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The Daily Star

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Inside Today

Article

Spotlight on Middle East: UN Security Council acts against Libya
Page 4

International



Yeltsin cabinet threatens to step down
Page 5

Business

Fertilizer units face setbacks
Page 7

Magazine

Vietnam: The country not the war, My World
by S M Ali, Write to Mita and Rising Stars
Page 9, 10, 11

Metropolitan

Dhaka Day by Day



Development communication
Page 3

AL won't press for indemnity repeal bill in coming session

By Nurul Kabir

The 12th meeting of the Parliamentary Standing Committee on Indemnity Ordinance (Repeal) Bill ended last night with the agreement of the committee members belonging to both the ruling party and opposition that it would take time to reach consensus on the issue.

AL leader Mohammad Nasim MP who moved the bill in Parliament last August told The Daily Star last night that his party would not press the government to express its decision in the next session of Parliament beginning April 12 this month.

The AL leader observed that the ruling party was yet to decide what positions it would take on the indemnity issue, and for that reason BNP should be allowed more time to settle the matter, Nasim added.

The Works Minister and a member of the Standing

Committee Rafiqul Islam, however, told the Star that since the next session of Parliament would be short lived and the chairman of the committee Law Minister Mirza Golam Hafez was going abroad for four to five days on April 11, the committee had no alternative but to take more time for resolving the issue.

Presided over by Law Minister Mirza Hafez the yesterday's meeting was attended by Agriculture Minister M Majid-ul-Hoque, Works Minister Khandaker Delwar Hossain, Deputy Leader of the Opposition in Parliament Abdus Samad Azad and Opposition Chief Whip Mohammad Nasim of Awami League and Fazle Rabbi of Jatiya Party.

According to the consensus of the yesterday's meeting, the committee would meet again before April 19, the expiry date of the third deadline given

to the committee by Parliament for making a draft report on the proposed repeal bill.

The Standing Committee is expected to seek fresh deadline in the coming session of parliament beginning April 12.

The AL leader and Chief Whip of the Opposition in Parliament Mohammad Nasim MP moved the Indemnity Ordinance (Repeal) Bill in Parliament on August 6 last year in a bid to remove the constitutional bar on trying people involved in the killing of Sheikh Mujibur Rahman.

Sheikh Mujib the then President of the country was killed in a military putsch on August 15, 1975.

But Mujib's cabinet colleague Khandaker Mostaque Ahmed took over the state power as Chief Martial Law Administrator only two days after the killing and promulgated an ordinance indemnifying the killers on September

20. Later, the BNP government under the leadership of late President Ziaur Rahman ratified the Indemnity Ordinance along with a number of Martial Law ordinances through the Fifth Amendment to the Constitution in the second parliament of the country in 1979.

A 15-member Parliamentary Standing Committee with the Law Minister Mirza Golam Hafez had been formed immediately after the AL-sponsored Indemnity (Repeal) Bill was introduced in the present parliament in last August with a view to reaching a consensus on the issue.

The Standing Committee comprises seven members from the ruling BNP, five from AL and one each from Gotonatri Dal, Jatiya Party (JP) and Jamaat.

Since August last year the

Myanmar FM due Apr 23

By Staff Correspondent

Myanmar sends its Foreign Minister to Bangladesh April 23, thanks to the mounting international pressure on the country's military rulers.

Ohn Gyaaw will be leading a 14 member delegation which includes Brig Gen Myo Thant, the Minister for Information. The latter will be the alternate leader of the team.

During the six-day stay in Bangladesh, the Myanmar team would discuss the influx issue 'with a view to ensuring the repatriation of the refugees in safety and honour at the earliest possible time', said a Foreign Office spokesman who formally unveiled the schedule of the Myanmar ministers' much-awaited visit at a press briefing yesterday.

The visit was due last February but did not take place for reasons Yangon authorities had not bothered to explain. In November last year,

Bangladesh Foreign Minister toured the trouble-torn country where rulers are fighting a strong pro-democracy uprising since 1988.

