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### NEWS BRIEFS

#### Haj application date extended

The date for depositing money has been extended upto February 29 for the people who intend to perform haj under government management this year. People are asked to submit their haj applications to the office of the deputy commissioners of their respective districts along with the bank receipt after depositing Tk 78,900, reports UNB.

#### Sirajganj food godowns empty

SIRAJGANJ, Feb 23: The food godowns in the district were empty of wheat for the last one month forcing a rise in its price over rice, official sources said. The food godowns in nine upazilas of the district were running short of wheat and rice, reports UNB.

#### Bhatiary mishap: 2 more dies

CHITTAGONG, Feb 23: The death toll in Saturday's accident at Bhatiary, Sitakunda here rose to four with two more deaths at the Chittagong Medical College Hospital today. Two persons died on the spot and seven others injured when a heavy iron sheet fell on them at a ship breaking industry at Bhatiary, Sitakunda yesterday, reports BSS.

### World Bank mission chief talks to the Star

## Aid Club sanction to be lower next fiscal year

By S Y Bakht



Christopher R Willoughby

Donors, worried about Bangladesh's slow implementation of projects, may cut down their aid for the next fiscal year which will be a "good deal" lower than the current year's pledge of 2.3 billion US dollars, a World Bank official said Sunday.

In an exclusive interview with The Daily Star World Bank (WB) Resident Representative in Dhaka Christopher R Willoughby said there was a "great concern" by donors on Bangladesh's project implementation performance.

According to him this will be one of the three primary factors to influence the lowering of the aid commitment by the Bangladesh Aid Consortium

scheduled to meet in Paris on April 21-22.

He identified the other two major factors as budgetary constraints due to recession on most western nations and the pressure on some countries to divert aid to East European countries.

Last year the donors made their highest ever commitment to Bangladesh demonstrating their support to the democratic government. Additional funds were committed because of the devastating cyclone which struck the coastal areas weeks before the Paris Club meeting in May last year.

Willoughby said disbursement of the project aid (estimated 1.5 billion US dollars) had been poor in the first half of the current fiscal as the Annual Development Programme (ADP) was "quite slow to move" and investment performance had been "very disappointing."

The WB, which plays an important role in assessing the country's economy, presides over the annual meeting of the donors.

The WB Representative said Bangladesh must act quickly during the next few months to step up the pace of project implementation. "The greatest need right now is to substantially increase the flow of disbursement... the big focus

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## Fundamentalism has no room, says Khaleda

MADARIPUR, Feb 23: Prime Minister Begum Khaleda Zia has said the BNP government does not believe in fundamentalism and will work for the betterment of people belonging to all strata of life, reports BSS.

She said the politics of present nationalist government was to make Bangladesh an abode of peace and harmony where people irrespective of caste, creed and religion could live together happily and work for the overall national development.

The Prime Minister was speaking at the first grand conference of Bangladesh Jatiyatabadi Scheduled Cast Cell at the Shashikar College Ground under Kalkini upazila of Madaripur district.

Presided over by Principal Ganesh Halder, the function was also addressed by Law and Justice Minister Mirza Golam Hafiz, Agriculture, Irrigation, Water Development and Flood Control Minister Majid-ul-Haque, Health Minister Chowdhury Kamal Ibne Yusuf, State Minister for Forest and Fisheries Gayeswar Roy, State Minister for Religion Prof Abdul Mannan, Farida Rahman MF, advisers of the cell Advocate Kazi Golam Mahub and Advocate A K M Shamsul Bari Mia Mohon, former Minister Abdul Mannan Sikder, Kartik Chandra Thakur, convener of the cell, Prafullah Kumar Mandal, Tarani Kanta Sarkar, Headmaster of Shashikar High School and Acharya Chitta Ranjan Biswas.

The Prime Minister said the members of the scheduled See Page 12 Col 1

## \$ 1.9 m WFP food aid for Rohingya refugees

World Food Programme has approved an emergency food assistance to 52,000 refugees from Myanmar for a period of six months, a WFP press release said in Dhaka Sunday, reports BSS.

The food assistance includes rice, dal and vegetable oil for a total value of about 1.9 million US dollar.

Rations will be distributed to refugees in the camps being established by the government, the press release said.

