impasse, Nasim said, "I feel we (AL and BNP) will be successful in settling the issue and hope BNP will return to the House."

See Page 12 Col 6

Bangabandhu killing Interpol's help to arrest fugitives sought

NEW DELHI, Oct 16: Bangladesh today appealed to Interpol to make best use of its communication and intelligence system in tracing and arresting the fugitives involved in the assassination of Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman and four national leaders, reports BSS.

Addressing the plenary of the 66th general assembly of Interpol here, the leader of the Bangladesh delegation and Inspector General of Police, Mohammad Azizul Huq, said the self-confessed killers of 1975 must face trial and be made accountable to the law of the land.

He said that these self-proclaimed murderers were hiding in various parts of the world. Huq appreciated on behalf of the Bangladesh government to the Interpol for quick response

See Page 12 Col 6



Vendors occupy almost half the road near Jatrabari crossing in the city, disrupting normal movement of vehicles. — Star photo

Beximco Investment Co Ltd A stunning case of bank manipulation

Star Business Report

A stunning case has been unearthed which shows that Bangladesh's biggest business conglomerate, Beximco, manipulated the banking system in a way that it was able to siphon out Tk 24.5 crore from two banks in which it has large shareholdings by using a bank account with a Tk 10,000 balance in the name of one company whose declared owners are untraceable till now.

The incidents, in this particular case, all happened over a period between late 1996 and early 1997.

An account opened with Tk 10,000 in only four months gave the business group benefits to the tune of Tk 24.5 crore when the balance still remained Tk 10,000.

Such fraudulent practices are really uncommon anywhere in the world when it comes to one of the best-known corporate houses in a country.

Mallik Export Ltd — who knows it in Bangladesh? —

from its current account with the Cox's Bazar branch of the Arab Bangladesh Bank wrote 21 cheques worth Tk 24.5 crore. The beneficiary was Beximco Investment Company Ltd (BICL), whose paid-up capital is reported to be less than Tk 100,000.

Naturally, the cheques bounced, but another bank was there to rescue.

The International Finance and Investment Company Ltd — its Dhanmondi branch to be precise — bought all the cheques through what is known inland bill of purchase or IBP.

The IBP is a kind of loan given against a cheque which cannot be encashed immediately. The cheque in this case is the collateral. The bank officials act on the basis of their relationship with the client, which is based solely on mutual trust. "If the cheque bounces, it is a breach trust. And it's a criminal offence," according to

See Page 12 Col 8

Oil companies react to change in bidding rules

By Sharier Khan

A number of oil and gas companies yesterday sharply reacted to the Energy Ministry's abrupt change of a vital clause relating to bidding for 12 exploration blocks in the country which, they said, had eliminated the competitive nature of the bidding process.

Official sources said the decision by the Energy Ministry earlier last week led some of the companies to write 'letters of protest' to the Prime Minister, expressing their 'unhappiness and concern' that the whole process had become 'murky'.

The Energy Ministry sent fax messages a two days ago to 21 bidders saying that negotiations would be conducted from October 21 on 'one company

one block' basis. Instead of multi-proposal basis. The proposals of the 21 bidding roughly outlined an investment of two billion US dollars in the next three years.

Quoting from their protest letters without disclosing the names of these companies the sources said that the changes in the bidding criterion had created "a great deal of confusion and anger over the process".

Representatives of these companies have already met high officials of the Energy Ministry and Petrobangla and reminded them of the government's commitment to hold the bidding on the merits of individual offers, financial abilities of the companies, past repu-

tation and their technical abilities, the sources said.

They also reminded the officials that such commitment was reiterated by the Energy Minister at a post-bidding press conference in July.

The government's answer to the protests were that it wanted to ensure "maximum participation" in oil and gas exploration in Bangladesh, the sources said.

"The decision for one-block one-company/group of companies has definitely created room for doubt about the transparency of the process," commented an energy expert. "Under this criterion, the negotiation committee becomes the supreme authority to decide

See Page 12 Col 4

4 Biman aircraft out of order, services disrupted

By Staff Correspondent

Disruption in the services of Bangladesh Biman due to absence of four out of the 10 aircraft in its fleet has been causing enormous sufferings to passengers for about a week.

Biman officials said they had to reschedule the timings of a number of flights in international routes resulting in delayed operations.

Operation in domestic routes, however, was not hampered much.

Many of the passengers of international flights had to wait at Zia International Airport for hours in the last few days. Besides, in some cases, two flights were merged due to the shortage of aircraft, an official said.

Two aircraft — a DC-10-30

See Page 12 Col 2

PCJSS for next round of talks on Nov 16

By Special Correspondent

The Parbattya Chattagram Jana Sanghati Samity (PCJSS) has proposed to the National Committee on Chittagong Hill Tracts (NCCHT) to hold the seventh round of talks on November 16 to finalise an agreement to end the decades-old insurgency in the hills.

The meeting is likely to be held in Dhaka. A reply is expected to be sent within a couple of days, highly placed sources told The Daily Star here last night.

Officials were awaiting return of NCCHT convenor Abul Hasnat Abdullah, Chief Whip of Parliament last night from the United States, where he is undergoing treatment now.

The proposal for the meeting was made in a letter from Ushatan Talukdar, a leader of

the PCJSS and Commander of its military wing.

It was sent to Dhaka on Wednesday night from Khagrachhari by Hansdaj Chakma, convenor of the Liaison Committee.

Earlier on Tuesday the PCJSS high command and leaders of its military wing Shantibahini endorsed the draft accord, agreed upon by Jyotirindriyo Bodhipriyo Larma, Chairman of PCJSS, during his talks with the NCCHT in Dhaka on September 17.