Due to Myanmar's apathy and indifference, diplomatic sources say, the trip turned into a 'formal' one without making any headway in the bilateral relations.

Since March last year, Rohingya Muslims, the inhabitants of the bordering Rakhaine (Arakan) province, have been pouring into Bangladesh to escape persecution in homeland.

The influx saw a marked rise following a cross-border military assault by Myanmar forces on a Bangladesh border post on December 21.

PM likely to visit India in May

Prime Minister Begum Khaleda Zia is likely to pay a three-day official visit to India in the second week of May, diplomatic sources here said Thursday, reports UNB.

The visit, expected to begin on May 13, will take place at the invitation of Indian Prime Minister Narasimha Rao.

Rao extended the invitation after Begum Zia had assumed the office of the Prime Minister of a democratic government.

It will be Begum Zia's second bilateral visit abroad as the head of the government. She visited the United States last month.

Floods hit 12 Sirajganj unions

SIRAJGANJ, Apr 9: Low lying areas in 12 unions of the district were submerged due to sudden onrush of water from upstream and rise in water level in the river Jamuna during the last 12 hours, reports UNB.

Water level in the river Jamuna increased by about 4 ft during the period submerging 10,000 acres of land with boro and other crops, local farmers said.

The affected unions are six in Kazipur upazila, two in Sadar, one in Belkuchi, two in Chowhatti and one in Tangail district.

Water Development Board sources said the sudden increase in the water level was due to the flood water rushing from the upstream.

Call to make Apr 12 march towards JS a success

By Staff Correspondent

Leaders of the National Coordination Committee for Realisation of the Spirit of the Liberation War and Resistance to the Killers and Collaborators of 1971 have called for massive participation in the April 12 march towards the Jatiya Sangsad.

Earlier, the coordination committee announced that a march from in front of the National Museum would start towards the Jatiya Sangsad on April 12 at 3.30 pm in demand for execution of the verdict of the Gana Adalat (people's court) that tried the controversial Jamaat leader Golam Azam for war crimes.

The court in its verdict viewed that Golam Azam's offences were punishable by death sentence.

Addressing a meeting of the committee's metropolitan unit on Thursday, the leaders also called for making demonstrations and wayside rallies at different parts of the capital Friday and Saturday a success. Chaired by Mofazzal Hossain Choudhury Maya, the meeting was also addressed by the coordination committee convener Prof Jahanara Imam, its member secretary Prof Abdul Mannan Choudhury and city unit leaders including Salahuddin Badal, Moniruzzaman, Kamrul Ahsan, Golam Mahmud, Sirajul Haq

