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Cabinet okays \$235m IIFC

The government yesterday gave the go-ahead to Infrastructure Investment Facilitation Centre (IIFC), aimed at promoting flow of private capital into infrastructure projects, reports APB.

A Cabinet meeting approved a proposal for the establishment of the IIFC which would facilitate private investment with capital from a 235 million US dollars window created by the World Bank.

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina chaired the weekly meeting of the Cabinet, held at the Prime Minister's Office, that endorsed the new institution, an official release said.

The World Bank gave the fund for floating a private-sector infrastructure project company which would lend to private companies interested to invest in Bangladesh's infrastructure sector.

The IIFC would mainly evaluate project proposals seeking funds from the Company, officials said.

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BNP, allies return to streets tomorrow

By Staff Correspondent

BNP and its allies are going to resume anti-government agitation tomorrow after a pause for the nine-day Willis International Cricket Tournament that concluded in the city on Sunday.

BNP Chairperson and Leader of the Opposition Khaleeda Zia held a meeting with her party leaders at her official residence last night and discussed strategies for the anti-government agitation, party sources said.

The street agitation is planned to protest, among other issues, government's 'failure' in giving relief to the flood-hit people and rehabilitating them, imposition of fresh surcharges, and to demand waiver of agricultural loans, free distribution of fertiliser and proper distribution.

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CAB survey Prices go up by 6.38pc in Oct

Prices of essentials in the city have gone up by 6.38 per cent in October, further worsening the plight of the people devastated by the flood, according to a consumer rights organisation, reports UNB.

A section of opportunist traders, taking the advantage of government's inaction in price control, caused the current price spiral of many essentials, said a press release of the Consumers Association of Bangladesh (CAB) yesterday.

It mentioned that the government had succeeded in controlling the price hike to a great extent during the period of flood by strictly monitoring the situation.

The CAB has demanded of the government to keep an watch on the market to ensure that prices remain within the consumer's purchasing capacity.

It also called for urgently enacting a law to protect the interest of consumers and buyers as well as to ensure fair price and accurate weights.

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Trial begins amid tight security Anwar Ibrahim loses first round of legal battle



Wearing a sign reading "Justice for Papa", Anwar Ibrahim's daughter, Nurul Nuha, 14, leaves the court where her father is being tried on the first day of his trial. — AP/UNB photo

KUALA LUMPUR, Nov 2: Defence attorneys for Malaysia's ousted deputy prime minister Anwar Ibrahim lost a crucial opening gambit in his corruption trial today, reports AP.

They contended that the jailed dissident's graft charges should be thrown out because the lower house of Parliament had repealed the special anti-corruption law before the criminal charges were filed against Anwar.

High Court Judge Augustine Paul dismissed the defense strategy, saying that because the law was still under review by the upper house of Parliament, it was still on the books.

The politically charged trial of Malaysia's one-time heir apparent began amid tight security and under the scrutiny of international human rights officials.

Riot police armed with automatic rifles blocked some 200 supporters of Anwar from reaching the courthouse.

Anwar faces five counts of corruption and five counts of illegal sex acts, charges he vehemently denies and says were cooked up to undermine his growing challenge to the 17-year leadership of Prime Minister Mahathir Mohamad.

Defence attorneys also called today for the judge to hold Mahathir in contempt of court for tainting the case by saying Anwar should be convicted.

"You should hold this man for contempt," said Raja Aziz Addruse, who leads a team of nine defence lawyers, Mahathir was quoted in local papers as saying a conviction would help preserve racial harmony in the ethnically diverse Southeast Asian country by easing the growing unrest.

Mahathir could be called as one of the 52 witnesses to testify against Anwar, lawyers said.

"His name is on the list. We believe he might be called," said Kamar Anisah, defence lawyer, after the hearing adjourned until tomorrow afternoon.

Demonstrations in support of Anwar have been held regularly since his arrest Sept 20. A full-scale riot broke out Oct 24 when police fired tear gas at a mosque and people retaliated by throwing stones and bricks.

