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# The Daily Star

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**NEWS BRIEFS**

**Bohra Community chief meets PM**

The spiritual leader and Chief of Dawoodi Bohra Community, Dr Syedna Mohammad Borhanuddin Sabeh, called on Prime Minister Begum Khaleda Zia at her residence yesterday evening. The leader of the community presented a cheque for Tk 25 lakh to the Prime Minister's relief fund for the Myanmar refugees, reports BSS.

**Student killed in road mishap**

SHERPUR, Apr 22: A degree examinee was hit and killed by a speedy truck at Gouripur in the town early today. Moshad Alam (25) of village Mercurah in Bakshiganj upazila, a student of Sherpur Government College, was crossing road when the truck ran over him, reports UNB.

**PDF rally today**

By Staff Correspondent  
Patriotic Democratic Front (PDF) will hold a rally today at Purana Palton Square to press home its demand for resolving present political crisis in the country.

## Aid club pledges \$ 2.1b

Star Report

Bangladesh has received a commitment of 2.1 billion US dollar in aid for the 1992-93 financial year at the Aid Club meeting in Paris.

According to sources, of the total commitment, \$ 1.4 — \$ 1.5 billion will be as project aid, \$ 0.45 — \$ 0.50 billion as commodity aid and \$ 0.20 billion as food aid.

This pledge is in addition to 600 million US dollar promised recently to finance flood protection plan and it did not take into account the assistance donors might provide to help Bangladesh cope with Rohingya Muslim refugees crossing the border from Myanmar to escape the brutality of the Myanmar troops. A spokesman told BSS last night after the two-day meeting that ended yesterday.

The government has won much praise for its sound fiscal and monetary policies and our request have been met, he added.

Joseph Wood, the World Bank Vice President and Chairman of the Bangladesh Aid Consortium, presided.

Finance Minister M Saifur Rahman led the six-member Bangladesh delegation.

UNB adds: World Bank and IMF at the Paris Consortium meeting criticised crucial weaknesses in Bangladesh's budgetary management and reform programmes but recommended continued donors' support to government efforts to correct the lapses.

Fattening size of government, dismal performance of leading public enterprises, poor management, decision dilemma in ADP implementation, corruption and inefficiency in power and jute sector, diversion of subsidies to privileged sectors were among the major issues that earned the donors' dissatisfaction on the first day of the Paris meet on Tuesday.

Lifting the Bangladesh economy still moves with low savings and investment will require 'high level' of donors' support to reinforce and complement government efforts, said World Bank representative Pradip Mitra at the inaugural session of the meet, according to a message received in Dhaka yesterday from the French capital.

International Monetary Fund (IMF) representative Ichiro Otani pointed out stagnance in agreed reforms in several areas, particularly in privatisation of public enterprises and rationalising losses in the state-run units.

But he simultaneously said government efforts cannot succeed without active donor assistance.

Ichiro Otani, IMF Division Chief for Central Asian Department, recommended for the donors to continue "strong support" to Bangladesh as the country cannot afford recourse to non-concessional borrowing.

Both the Bank and the Fund, the institutions usually speak for the Aid Club members, were strongly critical of the government for failing to keep pace with many of the reform programmes.

Macro-economic performance, revenue collection in particular, was, however, appreciated.

Finance Minister M Saifur Rahman represented the country at the meet where he sought from donors 2.15 billion US dollar in aid for next fiscal's development budget.

World Bank singled out four losing enterprises — Power Development Board, Railway, BJMC and BJC — and suggested urgent steps to cut their loss to rational size.

Improvements in the budgetary management would not be effective in increasing public savings unless efforts are made to "control the rapid growth of personnel costs and strong actions are initiated to stem the growing losses of public sector corporations," warned Pradip Mitra, World Bank economist.

"Bad management and corrupt practices," Mitra said, "have become deeply embedded in the PDB and the government must be willing to confront directly the special



Sheikh Hasina addressing a public meeting at Bangabandhu Avenue in the city yesterday. —Star photo

## Unite to combat killers, collaborators: Hasina

By Staff Correspondent

Awami League chief Sheikh Hasina has called for revival of the national unity that inspired the people to fight the War of Independence in 1971.

Such a unity, she said, was the most urgent need of the hour to bring about people's emancipation for which the Liberation War was fought.

This unity was also necessary to resist the killers and collaborators of 71 out to destroy the country's independence and sovereignty, Sheikh Hasina told a big public meeting in the city Wednesday.

The Leader of the Opposition in Parliament appealed to the freedom fighters who fought for the country's sovereignty and truly believed in the spirit of the war to abandon the party that protects the killers and collaborators of 71 and join the masses demanding trial of war criminals including Golem Azam.

