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NEWS BRIEFS

Mirza Hafiz hospitalised

Law, Justice and Parliamentary Affairs Minister Mirza Golam Hafiz passed his second day at the cardiology unit of BIRDEM Hospital, the Minister got indisposed soon after his return from North Korea and was admitted at the hospital Tuesday, reports BSS.

Benazir's envoy meets Hasina

Syed Khadem Ali Shah, Special Representative of Benazir Bhutto, Leader of the Opposition in Pakistan National Assembly, met Awami League Chief and Leader of the Opposition in the Jatiya Sangsad Sheikh Hasina at the latter's Sangsad office Monday. Shah handed over a letter from Benazir Bhutto to Sheikh Hasina, according to a party press release, reports BSS.

15 hurt in Tarash College clash

Stragjan, Apr 20: At least 15 people were injured in a series of clash between two rival groups of students at Tarash College of the district since Sunday morning. Police said Chhatra League (S-A) and Jatiyatadhi Chhatra Dal organised election campaign meetings at the same venue yesterday and today. Both the groups fought with sticks and lobbed stones, injuring at least 15 people, reports UNB.

New train stoppage

Railway authorities have decided to arrange stoppage of two inter city and two mail trains at Dhaka Airport Station under its passenger service programme, a Railway press release said Monday, BSS.

Khaleda at public meeting in city

Unite to foil conspiracy against democracy

Prime Minister Begum Khaleda Zia Monday called upon the people to unite against those conspiring to foil the hard-earned democracy, reports BSS.

Addressing a big public meeting at the Gultana (Ganotantra) Square here, Begum Zia said, "We have fought a war to liberate the country, now we have to wage another war to fight against the conspirators out to undo democracy."

She said attempts were being made to divide the nation in the name of Liberation War.

She urged the people including freedom fighters to identify those, who were hatching designs to disrupt discipline and peace in society.

Criticising the role of the Opposition, the Prime Minister said, "No body can come to power through violence". She said the people of Greater Dhaka had rejected them in the last parliamentary polls for resorting to violence.

Begum Zia said her government believed in the freedom of the press and independence of the judiciary. She said none had the right to take law into their own hands. "The law will take its own course to try its offenders and none can escape it", she added.

She urged the journalists to be objective in the exercise of their professional responsibilities and avoid creating confusion in society while reporting events.

Begum Zia said people had voted BNP to power for a five-year term and her government would remain in power with the mandate of the people. It could not be overthrown through any conspiracy, she asserted.

The Prime Minister said none should intimidate us in the name of taking to the streets. "Even when we are in power, we are on the streets to champion the cause of the people," she said.

Criticising the role of the Opposition in Parliament, the Prime Minister said the people had witnessed how the Opposition has misbehaved and dishonoured Parliament. They have proved through their



Prime Minister Khaleda Zia waving at people while leading a procession after public meeting in the city yesterday. — Star photo

Dhaka may propose tripartite accord on Rohingyas

By Mahfuz Ullah

Bangladesh is expected to propose a tripartite agreement involving Myanmar and United Nations (UN) to work out a formula for a voluntary, peaceful and safe repatriation of the Rohingya refugees before the coming monsoons.

Diplomatic sources said that the proposal would be placed before Ohn Gyaaw, Foreign Minister of Burma, when he arrives in Dhaka April 23.

Sources further said that the proposal had been approved in principle by the UN Secretary General.

Besides, Bangladesh would propose for another agreement between Myanmar and the UN providing for rehabilitation of the Rohingyas after their repatriation.

The repatriation, according to the proposal, should be supervised by a tripartite commission formed with representatives from Bangladesh, Myanmar and the UN.

Foreign office sources said that Bangladesh would propose immediate implementation of the border agreement signed between Bangladesh and Myanmar and withdrawal of army advance posts from the province of Arakan during negotiations with the Foreign Minister of Myanmar.

The Myanmar Foreign Minister will lead a 14-member delegation including Brig Gen Myo Thant, Information Minister and alternate leader of the delegation.

The visit by the Myanmar Foreign Minister was due in February but was cancelled without any satisfactory explanation.

