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848 more refugees back home

KHAGRACHHARI, Nov 22: Some 848 tribal refugees returned to their homes in Chittagong Hill Tracts from camps of Indian State of Tripura today, the second day of the fourth phase of repatriation, reports UNB.

A total of 850 tribals of 150 families were scheduled to come back but two of them did not turn up due to illness, officials said.

With this, the total number of returnees stood at 1,425 in two days. Some 577 tribals of 100 families returned, on the first day. The process will continue till November 30.

Additional Deputy Commissioner (Revenue) Nurunnabi Chowdhury and TNO of Matiranga thana Mir Nasir received the returnees at Tatabhchari transit point.

On arrival at the reception camp, the tribals were provided with government facilities, including money and three months' ration, and sent to their homesteads.

Some 909 tribals of 150 families are expected to come back tomorrow through Tatabhchari transit point.

48-hr industrial strike Dec 7-8

Jute Mills Worker-Employees' Action Council will enforce a 48-hour rail-road barricade and industrial strike December 7-8 demanding implementation of the Wage Commission, reports UNB.

This was decided at a national convention of the workers' representatives of private jute, cotton and textile mills yesterday with Council convenor Abul Bashir in the chair, said a press release yesterday.

Expressing resentment over non-implementation of the Wage Commission, the convention further decided to gherao the office of the mills owners' association in the city at 11 am on Wednesday.

The Council also demands implementation of the Wage Commission Award of 1991 in private sector jute, cotton and textile mills and reopening of closed mills by December 8.

Extradition: Spl PP leaves for Bangkok soon

By Staff Correspondent

Anisul Huq, one of the special public prosecutors in the Bangabandhu murder case is leaving for Bangkok sometime this week in connection with extradition of Maj (ret'd) Bazul Huda from Thailand, Huda is sought for trial in the case.

Huq will represent Bangladesh government in the extradition case now being heard in a court in Bangkok, according to official sources.

Abdul Kahar Akand, CID investigating officer of the murder case, recently returned home from Bangkok following his deposition in the court there in connection with the Huda's extradition.

The court in Bangkok is hearing a petition by Bangladesh Police, seeking extradition of Huda, one of the 14 absconding accused in the Bangabandhu murder case.

Huda, fled from the country following Awami League's return to power last year. He was arrested by the Thai police for shoplifting and is serving a sentence there.

The Daily Star

on the Internet

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The Daily Star

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Lone observatory obsolete, can't read intensity or locate epicentre

By Mizan Ali

The country's lone seismic observatory in Chittagong, having 30-year-old equipment, cannot accurately measure the intensity of an earthquake and locate its epicentre, sources in the Meteorological Department said yesterday.

At least three fully equipped seismic observatories are required to locate the epicentre of an earthquake and read its intensity on the Richter scale.

But bureaucratic redtapism and sheer negligence have so far thwarted attempts to modernise the seismic observatory although Bangladesh is situated in a quake-prone zone," said an official.

The government plan to establish three new seismic observatories and modernise the one at Chittagong could not be implemented in more than a decade, he added. The new observatories were planned for Dhaka, Rangpur and Sylhet, where "structural faults" susceptible to quake lie. "We are not too sure how long it will take to start the planned project," he said.

Negotiations are going on with the French government since 1994 for undertaking a project to establish the three seismic observatories and modernise the Chittagong centre.

said another official. "If nothing comes up by the end of this year, the Met Office will revise the project and request the government to implement it with its own resources," he said.

Earlier in 1986, a project for 'Development of Meteorological Services' was taken up with the UNDP. The 1.97 million US dollar project, funded by the UNDP, was postponed after equipment were specified and experts started working on it.

"Financial constraint" was shown as the reason for postponement of the project which led to the withdrawal of UNDP funds and the experts.

The project was then shelved

Fresh tremor rocks Ctg, 3 adjacent dists

Death toll rises to 6, 11 remain missing

CHITTAGONG, Nov 22: A moderate earthquake rocked the port city and its adjacent areas again this morning. Similar tremors were also felt in Cox's Bazar, Rangamati and Bandarban.

Met office sources here said the tremor in Chittagong was felt for 15 seconds from 8:35-9 am with its epicentre 135 km north-east of the port city. The tremor at Cox's Bazar lasted 2-3 seconds, and in Rangamati it was felt for 3-4 seconds. There was, however, no report of damage of life or property.

Meanwhile, police confirmed three more deaths in yesterday's building collapse at Hamjarbagh Lane under Panchlaish thana in the city raising the earthquake death toll to six.

