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Sultana succumbs to mystery illness

Sultana, the baby elephant, died at the Dhaka Zoo Friday, five months after she was brought from the jungles of Cox's Bazar. Zoo sources said yesterday. They said the five-month old baby was attended and fed as usual by its caretaker at the quarantine bay of the zoo on Friday morning. But then it suddenly collapsed before the veterinarian and died. What had caused her death was not immediately known. Zoo sources said they were yet to know anything about the cause of Sultana's death. They were waiting for the autopsy report. However, other sources alleged that there had been some negligence on the part of the caretakers who had failed to look after her properly. But zoo officials denied the allegation. The female cub was doing fine. She had weighed 145 kg before her death, the sources added. The baby elephants are usually nursed by their mothers until they are 18 months old. But in a lonely world without her mother, Sultana had been doing rather well with a mixture of cereal and milk. She was brought to the zoo in late October last year after forest guards found her abandoned in a water hole on a hill deep inside the rainforests of Ramu. Sultana was barely three to four days old when she was found. Her mother had apparently been shot dead by poachers. The guards waited for two days hoping that cries of the frightened baby would bring its mother to her. But the mother did not appear and the forest department sent her to Dhaka. By the time she arrived at

By Special Correspondent

the zoo, she was already traumatized, scared of humans and suffering from diarrhoea that resulted from forced milk feeding by the guards. However, she found caring hands from zoo veterinarians who tried to raise her. Quickly she gained weight and increased to 145 kg from 65 kg when she arrived at the zoo as the first baby elephant to be fostered. Belonging to a diminishing



Sultana at Dhaka Zoo on March 14. — Star file photo

Khaleda asks govt to quit power for mid-term polls

Leader of the Opposition in Parliament Begum Khaleda Zia has again asked the government to hand over power to a caretaker government for a mid-term election, reports UNB. 'People have expressed no confidence in the Awami League government by observing yesterday's hartal. If government has minimum respect for democracy, it should give up power, she said in a statement yesterday. Referring to the Prime Minister's recent remarks at Paltan Maidan, BNP chairperson said instead of confessing their failure, the Prime Minister is giving contradictory statements to shift the responsibility of power-water crisis and deterioration of law and order to the opposition.

Armed outsiders beat up BCL leader at DU

By DU Correspondent. Armed outsiders at DU yesterday beatup former president of Fazlul Haq Hall unit of Bangladesh Chhatra League (BCL) in front of the hall provost yesterday. BCL leader Elan who received head injuries is an MA (final year) student of Geography and Environment Department and resident of Fazlul Haq Hall. He was ousted from the hall by his rival group a few months ago. His friends and some BCL activists said he came to the hall to discuss with the provost about his plan to return to the hall. A group of outsiders led by an identified terrorist Shipu stormed into the provost's office when Elan was talking to provost Hossain Monsur. They started beating Elan with a rifle butt in front of the provost as he refused to come out of the office. Elan was later rushed to the Dhaka Medical College Hospital (DMCH). Provost Hossain Monsur informed the matter to the Vice-Chancellor and Proctor over telephone and demanded punitive action against the culprits. Residents told The Daily Star, Shipu was staying at the hall for a long time along with his associates. He is the younger brother of a BCL faction leader Iqbal Hossain who 'controls' the hall. When contacted, Vice-Chancellor of DU Prof AK Azad Chowdhury said a three-member probe body had been formed to investigate the incident. He said that the DU authorities would take necessary measures into the yesterday's incident at FH Hall.

Congress faces tough task

From Page 1. Far from certain whether Congress could drum up enough support from the fragmented ranks of parliament to rule. The prospect of fresh elections, India's third since 1996, loomed as sings emerged that Gandhi might fail to pull the raft of leftist and regional parties into a new alliance or convince them to prop up a minority Congress government. Sonia was due to meet Communist and regional party leaders today to put together the first pieces of a mind-boggling power jigsaw. Among those leaders was Jayaram Jayalalitha, the mercurial one-time movie actress who triggered the fatal trust vote by pulling her southern party out of Vajpayee's government. Leftist groups with a joint force of some 50 lawmakers met this morning to decide how to wield their influence. But cracks were already appearing in the front they put up against Vajpayee, with the

