

October-13-2005

PMs of Bangladesh, India, Pakistan to meet twice in Nov

REZAUL KARIM

The prime ministers of Bangladesh, India and Pakistan will meet twice in two weeks next months on the sidelines of two international gatherings.

The two major events -- 13th Saarc Summit and Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting (CHOGM) -- will take place in Bangladesh and Malta.

Diplomatic sources yesterday said the premiers of Bangladesh, Pakistan and India, presidents of Sri Lanka and the Maldives and kings of Nepal and Bhutan will meet at the Dhaka Saarc summit scheduled for November 12-13.

Official sources said the armed forces and law enforcement agencies of Bangladesh have finalised security plans for the Saarc summit. They assured that the authorities are ready to accomplish all security

SEE PAGE 15 COL 4

Essential drugs turn costlier

20 top pharmaceutical companies to set minimum selling price

PINAKI ROY

Prices of 18 essential drugs are set to go up as the top 20 pharmaceuticals companies have decided not to sell the medicines below a minimum ceiling rate.

The measure will instantly hike prices of the medicines, which many of the companies now sell at a far less than the minimum rate.

But medicine traders have already started to sell these drugs at a higher price after coming to know about the

development.

Experts say the price hike is unjust given that pharmaceuticals companies are already enjoying high profit margins with very low manufacturing costs.

But the companies argue that they have not increased drug prices for the last eight years while the taka has devalued greatly to make production costs higher. To make the situation worse, competition has led to undercutting prices, they argue, making the pharmaceuticals sector unhealthy.

"We are not going to increase the

price but re-fix the current rates for all top twenty companies for some kind of medicines," SM Safiuzzaman, the president of the Association of Drug Industries, told The Daily Star. "The companies were losing money as they were trying to sell those medicines at a competitive price. But now we are going to fix the price so that all get the same price."

A recent visit to different pharmacy shops in the city revealed that many commonly used medicines of

SEE PAGE 15 COL 1

JAGANNATH VARSITY

5 Shibir men injured in BCL attack

DU CORRESPONDENT

Bangladesh Chhatra League (BCL) activists yesterday beat up the members of Islami Chhatra Shibir (ICS) on the Jagannath University campus, leaving five of them injured.

Sources said the BCL activists attacked a group of 20 ICS men while they were distributing invitation cards among the teachers and students of Islamic Studies and Islamic History departments for an Iftar party.

The BCL men asked the ICS activists to leave the campus and beat them up.

Shortly after the incident, the pro-Awami League BCL and the BNP-backed Jatiyatabadi Chhatra Dal (JCD) activists took the campus under their control. They locked the main entrance of the university and

SEE PAGE 15 COL 5



PHOTO: AKM MOHSIN

Dredging goes on, even in the earlier autumn, to keep the Padma river near Paturia ferry terminal navigable. With a number of shoals in the river, the situation worsens during the dry season.

Population growth rate declines by 0.2pc

UNFPA report predicts total population to be 24.29cr by 2050

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Population growth rate in Bangladesh is on the decline and the total growth by 2050 will be less than as projected, says the State of the World Population 2005 report globally launched yesterday by the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA).

The country's population at the end of this year would be about 14.18 crore with the growth rate declining to 1.8 percent from 2 percent last year, the report says.

The population by 2050 had earlier

been projected at about 25.46 crore but the report shows it would be about 24.29 crore.

UNFPA representative in Bangladesh Suneeta Mukherjee presented the report styled "The Promise of Equality: Gender Equity, Reproductive Health and the Millennium Development Goals" at the Jatiya Press Club.

The report also shows only 12 in every 100 childbirth were attended by a skilled birth attendant last year, while the number has slightly improved to 14 this year.

Under-five child mortality rate marks progress this year as it stands at 72 per 1,000 live births for both male and female from last year's 85 for male and 90 for female.

Similarly, infant mortality rate has also improved to 54 per 1,000 live births from 64 of last year. Life expectancy has improved to 62.8 (male) and 64.6 (female) from last year's 61 and 61.8.

This year's report focuses on gender equality that reduces poverty and improves lives. It calls for

SEE PAGE 15 COL 6

Remove 'failed' ministers

11-Party asks govt

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Leaders of the 11-Party alliance yesterday severely criticised the prime minister's address to the nation, saying that the PM has deceived the nation by expressing mere sorrow for the failure to check the price hike of essentials and bomb attacks in the country.

At a rally, they demanded that the ministers who misgided the prime minister in running the country and who failed to perform their duties should be removed.

Gono Forum President Dr Kamal Hossain presided over the rally organised by the 11-Party alliance at the city's Muktangan to protest the

SEE PAGE 15 COL 6



REPORT CARD ON MINISTERS

4 years in office

Less success, more controversy

SHAKHAWAT LITON

Excepting a few routine rural infrastructure development, Local Government, Rural Development and Co-operatives Minister Abdul Mannan Bhuiyan could make no headway in fulfilling his party's electoral pledges to strengthen the local government system and decentralise the administration.

On the contrary, the ministry's



controversial move to introduce Gram Sarkar (village government) and alleged widespread vote rigging and violence that marred most of the local government elections held in the last four years have but wasted away the very foundation of local governance.