"I can't expect a fair trial," said Anwar, who was brought into the courtroom through an underground tunnel.

He was pale and gaunt. His sister said he had lost nearly 9 kilograms during the ordeal.

"I am in good health," he told reporters from the dock, where four policemen stood guard. He hugged his wife and children and was later seen sharing a candy bar with his wife, Azizah Ismail.

He said prison life was not bad, relatively speaking. "They don't harass and beat me up."

The 51-year-old politician, who has called for political reforms and Mahathir's resignation.

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This day 23 years ago

By Staff Correspondent

The 23rd anniversary of Jail Killing will be observed in the country today.

Four national leaders — Syed Nazrul Islam, Tajuddin Ahmed, AHM Quamaruzzaman and Capt Mansur Ali were killed inside the Dhaka Central Jail on November 3, 1975.

The ruling Awami League has chalked out an elaborate programme in observance of the day. The programme includes a public meeting at Paltan Maidan in the city at 3:00 pm today.

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina will address the public meeting.

This time, the day is being observed with some of the persons allegedly involved in the incident put behind the bars following CID investigation of the case.

The day's programme also includes hoisting of the National Flag and party flag at half mast atop Awami League offices across the country and wearing of black badges by AL leaders and workers to mourn the day.

In the city, the programme will begin with placing of wreaths at the portrait of Bangabandhu at the Bangabandhu Museum and on the

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Summary of charges

KUALA LUMPUR, Nov 2: Anwar Ibrahim pleaded innocent to all 10 charges against him. Today's trial is for four counts of corruption. A separate trial will be held for other charges, reports AP.

The five charges of corruption against Anwar are:

1. Interfering in May 1995 in an investigation into his then private secretary, who was suspected of receiving a bribe leading to illegally acquiring property.
2. Directing two police officers in August 1997 to obtain a written statement from a man denying sexual misconduct and sodomy with Anwar.
3. Directing the same officers to ask the man to give a written public statement denying sexual misconduct.
4. Directing officers to obtain a written statement from a woman denying sexual misconduct.

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No breakthrough in talks with PCJSS

From Staff Correspondent

CHITTAGONG, Nov 2: There has been no major breakthrough in the fourth meeting of the Chittagong Hill Tracts peace accord implementation committee at the Circuit House here today, sources said.

The marathon meeting which continued late in the evening reviewed the progress towards implementation of the accord signed between the government and the Parbatya Chhattagram Jana Sanghati Samity (PCJSS) on December 2 last year.

It started at 11 am and with two breaks, resumed at 7:45 p.m. After about 40 minutes, the meeting was adjourned for dinner at Chittagong city mayor Mohiuddin Chowdhury's Sholahshah residence.

The meeting, chaired by convener of the committee and Chief Whip Abul Hasnat Abdullah, was attended by minister

for CHT affairs Kalparanjan Chakma, Chairman of PCJSS Jyotirindriya Bodhipriya Larma alias Shantu Larma, Chairman of Refugee Task Force Dipankar Talukder and Mayor A B M Mohiuddin Chowdhury.

"Our meeting was held in a very cordial atmosphere. We had detailed discussions on ways of implementation of the peace treaty and the meeting would continue," Abdullah told reporters before slipping into his room after the evening break.

"We have formed the Regional Council. It was upto them (PCJSS) when they would take over," Abdullah said when asked on the discord with PCJSS over the interim CHT Regional Council (RC), rejected by Shantu Larma.

Larma virtually remained

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Nov 8 verdict: Spl security measures from today

The government has taken up tight security measures on the eve of the verdict in the Bangabandhu murder case scheduled for November 8, fearing trouble, especially in the capital, reports UNB.

Law enforcing agencies are considering next seven days as a 'sensational week' and have taken a foolproof security measures to avert any untoward incident in the country, said a senior police official requesting anonymity.

The lengthy trial of the Bangabandhu murder case was completed last month in which 19 people, including a former junior minister and 18 former army officers were accused. They were charged under provisions which provide a maximum punishment of death.