In November last year Bangladesh Foreign Minister A S M Mustafizur Rahman toured the trouble-torn country and

despite assurances the influx of Rohingyas continued.

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

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

The number of Rohingyas refugees in Bangladesh reached 211,560 until Sunday night. Of them 92,836 could not be provided any shelter.

Management of the refugees has become a difficult task for the government of Bangladesh.

Back in 1978, Bangladesh had to shelter 3 lakh Rohingyas. Under pressure the government of Myanmar took back 2 lakh while the rest managed to reach Saudi Arabia, Pakistan and other countries.

Diplomatic sources said that the UN initiative was activated following Prime Minister Khaleda Zia's meeting with UN Secretary General Boutros-Ghali during her visit to the United States from March 17 to March 21.

In a bid to find a solution, the UN Secretary General sent his Special Emissary Jan Eliasson to Bangladesh and Myanmar. Eliasson visited Bangladesh from March 28 to April 2. He also went round the refugee camps in Cox's Bazar and Teknaf and talked to the refugees.

Later, Eliasson visited Myanmar from April 2 to April 6. During his visit, sources said, the Myanmar authorities informed that they would be sending their Foreign Minister to Dhaka.

Influence Myanmar to solve Rohingya problem, PM urges China

Prime Minister Begum Khaleda Zia Monday urged China to influence the Myanmar authorities regarding Rohingya problems so that the refugees could return to their homeland before the rainy season, reports BSS.

The Prime Minister was talking to the visiting six-member delegation led by Deputy head of the Liaison Committee of the Communist Party of China Jian Guang Hua who called on her at her residence.

Begum Zia said Bangladesh had given shelter to the Rohingyas refugees on humanitarian ground but it was not in a position to bear this burden for long.

Begum Zia also detailed her government's on-going development programmes in the sectors of industry, agriculture

and other countries.

Barrister A R Yusuf, Barrister Mohammad Korban Ali, Barrister Abdur Razaq, Advocate Shaikh Ansar Ali MP and Advocate Ashraf-uz-Zaman appeared for the petitioner.

Attorney General Aminul Haq, Deputy Attorney General Alhaj Mohammad Shamsul Alam, A F Hasan Arif and Assistant Attorney General Obaidur Rahman Mostafa appeared for the government.

Azam's citizenship Rule issued on govt

A High Court division bench Monday issued rule upon the government to show cause within six weeks as to why the impugned notification dated April 18, 1973 disqualifying citizenship of Prof Golam Azam and the show cause notice, dated March 23, 1992, for deporting him from Bangladesh should not be declared to have been made without lawful authority and as having no legal effect, reports BSS.

The bench comprised Justice Mohammad Ismail Uddin Sarkar and Justice Badrul Islam Chowdhury.

When the court rose for the day Barrister A R Yusuf rising for arguments on behalf of the petitioner Prof Golam Azam submitted that the government disqualify his citizenship in exercise of power under Article 3 of the President Order No 149 of 1972 which was ultra vires of the constitution. It also violated Article 27 and Article 31 of the constitution, he said.

During the hearing the court refused to allow Barrister A R Yusuf to represent Prof Golam Azam as he did not appear for the petitioner yesterday.

5-Party for Azam's trial under Article 47(3) of Constitution

By Staff Correspondent

The left-leaning Five Party combine has demanded that the government try Golam Azam by forming a special tribunal under Article 47(3) of the Constitution and the International Crime Act, 1973.

In a press conference held yesterday morning at Taha auditorium the Five Party leaders asserted that Golam Azam be tried on charges of opposing the country's war of independence, carrying out a genocide against the people of the country, opposing the existence of Bangladesh even after its independence, illegal stay in the country and violation of the Constitution of the country by becoming chief of the Jamaat-e-Islami Bangladesh.

The Five Party combine also demanded that the government withdraw charges against the promoters of 'people's court', ban political activities in the places of prayer and take steps against those involved in doing so.

The Five Party leaders claimed that it was the government's sole responsibility to try Golam Azam and that the government could easily do it under the existing law of the land.

