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Beijing values ties with Bangladesh, will provide assistance despite financial constraints : Li

China traditional good friend, says Khaleda

BEIJING, June 19: China will provide Bangladesh with an interest-free loan of 60 million yuan (40 crore taka approx) of which 50 per cent would be commodity aid and the rest project aid, reports BSS.

The Chinese government had also offered to supply 200 small power tractors suitable for Bangladesh terrain.

These offers were made by Chinese Prime Minister Li Peng to the visiting Prime Minister Begum Khaleda Zia during the official talks held at the Great Hall of the People here this morning.

Shortly after the ceremonial welcome accorded to the Bangladesh Prime Minister, the two leaders held exclusive talks for over 40 minutes.

At the official talks lasting for more than one hour, Begum Zia and Prime Minister Li exchanged views on international situation and matters of bilateral and common interest.

Prime Minister Begum Zia briefed the Chinese Premier on the devastations caused by the recent cyclone and thanked the Chinese government and the people for the help and assistance they provided to Bangladesh in relief and rehabilitation work.

She referred to the February 27 elections and said the elected government was putting its efforts to institutionalise democracy in the country. Recalling her visit to China in 1980 with her husband Shaheed President Ziaur Rahman, Begum Zia said "now I am here as a representative of the people."

She said China was a traditional good friend of Bangladesh and had always stood by it. China has always come forward with economic and other assistances for social and economic progress of Bangladesh.

Li told Begum Zia that Bangladesh and China had always been good friends. "The friendship started by the late



Prime Minister Begum Khaleda Zia and Prime Minister of China Li Peng review the honour guard during official welcoming ceremonies on Wednesday in Beijing. — AFP photo

BNP submits amendment bill to Acting President today

Referendum to cost Tk 22 cr

By Reazuddin Ahmed

The Treasury Bench-initiated Constitution amendment bill, providing for switching over to parliamentary form of government, will be submitted to the Acting President for his approval today. The bill needs President's clearance as a referendum to endorse the passage of the bill will involve an expenditure of Taka 22 crore.

Law and Justice Ministry received the bill on Wednesday and scrutinised the various provisions. Law Minister Mirza Golam Hafiz is expected to submit the bill today to the Acting President for his clearance. A Law Ministry source told The Daily Star that the Acting President would approve the bill any moment. But he hinted that as the referendum would cost Taka 22 crore, the Acting President might take it to the cabinet for approval. In that event the bill may be cleared after Eid.

Available reports suggest that the 11th Constitution amendment bill, 1991 will be placed before the House by the end of the current month.

The Law Ministry is working on two other private members' bills regarding Constitution amendment. One of the bills has been proposed by Deputy Leader of the Opposition in Parliament and Awami League leader Abdus Samad Azad, and the other one has been submitted by Rashed Khan Menon. These two bills will also need President's clearance.

It may be mentioned that any bill which will involve any expenditure for its popular endorsement will require President's clearance. The Constitution amendment bill changing the fundamental clauses will require referendum if passed by two third members of parliament. The referendum will be organised by the Election Commission in the same manner as the general elections are held.

Article 142 of the Constitution provides that amendment of the Constitution will require two thirds of the total number of members of parliament. Two hundred and twenty members will be required to vote in favour of the amendment bill. After the passage of the bill amending Articles 48 and 56, it will be presented to the President for his assent. The President within seven days after the bill is presented to him will put it to a referendum.

A referendum under Article 142 (1b) shall be conducted by the Election Commission within such a period and in a such manner as may be provided by law, amongst the persons enrolled in the voters list. If the result of the referendum is positive, then it will be deemed that the president has assented to the bill.

Reliable sources told The Daily Star that there might not be major differences between the Treasury Bench's and the private members, bills except that Abdus Samad Azad seeks to revert to the parliamentary system as was envisaged in the 1972 Constitution.

Rao for consensus, Pawar favours secret ballot as race heats up

NEW DELHI, June 19: Forty-three Congress (I) members of the Indian Parliament have demanded an election to choose a prime minister-designate, rejecting a consensus, as the race for the top post heated up, reports AFP.

The MPs released a statement here Tuesday night throwing their weight behind Maharashtra state Chief Minister and prime ministerial aspirant Sharad Pawar's demand for a secret ballot.

Pawar, 51, and party president PV Narasimha Rao, 70, are the two main contenders for the post. Rao's supporters have been trying to forge a consensus in his favour and avert an election.

The statement was signed by several newly-elected MPs from Pawar's power base, his home state of Maharashtra where he led the party to a remarkable performance.

