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AL council body meets
 A meeting of the preparatory committee of the biennial council of Bangladesh Awami League was held yesterday at the party central office with party chief Sheikh Hasina in the chair. The meeting discussed in details the overall preparation of the council session to be held on June 1, reports BSS.

CNN signs accord with USIS, Dhaka
 Cable News Network (CNN) has signed an agreement with USIS in Dhaka for providing the latter with 24-hour television service. Eve Kroese, Executive Assistant of USIS, and Golam Arshad, CNN's Bangladesh representative, signed the agreement on behalf of their respective organisations, said a press release reports UNB.

CORRECTION
 We regret to say that the report carried by this paper yesterday, under the headline, "B. Chowdhury may quit politics" has been denied by the leader of the Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP) Dr Chowdhury himself. We also learn from reliable sources that there is no basis for the information contained in the same report that Prof. Chowdhury had been offered the post of the Director General of WHO by Dr Ko Ko, a visiting UN official during his trip to Dhaka a month ago. We apologise to all concerned for this error as well as for any inconvenience caused.

Rivals agree to end battle for Kabul

KABUL, May 21: A powerful mediation commission today announced a permanent end to the war for Kabul, marking a major step towards establishing a durable peace in Afghanistan, reports AFP.

The war permanently ends today. Further fighting is prohibited, the 31-member commission's chief, Mujahideen commander Maulvi Jalaluddin Haqqani, announced 10 kilometers (six miles) outside Kabul.

The formal transfer of power, on April 28, from a communist regime to an Islamic interim government came amid fighting between different factions in the Afghan capital Kabul.

A power struggle opposed the Jamiat-i-Islami of commander Ahmed Shah Masood, who became Defence Minister and the Hezb-i-Islami forces of Gulbuddin Hekmatyar.

Under the five-point peace accord, which Haqqani said had already been endorsed by rival Mujahideen factions, forces from the opposing sides will withdraw from Kabul within one week.

Policing of the capital city will be handed over to commanders belonging to the Kabul region, he said, adding that the Defence Ministry would be responsible for the security of the city perimeters.

If needed the commanders can deploy Mujahideen from neutral factions 'other than opposing groups' Haqqani said amid cheers from his followers.

Celebrations started immediately after the announcement with Mujahideen congratulating one another in many parts of the capital, witnesses said.

'We will have 'jashan' (celebrations) today', said a former air force pilot, adding that he was now prepared to rebuild his home in the nearby Paghman hills destroyed during the Afghan war. 'Khalqis and Parchamites and communists will have no place in the new Islamic government' Haqqani said, referring to the two factions of the ruling Watan or homeland party of ousted Soviet-backed President Najibullah.

Explaining his peace blueprint, Haqqani said neutral commanders would start taking over security posts from Saturday and then hand them back to the defence and interior ministries once the fear of clashes diminished.

'All heavy weaponry of the opposing factions that withdraw will be deposited and will (become) government property.'

All Mujahideen groups occupying government buildings, offices and installations will vacate and restore their control to the respective departments, he announced.

Haqqani, a respected religious leader and prominent Mujahideen chief from the Pashun-dominated eastern province of Pakitia, said he was acting with written authorisation from main rival factions of Hekmatyar and Masood.



Shop owners in Nawabpur Road pulled shutters down yesterday following fierce clash between two rival groups over possession of Eid-ul-Azha cattle market venue. — Star photo

Resist bid to create anarchy : PM

GODAGARI (Rajshahi), May 21: Prime Minister Begum Khaleda Zia today said certain quarters are trying to create anarchy in the country by raising unjust demand, reports UNB.

'Remain alert against evil designs of certain quarters and resist them if they want to create anarchy,' she told a public meeting here in an oblique reference to the Ghatak-Dalal Nirml Committee for execution of public trial verdict on Jamaat leader Golam Azam.

The Committee enforced a half-day hartal on May 18 in the capital and called for a countrywide dawn-to-dusk hartal on June 21 to press its demand.

Begum Zia vowed to safeguard country's independence and sovereignty at any cost, saying 'we'll protect every inch of our motherland.'

