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Drive carefully and observe all traffic rules. The man you are likely to kill by rash driving may be yourself.

Inside Today

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Differences shouldn't deter democracy
It is time for the legislators to select a suitable form of government and decide whether to let democracy survive...
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International



An undated publicity shot shows aging Indian film star and former chief minister of Andhra Pradesh NTR in the newly released film 'Brahmarshi Viswamitra'.
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Metropolitan



It's a sheer pleasure!
Not everyone enjoys having a haircut. But some do and often rush to barber's. Do barbers enjoy having to cut hair?
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Business

The country's largest multinational—Bangladesh Tobacco Company—witnessed another tough year of operations in 1990 with its sales lowered by 19 per cent.
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NEWS BRIEFS

Bomb haul

By Staff Correspondent
Police in a special drive on Wednesday recovered over 1200 bombs, cocktails and crackers. Ramna Police recovered 62 hand bombs. Mirpur and Mottijheel police recovered 198 crackers. Dhanmondi, Sutrapur, Cantonment and Sabujbagh police recovered 1023 packet of crackers while Gulshan police recovered three cocktails.

29 hanged in 5 yrs

Twenty-nine civilians have been hanged in different jails of the country in the last five years. Prime Minister Begum Zia told the Jatiya Sangsad yesterday. Replying to a question from Maulana Habibur Rahman (Chaudanga-2), she said 25 were hanged in 1986, one in 1987, two in 1988 and one in 1990, reports UNB.

Arnett gets award

NEW YORK, Apr 24: CNN correspondent Peter Arnett on Tuesday was honoured for an international reporting career capped by his coverage of the Gulf War. CBS News correspondent Bob Simon, captured by the Iraqis and held for weeks during the conflict, was also honoured at the 52nd Annual Overseas Press Club Awards ceremony in New York. Five other winners received awards for their work on the Middle East conflict, reports AP.

Special Powers Act will go, PM tells Sangsad

By Staff Correspondent

Prime Minister Begum Khaleda Zia on Wednesday told Parliament that the government was considering the annulment of the Special Powers Act.

The Prime Minister, replying to a supplementary question of Rashed Khan Menon (Workers Party), told the House, "You will see it in due course."

The Leader of the House, who faced the question for the first time in the Sangsad, said

that 1,375 persons had been detained under the Special Powers Act till March 31, 1991.

The Special Powers Act came into force during the Awami League rule in 1974.

Of the detenus, 789 are in the Dhaka division, 313 in Chittagong division, 129 in Rajshahi division and 147 in Khulna division.

In reply to another question from Sheikh Fazlul Karim Selim (AI) Begum Zia told the

House that a total of 824 convicts serving life terms had been set free last December after the interim government took over.

The Prime Minister, in charge of the Home Ministry, also said that a total of 5,539 convicts and political detenus had been released since March 1991.

Jail unrest

The Prime Minister also told the House on Wednesday that

17 prisoners were killed and 117 injured while they were trying to flee during the unrest in six prisons of the country.

Replying to a written question of Nurul Islam Moni (Independent) the Prime Minister said that the unrest took place in the Dhaka Central Jail, Jessore Central Jail, Chittagong District Jail, Khulna District Jail and Fent Sub-Jail.

The Prime Minister told the House on Wednesday that



Prime Minister Begum Khaleda Zia speaking at the conference of medical teachers at the Institution of Engineers on Wednesday. —Star photo

Medical varsity will be set up

By Staff Correspondent

Prime Minister Begum Khaleda Zia on Wednesday said that the setting up of a Medical University was under the active consideration of her government to meet the longstanding demand of the doctors.

Amid standing ovation from the physicians, Begum Zia said, "we have a plan to revitalise the health sector destroyed by the autocratic regime of Ershad through proper and optimum utilisation of our limited resources."

She said, the struggle against autocracy had ended but the movement to reach the fruits of democracy to the door-steps of people has just begun.

The Prime Minister said



Reazuddin Ahmed

LEADER of the House Prime Minister Begum Khaleda Zia impressed the House on Wednesday by confidently facing the sharpshooters from the Opposition Bench during the Question Hour.

She answered volleys of questions and supplementaries in her capacity as Home Minister and gave forthright answers to complex political questions, like the annulment of the Special Powers Act.

