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Holiday Notice

The offices of The Daily Star will remain closed today on the occasion of the Pahela Baishakh. Therefore, there will be no issue of the paper tomorrow.

NEWS BRIEFS

40,000 tons of rice for OMS

A total of 40 thousand metric tons of rice has been allotted for Open Market Sale (OMS) for all over the country under public food distribution system. The rice is being sold at government fixed rate to provide facilities for the consumers and to stabilize the market price of rice. The rice is being sold at a rate of 12.43 Taka per kg in Dhaka city, reports BSS.

Rohingya influx intensifies

COX'S BAZAR, Apr 13: The number of Rohingya Muslim refugees entering Bangladesh has crossed two lakhs as their influx intensified during the last three days. Official sources said today that the figure of the refugees sheltered in different camps in Cox's Bazar and Bandarban till today has been estimated at 2,00,275, reports UNB.

Girl killed in Rangpur

RANGPUR, Apr 13: A minor girl was killed and 20 houses were gutted in a devastating fire that broke out at Kashbag Dohiganj area of the town Monday. Fire Service sources said Mohsena (3) was roasted alive as the blaze which originated from an oven at about 11 am burned the dwelling houses into ashes, reports UNB.

12 killed in Srinagar

SRINAGAR, Apr 13: Twelve civilians were killed in the crossfire today when a fierce gun battle flared between Muslim militants and Indian troops in the Kashmir town of Sopre, police and witnesses said, reports AFP.

House not Paltan Maidan, Speaker tells Hasina

By Staff Correspondent

Shaikh Razaque Ali, Speaker of the Jatiya Sangsad yesterday reminded Sheikh Hasina, Leader of the Opposition and Chief of the Awami League (AL) that the Jatiya Sangsad was not the Paltan Maidan (a ground in Dhaka for public meetings) and that proceedings of the Sangsad were guided by rules contained in the rules of Procedure.

The comment from the Speaker came when Sheikh Hasina, in an angry mood, wanted to know whether they had freedom to speak the truth on the floor of the House. Sheikh Hasina's comment was prompted by the Speaker's switching off the

microphone of Tofael Ahmed. Taking the floor to give personal clarification Tofael Ahmed observed that President Zia had killed many freedom fighters.

Tofael Ahmed's name surfaced in the speech of Sardar Shakhawat Hossain, a Treasury member as he mentioned that Tofael and other AL leaders killed freedom fighters.

Tofael in his turn made personal attacks on Sardar Shakhawat and the Speaker acted to stop him as it went against the Rules of Procedure.

This act by the Speaker made the Leader of the Opposition angry and she demanded of the Speaker a clar-

ification.

The reminder from the Speaker enraged Sheikh Hasina further and she commented that the Speaker could not call the House Paltan Maidan and in anguish said 'Nowhere in the world is the microphone of the Leader of the Opposition switched off.'

Sheikh Hasina's voice became inaudible as the AL MPs stood up and started shouting and thumping the table.

At this stage Prof Badruddoza Chowdhury, Deputy Leader of the House stood up and clarifying the statement of the Speaker said, 'If you say that the Sangsad is not a Paltan Maidan then it

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JS discussion on Azam continues

By Staff Correspondent

The three-hour general discussion on the issue of Golam Azam's stay in Bangladesh and matters relating to the people's court continued for the second day in the Jatiya Sangsad yesterday.

The discussion started after the Maghreb prayers break with the Speaker Shaikh Razaque Ali in the chair. Eight members took part in the discussion for about three hours.

The session was adjourned at 10 last night with an appeal from the 'chair to discuss the issue within the time-limit set earlier 'otherwise reaching a

decision may be difficult'.

Rashed Khan Menon of the Workers Party (WP), the first MP deliberating on the Golam Azam issue at yesterday's session, urged Parliament Members to endorse the verdict of people's court who tried Jamaat chief Golam Azam as a war criminal March 26.

Arguing in favour of his appeal to the MPs Menon said, 'Golam Azam is not a mere individual, rather he is the symbol of destruction, killing and genocide carried out against people of the country by the Pakistani occupation forces

during our War of Independence in 1971'.

Menon in his appeal made to the MPs also said, 'Let us also try the Jamaat leaders who have violated the Constitution of the country by electing Golam Azam, a foreigner, their party chief.'

He hoped that the voice of the people as expressed in verdict of the people's court would be reflected in the resolution to be adopted by Parliament on Golam Azam issue.

Taking part in the discussion See Page 12 Col 3



A piece of parched land in Kurigram.

—Star photo

Cabinet approves \$2.15m aid plea

By Toufique Imrose Khalidi

Bangladesh will plead for a pledge of 2.15 billion US dollars from donors at the Paris meet for the 1992-93 fiscal year.