'The country didn't achieve independence at anyone's mercy, millions had shed blood for it, and if needed, will again shed blood to protect it,' the Prime Minister told the huge meeting at Godagari Degree College premises in the frontier upazila.

She also expressed her government's determination to build a corruption-free administration. 'Stern measures will be taken against anyone found indulging in corruption.'

Referring to the adverse impact of the Farraka barrage on the country's northern region, the Prime Minister gave priority to the canal digging programme, saying canals would contain excess water during monsoon which could be used for irrigation during the dry season.

Mentioning the Baranra Project, initiated in Rajshahi district by late President Ziaur Rahman but abandoned during the Ershad regime, Begum Zia said it would be implemented at a cost of Tk 350 crore.

She urged the people to come forward in setting up small and medium-scale industries, including silk-based factories, poultry and cattle farms and said the government would provide credit facilities in this regard.

She also pledged to make the country self-reliant in food and ensure all-round development in the next five years.

Stressing the need for population control, she said two children are enough and warned of a greater danger if the country fails to check the population boom.

She assured the local people of restarting the work of the local hospital and announced the Godagari Girls' College would be nationalised.

Earlier, the Prime Minister visited two sites selected for construction of a 1500-metre-long embankment at Raul Bazar and Dakbunglow.

The project, with an estimated cost of Tk 3.74 crore, has been placed for approval. On completion, it will protect from floods various establishments in and around the upazila, situated on the bank of mighty river Padma.

Hasina demands solution to CHT issues

Opposition leader Sheikh Hasina yesterday called for immediate political solution of the problems in the Chittagong Hill Tracts to end conflict in the area, reports UNB.

'Immediate steps should be taken for finding a political solution of the hill tracts problems in the interest of national cohesion, peace and development as well as protecting lives and property of the hill people,' she said in a statement against the backdrop of Wednesday's violence and killings.

The Awami League president expressed deep shock at the dastardly killing of five children in Khagrachari and grave concern at the violent incidents like arson and loot in Rangamati Wednesday.

Violence in the hill tracts has flared up alarmingly in recent time resulting in loss of many lives, property and violence.

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US concern over flood of refugees

WASHINGTON, May 21: The United States is concerned about the flood of refugees fleeing from Myanmar's repressive military rule and is considering more aid to help Bangladesh and Thailand cope with them, a US official said on Wednesday, reports Reuters.

The official, Assistant Secretary of State Richard Solomon, said that despite Myanmar's bleak human rights record, the administration remained opposed to a US trade embargo and to severing the few remaining links between the two countries.

Solomon told a House of Representatives of Foreign Affairs Subcommittee that refugees were continuing to arrive in Bangladesh at the rate of 1,000 a day and the situation was 'only barely under control.'

He said the coming monsoon would aggravate the problems of lack of shelter and sanitation and added, 'we are actively exploring ways to meet these needs.'

He said the United States had contributed dollar 3 million to an international relief effort and was working on an additional contribution.

Solomon also said the United States had provided

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Education for All Plan to set up national body

By Sohel Manzur

The government plans to set up a National Council for Education for All (NCEFA) to help implement the programmes of providing basic education to the targeted population.

The council proposed by the Joint Government-UNICEF Advisory Group (JGUAG) will be headed by the Minister of Education and will comprise representatives from various ministries and agencies of the government. The council will also include representatives from outside and will provide facilities to deal with multi-sectoral activities to promote and advance the causes for basic education for all.

The NCEFA will act as the central clearing house for project proposals before their submission to the ECNEC for formal approval. It will also monitor and review the overall progress towards realisation of the goal of Education For All (EFA) adopted under the National Plan of Action (NPA) and give appropriate policy directions as needed.

The NCEFA will take all initiatives it considers necessary for successful implementation of the NPA and will be authorised to submit direct proposals for approval by the Minister for Planning, Finance, Establishment and others as well as by the Prime Minister or the cabinet.

The JGUAG also proposed an implementation committee for EFA headed by the Secretary, Ministry of Education to get the decisions of the NCEFA implemented.