Of them, Sadia, 5, who was rescued at midnight last night succumbed to her injuries in the hospital early this morning while two other bodies were seen trapped under the rubble of the collapsed building.

Police said those two bodies would be recovered after demolishing the upper portion of the five storeyed building, first floor of which went under soil due to earthquake.

They further said that eleven other residents of the building were still missing. Their bodies might be trapped under the rubble, police officials and neighbours apprehended.

A next door neighbour of the occupants of the building said the missing people, who came out from the adjacent tin-shed house for shelter in the building during the tremor, were buried under the debris.

Army joined the rescue operation from 10-30 pm last night.

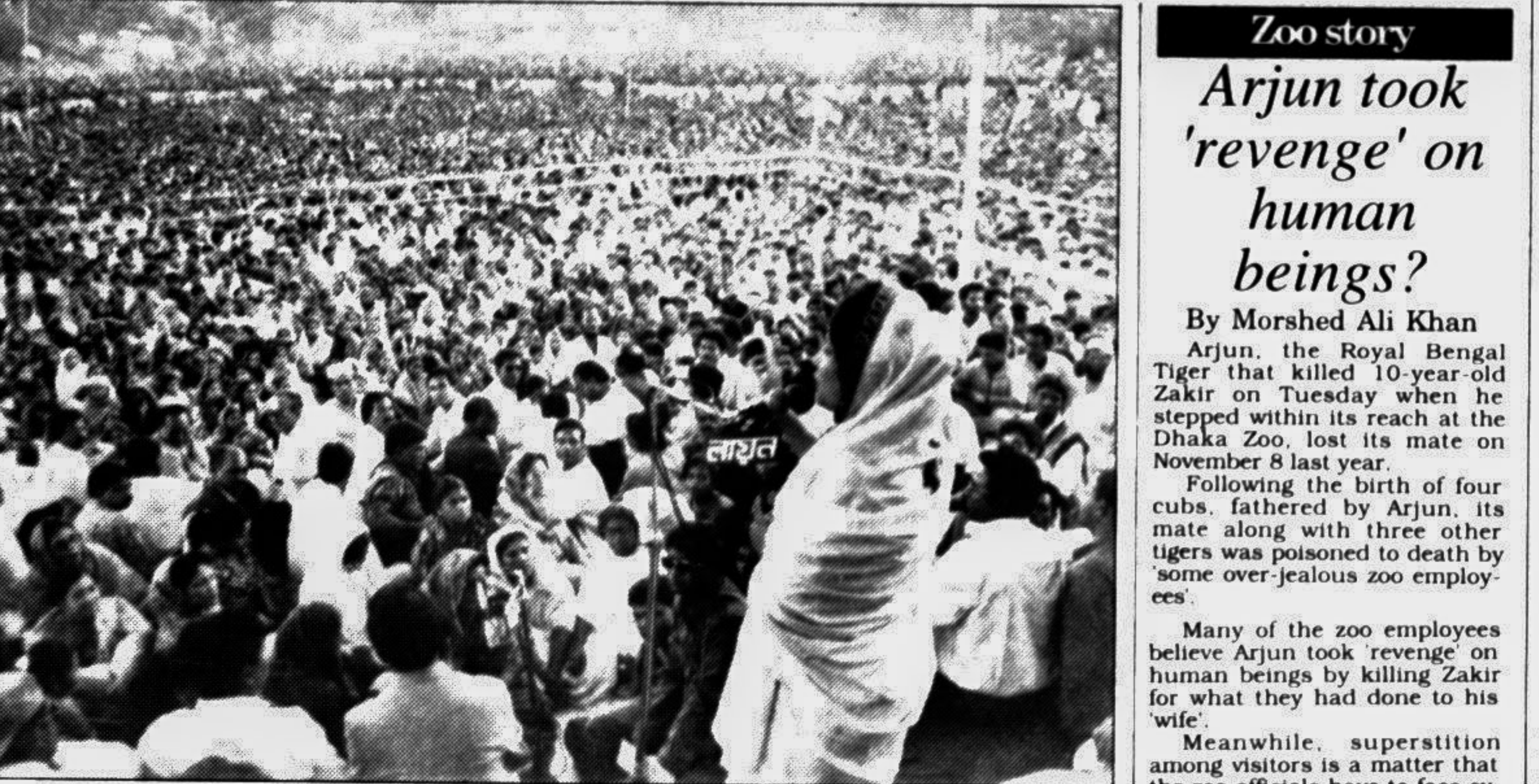
Meanwhile, an inter-departmental coordination meeting held with Chittagong City Mayor Alhaj A B M Mohiuddin Chowdhury in the chair at the building site unanimously decided to dismantle the collapsed building immediately as it is risky and hampering the salvation work.

