

Kuwait emir arrives next month

DIPLOMATIC CORRESPONDENT

Emir of Kuwait Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah will visit Bangladesh next month at the invitation of Prime Minister Khaleda Zia.

The Emir's visit is taking place less than a month of the prime minister's official visit to Kuwait on May 7-8.

The Emir is expected to lead an 80-member high-power delegation, which will include all the important cabinet ministers, Foreign Minister Morshed Khan told the diplomatic correspondents yesterday.

Morshed Khan, however, could SEE PAGE 19 COL 6

100 killed in Afghan fighting, blasts

AFP, Kandahar/ Herat

Taliban militants fought fierce battles with coalition and Afghan forces in a dramatic upsurge of violence in southern Afghanistan, leaving up to 100 people -- mostly rebels -- dead, officials said yesterday.

Two suicide bombs also rocked the insurgency-hit country. One in western Afghanistan killed a US anti-narcotics adviser while a civilian died in the other in the south.

The battles, in which 13 police and a Canadian soldier also died, were all in the volatile south and

came weeks before NATO-led peacekeepers are due to take over operations in the troubled region at the end of July.

It was the worst violence for months in Afghanistan, where remnants of the ultra-Islamic Taliban continue to wage a bloody insurgency more than four years after their hardline regime was ousted by US-led forces.

In an operation early Thursday in southern Kandahar province seven Taliban were confirmed killed with another 15 to 20 likely dead in an air strike, the US-led coalition said. A

coalition soldier was also wounded. Three suspected Taliban hide-outs were destroyed in the operation, designed to "detain individuals suspected of terrorist and anti-Afghanistan activities," it said in a statement.

Separately a battle raged in Helmand province for several hours late Wednesday after police stormed a district on a tip-off that Taliban fighters had massed there.

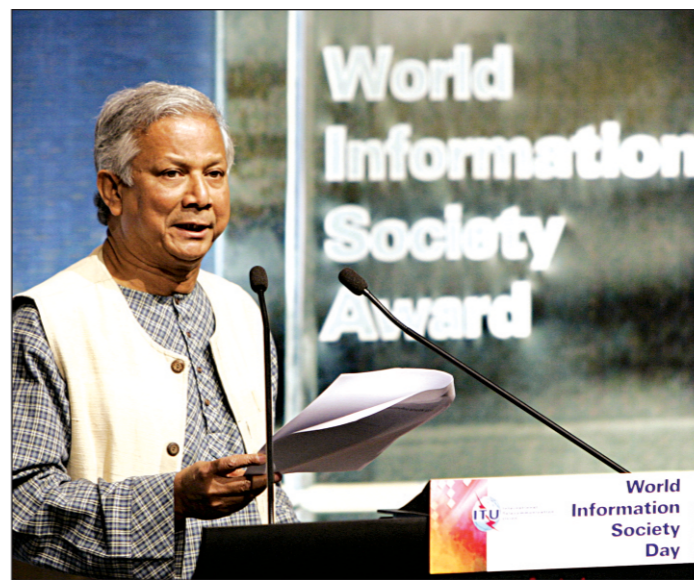
SEE PAGE 19 COL 7

Saarc tourism ministers to meet in Cox's Bazar

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Saarc tourism ministers will meet in Cox's Bazar on Sunday to discuss ways to encourage private sector participation in advancing tourism infrastructures in the Saarc region and develop the town as a common tourism centre.

The ministerial meeting, second of its kind, will also take decision on setting up air-link among the capitals of the Saarc countries, establishing direct railway communications among the neighbouring countries, joint investment, marketing and sales promotion plan and developing religious SEE PAGE 19 COL 1



Prof Muhammad Yunus, managing director of Grameen Bank, speaks after receiving the World Information Society Award of International Telecommunication Union (ITU) at a function in Geneva on Thursday.

Water vessel workers call strike for May 24

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Nou-Jan Sramik Federation will go for a countrywide strike on May 24 protesting against the government's indifference to extortion, robbery and criminal activities in country's inland waterways.

In a bid to realise their nine-point demand, the workers of vessels yesterday said they would go for strike on May 24 if their demands were not met by May 23.