It was for the first time that Begum Khaleda Zia replied to questions since the inaugural session. Her replies were sharp, witty, short and unambiguous. For the first time the Prime Minister even managed to provoke the two burqa-clad Jamaat lady members, to ask some questions, amid jubilant thumping of tables by the male members.

But Begum Zia, though succeeding in inducing the hitherto mute Jamaat ladies into breaking their silence, seemed to have failed in arousing any interest in the Leader of the Opposition Sheikh Hasina. Sheikh Hasina, who tries to rebort the Leader of the House Begum Khaleda Zia at every opportunity, appeared instead to be enjoying the Question Hour by remaining silent.

Whether this was indicative of a desire on her part to shun

Hasina offers talks with BNP on form of govt

By Staff Correspondent

Sheikh Hasina, the Leader of the Opposition in Parliament, said on Wednesday that she was ready for dialogue with the ruling party on the passage of a constitutional amendment to introduce a parliamentary form of government in the country.

Talking to newsmen at her parliament building chamber she said all opposition parties and groups, except the Jatiya Party, in the Opposition Bench had agreed to support an Awami League constitutional amendment bill notice which was given on April 4.

Sheikh Hasina said her party would support a bill because, in her opinion, the government was giving no positive indication in this regard. She said the bill will be the basis for dialogue with the government.

As to the question whether or not she would support any constitutional amendment bill introduced in the House by the government to establish parliamentary form of government, she said her party would have to examine such a bill first.

Sheikh Hasina said that the joint declaration of the 8-party, 7-party and 5-party alliances called for establishment of sovereign parliament and an accountable government to end what she termed as the illegal method of grabbing power experienced during the last 15 years.

She said the joint declaration of the three alliances was clearly in favour of introduction of a parliamentary form of government so that there was no more military dictatorship in the country.

Sheikh Hasina alleged that

after the February 27 election a party looked more interested in enjoying power than fulfilling the commitment to the people. She said if the government was not made accountable to the parliament, corruption and plunder of wealth would continue and the people would continue to suffer.

Abdus Samad Azad, the Deputy Leader of the Opposition in Parliament also spoke on the occasion. The bill, he said, merely seeks to change the form of government and avoids all controversial constitutional issues. Abdus Samad Azad has given notice to introduce the AL bill in the parliament.

Lawyers on form of govt

Public awareness, not system is deterrent to autocracy

Supreme Court

Correspondent

A section of the lawyers has responded with dismay that Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP) might go for parliamentary form giving an edge to Awami League on the controversy over interpretation of a "sovereign parliament".

While talking to this correspondent they opined that the Joint Declaration of the three alliances was superseded automatically by the election manifestos of political parties. BNP, Jamaat and Jatiya Party did not seek votes on this issue. Awami League was clear

Sec Page 10 Col. 3

Cross-examination of prosecution witnesses concludes Defence plea to grant Ershad amnesty

By Staff Correspondent

Cross-examination of the prosecution witnesses in Ershad's arms case at the Special Tribunal concluded yesterday with a suggestion by the Defence that the accused may come under the ambit of the general amnesty declared by the Acting President for the surrendering of illegal arms.

"Assuming everything said is true (Ershad) am covered by the amnesty declared by the Acting President," said Defence Lawyer Strajul Haque in a suggestion to the court before ending the cross-examina-

tion of Investigating Officer Golam Mostafa, Senior ASP of CID.

The investigating officer (IO) denied the suggestion saying that it was not based on facts.

A total of 15 Prosecution witnesses including one declared as gained over have been produced before the tribunal.

Attorney General Aminul Haque, Deputy Attorney General Amirul Kabir Chowdhury and Hasan Arif, SPP Farid Ahmed and others are appearing for the state.

On the other hand advocate

Strajul Haque, Barrister Kazi Shahdat Hossain, Yousuf Haider Humayun, Mosharruf Hossain Kazal, Mufizur Rahman Majumdar, Sharif Ahmed, Helaluddin Ahmed, Sk. Rezaul Karim, Sudhir Kumar Hazra, AR Mollah and Zeenat Ali are pleading for accused.

The Prosecution side will now give a statement of the accusation under Section 342. If the Defence wants to produce separate witnesses it will have to announce the names of its witnesses instantly after the

Sec Page 10 Col. 4

Another bill withdrawn

By Staff Correspondent

One more bill was introduced in the Jatiya Sangsad (Parliament) while another bill was withdrawn by showing respect to opposition views on Wednesday.

