

Inside today

International



The United States wants to set up security zones for refugees in Iraq to protect civilians against reprisals by Saddam Hussein's Republican Guards.
Page 5

Metropolitan

Dhaka Day by Day

The Ramna Park looks bedraggled and moth-eaten at times and could be better tended.
Page 3

Article

Stage is set for the Indian Election



Star Special Correspondent Sumanta Banerjee writes from New Delhi.
Page 4

Parliament proceedings

During the current Jatiya Sangsad session, we will be using Page 6 mostly for the coverage of the parliamentary proceedings. When the JS session is over, we will revert to our normal format by devoting Page 6 to development-oriented features and news.

We are committed for parliamentary form : Hasina

Sovereignty of Sangsad unquestionable : Khaleda

By Staff Correspondent

The Speaker and the Deputy Speaker of the Jatiya Sangsad (Parliament) were felicitated by Prime Minister Begum Khaleda Zia. Leader of the Opposition Sheikh Hasina and other MPs Sunday when the sitting of the House resumed.

The two-and-a-half hours felicitation session was taken as the first opportunity by members belonging to different parties and groups also to project their views on key issues like the form of government and necessary constitutional amendments.

Leader of the House Begum Khaleda Zia in a written statement termed the Speaker as a veteran lawyer, parliamentarian and politician, and hoped that under his leadership MPs irrespective of party affiliations

would be able to create national unity on the basis of mutual respect.

She also said MPs would be able to set an example in the establishment of democracy and rule of law.

Begum Zia said, as a legislature the 'sovereignty' (supremacy) of the parliament is unquestionable. It is the nerve centre of democracy and rule of law, she observed.

She said that the parliament was elected through a free and fair election under a caretaker government following a mass upsurge that toppled a nine-year-old autocracy. The people gave their life and suffered repression during the nine-year movement, she said.

Begum Zia urged the Speaker to discharge his responsibilities impartially and

fearlessly and held people's representatives materialise hopes and aspirations of the people.

She hoped that as an experienced parliamentarian and politician Deputy Speaker Sheikh Razzak Ali will actively cooperate with the Speaker in upholding the supremacy and dignity of parliament.

Earlier, taking the floor Sheikh Hasina deplored that the House could not felicitate the Speaker on April 5 immediately after he was elected. She also sought to know why the Leader of the House did not initiate a motion felicitating the Speaker on that day.

Sheikh Hasina welcomed the new Speaker on behalf of the Members of Parliament. She said even though her party did not vote for Abdur Rahman

Biswas, the Speaker does not belong to any party but to the whole House.

She hoped that he would uphold the rules, customs and conventions of the House to ensure its proper functioning.

Sheikh Hasina said the parliament elected on the basis of the joint declaration of three alliances represented 12 crore people of Bangladesh and was pledged bound to introduce parliamentary democracy. 'We should institutionalise democracy through democratic tolerance and restraint'. She assured the Speaker of all cooperation to run the House smoothly.

Tofayel Ahmed of AL said that the failure of the Treasury Bench to felicitate the Speaker on April 5 had angered the

See Page 10 Col. 1

House plunges into uproar over status of Leader of the Opposition

Maiden walkout

The opposition members in the Jatiya Sangsad (Parliament) staged their maiden walkout on Sunday on the question of status of their leader.

Sheikh Hasina, Leader of the Opposition, told the Sangsad that she would not be in the Business Advisory Committee of the House without her name being placed just after the Leader of the House. 'I withdraw my name from the committee', she said.

Her announcement came following a furor in the House, raised over the order of placement of names in the 15-member committee. Both Leader of the House and Prime Minister Khaleda Zia and Leader of the Opposition Sheikh Hasina were included by Speaker Abdur Rahman

Biswas in the Business Advisory Committee, headed by himself.

The Speaker placed the name of the Leader of the House in the second position and then the names of four other members from the Treasury Bench, all ministers. The Leader of the Opposition Sheikh Hasina was positioned sixth in the Committee.

Immediately after the Leader of the Opposition announced the withdrawal of her name from the Business Advisory Committee, the opposition members walked out. The Jamaat-e-Islami and Jatiya Party members and others except three independents also followed them.

The House witnessed an uproar over the issue. Another committee -- the 12-member

House Committee, also announced by the Speaker in the same afternoon sitting -- had however a smooth sailing. Abdul Matin Chowdhury of BNP heads this committee. Neither the Leader of the House nor the Leader of the Opposition is its member.

Deputy Leader of the Opposition Abdus Samad Azad, Awami League members Tofael Ahmed and Sudhangshu Shekar Halder and Ganatantri Party member Suranjit Sengupta took up the issue about the status of the Leader of the Opposition. Leader of the Jamaat-e-Islami Parliamentary Group Matur Rahman Nizami, National Democratic Party member Salahuddin Quader Chowdhury and JSD (Straj) member

See Page 10 Col. 4



Reazuddin Ahmed

A quiet beginning of the day in the Parliament was swept away by the rather stormy session in the afternoon Sunday.

