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NEWS BRIEFS

PM inaugurates Hajj flight

Prime Minister Begum Khaleda Zia Friday inaugurated the Hajj flight of Bangladesh Biman. The first Hajj flight left Jeddah with 301 pilgrims. Begum Zia offered munajat for welfare and safe journey of the pilgrims. She also boarded the aircraft and exchanged greetings with the pilgrims, reports UNB.

World Tele-Day tomorrow

The 24th World Telecommunication Day will be observed on May 17 throughout the 168 member countries of the International Telecommunication Union (ITU). The ITU, one of the oldest international organisations, formed with the adoption of the First Telegraph Convention on May 17, 1865 in Paris, celebrates its 127th anniversary this year, reports BSS.

19 killed in Sind bus mishap

ISLAMABAD, May 15: Nineteen people were killed on Thursday when two buses collided head on in the southern Pakistan province of Sind, the official APP news agency said, reports Reuters.

US-India joint naval exercise

NEW DELHI, May 15: India will conduct its first ever joint exercise with the US Navy despite a trade ban slapped on an Indian Space Agency by Washington, PTI reported today. PTI quoting official sources as saying that the joint exercise involving 500 personnel from each side is slated to be held in the Indian Ocean May 27 and 28, reports AFP.

Jana Sanghati Samity splits

Four killed in fresh Shantibahini attack

RANGAMATI, May 15: Outlawed Shantibahini men swooped on a village in Longadu upazila of the district and killed four people early today, reports UNB.

The outlaws burnt alive three non-locals including a baby, shot dead one and left another injured with bullet at village Nagartila at about 1.30 pm, official sources said.

The insurgents numbering 15 also fought with Ansars who rushed in from nearby camp on hearing the rattles of guns, for one hour and a half hours. They also burnt to ashes three houses in the village.

They fled when the army encountered them.

Those who were burnt alive were Sakina Khatun (20), Md. Shaheen (20) and an unidentified boy (6), Asura Khatun (40) was shot dead.

Hasan Ali (30) was admitted to Rabita Hospital in Longadu with serious bullet injury.

Rangamati Region Commander Col. Ahsan Nazmul Amin visited the spot and distributed relief among the affected families.

Earlier on Wednesday, the insurgents killed three people at village North Kobakhali in Dighinala upazila of Khagrachhari district.

Former presidential adviser Binoy Kumar Dewan, local BNP leader Nazimuddin Ahmed,

President of the Rangamati Unit of Human Rights Commission A KM Maksud Ahmed and President of the Greater Chittagong Hill Tracts Human Rights Preservation Committee Chowdhury Ataur Rahman Rana condemned the brutal killings.

In another development, Parbatya Chattagram Jana Sanghati Samity (PCJSS), the parent organisation of the outlawed Shantibahini, has split into two factions owing to conflicts over leadership between brother and widow of its founding leader.

Party sources said PCJSS chairman Jyotirindriya Bodhipriya Larma (Shantool), younger brother of founder chairman

Monobendra Narayan Larma, is leading one faction while widow of the late leader Pankajini Larma is heading the rebel group.

Pankajini launched her faction of the party at a special meeting in Agartala on May 5, attended by some top leaders of the PCJSS, alleging "leadership crisis" in the mainstream Jana Sanghati Samity.

Her supporters accused the chairman and his associate of misappropriating of party funds. She is backed by prominent PCJSS leaders like Priti Kumar Chakma and Bhabatesh Dewan.

According to them, Panka- See Page 12 Col 7

Balukhali camps tense

Rohingyas set up roadblocks, hold protest rallies

By Staff Correspondent

Rohingya refugees set up roadblocks and took out street processions Friday at Teknaf to protest their planned repatriation and killing of a fellow refugee, according to reports received in Dhaka last night.

One refugee was killed and another 20 were injured Thursday when Ansars fired on about 2,000 refugees who attacked a government relief office to protest their repatriation.

The local administration, meanwhile, stepped up police patrol for Balukhali camp, the scene of Thursday's clashes and asked its more than 21,000 inmates to stay inside the camp.

As tension mounted in the

camps, refugees mourning the death of the fellow inmate offered prayers and held protest rallies. They sought Allah's blessings for their safety.

Repatriation of about 2,55,000 refugees was to begin Friday, but it was put off until this weekend following the clash.

The refugees say they will not return home until human rights situation improves there.

Police said they removed several roadblocks on Teknaf-Cox's Bazar Highway on Friday that refugees erected with tree-trunks.

Traffic on the 60-kilometer (40 mile) highway came to a See Page 12 Col 3

Bodies of two youngmen recovered from Buriganga

By Staff Correspondent

Floating bodies of two youngmen were recovered from the river, Buriganga, near Chandhi Ghat, at Lalbag in the city Friday afternoon, police said.

The victims were identified as M. Sohel, 18, and M. Delwar Hossain, 20. They were friends and residing in different floors of the same apartment at Kazi Dewan, Lalbag.

Some local people recovered the bodies at about 4 pm yesterday and handed over to Lalbag Police, said police.