Fisheries and Livestock Minister Abdullah al-Noman introduced the Protection and Conservation of Fish (Amendment) Bill, which provides for disposal of current net and illegally caught fish seized by the government.

Industries Minister Shamsul Islam Khan withdrew the Sugar (Road Development Cess) (Amendment) Bill which sought to increase cess from Taka 0.12 to Taka 0.25 per maund of sugarcane.

Meanwhile, Prime Minister

Begum Khaleda Zia conceded an opposition demand and deferred the consideration of the Bank Company Bill. JSD member Shahjahan Siraj, NDP member Salahuddin Quader Chowdhury and AL member Tofayel Ahmed earlier stated that they did not get enough time to study the bill to effectively take part in the discussion on it.

On the day, a call attention on misappropriation of crores of taka of the Islamic Cooperative Bank was admitted in the House. Prof Rafiqul Islam (Jessore-2) had given notice for the call attention.

Twentyfour other call attention notices and six privilege notices were rejected by Deputy Speaker Shethk Razzak

Sharing of waters will get priority

By Staff Correspondent

Bangladesh and India have decided to attach priority to sharing waters of the Ganges and the Teesta. The two countries also agreed that a joint team would monitor the dry season flows at Farakka barrage and Harding bridge.

This was stated in a joint press release issued Wednesday afternoon at the end of two-day secretary-level committee meeting in Dhaka between Bangladesh and India on common river waters sharing.

The committee further agreed that a joint technical team would visit the areas in Bangladesh and India which

are dependent on the river flows, monitor the relevant ground situation on both the sides and report to their respective governments.

The whole gamut of waters sharing between the two countries was discussed in the meeting while the flows of the Ganges and the Teesta got special emphasis.

According to a meeting source, Bangladesh made a specific proposal to India for an agreement on sharing the Ganges waters at Farakka barrage with a 'guarantee clause' for ensuring availability of water necessary during dry season.

Sec Page 10 Col. 1

2 killed in cyclone

NETRAKONA, Apr 24: A severe cyclonic storm coupled with hailstones lashed at the district Tuesday night, killing two people and injuring at least 100, reports UNB.

Khairul Islam (29) of Madan upazila died in house collapse while lightning struck Prashanta (32) to death at Bangladesh in Sadar upazila amid the hour-long devastation beginning at about 11 pm that also wrecked havoc on standing crops, houses, cattle and trees in nine upazilas.

According to reports from upazila administrations, standing boro crops on some 70,000 acre were totally destroyed and 6,000 houses levelled. At least 1,000 cattle-heads and a large number of poultry perished.

The district administration sources said in the sadar upazila alone, some 300 houses, including two pucca houses in the town, were destroyed.

The worst-affected are sadar, Kendua, Mohanganj and Kalmakanda upazilas.

Power supply in Netrakona town and other affected upazilas remained snapped till Wednesday night.

A large number of electric poles and trees were uprooted, blocking road communication.

At least 100 tubewells were also blown off by the violent storm in the sadar upazila alone.

The Deputy Commissioner visited the cyclone-torn Durgapur upazila today.

We still have to go far for ME peace: Baker

DAMASCUS, Apr 24: US Secretary of State James Baker condemned Israeli settlements in the West Bank in unusually sharp words today and said his effort to convene a Middle East peace conference still had far to go, reports Reuter.

He said he and Syrian President Hafez al-Assad made some progress in nearly 10 hours of talks but failed to agree what role the United Nations should play in Middle East peacemaking.

"We were very disappointed to learn this morning that there is yet another new settlement established in the occupied territories," Baker told reporters before leaving for the Soviet Union.

"That points up vividly that it is easier to distract peace than to promote it."

Asked if Syria would agree to a peace conference with the United Nations as an observer instead of a participant, Baker said, "The Syrian position vis-a-vis this point is very clear. The UN should play an important role in this conference... we are still discussing the nature of that role."

Arab countries long wanted

a peace conference convened by the UN — a formula they hoped would provide a counterbalance to Washington's customary support for Israel.

Israel reject that idea, fearing commitment to Security Council resolutions telling to withdraw from captured Arab land.