seven deputies of the Revolutionary Socialist Party and Forward Bloc vowing not to back a Congress government. Another party, the Tamil Maanila Congress, said it would be no part of a government which included Jayalalitha's deputies, its rivals in the southern state of Tamil Nadu. A third party, the Bahujan Samaj Party (BSP), said it would let its stand be known at the last minute. The BSP, an aggressive, champion of lower castes, voted against the government yesterday despite its pledge to abstain. Meanwhile, Shiv Sena, a hardcore Hindu party in India's defeated coalition government said today foreigners had no right to rule the country. 'A foreigner like Sonia Gandhi cannot become PM' Subhas Desai, general secretary of the party told Reuters. 'A country like India with a huge population has many leaders who can run this country. We don't want an Italian prime minister.'

'I don't want to say anything about our future plans. Let them make her the PM, then we will show them our strength,' said Desai, whose party is known for its violent tactics. Editorial writers saw more instability ahead and said an election appeared to be the only way out. 'This parliament is genetically constructed to give us no more than instability,' the Indian Express said. 'It is time, therefore, to give the voter a chance to rectify this. Now, or in the winter, an election this year is an inevitability.' Kuldeep Nayar, a non-party member of the upper house of parliament, agreed that an election was on the cards. 'It doesn't mean it will happen immediately,' he said. 'There is a possibility of some government emerging. First Congress will try, but too many compromises will have to be made.'

Hartal

From Page 1. Government offices were open but attendance was thin. Inter-district buses and trucks did not leave the city terminals but trains and motor vessels did. Domestic and international flights operated on schedule. Factories at the export processing zones ran, and activities at the Mongla and Chittagong ports were uninterrupted. At Bonarpura in Gaibandha, pickets put up barricades on rail tracks suspending movement of trains throughout the day. Most of the clashes occurred in the capital where huge contingents of police and paramilitary BDR were deployed at strategic points. In the capital, pro-hartal activists allegedly hurled a crude bomb on a state-run BRTC bus near the Shishu Park at Shahabagh at about noon, leaving a helper of the bus, Shahid, 28, critically injured. Shahid was first taken to the Dhaka Medical Hospital (DMCH) and then shifted to the Pongu Hospital with his right hand and eyes badly damaged. Majid Khan, a field officer of NSI riding the bus, also sustained injury in his right eye. He was also admitted to the DMCH. Injured by bomb explosion another 11 persons were also undergoing treatment at the DMCH and five policemen at the Rajarbagh Police Hospital.

Hospital maids

From Page 1. self handed over her babies to them saying she already had a number of children and her family would not be able to bear the expenses of her two newborn daughters, according to police. Other sources in the hospital said that in the morning the maids asked Azimun to give them their fees as they had attended the mother and her babies for the last seven days. Azimun told them that she did not have much money with her as she was poor and later proposed them that they take her children with them instead of the money. Police, however, said they were investigating the incident. Azimun, a resident of Kurigram, was released from the hospital yesterday and she took her babies with her. 'The hospital maids are not employed by the hospital authorities and we do not encourage patients to assign them personally,' said an official of the hospital last night. According to sources, Azimun started crying for her babies while she was being discharged from the hospital. After listening to Azimun, Aminuddin, a leader of Casualty Block of the hospital, along with some other hospital staff searched the residences of the maids near the PG quarter of the DMCH and recovered the babies.

First shower

From Page 1. Elsewhere in the country, high temperature continued with a lingering dry spell. Rajshahi had the day's highest temperature of 39 degree Celsius. Dinajpur had the lowest of 19.8 C. But power failure and load-shedding, which darkened Dhanmondi, Elephant Road and New Market areas late in the evening, did not allow shopkeepers to open their shutters after the hartal. Met office in its forecast for today said there are chances of rain/thundershower accompanied by gusty/squally wind at places in Dhaka, Rajshahi and Sylhet divisions and in Kushiya, Barisal, Comilla and Noakhali districts till 6 p.m. The weather may remain mainly dry with cloudy sky. Day temperature may remain unchanged in the country today.



A damning influence. The police divert a BNP procession in the Naya Paltan area.