Relatives close to the victims said they were missing after they had left the houses together at around noon Thursday.

Sohel's father, Maqsood Rahman registered an unnatural death (UD) case with Lalbag Police Station Friday after he had identified the body.

Lalbag Police declined to make any comment on the mysterious deaths.

Police, however, sent the bodies to the Dhaka Medical College Hospital for autopsy.

Miscreants snatch sten guns from policemen

From Our Correspondent

KISHOREGANJ, May 15: A group of miscreants snatched two sten guns after attacking a police contingent leaving two constables seriously injured in Hussainpur upazila Thursday evening.

According to Hussainpur police, the contingent of police came from the nearby Gafarganj Thana in search of a gang of dacoits wanted in connection with a case.

When the contingent reached the bazar area, a group of about 20 miscreants attacked them with daggers and knives.

The miscreants snatched 3 sten guns and two magazines with 40 rounds of ammunition after stabbing two policemen.

One of the sten guns was later found abandoned near the bazar area.

Kishoreganj and Mymensingh district police today launched a massive hunt to arrest the miscreants and recover the arms.

The two injured police constables were admitted to the Mymensingh Medical College Hospital in critical condition.

Buddha Purnima today

Buddha Purnima, the most sacred festival of the Buddhist community, is being celebrated throughout the country today with due religious fervour, reports BSS.

The festival, also known as 'Vesakha Festival' in the Asian countries, commemorates the birth of Prince Siddhartha Gautama, his attainment of supreme enlightenment and 'mahaparinirvana' or passing away on the same full moon day of Vesakha.

President Abdur Rahman Biswas, Prime Minister Begum Khaleda Zia and Leader of the Opposition in Parliament Sheikh Hasina in separate messages have felicitated the Buddhist community on this significant occasion.

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Chinese experience will be helpful to NAM: Mostafiz

BALI (Indonesia), May 15: Chinese Deputy Minister for Foreign Affairs Liu Hua Kiu today assured Bangladesh Foreign Minister ASM Mostafizur Rahman of his government's continued economic support to Bangladesh and expressed the hope that relations between the two countries would be further strengthened in the years to come, reports BSS.

The Chinese Deputy Minister's assurances came when he called on Foreign Minister Mostafizur Rahman here today.

The Chinese Minister conveyed his government's sincere thanks and appreciation to the government of Bangladesh for supporting China in its bid to become an observer of the Non-Aligned See Page 12 Col 6



Leaders of Dhaka University Teachers Association called on Prime Minister Begum Khaleda Zia at her Sugandha office Friday. —PID photo

Task Force plans fresh swoop on smugglers

By Farid Ahmed

The anti-smuggling task force has decided to swoop down again on both smugglers and smuggled goods all over the country from this month, according to a task force source.

The drive had moved at a snail's pace during the last two months.

A high government official connected with the task force said that the anti-smuggling crackdown programme was geared down as the law enforcing agencies had to be concentrated elsewhere during the month of Ramadan. But also because of some political unrest and the SSC examinations during the months of March and April.

The task force has made a list of as many as 30 people reportedly responsible for smuggling and again announced the 29 contraband items including foreign-made cotton sarees, shoes, ready-made garments, Benson & Hedges cigarettes, some cosmetics, crockery and toilet articles not to be sold in the country's markets, according to the source.

Bent on ending the sale of smuggled goods in the coun-

try, the task force has been conducting the crackdown on the secret smugglers hideouts since January 1.

Before the operation got underway the shop owners were given a month's time to sell off all contraband goods kept in their shops in the wake of several rounds of discussions between the government and the Shop Owners' Associations.

But it is being observed that the declared contraband items are still being sold in the local markets. Several shopowners also alleged that the task force failed to check smuggling in the country and it was still hampering their business.

Reviewing the four-month drive, another high official related to the task force said that the information received in Dhaka from different law enforcing agencies on duty in the frontier areas showed that smuggling had decreased by 60 per cent during the last four months.

He further said that on average smuggled goods worth about Taka 10 to 11 crore were seized every month in 1991 in the frontier areas but this year the amount had de-

creased to Taka 4 or 5 crore.

He also commented that smugglers were continuing to elude the law enforcing agencies.

Referring to the recent devaluation of Indian currency, he said, "It will encourage the smugglers very much".

A high official of the Customs Intelligence requesting anonymity said that most of the seized smuggled goods, were low quality Indian cotton sarees, Indian cotton sarees at Taka 80 to 100 per piece flooded the markets due to their variety of colours, designs and lower prices, these sarees are very popular in the local markets, he added.

He also said that as the smugglers were well-organised, the law enforcing personnel very often had to face a lot of problems in carrying out the operations.

Amir Hossain Khan, Chairman of the Federation of Bangladesh Shop Owners' Association, told The Daily Star that swooping down on shops should have been in the final stage of the crackdown programme. The government had to ensure tightened steps to ensure tightened steps in See Page 12 Col 7

8-pt memo to PM

DUTA backs govt steps to check terrorism

The leaders of Dhaka University Teachers Association (DUTA) yesterday expressed their total support to the government's steps for checking terrorism and violence on the campus, reports BSS.