The amount is made up of \$250 million as food aid, \$500 million as commodity aid and \$1400 million as project aid.

These figures have been proposed in the Memorandum for the Bangladesh Aid Group 1992-93, prepared by the Government which will be placed before the Aid Consortium meet scheduled for April 21-22.

The Council of Ministers yesterday approved the memorandum, sources said.

The World Bank in its finalised version of the Aid Memorandum has proposed that the donors provide between \$1.9 billion dollars and \$2.1 billion dollars in aid to Bangladesh for the next fiscal.

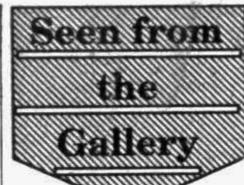
According to the brief prepared for the Cabinet, the issue which will figure prominently at the World Bank chaired meeting is the decline in the rate of internal resource mobilisation, resulting in the sluggish economic growth.

Referring to the recent discussions with the World Bank officials and the finalised Aid Memorandum of the Bank, the Economic Relation Division (ERD) apprehends that the Bangladesh Government will be asked to deal with some of the issues on a priority basis.

According to the brief, these issues include, (1) linkage of wages to productivity; (2) surplus workforce in the Railway, BADC, BJMC and BJC; (3) corruption and unfair means in the overall management of the power and gas sector; (4) congenial atmosphere for private sector development and rapid privatisation of industries; (5) simplification of import and tax structure; (6) internal resource mobilisation; (7) financial outlay in unproductive areas; (8) procedural development in the utilisation of foreign aid; (9) wastage and malpractices in the revenue sector; (10) measures against defaulters in the banking sector.

In view of the changes in the world order as well as the world-wide economic recession, Bangladesh faces a tough

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By Mahfuz Ullah

Political polka has been defined as 'one step forward, two steps backward and the main issue side stepped'.

If we go by this definition then our members of parliament are very apt in it. Quite often they love to digress from what they are supposed to discuss. In the process the risk of an issue's being talked out becomes imminent.

Taking part in the general discussion on Golam Azam, the opposition members raised issues which could be safely avoided for the time being.

The Speaker, Shaikh Razaque Ali also failed in his attempt to get the point through.

During the three-hour debate on Golam Azam yesterday about an hour was lost discussing other issues, expressing anger and abusing one another.

Before the heat generated by the war of words between the Speaker and Sheikh

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Mandelas separate

JOHANNESBURG, South Africa, Apr 13: Black leader Nelson Mandela said Monday he was separating from his wife Winnie, but denied it was linked to new charges about her role in a kidnapping case, reports AP.

The African National Congress President denied he was leaving his wife in response to new allegations of her involvement in the kidnapping and assault of black youths in 1988 and 1989.

'In view of the tensions that have arisen owing to differences between ourselves on a number of the issues in recent months, we have mutually agreed that a separation would be best for each of us,' Mandela told a news conference.

There was no immediate response from Mrs. Mandela, 57. ANC officials could not say if she would retain her positions in the movement.

Allegations about Mrs. Mandela's role in kidnapping four black youths have created controversy in ANC ranks. Many ANC leaders fear the controversy surrounding Mrs. Mandela will damage the movement as it negotiates the end of white minority rule.

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Drought worsens in northern dists

Star Report

The drought situation continues to worsen in the northern districts as a persisting dry spell accompanied by a heat wave are threatening standing crops and delaying the cultivation of new ones.

Farmers in the region have been hit the hardest as the scorching sun has dried up ponds, streams and rivers and the underground water level has subsided making irrigation difficult.

It is being reported that an estimated 30 per cent of the boro, aus and jute crops may

have already been damaged in the 16 northern districts.

Agricultural experts pointed out that the crop damage could increase drastically if there was no rainfall in the next week or so.

The highest temperature of the season in the country was recorded in the region Monday, with the mercury climbing to 41.8 degrees Celsius at Rajshahi.

A Met Office source remained optimistic about rainfall within the next several days, but there was no forecast for rain throughout the country in the next 36 hours.

However, the source cautioned that there would be reason for 'alarm' if there was no rainfall before the end of this month.

A short supply of diesel and regular loadshedding have aggravated the situation severely hampering irrigation efforts in the region, according to reports from Kurigram, Rajshahi, Bogra, Dinajpur, Sirajganj, Gaibandha, Naogaon and Panchagar.

All major rivers in the region including the Padma,

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Greetings

শুভ নববর্ষ The Daily Star wishes its readers, patrons and well-wishers a happy Bangla New Year.

Pahela Baishakh today

By Staff Correspondent

'Shuvo Naba Barsho.' Today is Pahela Baishakh, the first day of the Bangla year 1399.