Rao said on television Tuesday night that he did not believe the Congress (I)'s overwhelming success in one state should influence the choice of prime minister-designate, saying "this has never been a consideration".

The Congress (I) is hoping to form a government with the support of secular parties after emerging as the single largest party in parliament from

Party	Total seats	Elections held	Results declared
Congress (I)	543	511	492
BJP	220	117	117
JD	51	51	51
CPI (M)	35	35	35
CPI	13	13	13
SJP	5	5	5
TDP	12	12	12
AIADMK	11	11	11
JMM	6	6	6
Shiv Sena	4	4	4
IULM	2	2	2
Congress (S)	1	1	1
Others	15	15	15

Wealth amassing case adjourns till July 1

I don't need lawyer, anyone can punish me, Ershad tells newsmen

By Staff Correspondent

The Special Judge Court trying deposed President Ershad on charges of amassing wealth and grabbing government property was again adjourned yesterday till July 1.

The prosecution yesterday produced two more witnesses who corroborated the statements of the informant of the case before the Court, chaired by Special Judge Mohammad Ali Khan.

Joint Secretary of the Home Ministry Abdul Hamid Chowdhury and Deputy Secretary (Security) of the Home Ministry Major (Retd) Montazuddin were produced by the Prosecution.

Attorney General Aminul Haque examined the witnesses.

Deposing before the court Joint Secretary of the Home Ministry Abdul Hamid Chowdhury showed the copy of the

Will it be considered an act of moral turpitude?

By Moinuddin Naser

Simmers persist in and around the High Court whether the illegal possession of arms will be considered an offence of moral turpitude or not.

This debate came up after the judgement in the arms case against Ershad, because if the offence amounted to moral turpitude Ershad would cease to be a member of Parliament.

The Constitutional Clause 66 (2) (d) describes "a person shall be disqualified for election as or for being, a member of Parliament who(d) has been, on conviction for a criminal offence involving moral turpitude, sentenced to imprisonment for a term of not less than two years, unless a period of five years has elapsed since his release."

When asked whether the illegal possession of arms would be a matter of moral turpitude the Attorney General Aminul Haque replied in the affirmative.

He said that the word moral turpitude had not been defined in any law, but the judicial decisions on different cases had defined, construed and interpreted the word 'moral turpitude'.

Now after the conviction in Ershad's arms case it is in the minds of many persons, whether illegal possession of arms is an offence of moral turpitude, he added.

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Movement soon for Ershad's release, says Moudud

By Staff Correspondent

Former Vice-President and Acting Chairman of Jatiya Party (JP) announced Wednesday his party would launch a movement to secure release of ex-President HM Ershad.

Deposed President Ershad has been sentenced to 10 years' rigorous imprisonment for possession of illegal arms.

Addressing a public meeting in the city, the first since the conviction of Ershad on June 12, Moudud blamed the present Government for resorting to oppression on JP men after the fall of the Er-

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Steps for implementation of VAT inadequate : FICCI

Star Economic Report

The enforcement of Value Added Tax (VAT) should be deferred at least for a month because of "inadequate preparations for its implementation according to the members of Foreign Investors Chamber of Commerce and Industry (FICCI).

The FICCI members held a meeting on Wednesday at Bangladesh Oxygen Limited (BOL) with Chamber President Abul Hasnat Khan in the chair to consider the implications of VAT on the operations of their units.

The VAT which would replace sales tax at importation stage and excise duty at manu-

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No alternative to parliamentary form : Hasina

By Staff Correspondent

Awami League Chief and Leader of the Opposition in Parliament Sheikh Hasina said on Wednesday her party was determined to continue democratic movement aimed at the emancipation of the people and stressed that there was no

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I don't like Gorbachev: Yeltsin

WASHINGTON, June 19: Boris N Yeltsin, on his first visit to the United States since being elected President of the Russian republic, says he doesn't like Soviet President Mikhail Gorbachev very much because the Kremlin leader is inconsistent and bends under pressure, reports AP.

Yeltsin's slap at his chief of state and erstwhile political rival came just a few hours after he had praised Gorbachev on Tuesday for making possible his victory in Russia's first democratic presidential election.

"To a large extent, I don't like him," Yeltsin said in an interview with Ted Koppel on the ABC television network's "Nightline" programme. "He's inconsistent. He has strength for a period of time, and then under pressure from other forces, he may change his decision. That isn't a good thing."

Yeltsin, speaking through an interpreter, criticized Gorbachev for what he called the Soviet leader's "half-hearted decisions, changing his position, he goes first to the right, then to the left. These perhaps are the main qualities which I don't like about him."

Recently, however, after

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