The food aid will be a part of joint relief operation conducted by the government in collaboration with UNHCR, Red Crescent, MSF and WFP. Meanwhile UNB says: The UNHCR is expected to come up with a comprehensive programme within a week for providing adequate relief to tens of thousands of Myanmar refugees sheltered in the See Page 12 Col 7



Activists of Greater Chittagong Hill Tracts Students Council demonstrating in the city yesterday in demand for release of six fellow students. — Star photo

## Ignore BNP's bait, Hasina tells UP chairmen

GOPALGANJ, Feb 23: Opposition leader Sheikh Hasina today asked the local administration and union parishad chairmen to work unitedly for the welfare of the deprived multitude ignoring all threats and temptations, reports UNB.

The party in power may try to allure or intimidate you to share their misdeeds... ignore all temptations or intimidations and work neutrally for the welfare of the masses", she told a meeting of local officials and the newly elected UP chairmen at the Tungipara Upazila Parishad auditorium this morning.

Officials and UP chairmen apprised the opposition leader of various ongoing projects in the area and problems faced by them.

Among others, Gopalpur UP Chairman Swarup Chandra Howlader and Patgati UP Chairman Munshi Emdadul Haq spoke on the occasion.

Hasina, now on a five-day visit to Gopalganj, said concerted efforts by officials and elected representatives could make significant contribution to improve the socio-economic condition of the poor.

She accused the BNP government of politicising the administration saying it created indiscipline and resentment among the officials.

The Awami League President alleged that the government would not formulate any pragmatic policy yet to boost the country's economy through increased production in the agriculture and industries sectors.

Callousness of the ruling party and the luxurious life its members are leading are making the crises worse everywhere, aggravating the hardship of the people.

Hasina said that despite repeated calls, the government had failed to take steps to halt price-hike, campus violence and lawlessness. She accused the government of patronising corruption and nepotism.

Reiterating her party's programme, the Awami League chief called for removing illiteracy, hunger, poverty and unemployment of women in the rural areas through specific economic programmes.

Hasina also addressed a See Page 12 Col 7

## Senior officers get postings

By Staff Correspondent

A number of senior civil servants who have recently been promoted have been given postings.

These officials were made OSDs at the Ministry of Establishment after promotion. Additional Secretary Abdus Sobhan has been appointed Press Secretary to the Prime Minister, says a PID handout on Sunday.

Mesbahuddin Ahmed and Syed Amirul Muik, both Additional Secretaries have been appointed Divisional Chief of the Planning Commission and Director General of Radio Bangladesh respectively.

Shah Abdul Hannan (Additional Secretary) has been appointed Member of the National Board of Revenue.

Additional Secretaries ABM Siddique and Mamunur Rashid have been made Managing Director of Shilpa Rin Sangstha and Principal of the Planning Academy respectively.

Safiuddin Ahmed (Joint Secretary) who belongs to the BCS (Information) has been appointed Private Secretary to the Prime Minister with his See Page 12 Col 2

## 'RSO' has armed units in every Arakan village'

Star Special by S Bari

Professor Zakaria was once a botany teacher. Now Secretary of the Mujahideen of the Rohingya Solidarity Organisation (RSO), he lives the life of a guerrilla. In their struggle against the Myanmar military, the fighting members of the RSO call themselves, optimistically, Mujahideen.

In an interview in Cox's Bazar with The Daily Star, Zakaria talked about alleged arms sources and internal disagreements, touching on Rohingya history along the way.

"Since the independence of Myanmar," he claimed, "Rohingyas have been struggling for a say in its administration, but the Myanmar

rulers are afraid their hegemony will be overthrown." The strategy has been to keep minorities such as the Rohingya Muslims underprivileged; lately, this has given way to active persecution in the Arakan region, home of the Rohingyas.

The diminutive professor joined the revolutionary movement after being dismissed from his job in Akyab College of Arakan. With few educational opportunities, Rohingyas are a largely illiterate community. The rare educated ones find the Civil and Defence services closed to them, and most enter the teaching profession. Last year, nearly all Rohingya teaching

staff in government institutions were expelled, according to Zakaria.

Asked about the reports that the RSO had suspended military activities, Zakaria replied, "That is untrue. We have two to three thousand men ready to fight at any moment. We have units in every village in Arakan, and 10,000 members."