Paris meet begins today

From Page 1. We did not get this money, there would be corresponding pressure on our foreign exchange. Supposing a project had an expenditure of Tk 100 crore and Tk 50 crore is foreign assistance, this 50 crore becomes crucial. The point is that we still need foreign assistance. Some of the publicity and propaganda on this is not welcome," said Kibria. The WB officials here said that the Paris conference, as usual, would take stock of the developments in the economy from both perspectives. The meeting of Development Forum, formerly known as the Aid-to-Bangladesh Club meeting, brings together representatives of 15 bilateral donor countries and multilateral lenders including Asian Development Bank and UN agencies. Two key documents prepared by the government and the WB form the basis of the discussions at the meeting. This time, the government will present 'special development issues' as a result of last year's prolonged floods, dubbed the worst in a century. The government statement, prepared by the Economic Relations Division, has highlighted the impact of the 10-week deluge on the economy. 'The adverse impact of the floods is likely to result in a lower GDP growth rate, higher inflation generated through supply shock, and deteriorating trade balance,' it said. In the post-flood scenario, the government's preliminary estimates put the growth rate at less than four per cent instead of the original target of six per cent. The losses have been attributed to low growth in agriculture (only 0.03 per cent), manufacturing, transport and trade services. Construction however will benefit from the rebuilding activity. The WB, in its regular background document previously known as Country Economic Memorandum, also acknowledges the problems. 'For Bangladesh, 1998 was not an easy year. Devastating floods took a heavy toll on the

economy, and it is projected that despite timely intervention and good management of the relief and rehabilitation effort by the government, the rate of economic growth will be between 3-4 per cent, or about two percentage points off the 'normal' rate of growth," the Bank said. The Bank paper, titled Bangladesh: Key Challenges for the Next Millennium, also agrees with the government on the fallout of the floods in other areas. 'The balance of payments current account deficit will be larger as a result of lower export growth and flood-related imports, as will fiscal deficit.' 'Inflation has also been higher and had accelerated to 12.6 per cent by December 1998, driven largely by the increase in food prices.' The donor officials would also like to discuss the disturbances caused by the current political unrest. The indication is there in the background paper from the WB. In recent weeks, top diplomats of these countries and the European Union have made public appeals for peaceful solution to the political crisis apart from speaking directly to the Prime Minister and the Leader of the Opposition. 'The year also saw a resurgence in political demonstrations, with the opposition parties calling a series of nationwide strikes, making it difficult for those in power to take politically sensitive decisions,' says the WB paper. But the government delegates would expect the 'development partners' to tone down their criticism. 'They are going to talk economy and development, not politics,' a senior government minister said after the diplomats' April 4 dinner with the Prime Minister. In the wake of suggestion that the statements from diplomats of aid-giving countries bordered on interference, Finance Minister Kibria has blamed the media and the opposition for such a perception getting ground. 'I think it is the opposition and the press which are unduly

politicising it. The donors have expressed their concern, and I think they are fully justified in feeling concerned because, after all, they are our friends.' The WB paper lauds 'the improvement in policies since the mid-1980s' which enabled Bangladesh 'to grow faster and reduce poverty.' But the government comes in for criticism for losing the pace in recent times. 'The momentum of policy reform has not been maintained and this has slowed the pace of poverty reduction.' The government has been told to place 'the highest emphasis' on human development, try to improve governance and build institutions, enhance competitiveness of the private sector, manage foreign direct investment better, establish a sound financial system, and finally maintain a stable macro-economic environment. The annual conference, chaired by the WB vice president for South Asia, has returned to Paris after meeting in Dhaka for the first time last year. The Paris meeting this year has assumed another significance as the WB is sponsoring a one-day Investment Forum to be attended by the Aid Club delegates and investors from around the world. Leaders of business will join the finance minister and senior civil servants to try to woo foreign investment.

25 hurt as JCD, BCL clash at BIT, Rajshahi

From Our Correspondent. RAJSHAHI, Apr 18: At least 25 people were injured in a clash between the activists of ruling party backed BCL and opposition BNP backed JCD at Bangladesh Institute of Technology (BIT), Rajshahi today. The clash was a sequel to yesterday's incident in which JCD activist Jubair was beaten up allegedly by BCL activists.

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