The uproar was over the status of the Leader of the Opposition.

The Speaker's refusal to upgrade the position of the Leader of the Opposition next to that of the Leader of the House led to the maiden walkout by the Opposition.

Things went wrong soon after Speaker Abdur Rahman Biswas announced the names of the 15-member Business

See Page 10 Col. 7

Cross-examination continues

Ershad sick : Court adjourned

By Staff Correspondent

The cross examination of a prosecution witness marked the resumption of the trial of deposed President Ershad at the Special Tribunal yesterday.

The accused Ershad, present at the hearing, was seen profusely perspiring as he sat in dock. He was grim and gloomy.

Prior to the resumption of the Tribunal the Defence Lawyer submitted a petition to Judge Mohammad Habibullah stating the health condition of his client, now being tried on charges of illegally possessing arms.

The Defence said that Ershad had been suffering a stomach upset and a fever

since Saturday night. He prayed for a two day adjournment of the Tribunal.

Ershad was then examined in the court by a Doctor of the Central Jail who is taking care of his health round the clock.

The Judge of the Special Tribunal however decided to adjourn the court for only one day till April 9 after the cross examination of prosecution witness No 9 Taim Hussain, Dhaka Garrison Engineer, had continued for about two hours on Sunday.

Taim Hussain in his statement to the Tribunal said that he was a member of one of the two committees set up for the

See Page 10 Col. 3

Hasina's concern at transfer of Home Ministry to Khaleda

The Acting President Justice Shahabuddin Ahmed on Sunday expressed the view that his neutral character would not be affected by transfer of the Ministry of Home Affairs to the Prime Minister, who was not the head of the government, reports BSS.

He told this to the Leader of the Opposition in the Jatiya Sangsad and Bangladesh Awami League President Sheikh Hasina, who met him at his residence and expressed her great concern at the transfer of the Home Ministry to the Prime Minister and leader of BNP.

The Acting President did not agree that his neutral character would be affected by transfer of the Home Ministry

See Page 10 Col. 6

Status issue will be resolved today, hopes opposition

By Staff Correspondent

Leaders of the opposition political parties in the Jatiya Sangsad (parliament) on Sunday regretted that the ruling Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP) did not take any initiative to give proper status to the Leader of the Opposition, Sheikh Hasina in the House.

Addressing a news conference, after staging a walkout, at the office of the Leader of the Opposition in Parliament they hoped that the matter would be resolved before the start of the session today.

The opposition leaders had a meeting at the chamber of the Leader of the Opposition before addressing the news conference.

Abdus Samad Azad, the Deputy Leader of the Opposition, said the intransigence of the Treasury Bench over the demand of the opposition was deplorable. He said the opposition expected that the Speaker, the Leader of the House and the Leader of the Opposition would be upheld as institution to make parliament effective.

He said the opposition staged walkout because two ministers opposed the demand for giving proper status to Sheikh Hasina in the Business Advisory Committee. He said the opposition hoped that the

See Page 10 Col. 2

Moudud's bail order stayed

By Staff Correspondent

The Vacation Bench of the Supreme Court on Sunday stayed the bail order of former vice-president and Jatiya Party leader Moudud Ahmed for four days.

Justice Latifur Rahman fixed the next date of hearing of the matter on April 11.

Moudud Ahmed was granted bail on Thursday by the High Court Division on condition that he submits his passport and the deed of his house to the court.

His release was delayed till Saturday as he failed to

See Page 10 Col. 1



With Eid-ul-Azha nearing, more and more home-going people are rushing to book bus, launch and train tickets. This picture was taken at Kamalapur Railway Station on Sunday.

—Star photo

NEWS BRIEFS

Alikadam UZ Chairman held

CHITTAGONG, Apr 7 : Ali Meah, Chairman, Alikadam upazila under Bandarban district was arrested from his upazila headquarters home today, official sources said. He was arrested on charges of terrorism and abuse of official power, reports BSS.

Abducted Japanese student freed

KARACHI, Apr 7 : Kidnappers have freed a Japanese student abducted on a river rafting trip last month and will soon release two companions who were seized within, police said Sunday, reports AP.

Hindu rioters burn shops

NEW DELHI, Apr 7 : Hindu rioters have burned several shops and homes belonging to Muslims in the town of Faridabad near here in communal clashes this weekend, police said today, reports AFP.

4 Kashmir militants killed

SRINAGAR, Apr 7 : Four persons, including three militants, were killed in the Kashmir valley since last night while efforts continued for the release of two kidnapped Swedish nationals, reports PTL.