"Yes, we have taken appropriate security measures concerning the trial," he said.

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Draft nat'l water policy approved

National Water Resources Council yesterday approved the draft on the National Water Policy aimed at taking all necessary means and measures to manage the water resources of the country in a comprehensive, integrated and equitable manner, reports UNB.

The policy was approved at a meeting of the council at the Prime Minister's Office with Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina in the chair.

The water policy is designed to ensure continued progress towards fulfilling the national economic development, poverty alleviation, food security, public health and safety, decent standard of living of the people and protection of national environment.

The draft policy will be sent to the Cabinet for final approval.

Addressing the meeting, the Prime Minister thanked all concerned for presenting an excellent water policy, which is essential for the riverine and water-dependent country like Bangladesh.

"Bangladesh is a land of water. Water is a blessing to us, but sometimes it brings sufferings," she said stressing on proper management of water for its optimum use in all seasons.

There was no water policy in the country for which it caused suffering... there was no plan or programme for proper use of this valuable resource, she said mentioning the historic Ganges Water Sharing Treaty with India, which has ensured the right of Bangladesh on the waters of the river Ganges.

Water Resources Minister Abdur Razzak in his introductory speech said the policy stressed on integrated and planned use of surface and ground water. The policy has also given priority to the participation of the people in integrated use of this most valuable resource.

He said the government has also taken steps to formulate a National Water Management Plan for ensuring planned use of the water resources.

Water Resources Secretary Dr ATM Shamsul Huda presented the draft policy at the council meeting and described various aspects of the policy and its future implications.

There is also an indication of process of water resources development up to the year 2025 in the policy, he said adding that the policy will also guide

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Eminent citizens sit in silence at the alter of the Central Shaheed Minar in the city yesterday to protest rapes, sexual abuses and terrorist activities on the campuses. — Star photo

Injured Jubo Dal leader dies at DMCH

By Staff Correspondent

A Jubo Dal leader, injured earlier in an attack in Jessore, died at the Dhaka Medical College Hospital (DMCH) at around 10 yesterday morning.

Shawqat Ali, son of Golam Mustafa, received bullet wounds in his left chest and left hand in an armed attack allegedly by a group of Awami League workers on his way to attend the founding anniversary programme of his organisation at Sharsha thana in Jessore on October 27.

He was rushed to the Jessore Sadar Hospital and shifted to the Chest Disease Hospital in Dhaka the same day. Two days later, an unconscious Ali was taken to the DMCH.

His body was taken to the

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Put no remark on passports, Dhaka requests foreign missions

The Foreign Ministry has requested the foreign missions in Dhaka not to put any seal or remark on the passport of any Bangladeshi national if his or her visa is not granted, reports UNB.

"Passport is the property of the government." Foreign Secretary Mustafizur Rahman told a regular press briefing at the Foreign Office yesterday.

He said a circular was given to the foreign missions in Dhaka recently with a request that "either give visa or return the passport" without any seal or remarks like "applied for" or "Application received."

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Robot's hand heals the hole in her heart

From Naimul Haq

NEW DELHI, Nov 2: A Bangladeshi woman became the first Asian to undergo a robot-assisted heart surgery here last on Tuesday.

The 90-minute critical operation was performed at Escorts Heart Institute and Research Centre on 21-year-old Meherunnessa, a student of Dhanmandi Women's Federation College in Dhaka.

Meherunnessa had a congenital hole in her heart detected only last year.

A surgeon sitting in front of monitor away from the patient was able to carry out the operation by taking cue from the images transmitted by a three-dimensional camera attached to the probing arm of the robot and giving voice commands.

"Meherunnessa is fine now. She was able to speak normally soon after the surgery," her uncle Mohammad Waliullah told this correspondent at the hospital premises yesterday.

"She had been suffering from severe breathlessness for a long time. But, since her surgery she has been speaking without gasping for breath," Waliullah said.

"She was recovering fast," said one of the doctors at the intensive care unit of the hospital.