See Page 12 Col 6

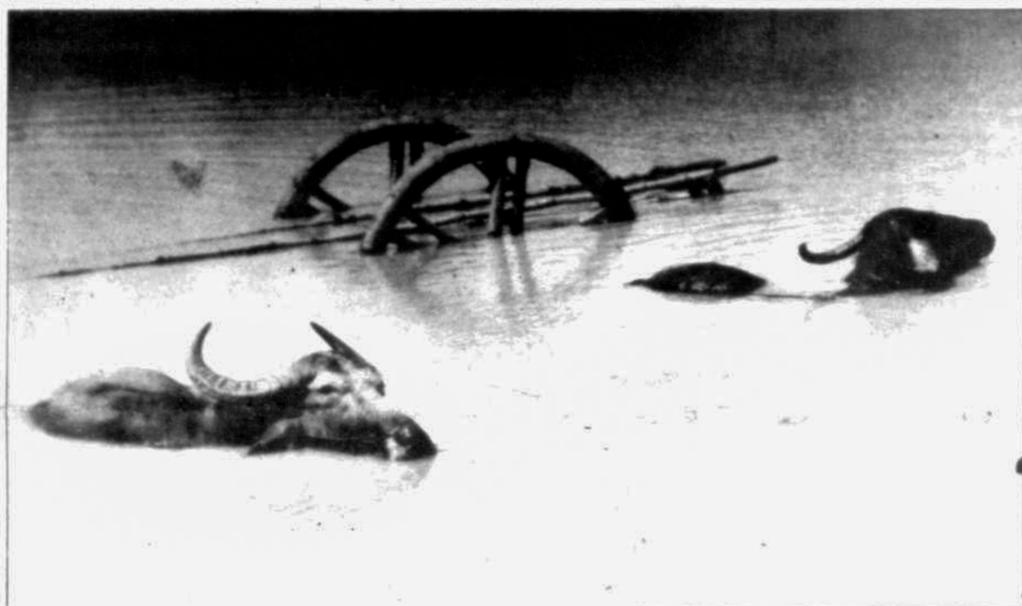
4 killed in Feni road mishap

FENI, Apr 9: Four people were killed and 15 others injured when a passenger bus skidded off the road and fell into a roadside ditch near Sree Bhanga bridge, 15 kilometres from here on Wednesday night, reports UNB.

The accident took place when the driver lost its control and the bus turned turtle into a water ditch on Feni-Porshuram highway at about 9 pm.

The victims identified as Maulavi Saleh Ahmed (45), and Tamal Chandra Das (30) of Moripur in Porshuram upazila, Golam Rasul (32) of Balua Chaumuhani in Sadar upazila and an unknown person were killed on the spot.

Local people recovered their bodies trapped under the ill-fated bus. All the deceased were reportedly travelling on the rooftop.



Heat spell forced a pair of buffaloes to douse in water along with the cart yesterday.

—Star photo

Acute shortfall in power generation 300 mw loadshedding a day

There will be a 300-megawatt loadshedding every day for shortfall in power generation in the country, Power Development Board (PDB) said Thursday, urging the people to make economic use of electricity, reports UNB.

Giving causes of the short supply of electricity, PDB said there was a shortfall in the generation of power to the level of available capacity as several old power plants were awaiting overhauling, repair and maintenance.

Temporary shortfall in the supply of natural gas and fall in the water level of Kaptai lake have resulted in decreased generation of power in several plants, it further said.

Also, PDB said, the commitment assistance of the donor countries had been held up for about one and a half years as the system loss could not be reduced to the acceptable level.

The system loss in power distribution in the country is rated world's highest to the tune of above 40 per cent.

In the wake of power crisis, PDB seeks the cooperation of consumers in minimising power use in the unproductive sector and shaking off the propensity of using it illegally.

To relieve pressure on the system loss during peak hours, it asked the consumers to operate irrigation pumps, mills and factories during the off-peak hours.

The board, in a press release, said economic use of power is indispensable to keep the country's economy dynamic.

The malefactors of system loss beyond limit and huge unrealised electric bills have been affecting the national economy very adversely, it admitted.

So, the PDB press release said, the areas where system

loss is heavy, illegal connections are many and where arrears of electricity bills are huge will be subjected to higher incidence of loadshedding.

The consumers have been requested to be economical in the use of power during the peak hours between 5 pm and 10 pm.

Loadshedding of 300 mw is being taken recourse to owing to shortfall in the generation of power compared to its growing demand during the summer, it said.

The maximum demand of power at present stands at 1800 mw, 300 mw up from the normal demand of about 1500 mw, a PDB official told UNB. The installed capacity of the power plants in the country is 2300 mw.

With its own available resources, PDB is taking steps to overcome the problem as early as possible, the release said.

Temperature may break 100-yr record

By Staff Correspondent

The much cherished rains that would relieve the people from the scorching heat are expected in a couple of days, a Met office forecast said.

Meanwhile, the forecast also said that temperature may soar up to 45 degree Celsius over the country this summer.

Flash floods, nor-westerly and hailstorms have also been forecast for this month.

A weather expert said that most parts of the country would be experiencing showers within a week.

The capital dwellers Thursday experienced a 37.4 degree Celsius temperature which, Met office said, was the season's highest so far in Dhaka, but the country's highest temperature 39.6 degree Celsius was recorded at Rajshahi on the same day.

