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The Daily Star

Today's issue
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ANNOUNCEMENT

The Daily Star has declared 1998 as the year of the Young Professionals & Entrepreneurs. Today's issue includes a 4-page Special on the Conference of the group held on 28 December '97. Please read what the young have to say about the future and join our march to the 21st century.

Top ULFA leader arrested in city

By Staff Correspondent
Anup Jetia alias Golap Barua, secretary general of the United Liberation Front of Assam (ULFA) has been arrested in the city, according to policy officials.

Barua has been kept in police custody and his remand will be for interrogation, they said.

It could not be known whether some other people were also arrested along with him.

"Barua was arrested in the city at least two days ago," said an official of the Ministry of Home Affairs, requesting anonymity. He however, declined to give details.

"Golap Barua was arrested today," said the Chief Secretary of the government of the Indian State of Assam," BBC reported last night. The BBC quoted the Chief Secretary as saying that the information was received by the Indian government from Bangladesh.

"Bangladesh police arrested Barua following issuance of red corner notice on him by the Interpol on request from the Interpol.

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Senator Harkin due Jan 8

Star Business Report

Senator Tom Harkin, the man who made child labour a major trade topic some five years ago, will be in town next week on a two-day trip.

The US senator will meet government and garment industry leaders during his January 8-9 stay in Dhaka.

Harkin's visit is seen by the industry leaders here as an important event towards convincing the US in raising Bangladesh's garment quota.

The much-publicised Harkin Bill, a legislation the Senator had aimed against American import of goods made with under-age labour, forced countries including Bangladesh to arrange schooling for children in factories.

In 1995, controversies sparked off by the proposed law led to a MOU involving the factory owners (BGMEA), ILO and the UNICEF to send working children to school.

Last month, former US Representative Stephen Solarz, who now acts as a lobbyist for Bangladesh's garment industry seeking a 30 per cent quota raise, was here.

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Direct bus service with Calcutta now seems a far cry

By M Anwarul Haq

The proposal to operate direct bus service between Dhaka and Calcutta which was likely to begin last month is now almost shelved, according to sources concerned.

The plan which was about to be implemented faced a sudden setback when the Ministry of Communications received, through the Foreign Ministry, a message from the Indian authorities recently requesting a comprehensive Motor Vehicles Agreement (MVA).

The Indian side is learnt to have insisted that besides buses, trucks and heavy duty vehicles also be permitted to move non-stop between Dhaka

and Calcutta and subsequently to other parts of India.

A top official involved in the negotiation process said, "Delhi's insistence to have an umbrella agreement to allow the plying of other types of vehicles, particularly cargo carrying trucks, have made Dhaka hesitate to enter into any agreement on operation of non-stop transports between the two countries."

Some officials pointed out that the Cabinet had earlier approved only linking Dhaka with Calcutta and Ajmer.

This was supposed to be followed up with another meeting which was finally "abandoned" after Dhaka received Delhi's proposal for the MVA.

It is also learnt that Delhi did

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A meeting will be held under the chairmanship of Principal

Secretary to the Prime Minister sometime later this month to review the situation," they said.

The last bilateral meeting between Bangladesh and India on opening of direct bus route between Dhaka and Calcutta ultimately linking Delhi and Ajmer was held in the capital when a high level delegation led by K Bhatti of India's Surface Communications Ministry came here in September.

This was supposed to be followed up with another meeting which was finally "abandoned" after Dhaka received Delhi's proposal for the MVA.

It is also learnt that Delhi did

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Shenli, a flower that used to fill the morning air with its sweet fragrance in many areas of the city in the winter, is becoming rare nowadays.

— Star photo by AKM Mohsin

Dhaka's fresh initiative to hold 3-nation summit this month

By Staff Correspondent

A flurry of diplomatic communications among Dhaka, Delhi and Islamabad is on in a bid to hold the postponed "Three Nation Business Summit" sometimes this month. However, no date could yet be fixed, diplomatic sources said.

The one-day "Three-Nation Business Summit" was scheduled to be held on November 23 but was postponed three days ahead of the event following a request from Pakistan Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif to postpone. The Summit would be for one day, divided into three broad sessions — a formal opening session, participated

to have evinced "keen interest, through diplomatic channels, to participate in the Summit at an early date."

Bangladesh which is both the initiator and coordinator of the summit, after learning about the interest of the two leaders, has sent requests, through diplomatic channels to IK Gujral and Newaz Sharif to confirm, if they are in a position to agree on a common date to attend the Summit, between January 15 and 25.

The diplomatic communications also mentioned that as part of the originally drawn up programme, the Summit would be for one day, divided into three broad sessions — a formal opening session, participated

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by the three prime ministers and two business sessions participated by the leaders of private sector trade and industry from the three countries.

State Minister for Foreign Affairs, Abul Hasan Chowdhury told The Daily Star yesterday, "The Business Summit is still hanging in the balance. However, all the three countries are now keen to hold the Summit. We have sent the request to the two countries and are trying to synchronise the dates."

A spokesman of the Indian High Commission in Dhaka confirmed that his country has received the request but said, till yesterday, no confirmed date was communicated to

the postponement. Now, both the prime ministers are learnt

to have evinced "keen interest, through diplomatic channels, to participate in the Summit at an early date."

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