The Awami League convened the meeting demanding trial of Golem Azam, repeal of the Indemnity Ordinance and to protest the deterioration of law and order and the price-hike of essentials.

Noting that there were freedom fighters in the ruling BNP, the AL chief questioned "How can the freedom fighters belong to a party that protects the enemies of independence? Do they not remember the genocide, rape and arson carried out by the anti-Liberation forces and the supreme sacrifices of their near and dear ones during the war?"

The AL leader accused both the Prime Minister Khaleda Zia and the Jamaat leader Abbas Ali Khan of pushing the country towards a civil war by delivering provocative speeches.

Criticising BNP-Jamaat relations, an angry Hasina questioned: "Did the people vote the BNP to power to protect and patronise the killers and collaborators of 1971?"

Referring a recent public meeting organised by the Ittehadul Ummah in the city, she said, "The killers of 71 and 75 are now delivering speeches from the same dais and the government is backing them."

Thousands of slogan-chanting workers of the Awami League thronged the Bangabandhu Avenue, the road in front of the Awami League central office, and the Democracy Square.

The crowd spread over to Nawabpur Road and crammed the street-side houses to listen to the public addresses of the Awami League central leaders.

Vehicular traffic came to standstill while placard bearing men and women shouted "Joy Bangla... Joy Bangabandhu," and "the trial of Golem Azam will take place on the soil of Bengal."

The AL volunteers wearing red and green arm-bands maintained discipline during the meeting.

In her 15-minute speech,

## Ghali receives 'guarantee' Rohingyas will return under UN supervision

BANGKOK, Apr 22: The United Nations has received assurances that Muslim refugees who have fled Myanmar to Bangladesh will be able to return home under UN supervision, according to UN Secretary General Boutros Ghali, reports AFP.

"We have received a guarantee that the refugees will be able to return under the supervision of a representative of the UN High Commissioner for Refugees," Boutros Ghali said in an interview published here today by the English-language daily The Nation.

Over 200,000 Muslims from Myanmar, known as Rohingyas, have fled to Bangladesh over the past few months because of alleged widespread atrocities committed by Myanmar troops. Yangon's ruling junta has denied the charges, which include rape and murder.

Myanmar Foreign Minister Ohn Gyaw is scheduled to arrive in Bangladesh's capital, Dhaka, Thursday for a six-day visit aimed at seeking a solution to the refugee crisis.

"There is a political will on both sides to solve the problem," said Boutros Ghali.

The UN chief, who left here for New Delhi on Tuesday, asked Thailand to back the UN moves during a meeting with former prime minister Anand Panyarachun.

Anand told Boutros Ghali that Thailand would try to talk with Myanmar about the problem.

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## Dhaka hopeful of fruitful talks with Myanmar FM

By Taufique Imrose Khalidi

Bangladesh officials appear to be guardedly upbeat about a positive outcome of the ministerial level talks with Myanmar that begin tomorrow.

"This is no normal diplomatic visit," says an official and Dhaka has taken 'extensive preparations'.

"We believe we'll be able to find a solution and hopefully a lasting one," said a senior foreign ministry official.

Sources say Bangladesh may opt for a 'tough posture' should the talks fail. They did not elaborate.

A 14-member high-powered Yangon delegation led by Foreign Minister Ohn Gyaw arrives this evening to discuss what Dhaka officials say 'repatriation of refugees in safety and honour at the earliest possible time.' The delegation includes Information Minister Brig Gen Myo Thant as Alternative Leader and at least three

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## 648 expelled on first day of SSC exams

By Staff Correspondent

At least 648 examinees were expelled on the first day of this year's Secondary School Certificate (SSC) Examinations for adopting unfair means during the examinations Wednesday.

No untoward incident was, however, reported during the examinations held at 528 centres under Dhaka, Rajshahi, Comilla and Jessore Boards. The examinations yesterday was held on Bangla 1st paper.

Of the expelled, 89 examinees were expelled from ten districts under Dhaka Board, 336 examinees, from thirteen districts under Rajshahi Board, 203 examinees, from 12 districts under Comilla Board and 20 examinees, from five districts under Jessore Board.

Of the total 89 expelled under Dhaka Board, 15 were expelled from Narasingdi district, 15 from Munshiganj district, one from Manikganj district, eight from Faridpur district, two from Madaripur district, two from Shariatpur district, one from Rajbari district, five from Gopalganj district, two from Sherpur district and 38 from Mymensingh district.

Of the expelled under Rajshahi Board, 62 examinees were expelled from the Rangpur district, 59 from Gaibandha district, 42 from Pabna district, 27 from Bogra district, 97 from Dinajpur district, 21 from Thakurgaon district, five from Rajshahi district, one from Nawaganj district, five from Naogaon district, 15 from Sirajganj district and two from Nilphamari district.