The months of April and May are the hottest in the

See Page 12 Col 7

Najibullah to step down this month

KABUL, Apr 9: Afghan President Najibullah said today he would step down at the end of the month and not wait until an interim neutral government was installed, reports AFP.

The 45-year-old president told foreign journalists he had decided to relinquish his office when a transition council was installed at the end of April or in the first days of May.

He said he had decided not to wait for the interim government because the UN peace plan for Afghanistan had accelerated since March 18, partly on his own suggestion.

"As soon as this [pre-interim government] council is formed, I will deliver power to this government," he told Natasha Singh of the Pioneer newspaper of Delhi and an American news agency.

However, the president, who on March 18 had set the

first day of the interim government of his exit from power, declined to reveal whether he intended to leave Afghanistan.

"For Afghans, their cradle is their home," he said in the interview, a transcript of which was made available to AFP.

"But specifically I will do whatever will be in favour of peace, whatever will contribute to the peace process, I will follow."

"As soon as this council is formed, I will deliver power to this government... when I first issued the statement that I would step aside, the idea of the transition council did not exist," he said explaining his change in schedule.

To the question whether anyone had asked him to leave the country, he said simply, "no".

Kabul's local money bazaar, See Page 12 Col 7

Russia, Ukraine loosen grips on Black Sea Fleet for peace

MOSCOW, Apr 9: Russian President Boris Yeltsin and Ukrainian President Leonid Kravchuk on Thursday suspended their conflicting decrees claiming control of the former Soviet Black Sea Fleet, a news agency reported, reports AP.

The agreement would be a major step toward resolving the thorniest issue separating the two largest members of the Commonwealth of Independent States.

Lawmakers of both countries will create a joint commission to settle the dispute, the Itar-Tass news agency reported.

Kravchuk signed a decree Monday putting the fleet under Ukrainian jurisdiction, as well as claiming all conventional armed forces on Ukraine's ter-

ritory. Yeltsin responded the next day with his own decree, ordering the takeover of the fleet by Russia.

Kravchuk on Wednesday further escalated the conflict by appointing a commander of the newly created Ukrainian navy, Yeltsin dispatched the commander of the commonwealth navy, Vladimir Chernavin, to ensure that his Russian decree was carried out.

Chernavin later held talks with Ukrainian deputy parliament speaker Valentin Durdinets in an effort to resolve the dispute, Itar-Tass reported.

Yeltsin and Kravchuk spoke by telephone twice on Thursday and eventually forged the agreement to suspend

their decrees and form the commission to resolve the dispute, Itar-Tass said.

The fleet, established by Catherine the Great in 1783, has 45 cruisers, 28 submarines, 300 small and medium-sized ships, 150 airplanes and 85 helicopters. It was considered part of the Soviet strategic forces and a direct counter to the US 6th Fleet in the Mediterranean.

Russia and Ukraine have been squabbling for months over the fate of fleet, considered a crown jewel of the former Soviet navy. But their dispute had escalated quickly in recent days as Yeltsin sought to shore up support in the Russian parliament, which convened in Moscow on Monday.

See Page 12 Col 7

Britons go to polls

LONDON, Apr 9: Britons went to the polls Thursday in the most closely fought election for decades. It's likely to slash the Conservatives' huge parliamentary majority but may leave no party with overall control, reports AP.

A total of 2,903 candidates are competing for 651 seats in the House of Commons. For an overall majority, one party must win at least 326 seats.

The country's two leading parties—Prime Minister John Major's Conservatives and the opposition Labour Party led by Neil Kinnock—are divided by three main issues: recession, taxation and the state-run National Health Service.

Major, facing the loss of the 88-seat majority he inherited from Margaret Thatcher 16 months ago, says Britain's 1 1/2-year recession is part of a

See Page 12 Col 8



British Prime Minister John Major and his wife Norma pose outside polling station at Great Stoutley near Huntingdon after casting their votes yesterday.—AFP photo