The assurance came when the Executive Committee of office bearers and members met the Prime Minister at her Sugandha office.

During the meeting the teachers discussed the problems faced by the teachers and students of the university. They submitted an eight-point memorandum to the Prime Minister. The demand in the memorandum included sanction of funds at a time for the modernisation of libraries and laboratories of the university, increasing healthcare facilities in the Dhaka University Medical Centres, providing land for the expansion of the university and arranging at least 10 scholarships under Overseas Training Programme for the teachers.

Speaking on the occasion the Prime Minister said that her government was firmly determined to ensure a congenial academic atmosphere in the Dhaka University.

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Better ties among S Asian nations urgent: Hasina

Opposition leader Sheikh Hasina yesterday appealed to all to work unitedly against all kinds of injustice and discrimination to establish humanism and peace, reports UNB.

"Love your neighbours, love the mankind... love the entire creation," she told an international seminar at the City Council Hall at Kathmandu, marking the Buddha Jayanti, according to a message received here.

The Awami League President and Leader of the Opposition in Parliament inaugurated the seminar, organised by Goutam Buddha Foundation. Janata Dal leader Atal Bihari Vajpayee was the special guest at the seminar, presided over by Dr Regmi.

Speaker of the Nepalese Lower House Dhaman, Protiva Patel, MP, of India and Dr Mizanul Haq, MP, of Bangladesh also spoke on the occasion.

Hasina said the whole world was now caught in a 'vicious storm of violence' disturbing the very fabric of social systems.

The Awami League chief said people were being dis-

criminated because of religion, race, caste or creed. Conflicts between people of different ethnic origin lead to 'hatred and tension, and tension gradually transforms into clashes,' she observed.

But the essence of all religion is peace and love, she said adding "We have no choice but to work against all sorts of injustices, be it social, cultural, national or international."

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56-member preparatory body formed

A 56-member Preparatory Committee has been formed with Awami League Chief and Leader of the Opposition Sheikh Hasina as its Chairperson to make the national conference of Awami League a success, according to a party press release Friday, reports BSS.

Besides, nine sub-committees and an election tribunal See Page 12 Col 7

Observers charge fraud in Filipino polls

MANILA, May 15: As results of the presidential election continued to trickle in Friday, Fidel Ramos edged ahead of Miriam Defensor Santiago, who has called for protests against 'wholesale election fraud', reports AFP.

With about 12 per cent of the ballots counted from Monday's voting, Media Citizens Quick Count said Ramos, the candidate supported by President Corazon Aquino, was leading with 6,33,435 votes to 6,04,562 for Mrs. Santiago.

Mrs. Santiago had been the frontrunner until the latest tally, which included votes from Ramos' home province.

Businessman Eduardo Cojuangco, a close associate of former President Ferdinand Marcos, trailed the presidential tallying in third place and Marcos' widow, Imelda, was sixth.

Mrs Santiago on Friday

charged that the excruciatingly slow ballot counting was to allow time to rig tallies in favour of 'the losing candidate,' apparently Ramos.

She called on Filipinos to maintain round-the-clock vigils at tabulation centers to guard against cheating.

Meanwhile, additional troops were deployed around counting centers in Manila Friday evening after intelligence reports indicated dissidents might try to storm the buildings and burn ballots.

Charges of cheating have been mounting because of the painfully slow vote count in the race for president and more than 17,000 other positions. Four days after the election, only about 10 per cent of the vote has been tabulated.

Quick Count officials in southeastern Luzon said they had suspended their count after discovering the number

of votes tabulated so far had exceeded the number of ballots cast in the region.

The officials, who spoke on condition of anonymity, said someone apparently infiltrated their operation and padded the results. They said an investigation was underway.

A 19-member international observer delegation echoed the charges of fraud and other irregularities in the election, including vote-buying and intimidation.

Although relatively peaceful, the group said in a statement Friday, the election "cannot be considered clean and honest."

They said observers saw election officials so drunk they couldn't perform their duties, ballot boxes opened by unauthorized people, death threats against candidates and payments of dir 4 apiece to prospective voters.

"We observed incidents of

electoral manipulation and intimidation as well as inadequate implementation of electoral safeguards," the group said after visiting polling stations in Luzon, Cebu and Mindanao islands.

They declined to provide details until the group submits its report to the government Election Commission.

Meanwhile, Mrs. Santiago vowed to launch a "series of demonstrations to denounce wholesale political fraud... I will personally lead a mass demonstration to defend democracy."

Her fighting tone was reminiscent of Mrs. Aquino's civil disobedience campaign after the 1986 elections. That led to a political crisis, triggering a military revolt followed by the mass uprising that ousted Marcos and installed Mrs. Aquino.



Fidel Ramos reads a newspaper yesterday from his campaign headquarters in Manila with a headline saying his rival candidate ex-judge Miriam Santiago is leading in the election count. The latest tabulation showed Ramos had overtaken Santiago in tight race. — AFP photo