Of the total 203 expelled examinees under Comilla Board, 73 students were expelled from the Comilla district, 47 from Cox's Bazar district, 18 from Feni, one from Brahmanbaria, 12 from Habiganj, 13 from Sylhet, one from Lakshmipur, three from Sunamganj, two from Maulvibazar, 13

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A view of SSC examinations at Willes Little Flower School centre in city yesterday. —Star photo

## BCI branches inoperative

Star Report

A prominent lending institution, Bangladesh Commerce and Investment Ltd. (BCI) has been hit by a liquidity crisis and as a result its branches have become inoperative.

Reports from Khulna said that the branch of the BCI has abruptly ceased operations without any notice for the last three days. Hundreds of depositors have been crowding the office.

When contacted State Minister for Finance, Mostafizur Rahman said that he had received information from different parts of the country on the situation of the BCI. He said that the branches of the BCI had become unable to honour claims of their clients.

The State Minister, however, said that he would look into the matter today.

Sources said that the bank had been facing difficulties since a month of its liquidity crisis. The bank could not honour its clients during the Eid. The Bogra branch of the bank was specially in a deep crisis during that period.

Despite repeated attempts, the Chairman and Managing Director of the BCI, Mostafizur Rahman could not be contacted for comments.

Mostafizur Rahman, an Awami League Member of Parliament from Sandwip started the company in 1985. He recently applied to the Finance Ministry to float the BCI as a full-fledged commercial bank. The application is still under consideration, according to BCI sources.

## Tornado strikes Mymensingh

From BAU Correspondent

MYMENSINGH, Apr 22: A tornado hit Mymensingh town tonight.

Primary report said at least three persons were killed and about 150 wounded.

At least 3000 household were also razed to the ground by the whirlwind that lasted for about one and a half minutes.

## Blast kills 4 at Savar

By DMCH Correspondent

Four persons including two minors were killed and another two children injured as a crater exploded in a house at Natun Bander village under Shilmulia union, Savar, Wednesday afternoon.

Family sources said, some of the family members went on fishing at a nearby canal at Rangamati and found a scaled small container in the canal and brought it home as they thought there could be something precious in the container.

When they tried to open the container at home, it blasted leaving four of the house members dead on the spot and two others injured, said the family sources.

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## Indian currency reform hits Bangladesh exports

A recent Indian currency reform that allowed partial convertibility of the Indian Rupee in the open foreign exchange market is threatening Bangladesh's exports, reports UNB.

According to local business circle, the reform which came into effect in March, dramatically buoyed India's export sector giving it a tremendous competitiveness within just two months.

But the Indian move appeared to have put Bangladesh exporters in a tight corner.

Frightened exporters in Dhaka said the Indians can now trade 60 per cent of their export proceeds in the free markets, giving them the advantage of outpricing Bangladesh exports.

Indian exporters are being extremely benefited from the partial convertibility facility as the premium on export earnings retained is considerable — reportedly more than 25 per cent.

As a result, they can now offer items at cheaper prices wooing away buyers having old business connections with Dhaka into the Indian market.

Exporters here attributed the recent slump in the export earnings of traditional items like jute, tea, leather and shrimp much to the impact of Indian currency reforms.

The situation might even turn worse, cautioned the exporters, as Indian Ministry of Finance seeing the positive impact of partial convertibility is now reportedly planning to permit for remittance of entire foreign exchange at the market rate of the dollar.

This will further push export competitiveness of Indian exporters compared to their Bangladeshi counterparts, currency experts here warned.

"It's a life and death situation for Bangladesh's export trade when its competitiveness is already at a dismal state because of declining labour productivity and withdrawal of all direct cash incentives," said a top executive of a leading chamber.

With the elimination of differences between official and secondary exchange rates in January last, he said, there is virtually no premium left for exporters and wage earners in Bangladesh.

The SEM (Secondary Exchange Market) rate was providing a good shadow rate for external value of Taka which is no more there.

Even the EPB (Export Performance Benefit) scheme which used to provide a token incentive to exporters was also eliminated with the unification of dual exchange rate in January, said the chamber leader.

Talking to UNB, some leading exporters cautioned that unless an immediate step is not taken to offset the shock of the Indian currency reforms, the country's export trade is certain to face a severe jolt.

If market is once lost, it will be very difficult to regain the lost ground, particularly when the competitor is an economic monster like India, an exporter observed.

Recently, the Metropolitan Chamber of Commerce and Industry (MCCI) has reviewed the situation and urged the Ministry of Finance to take an immediate step in this regard.

The chamber has suggested partial convertibility of Taka as an immediate measure to make Bangladeshi exporters enable to compete with the Indians.