Schri and Har timings

Month	Day	Last time for Schri	Har
22	Monday	4.30 am	6.20 pm
23	Tuesday	4.20 am	6.30 pm



A Kurd feeds his child bread distributed to refugees from Iraq by villagers in Cukurka in southeastern Turkey Saturday.

—AFP photo

Flash flood in Sunamganj 20000 acres of cropland under water

SUNAMGANJ, Apr 7: Flash flood has so far damaged 15,500 acres of paddy field in the district and officials fear two embankments may collapse any moment causing further havoc.

The Kushiara rose eight feet till Friday night, submerging boro crops on 15,500 acres worth about Tk 15 crore in four hours of Shalla upazila and a union of Birai upazila, officials said today.

Unofficial sources, however, claimed about 20,000 acres of

standing crops of the haors had gone under the flash flood water.

Sources said 5,000 acres of boro in lowlying areas of Kunja union of Birai upazila were submerged Saturday night.

Upazila Chairman of Shalla Audul Mannan Chowdhury told UNB more 6,000 acres of boro worth about Tk 15 crore in four hours of Shalla upazila and a union of Birai upazila, officials said today.

Unofficial sources, however, claimed about 20,000 acres of

Dhaka-Beijing JEC meet today

A 12-member Chinese delegation, led by Vice Minister for Foreign Economy and Trade Wang Wen Dong arrived in Dhaka Sunday to attend the sixth meeting of China-Bangladesh Joint Economic Commission, reports UNB.

The three-day session begins in the capital today (Monday).

The meeting will review the progress of bilateral trade and economic relations between the two countries since fifth meeting of the JEC, held in Beijing October 1989.

Unofficial sources, however, claimed about 20,000 acres of

The water level of hilly river Mahram is also increasing. If it rises further, local people fear another upazila, Tahirpur, will be hit soon. The largest haor of the district, Shanir haor, situated in this UZ, will be flooded causing damage to 25,000 acres of standing boro crops, the only crop of the upazila.

Earlier, Monowa, Bera-Mohona, Duaria and Shalla haors of Shala upazila were hit by flood. Two more haors of Shalla upazila—Thayar and Kachertor—are also threatened by flood waters rolling down the hilly region.

Meanwhile, leaders of Krishak Sangram Samity in a press release here blamed the negligence of officials and public representatives for the ripping crop damage in the district.

Iraq warned not to interfere in relief effort

KEPLAVIK (Iceland), Apr 7 : US Secretary of State James Baker warned Iraq today not to interfere with an international relief effort to help refugees fleeing the Iraqi military.

"We will not tolerate any interference with this humanitarian relief effort", Baker told reporters "on his flight to Turkey."

"Working with the international community, we will make certain that humanitarian assistance in both northern and southern Iraq gets to those who most need it", he said.

Baker plans to visit a mountainous area along the Turkish-Iraqi border, where hundreds of thousands of Kurdish refugees are reported to be headed to escape the forces of Iraqi President Saddam Hussein.

Stung by mounting criticism that he was standing idly by while a major human tragedy unfolded, President George Bush on Friday ordered the US Air Force to begin dropping food, blankets, clothing, tents and other relief supplies to Iraqis suffering the effects of the war.

But the administration has refused to help the rebel Kurds in the north or Shi'ites in southern Iraq, saying it would not be drawn into a civil war or support groups whose aim was to carve Iraq into separate states.

Baker, on the defensive during his airborne briefing, repeatedly rejected suggestions that the United States was not doing enough to help the victims of an uprising which it had suggested and supported.

We are not prepared to go down the slippery slopes of be-

ing sucked into a civil war. We cannot police what goes on inside Iraq and we cannot be the arbiters of who shall govern Iraq, he said.

Earlier report said: President George Bush sent US Secretary of State James Baker on a hastily-planned trip to the Middle East on Saturday, saying he wanted progress towards peace in the region before the Gulf war afterglow wears off, report Reuters.

In remarks to reporters, both Bush and Baker indicated no specific new plans to untangle differences between

Israelis and Arabs.

Bush described Baker's mission to Israel, Egypt, Syria and Turkey as another consultative trip.

Baker spoke plainly about the possibility of using what he and Bush called the new US credibility in the region towards solving some of the problems that have wracked the Middle East for decades.

If we can't get anywhere, we'll just have to fall back and look at other options and other approaches. But I think most people believe that there are changed circumstances in the

region, Baker said. This changed attitude, said Baker, must translate into positive moves towards peace.

The United States has been trying to convince Israelis and Arabs to take a series of measures that would build confidence between them and hopefully lead to an overall peace.

But neither side has expressed willingness publicly to make the first step and US insistence that Israel exchange territory for peace is unacceptable to the Israeli government.