A broad-based committee, comprising Chittagong Development Authority (CDA), Chittagong City Corporation, Railway, Army and Fire Brigade, has been formed to demolish the collapsed building for the rescue operation.

The meeting also decided to declare the area around the building unsafe.

As per decision of the meeting over 100 square feet area around the building was cordoned off by police and the residents were asked to vacate their houses till the completion of rescue operation.

Commissioner of Chittagong Division, Mohammad Shakhawat Hossain, Commissioner of Chittagong Metropolitan Police Ashraf Huda, Chief Engineer of CDA Abdul Matin, senior engineers of Railway, PDB, EPZ, Deputy Commissioner K M Habibullah, high officials of the Army, Fire



BNP Chairperson Begum Khaleda Zia addressing a public meeting at Mymensingh Circuit House ground yesterday. — Star photo

Khaleda warns at public meet

Stop conspiracy or face oust-govt movement

By Reaz Ahmad, back from Mymensingh

Leader of the Opposition in Jatiya Sangsad Begum Khaleda Zia has warned of an 'oust government' movement if it signs any accord on Chittagong Hill Tracts (CHT) beyond constitutional provisions, and fails to ensure free and fair Union Parishad (UP) polls.

Addressing a huge public meeting at Mymensingh Circuit House maidan yesterday afternoon, the BNP chairperson said, "We will launch an 'oust government' movement if it keeps conspiring against our independence and sovereignty."

Begum Zia's visit to Mymensingh was part of her countrywide mass-contact programme.

"We had achieved independence shedding our blood and if necessary, we will shed blood again to save the CHT," said the former Prime Minister.

The meeting was also addressed by BNP Secretary General Abdul Mannan Bhuiyan, Abdus Salam Talukdar, Afzal H Khan, MP, Amanullah Aman, MP, Shahjahan Siraj, Lutfur Rahman Khan Azad and other leaders of the party and its front organisations. District BNP Convenor AKM Fazlul Haq presided.

Begum Zia said the so-called Shantibahini is a terrorist force trained in India, brings arms from India and "kill our people. So, Bangladesh may lose its sovereignty over CHT if an accord is signed with this terrorist force."

She alleged that since long India has been conspiring to grab not only the CHT but has also kept an eye on Chittagong Port.

The BNP chief said, "This government is handing over our garments sector to India. Markets for our jute, shrimp and leather are also in the process of being taken over by India."

Begum Zia said the present government came to power giving false commitments to the

Prices of winter vegetables up

By Staff Correspondent

Prices of some varieties of winter vegetables have shot up in the city markets because of their "short supply," wholesalers and retailers said.

Prices of newly harvested potato, tomato, and green chilli suddenly increased by Tk 5 to Tk 20 per kilogram last week but slightly decreased again yesterday.

Potato was being sold at Tk 60 per kg as against last week's price of Tk 40. However, the price has now settled at between Tk 40 and Tk 50 per kg.

Newly harvested potato is being sold at Tk 24 to Tk 26 per kg as against last week's price of Tk 20 to Tk 22.

Wholesalers at Kawan Bazar told this correspondent that there was a disruption in the transportation of vegetables, causing an increase in the prices of potato and green chilli. The reason for the disruption in transportation could not be known immediately.

However, last season's potato, stored in cold storages, is being sold at Tk 8 to Tk 10 per kg. Local variety of potato, Bo-

No hope of early resumption of AL-BNP talks

By Nurul Kabir

The dialogue between the ruling Awami League and the Opposition Bangladesh Nationalist Party has stopped, leaving little hope for a sound working relation between the two feuding political camps in the near future.

The dialogue began before the Jatiya Sangsad went into its last session on November 2 and the process ended as the session was prorogued on the 16th.

The BNP has been abstaining from attending Sangsad proceedings since August to press a set of demands that include lifting of ban on street rallies in the city, stoppage of alleged repression on political opponents, disclosing contents of the draft accord to be signed with leaders of the tribal people in Chittagong Hill Tracts and so on. BNP refused to return to the House during the last session as the dialogue failed to forge a consensus.

"The ruling party has not contacted us for talks after the prorogation of parliament session," said a BNP official.