At a press conference in the National Press Club in the capital, leaders of the federation identified a number of high-risk inland waterways where pirates rob SEE PAGE 19 COL 4

Verdict in Jhalakathi blast case May 29

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Barisal

A Jhalakathi court will deliver the judgement in the judges killing case on May 29.

Judge Reza Tarique Ahmed of the Additional District and Sessions Judge's Court yesterday set this date for the verdict in the case for killing of two senior assistant judges in bomb blasts on November 14 last year.

The eight accused in the case include chief of banned Islamist outfit Jama'atul Mujahideen Bangladesh (JMB) Abdur Rahman and his second-in-command Siddiqui Islam alias Bangla Bhai. SEE PAGE 19 COL 3

Nepal parliament clips king's wings

REUTERS, Kathmandu

Nepal's reinstated parliament yesterday unanimously approved a sweeping plan to curtail the powers of the king and take away his control over the army.

The historic move came less than a month after often violent mass protests across the Himalayan nation pressured King Gyanendra to reinstate parliament and hand power back to a multi-party government.

The landmark resolution was approved by a verbal vote by deputies in the 205-member house, less than two hours after it was presented by Prime Minister Girija Prasad Koirala.

The proclamation takes away the title of supreme commander-in-chief of the military from the king, traditionally revered as an incarnation of Hindu God Vishnu until the present monarch fell foul of his people after he grabbed power in 2005.

The government will no longer be called "His Majesty's Government" but just Nepal government. The country would also stop being a Hindu nation and become a secular state.

"It reflects the aspirations of the people and respects the sacrifices of the people who were martyred during the movement," Koirala said as he tabled the resolution, referring to weeks of mass protests against

King Gyanendra.

"Now no one can dare underestimate this. I urge people to remain alert and rise against anyone who tries to interfere in this and undermine this," Koirala said, speaking in Nepali.

Cutting the monarch's powers was a key demand of last month's pro-democracy protests, which led to King Gyanendra reinstating parliament and handing power back to a multi-party government.

The proclamation also taxes the king and allows his actions to be challenged in court.

The principal advisory body of the king, the Raj Parishad or privy council, is scrapped, the Royal SEE PAGE 19 COL 8

Woman killed at Mirpur flat

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Mystery shrouds the death of a pregnant woman apparently strangled to death at her flat at Mirpur in the city yesterday.

The victim, Momena Akhtar Munni, 20, was alone at her second floor flat in section-2 for only 15 minutes when she was murdered.

Ekhlashur Rahman, Momena's husband, went to work in the morning and his stepdaughter, Sadia Rahman, 14, and housemaid, Soma, 14, went out to buy stationeries around 10:30am.

Sadia and Soma returned within 15 minutes and found the door locked from inside but no one responded to the knocking. Ekhlash also returned but could not open the door.

The landlord of their flat opened SEE PAGE 19 COL 8

Land ministry fails to give list of land grabbers to JS body

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The Parliamentary Standing Committee on Land Ministry yesterday expressed dissatisfaction at the failure of the land ministry to provide the list of the land grabbers across the country.

The parliamentary body on March 14 asked the ministry to come up with the list at its next meeting, but the ministry officials failed to produce the list yesterday.

"The ministry is still preparing the list of the grabbers and they promised to submit the list later," committee Chairman Mahbubur Rahman told reporters referring to the minis-

try officials, after the meeting held at the Jatiya Sangsad Bhaban.

The parliamentary body also blasted the officials involved with the land survey for their alleged irregularities in the task.

People are being harassed in different areas, as officials demand bribe, Awami League lawmaker Enamul Huq said.

"We asked the secretary of the land ministry and the director of the land record and survey directorate to inform in details about such activities and alleged financial irregularities," the committee SEE PAGE 19 COL 3

CTG INCIDENT Body suggests compensation for 20 hurt journos

UNB, Dhaka

A government committee has recommended Tk 14,36,397 as compensation for 20 journalists who were injured and incurred losses during an unwarranted SEE PAGE 19 COL 8

Table with Prayer Timing for May 19, including columns for Azan and Jamaat times for Fajr, Juma, Asr, Maghrib, and Esha.