"The unique thing about the robot-assisted surgery is that it involves precision, smaller incision operation and faster recovery as the patient would hardly feel any post operative pain," according to Dr. Naresh K. Trehan, Escorts executive director and chief cardiothoracic and vascular surgeon.

"Unlike in the conventional open heart surgery, the robotic arm does not require a large opening of the chest cavity to reach the heart. A two-inch cut is sufficient for the robotic arm to do its work substantially reducing the burden on the surgeons," he said, speaking to The Daily Star in an interview Friday evening about the introduction of the revolutionary cardiac technology at Escorts.

Referring to the cost of new technology Dr. Trehan, who has

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A silent protest

By DU Correspondent

Eminent citizens assembled at the Central Shaheed in the city Minar yesterday protesting rapes and other sex-related crimes and terrorist activities at the country's universities.

A good number of celebrated members of the civil society with festoons and banners joined the gathering to launch a social movement against such crimes at the universities. They sat for an hour at the alter of the Minar.

They also demanded introduction of a code of conduct for regulating the teacher-student relationship, enactment of tougher laws against the criminals, ensuring exemplary punishment of the rapists irrespective of their family and political affiliation.

The gathering was attended, among others, by Dr Kamal Hossain, Prof Khan Sarwar Murshid, Prof Kabir Chowdhury, Prof Rehman Sobhan, Barrister Ishiq Ahmed, Waheedul Haque, M A Muhi, Dr Abu Abdullah, Prof Zillur Rahman Siddiqui, Prof Mustafa Nur Ul Islam, Prof

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Trial of share scam cases likely this month 3 lawyers named but poor pay may 'spoil the whole soup'

By M Shamsur Rahman

The law ministry has named three Special Public Prosecutors to deal with 15 share scam cases and said they will receive fees at government rates.

The trial is expected to begin this month after almost two years. A key problem was finding prosecutors.

Dr M Zahir, Dr ARK Ali and Syed Hyder Ali have been appointed Special PP by a ministry order on Thursday. Earlier, the ministry had appointed Syed Rezaur Rahman as Special PP.

But their poor pay could be a discouraging factor in the whole affair, SEC officials fear.

According to government rules, such public prosecutors can be paid a maximum monthly retainer's fee of Tk 2000, Tk 500 for a full-day hearing and Tk 250 for a half-day hearing.

"How could the ministry even think of assigning these people with such negligible fees?" asked a SEC official.

The Securities and Exchange Commission (SEC) filed 15 cases on April 4 last year following the stock market crash in late 1996 on the basis of an inquiry report. The cases involve such big companies as Beximco Pharmaceuticals and Shinepukur Holdings Limited.

The two companies along with Doha Securities filed petitions challenging merits of the cases, which later went to the High Court and then the Supreme Court.

The Supreme Court after a long hearing rejected the petition filed by the three companies on May 13 this year.

SEC officials said these accused companies would hire highly-paid lawyers to deal with the cases. "We decided to bring in special PPs to match their lawyers. If they are paid so poorly, then we could have gone ahead with those already on the government list," according one SEC official.

After the 1996 stock market crash the capital market of the country had been hitting new lows and lack of confidence was identified by many as the main reason for market to behave in such a fashion.

SEC sources said that the regulatory body would urge the Law Ministry to withdraw the conditions on fees.

DSE polls: Rakib not on list of rtd councillors

By Staff Correspondent

The Dhaka Stock Exchange (DSE) election took a new turn as the bourse election committee yesterday announced names of four retiring councillors excluding the current chairman who should also step down according to the bye-laws.

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Court orders suspension of CCCI polls

CHITTAGONG, Nov 2: A district judge's court today ordered suspension of election of the Chittagong Chamber of Commerce and Industry which was scheduled for December 20, reports UNB.

The suspension order came upon three identical appeal petitions filed on behalf of those who have lost or failed to secure membership of CCCI.

The court ordered that all election activities should be postponed until applicants for associate and ordinary membership numbering more than 500, are accorded membership and the membership of more than 100 businessmen are renewed, and the voter lists are updated with their inclusion.