The leaders observed that although the ruling party had admitted Azam's civil role during the country's war of independence, his collaboration with the Pakistan occupation army and his illegal stay in the country for long, the ruling party resolution on the Golam

Commentary

Despite JS stalemate, BNP and AL should reach accord

By S M Ali

With the nation both divided and puzzled over the outcome of the parliamentary debate on the Golam Azam issue, few analysts would agree on who has gained and who has lost in what was an unprecedented crisis faced by this troubled country in just over a year after the restoration of democracy.

In some ways, the debate could have served as a supreme test of the country's parliamentary system, provided the major parties had reached a consensus, like they did on the postponement of an agreed decision of the Indemnity (Repeal) Bill.

Even on the Golam Azam issue, there were hectic, sporadic consultations between the ruling Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP) and the opposition Awami League (AL). Why they failed to reach any accord on an agreed motion will be known through a number of contradictory 'inside stories' which will surface during the next 48 hours.

Meanwhile, there is little doubt that the real loser is the country that faces a number of mass rallies by major political parties and, as expected, by the organisers of the Gano Adalat. If these rallies fall into the established pattern, there will be hartals and work stoppages, creating new doubts at home and abroad about political and economic stability in the country.

One can also be sure that the Aid to Bangladesh Consortium meeting, now on in Paris, will monitor the situation closely. While, at this stage, it is most unlikely to scale down its promised commitment, aid agencies and donor nations will study the political situation carefully when it comes to disbursement of assistance and preparation of specific projects.

Then, representatives of aid agencies who have been using increasingly tough language towards Bangladesh, often through the media, may well warn the BNP administration to clean up its political act or risk a decline in international goodwill for the country.

This is a warning the government of Begum Khaleda Zia can do without.

The real winner in the present situation is the Jamaat whose sole aim, analysts say, lies in destabilising the system, discrediting the pro-liberation forces within both the BNP and the AL and, finally, in emerging as a leading contender for power in Bangladesh before the end of the decade.

The other winner, but to a lesser degree, is the Jatiya Party (JP) which may look for a new polarisation of forces to gain a respectable place for itself in the mainstream politics.

All these possible developments point towards an increase in tension, perhaps leading to confrontation, at different levels, with the democratic system proving helpless in halting the drift.

The choice lies entirely with the ruling BNP and the opposition AL to change the

Nirmul committee threatens 'street agitation'

The Ghatak-Dalal Nirmul Committee has urged the government to execute the "people's court" verdict against Golam Azam, failing which it will go for street agitation as the only alternative to realise the demand, reports UNB.

Addressing a rally Monday here, Nirmul Committee Convenor Jahanara Imam said they would be compelled to announce greater action programme from a grand rally in the capital if the people's verdict was not implemented by April 26.

Presided over by city convenor Mofazzal Hossain Chowdhury Maya the rally was addressed, among others, by Kazi Aref Ahmed, Hasan Imam, Prof Abdul Mannan Chowdhury, Maulana Ahmedur Rahman Ajme and Principal Abdul Ahad Chowdhury.

The rally over, a torch procession in support of the demand for executing the March 26 public trial verdict paraded the main city streets. The city unit of the Nirmul Committee organised the rally.

The people's court in its verdict said Pakistani national and "war criminal" Golam Azam is punishable to death for the crimes he committed

Bid to foil Tinbigha transfer Human chain around Dahagram, Angorpota

From Mozammel Haque

RANGPUR, Apr 19: The Indians have cordoned off the Dahagram-Angorpota enclaves with a human chain in a bid to foil the Tinbigha corridor transfer plan, according to information received here.

Hundreds of Indians belonging to the Anti-Tinbigha Sangram Committee, Kuchlibari Sangram Committee, Tinbigha Liberation Front, Tinbigha Operation Bujaram, Tinbigha Mukti Morcha, Bharatiyo Janata Party (BJP), Forward Block, SUC and RSP have formed a human chain at Tinbigha corridor and other vital exit points around the enclaves since April 7. With this fresh Indian step, the inhabitants of the enclaves have been trapped within the enclaves.

On the same day, seven enclave residents were arrested by the BSF at Mekligonj Bazar when they went there to purchase daily necessities. They were sent to Mekligonj jail here. They are: Motalib (25), Hasan Ali (22), Moht (21), A Rashid (28), Rahman (42) and Mostafa (30). Bangladesh did not take any step for their release yet.