Washington supports a 'land-for-peace' solution but, in the days of superpower hostility, opposed a UN conference because it wanted to block any Soviet role in the region.

The end of the cold war softened the US position.

Baker now seeks compromise on which Moscow would be the main non-Middle East power.

Baker's next stop is Kislovodsk, a resort in the Caucasus mountains of the southern Soviet Union, where he will meet Foreign Minister Alexander Bessmertnykh tomorrow to discuss Middle East peacemaking.

He will then return to Israel to hear Prime Minister Yitzhak Shamir's response to suggestions Baker made last week at the start of his third trip to the region since the Gulf War.

Baker said in Damascus he did not know when he would visit the region again.

Asked whether he had reached agreement with Syria on a peace conference, Baker replied: "I do not yet have that."

But he said that despite differences, "I think there is a considerable degree of agreement among the parties."

Syrian Foreign Minister Farouq Al-Shara, at the same press conference, accused Israel of being the main obstacle to peace and of pushing the region towards war.

Baker quickly distanced himself from those remarks, saying: "That's not exactly what I said."

AP reports say: James Baker suffered a double setback Wednesday as Syria insisted on a UN role in Middle East peace talks and Israel expanded settlements on Arab lands. Syrian Foreign Minister said of Baker's peace mission "we are not optimistic at all."

However, the most optimistic message from Baker was his assertion that he would not be spending so much time in the region.

Ershad govt paid US lobbying firm \$3,24,000

By Staff Correspondent

The fallen Ershad government appointed a lobbying firm called Bannerman and Associates based in US and paid it 3,24,000 US dollars as fees for 'protecting Bangladesh's interests, maintaining contacts and relations with noted personalities, parties and organisations, administration and important members of the Congress in the US.'

This was disclosed by Foreign Minister ASM Mustafizur Rahman in Parliament on Wednesday in reply to a question from Nurul Islam Moni (Independent).

The Foreign Minister said the Bangladesh Embassy in Washington was to act as complementary and supportive agent to MG Bannerman. An accord to this effect was signed with the lobbying firm on March 1, 1988 through the Bangladesh Embassy in Washington.

Replying to a supplementary question, the Foreign Minister said the present government had no intention to re-appoint the firm. The caretaker government of Acting President Shahabuddin Ahmed cancelled the accord on December 31, 1990 with effect from January 2 this year.

Tin bigha to be handed over soon, FM tells JS

By Staff Correspondent

Foreign Minister ASM Mustafizur Rahman told Parliament that Indian government had assured that the Tin Bigha corridor would be handed over to Bangladesh soon.

Replying to a question from Salahuddin Yusuf (AI), the Foreign Minister said that the present government was in constant touch with New Delhi on the issue.

The Foreign Minister told the House that Indian Supreme Court in its verdict on May 5, 1990, directed transfer of Tin Bigha corridor to Bangladesh with immediate effect in order to improve bilateral relations.

He said the implementation of the agreement was being delayed as several writ petitions had been filed in the Calcutta High Court by the citizens of those areas.

Some opposition members wanted to know whether the BNP government would renew the treaty or scrap it. The Minister said, "If you (opposition) want, everything can be done."

JP activists protest Ershad's transfer to jail

Jatiya Party and its front organisations Wednesday held rallies and brought out processions in the capital to protest against transfer of ousted president H M Ershad to jail and arrest to JP Acting President Mizanur Rahman Chowdhury, reports BSS.

Raushan-heroin link probe

Investigation is on to find out if Begum Raushan Ershad, wife of deposed President Ershad, was involved in the smuggling of heroin and gold, and in transferring money abroad. Prime Minister Begum Khaleda Zia informed parliament during question hour Wednesday, replying to Abdur Rouf MP (Nilphamari-1). She also informed the House that two criminal cases have been filed against Raushan Ershad in Tejgaon and Mottijheel Police Stations, reports UNB.

Saddam, Talabani sign autonomy deal

BAQDAD, Apr 24: Kurdish rebel leader Jalal Talabani said today he had signed a deal on Kurdish autonomy with Iraqi President Saddam Hussein. He told a press conference after talks with Saddam — "the agreement affirmed the principle of democracy in Iraq, press freedoms and... allowing all Kurds to return to towns and villages."