The Pahela Baishakh will be celebrated across the country with the hopes of a new year of peace and prosperity and a re-awakening of the spirit that has moulded the Bengali culture.

Although we have almost forgotten the use of the Bangla calendar in our everyday life, the Pahela Baishakh is one of those days on which we assert our cultural identity.

As the day dawns exactly at 5.38 am, the nation will welcome the new year singing 'Esho He Baishakh, Esho, Esho.'

The day is a public holiday. In Dhaka, the cultural centre of the country, a joint sitar recital by the artistes of Chhayanaut, a leading cultural organisation, at 6am will herald the celebrations of Pahela Baishakh at the Ramna Batamul.

Besides, some 150 artistes of Chhayanaut, will also present solo, duet and chorus. The dawn-time function of Chhayanaut today enters its 25th year in the celebrations of Pahela Baishakh.

The highlights of the day include the traditional Baishakhi Mela, boat race and other folk festivals throughout the country.

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Work unitedly for cultural distinctiveness: Khaleda

Prime Minister Begum Khaleda Zia yesterday called upon the people to work unitedly forgetting all differences in order to bring smile to the distressed people and also maintain our cultural distinctiveness and preserve our traditions, reports BSS.

In a message on the occasion of 'Pahela Baishakh' — the Bangla new year, Begum Zia said 'Let us engage ourselves in the task of increasing production in fields, mills and factories and contribute to the success of the significance of Pahela Baishakh.'

She said the people had established democracy in the country after a nine-year struggle which was needed for flourishing of nation's indigenous culture. She said the most favourable atmosphere for cultural activities has been prevailing now in the country.

Foil conspiracy of anti-liberation forces: Hasina

Awami League leader Sheikh Hasina Monday called upon the people irrespective of their political affiliation to come forward to protect the country's independence and preserve democracy, reports UNB.

'A greater unity of the nation is the need of the hour', Hasina, who is also leader of the opposition in Parliament, said in a message on the occasion of Pahela Baishakh, the Bengali new year's day.

She urged the people to take a vow afresh to save the country by foiling conspiracy of the anti-liberation forces and weeding out corruption from the society.

Neil Kinnock resigns

LONDON, Apr 13: Labour Party leader Neil Kinnock resigned Monday, saying he could no longer carry on following his fourth straight electoral defeat by the Conservative Party, reports AP.

The 50-year-old Welshman made the announcement in a prepared statement.

Kinnock, who remains a member of Parliament, quit four days after Prime Minister John Major's Conservatives

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Russian Govt resigns in face of opposition pressure



Deputies to the sixth Congress of People's Deputies at a discussion in the Kremlin, Monday. — AFP photo.

MOSCOW, Apr 13: The Russian government tendered its resignation Monday claiming that opposition from parliament was undermining its efforts to reform the economy and had left the administration 'impotent,' reports AFP.

'We are obliged to ask the President to accept the resignation of the government,' First Deputy Prime Minister Yegor Gaidar told reporters on the sidelines of the Congress of People's Deputies.

Gaidar read a letter of resignation dated Saturday and submitted to President Boris Yeltsin on Sunday and stated that resolutions approved by the deputies 'force us to make this declaration.'

However, Russian President Boris Yeltsin has asked his cabinet to continue working and said he would decide whether to accept the government's resignation by the end of the current parliamentary session, Itar-Tass News Agency reported Monday.

The report, quoting First Deputy Prime Minister Yegor Gaidar, came after Gaidar earlier announced that the government had submitted its resignation to Yeltsin following opposition from the Congress of People's Deputies to the administration's reforms.

Gaidar said however that the decision could be 'revised' if the congress tempered its demands on the government or if Yeltsin intervened and asked the government to remain in place.

The government had hoped the deputies in the full-scale parliament would demonstrate, 'greater responsibility... for the country's future,' the agency quoted Gaidar as saying.

The congress on Saturday approved a resolution calling on Yeltsin to submit plans for re-organizing his government and to name a new Prime Minister within three months.

The government has countered that the parliament is attempting to impose con-

straints on Yeltsin and his administration that make it impossible to carry on with radical political and economic reforms.

The current session of the parliament, which began on April 6, has been characterized by behind-the-scenes political jousting for authority between government supporters and opponents.

Saturday's vote by the parliament, while clearly a setback for the government, fell short of the sharp attack on the government—including a demand for its resignation and the withdrawal of Yeltsin's special powers—that had been anticipated by many political analysts.

The Congress, elected in 1990 and dominated by conservatives, has sought to exert more control over policy and to ensure government accountability on its radical decisions for economic and political change.