Time and again, the Election Commission (EC) encountered stiff non-co-operation from Bhuiyan's ministry in its efforts to hold free and fair local government polls.

SEE PAGE 2 COL 5

PM asks people to capture bombers

UNB, Nawabganj

Prime Minister Khaleda Zia yesterday apparently declared a mass resistance to militants as she asked people to capture those involved in bomb-terrorism in the name of Islam, saying that her government has already banned these outfits.

"You know who they are. They have to be caught. There is no room for terrorism in Islam," Khaleda told her audience at a big public meeting at Daulatpur here, barely two days after she addressed the nation about her government's iron will to extirpate the new syndrome of 'bomb-terrorism'.

SEE PAGE 15 COL 1

KAMALAPUR CUSTOMS

ACC to probe graft charge

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The Anti Corruption Commission (ACC) will conduct investigations regarding a number of allegations they received against Kamalapur Customs Station, ACC top officials said during a visit to Dhaka Customs House (DCH) yesterday.

They expressed disappointment over the performance of Inland Container Depot (ICD) and Kamalapur Customs Station, which are under the DCH.

The commission will frequently observe and monitor the offices of DCH and Zia International Airport, ACC Chairman Justice Sultan Hossain Khan said during a meeting with the DCH high officials, where ACC Commissioner Maniruddin Ahmed was also present.

"If any corruption takes place, strong action will be taken and the people involved with the corruption will have to face trial according to law," the ACC chairman said at the meeting.

Justice Sultan asked the DCH officials to plug the loopholes, if there is any, by bringing them to the notice of the authorities concerned.

ACC Commissioner Maniruddin asked the DCH commissioner to strengthen vigilance on the activities of ICD.

Referring to the Transparency

SEE PAGE 15 COL 8



PHOTO: STAR

Mobile court Magistrate Rakan Ud Doulah looks at the unhygienic oil used in preparing iftar items. The photo was taken on the roadside in city's Chawk Bazar yesterday.

Irregularities in LC opening lead to forex smuggling

BB working group says

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Plenty of scope for tampering with documents, from the opening of Letters of Credit (LC) to the entry of imported goods, allows the smuggling of foreign currencies, reveals a working group led by the Bangladesh Bank (BB).

The working group's report also reveals there is no system to help bank and customs authorities scrutinise each other's documents, creating opportunities for the use of fake documents.

Moreover, non-compliance with the existing laws allows smugglers to rampantly smuggle foreign currencies out of the country.

SEE PAGE 15 COL 8

Correction

The October 11 news headlined "Coal Mining, Power Project: Sheer neglect led to Barapukuria Disaster" inadvertently named Chinese company CMEC in place of CMC as the mine's contractor.

The CMEC stands for China National Machinery & Equipment Import & Export Corporation, while the CMC stands for China National Machinery Import & Export Corporation.

The Daily Star ROUNDTABLE

Call for implementing building code

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The capital's key installations, such as fire service stations, hospitals and educational institutions, should immediately be made resistant to earthquakes to facilitate rescue work directly after a disaster.

The authorities should also ensure the implementation of the National Building Code 1993, which now awaits a parliamentary nod.

This was the unanimous view of experts at a roundtable on "Earthquake Preparedness: Tasks Ahead," organised by The Daily Star and participated in by eminent architects, engineers, planners, and representatives of the Dhaka Water and Sewerage Authority (Wasa), the Dhaka Electric Supply Authority

(Desa) and the fire service.

The speakers said a moderate tremor could severely damage many important installations, including most fire service stations and hospitals in the city, and urged the authorities to retrofit these structures so that earthquake disaster management is not hampered.

They also stressed a massive public awareness campaign about post earthquake scenarios.

Prof Jamilur Reza Chowdhury, vice-chancellor of BRAC University and also president of the Bangladesh Earthquake Society, said some parts of the country, including the Chittagong Hill Tracts,

SEE PAGE 15 COL 3

Hannan barred from 'political speech'

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A court inspector yesterday barred militant kingpin Mufti Abdul Hannan from giving a statement, directing him not to make any "political speech", when a Dhaka court asked the suspect of the August 17 countrywide bomb blasts to make his submission.

The incident took place when Hannan, also operations commander of Harkatul Jihad's Bangladesh chapter, was produced before the court at 5:00pm on completion of a 10-day remand in a case filed for the Tejgaon bomb blast on August 17.

Showing him arrested in connection with the bomb blast on the Supreme Court premises on August 17, the detectives sought to take him on another 10-day remand.

"The primary inquiry shows that he

[Hannan] was involved in the blast. So, he needs to be placed on remand and interrogated further for information about others involved in the incident and their whereabouts," said the forwarding report submitted to the Court of Chief Metropolitan Magistrate (CMM), Dhaka.

The information provided by Hannan during the 10-day remand ending yesterday was being verified and he needed to be confined in custody until the probe ends, the report added.

The court asked Hannan if he had any lawyer to make a submission for him. As Hannan answered in the negative, the court asked him if he wanted to make his submission himself.

SEE PAGE 15 COL 7