Election materials including ballot boxes, indelible ink, rubber seals and stamp pads are being sent to different areas of the country for the Union Parishad elections beginning on December 1. — Star photo

UF-Cong battle of nerves continues

NEW DELHI, Nov 22: India's seven-month-old minority coalition looked days away from collapse today as the battle of nerves with the party which keeps it in government dragged on, reports Reuters.

After a frenzied week of brinkmanship and manoeuvring by the main parties to find allies for the formation of a new government or brace for a snap election, the drama's protagonists took a weekend breather to consider their next moves.

Prime Minister Inder Kumar Gujral said today that elections, not formally due until 2001, might be held within the next few months, according to the Press Trust of India (PTI).

"It may be that the next elections will take place as the country celebrates its 50th year of independence," Gujral said in a speech in the eastern city of Calcutta, India's 50th year of independence ends next August.

"My strong feeling is that we are heading for dissolution and early elections," said Mahesh Rangarajan, an analyst at the Centre for Contemporary Studies in New Delhi.

The crunch could come early next week in the Lower House of Parliament if the Congress Party puts forward a no-confidence motion against Gujral's 15-party United Front government or if he calls a confidence motion.

Parliamentary proceedings were blocked this week as Congress MPs, chanting slogans, demanded the removal of a southern regional party from

Revenue collection misses target

Steps to contain govt borrowing suggested

By Inam Ahmed

As the revenue collection misses its target, economists feel a close monitoring of the budgetary situation and fiscal adjustments are needed to contain the government's borrowing from the banking system.

These adjustments are needed both on the revenue and expenditure sides to keep the budget deficit within sustainable limits," a top economist told The Daily Star without wanting to be named. "Otherwise, borrowing would increase out of proportion. This would mean a serious threat to the private sector which now seems to be taking off."

The revenue collection fell short of its target by Tk 318.59 crore in the first four months of FY '97-98, raising doubts about whether the target set for the year is reachable. If not, the government's only course will be to borrow from the banking system, crowding out the private sector. This will also make the inflation rate, which is already creeping up, shot up sharply.

The World Bank also sounded warning recently saying, the budget deficit should be kept 'within sustainable limits'.

In its draft status report on 'An Agenda for Action', the Bank said domestic financing of fiscal deficit should be limited to no more than 1.5 per cent of the GDP to contain inflationary pressure.

But there are still signs of no relenting in the higher level of domestic financing which has been about two per cent of GDP for the past two years.

Now, economists say, unless the revenue position is improved, this level will increase further fuelling inflation. This will have widespread effect, ranging from credit contraction to fall in manufacturing

OECF help for Ganges Barrage project assured

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina has said that her government attached priority to the development of transport and telecommunication sectors for an overall development of the nation, reports UNB.

The government, she said, has also given a high priority to industries, specially those based on gas, and to energy sector infrastructural development for the country's development.

The Prime Minister was talking to the president of Overseas Economic Cooperation Fund (OECF) of Japan, Akira Nishigaki, who called on her at her official residence yesterday.

Hasina appreciated the OECF assistance to different development projects, including the Bangabandhu (Jamuna) Bridge.

Right time for foreign cos to invest here, says Kibria

By Staff Correspondent

Finance Minister S A M S Kibria has urged foreign entrepreneurs to invest in Bangladesh with confidence because the country's banking and financial sector has been brought under tight discipline and it would be maintained at any cost.

He was speaking at the launching ceremony of non-banking financial institution, Vanik Bangladesh Limited, joint venture between Bangladesh and Sri Lanka, at a city

Bid to snatch money from trader: 2 riot policemen held

By Staff Correspondent

Two riot policemen were arrested when they allegedly tried to snatch money from a trader in front of Bangla Academy in the city yesterday morning.

Ramna police said plainclothes police arrested Abdus Salam and Safi, both aged about 25, while they were snatching the money from a vegetable trader at about 5:30 am.

The arrested persons were produced before the Chief Metropolitan Magistrate's court yesterday. A case was lodged with Ramna thana in this regard.

Pakistan needs strong military for peace with India: Sharif

ISLAMABAD, Nov 22: After three wars and dozens of cross-border skirmishes, Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif told graduates of the Pakistan Air Force Academy today that Pakistan needs a strong military if it is to achieve a lasting peace with neighboring India, reports AP.

"Our policy of peace can only succeed if it is backed by a strong and credible defence capability," Sharif said in his speech to the cadets.

The two countries have fought three wars since the

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