In another incident the same day, Indians created havoc at Mekligonj Hospital where 35 patients from the enclaves admitted for treatment, were dragged out of the hospital premises and beaten.

In the face of continued agitations and Anti-Tinbigha transfer demonstrations apart from the formation of the human chain, work on the boundary demarcation of the enclaves by the Indo-Bangladesh joint survey teams had to be abandoned.

The anti-Tinbigha transfer committees have unitedly chalked out 3-month-long programmes with a view to resist any attempt by the Indian government to lease out the corridor to Bangladesh and hand it over on the scheduled date, June 26.

The programmes include wearing of black badges, formation of human chains at Dhubriguri, Mekligonj, Moynaguri and Haldibari in Coochbihar district, civil disobedience

Najibullah allowed to leave country

KABUL, Apr 20: The Afghan government has agreed in talks with the United Nations envoy in Kabul to allow ousted president Najibullah to leave the country, official sources said today, reports Reuter.

Najibullah was still in Kabul on Monday, UN special representative on Afghanistan Benon Sevan said here, according to AFP.

Sevan refused further comment on reports that full clearance had been given for Najibullah's departure, saying the issue was both sensitive and dangerous.

Speaking at a press conference five days after troops at the airport prevented Najibullah from leaving the country, Sevan also said Najibullah's departure from the Afghan political scene had been agreed on as part of the peace process.

Najibullah was overthrown by his own government last Thursday and has been sheltering in United Nations offices since his attempt to flee the country was thwarted at Kabul airport.

Foreign Minister Abdul Wakil had earlier branded Najibullah a hated dictator and said he should be handed over to the legal authorities.

The official sources said agreement was reached with UN special envoy Benon Sevan today and that Najibullah was likely to leave for India.

AFP says the Jamiat-i-Islami faction has named commander Ahmed Shah Masood and engineer Mohammed Ayub as its representatives on a Mujahideen council to rule Afghanistan, Pakistan-based resistance sources said.

Complex negotiations are continuing among a dozen rival resistance groups on formation of a council to take power in Kabul after ouster of President Najibullah and as Mujahideen take control of several cities.

He has also pledged not to enter any coalition government with members of the Watan Communist Party. His pledge was contained in a statement issued by the commanders of other resistance parties based in Pakistan.

They said Masood told them in a radio hook-up that Jamiat forces had all the weapons and equipment of Bagram Air Base, including its jet fighters, at their disposal and could enter Kabul at any moment to form a government.

Ayub told AFP in Peshawar, base of the Sunni Mujahideen factions, that an "agreement is possible" among the Mujahideen

News Analysis

Islamabad favours a Mujahideen govt

From M J Zahedi, Star Special Correspondent

KARACHI, April 20: In a dramatic swing in its position, Pakistan has now agreed with Afghan Mujahideen leaders that they, rather than a neutral council, assume power in Kabul, daily Dawn reported this morning.

The decision coincided with swift victories by the Mujahideen groups which reportedly have captured Jalalabad and three other important towns and are poised for an attack on the capital Kabul.

Pakistan had earlier signified support for a UN proposal for a neutral caretaker government to replace Najibullah's government, leading to elections.

The change in the Pakistan position followed Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif's marathon talks with leaders of the various Mujahideen groups in Peshawar on the night between Saturday and Sunday.

After briefing President Ghulam Ishaq Khan on the new development, the Prime Minister left Islamabad last night on a visit to Austria.

The visit had already been

3 injured as Shibir, BCL clash in Bogra

BOGRA, Apr 20: Three people were injured in a clash between two rival groups of students at Shah Sultan College here today, report UNB.

Police said the clash ensued when processions of Awami League-backed Chhatra League and Islami Chhatra Shibir confronted each other on the college campus this morning. Both the groups blasted cocktails and used sticks and knives.

Campus sources said the injured were outsider Shibir activists. Two of them, Hafizur and Mahbub, were admitted to Mohammad Ali Hospital with stab injuries.

Shibir brought out a procession in the town protesting the attack on its procession.

In another incident, local Juba League leader Prodip Roy