The majority of the active Mujahideen, it appears, roam between Northern Arakan and the Bandarban district of Bangladesh. In the latter, the Shantibahini have reportedly clashed with Rohingya factions.

According to Zakaria, "The See Page 12 Col 4

## CHT students' memo to Home Minister

By Staff Correspondent

The students belonging to the Greater Chittagong Hill Tracts Students' Council Sunday staged a sit-in in front of the Secretariat for release of their six student leaders.

Six leaders of the Council — Pulak Chakma, Pradipan Khisha, Animesh Chakma, Anuttar Chakma, Manotpal Chakma and Amar Sadhan Chakma — were detained at the Manikchhari military camp on their way home after holding a procession in Dhaka on February 17. The student leaders, handed over a memorandum to the Speaker of the Parliament demanding implementation of their five-point demands.

After Sunday's sit-in, the See Page 12 Col 8

## Experts suggest wider use of geotextiles

By Staff Correspondent

Construction scientists and experts at a seminar Sunday emphasised the need to use Geotextile technology in controlling river erosion and protecting embankments in the coastal belts of the country.

The seminar titled "Use of Geotextile technology in Bangladesh" was jointly organised by United Enterprises and Co Ltd, Bangladesh and UCO Technical Fabrics NV, Belgium at Hotel Sonargaon where the Minister for Local Government and Rural Development Abdus Salam Talukder was present as the chief guest.

Geotextiles are heavy-duty materials like polypropylene, polyester, polyethylene, polyamide and polyvinylidene used in embankments and

even in the constructing of seawalls that effectively prevent percolation of water and ensure durability of embankments.

The technology is also used in 11 other civil engineering construction works like flyovers, water drainages and railway bridges.

British expert Dr Peter R Ranklitor, considered the pioneer in the technology in the world, presented the key-note paper at the seminar.

The seminar was attended by Energy and Mineral Resources Minister Dr Khondoker Mosharrar Hossain as special guest and State Minister for Communications Fazlur Rahman as the guest of See Page 12 Col 7

## Striking deep sea fishermen threaten to 'internationalise' their issue

By Staff Correspondent

The striking workers of the Bangladesh Deep Sea Fishing Trawlers have threatened to internationalise the issue of their ongoing strike pressing for pay hike and other allowances.

Some 2000 workers of the Deep Sea Fishing Trawlers Workers' Union are on an indefinite strike since February 7 demanding increase in wages by 50 per cent, increase in on-board allowance to Taka 15 hundred from Taka 800 and over time allowance to the crew for extra hours.

M A Muttalib, the President of the Bangladesh Plantation, Agricultural and Fisheries Workers' Federation (BPAFWF), See Page 12 Col 1

## Reds rally near Kremlin, shout 'Yeltsin resign'

MOSCOW, Feb 23: Thousands of hardline communists shouting "Yeltsin resign", forced their way past police barricades today and held an illegal rally near the Kremlin to mark the 74th birthday of the former Soviet army, reports Reuter.

About 5,000 demonstrators waving photographs of Stalin and Lenin jumped over lorries at Mayakovskiy Square and then pushed through two rows of policeman before marching towards Manzh Square across from the Kremlin.

"We are trying to defend the army and the Soviet Union," said Natalya Ivanova, a middle-aged demonstrator. Police in riot gear offered little resistance as they

watched the rowdy crowd march toward the Kremlin. "We are not against meetings and rallies," said one policeman, "we are just ensuring order to prevent people from

MOSCOW, Feb 23: Procommunist demonstrators battled riot police on Sunday during an anti-government rally.

Several policemen were knocked to the ground and demonstrators' faces were bloodied as police used truncheons to force them back, reports AP.

causing a stampede." The anniversary, traditionally marked with fireworks and other festivities, took place at a time of political dispute over

whether the army should stay united or be split up among the new states which replaced the Soviet Union.

The dispute has fuelled public discontent with Russian President Boris Yeltsin's government which conservatives already blame for soaring prices and low wages and has revived calls for a return of the Soviet Union.

"The army is our last hope our last protector" said one demonstrator "that is why the democrats are against the army."

Some protesters denounced the Russian government's new disarmament initiatives and called for return to the days of dictatorship and a strong military state.

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