Before leaving Dhaka Larma had told newsmen that it would be placed before his 'comrades' for discussion and that a final accord would be signed in the next meeting.

Some amendments to the

See Page 12 Col 7

Accord for 2nd pvt power plant signed

A 15-year agreement for power generation in the country was signed yesterday between the Power Development Board (PDB) and Khulna Power Company Ltd, a consortium of Wartsila NSD Power Development Company, Summit Industrial and Marcantile Corporation (Pvt) Ltd and United Enterprise & Co Ltd, reports BSS.

This will be the first venture in Khulna for generation of electricity in the private sector, said a press release yesterday.

Khulna Power Company Ltd will install and commission a 100-megawatt barge-mounted power plant in Khulna and supply electricity to PDB within 10 months of signing of the agreement.

Under the deal, the company

See Page 12 Col 8

Ministerial body decides to make police force more effective

A meeting on law and order situation yesterday decided in principle to take necessary measures for gathering information and experience from the countries where a well-organised police system exists, reports UNB.

The decision was taken in the 6th ministerial committee meeting to make the country's police force more effective and people-oriented.

The meeting, held at the conference room of the Cabinet with Home Minister Rafiqul Islam in the chair, took stock of the overall law and order situation.

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CU halls reopen amid siege by APSU

From Staff Correspondent

CHITTAGONG, Oct 16: Residential halls of Chittagong University were reopened today amid tension as the 'anti-communal' All Party Students' Unity (APSU) began a three-day siege programme at Gate No 1 to press its demands, sources said.

The APSU demands include exemplary punishment to killers of Bakul and allotment of seats on the basis of merit and faculty.

Pro-Vice Chancellor of the university Dr Abu Yusuf Alam told The Daily Star that a total of 17 resident students entered the halls with valid documents after a check-up at the gate to

day. All resident students will return to the halls in next two days, he hoped.

Despite the siege, no untoward incident took place during entry of resident students, the Pro-VC said adding that strong security measures were taken inside the campus and at the gates.

He said the resident students would be given protection at night.

All necessary measures have been taken to resume classes on October 18 and to ensure safe return of resident students, he added.

See Page 12 Col 3

Border confce Effective steps to check smuggling, cross-border crimes discussed

The border coordination conference between Bangladesh and India continued for the second consecutive day yesterday, reports UNB.

The meeting being held at the BDR headquarters is working out an effective measure to combat smuggling and other cross-border crimes, according to an official handout.

Various issues, including smuggling of arms, phensidyl and other goods, trafficking of women and children, border demarcation, Tin Bigha corridor

See Page 12 Col 1

'Repatriation of Chakma refugees to resume Nov 21'

Repatriation of the Chakma refugees from India will resume on November 21 after a holy Buddhist festival, 'Kathina Chivara Dana', reports UNB.

It will continue unhindered as long as all measures for safety, security and proper rehabilitation of the returnees are ensured and implemented.

Chittagong Hill Tracts Juma Refugees Welfare Association (JRWA) President Upendra Lal Chakma made the announcement in a press release here yesterday.

He said the decision was taken in view of assurances given by Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina and the progress in ongoing dialogue towards a peace accord.

See Page 12 Col 3

Thousands of illegal workers rush to leave KSA

RIYADH, Oct 16: Threatened with fines and jail terms, hundreds of thousands of illegal workers from the Philippines to Pakistan scrambled to leave Saudi Arabia before a grace period runs out Thursday, reports AP.

Indians, Pakistanis, Bangladeshis, Sudanese, Filipinos and Egyptians crowded their embassies in the capital Riyadh and the Red Sea Port city of Jiddah, pleading with officials to put their names in lists of illegal workers preparing to leave the oil-rich kingdom before the deadline expires. Otherwise, they could face up to six months in prison and fines of up to 100,000 riyals (27,000 million US dollars).

The Saudi government announced the grace period in mid-July with the aim of regulating the labor market, which has been inflated by illegal workers. The immigrants must leave or obtain papers promising that they will leave by Thursday.

Saudi officials, speaking on condition of anonymity, said the campaign to expel illegal workers comes in line with a government plan to provide job opportunities for Saudis and reduce the number of crimes committed by foreign workers.

The government also wants to cut back the amount of money foreign workers send out of the country. Remittances out of Saudi Arabia total over 60 billion riyals (16 billion dollars) annually.

On Wednesday, the Interior Ministry issued a final warning to illegal workers, and a crackdown to flush out laborers who did not leave during the amnesty is expected to begin next week.

Of Saudi Arabia's total population of 18 million, six million are foreigners, of which 4.3 million have jobs in the kingdom.

Sec 144 imposed at Cox's Bazar

COX'S BAZAR, Oct 16: District administration imposed Section 144 on the town today as two factions of the local Awami League fought for holding meeting at the same venue, reports UNB.

The authorities clamped the ban as the rival groups — one led by A K M Mozammel Haque and the other by Mstaque Ahmed Chowdhury — locked in clashes since Wednesday night over holding meeting at Shah-eed Dawlat ground.

State Minister for Land & Haj Rashid Mosharruf and central leader Ataur Rahman Khan Kaiser were scheduled to attend the meeting but cancelled their

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সম্মানিত গ্রাহকদেরকে অধিকতর ব্যাংকিং সেবা প্রদানের লক্ষ্যে প্রধান কার্যালয় ও আঞ্চলিক কার্যালয় সমূহ সহ সারাদেশে

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