It also proposed that a suitably staffed NPA project for

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Two conferences of Dhaka dist AL today

By Staff Correspondent

Two factions of the Dhaka District Awami League are holding their conferences at separate venues today (Friday) each claiming to be the 'mainstream' of the district committee, reliable party sources said Thursday.

The AL Central Committee source said that the Dhaka district AL conference will be held at Savar under the leadership of Shamsuddin Khan Majlish while suspended leader Mostafa Mohsin Mantu said that 'preparations have been completed to hold the conference on Friday at the Engineers' Institution.'

Majlish and Mantu were the president and the general secretary respectively of the district committee until March 5 when Mantu was expelled following a 'crisis' in the Bangladesh Chhatra League (BCL) in the Dhaka University. Moniruzzaman Badal, the

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SKOP likely to go on 48-hour strike from July 7

By Nazmul Ashraf

The Samik Karmachari Oikya Parishad (SKOP) is likely to go for a 48-hour general strike throughout the country from July 7 to press the government implement its agreement with the SKOP and stop retrenchment of public sector employees.

According to SKOP sources, the programme will be adopted at the national convention of the SKOP representatives scheduled to be held today (Friday) at the Teacher-Student Centre (TSC) of the Dhaka University.

The convention of the SKOP, comprising 19 trade union federations, has been called in the backdrop of government's 'breach of agreement' signed with the SKOP leaders on December 24 last year.

The December agreement provided that the government would announce steps for fulfilment of the five-point demands of SKOP within three weeks of its signing.

The government formed a Wage Commission in the light

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Saifur rules out fresh taxes on commonman

Finance Minister M Saifur Rahman yesterday underscored the need for a higher development budget outlay of about Taka 8,500 crore in the next fiscal for achieving a GDP growth rate of over five per cent and bringing about qualitative improvements in the living standard of the vast masses, reports BSS.

Ruling out the possibilities of any fresh tax burden on the poor and commonman in the forthcoming budget, the Finance Minister said instead of imposing any new tax, the democratically elected government would boost the tax-revenue collections by improving administrative efficiency, plugging the loopholes and expanding the tax base for the sake of quicker development of the country.

He was exchanging views with a group of leading MPs, politicians, eminent lawyers,

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PCP protests Rangamati incident

By Staff Correspondent

Pahari Chhatra Parishad (PCP) Thursday brought out a procession and held a rally protesting the attack on PCP activists in Rangamati Wednesday and demanded punishment to the attackers.

At the PCP rally held in front of the National Press Club, leaders expressed their no confidence in the probe committee headed by a First Class Magistrate in this regard and demanded that such a committee be formed with a Judge of the Supreme Court as its head.

Demanding abolition of the hill district council, the leaders said that the government had failed to solve hill problems in the last 21 years. The government should solve these problems politically, they added.

The rally, presided over by PCP General Secretary Karuna-

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Thai troops return to barracks, leaving behind public rage

BANGKOK, May 21: Troops returned to their barracks today after a compromise brokered by King Bhumibol Adulyadej ended four days of bloody clashes with anti-government protesters in the Thai capital, reports AFP.

But they left behind them public rage, a shattered image of the country, and a host of questions for the future.

Some 2,000 prisoners were also freed, in line with an amnesty declared by Prime Minister Suchinda Kraprayoon early today in the wake of negotiations with opposition leader Chamlong Srimuang.

Marchers staged a new demonstration, walking from the scene of the worst violence at the Royal Hotel to the nearby Democracy Monument and back to mourn the dead.

Some 3,000 people from all classes were applauded by passers-by as they laid wreaths at the Monument and walked around it.

Individuals also marked with flowers the places where comrades died in the attempt to force the resignation of Suchinda, architect of the 1991 military coup who was appointed Prime Minister without having run in the March general elections.

Indicating the continuing tension, a passing army truck was stoned and a military helicopter circled overhead. But while a state of emergency remained in force, a curfew was lifted after only one night.

Suchinda was silent, following his promise soon after midnight that he would support rapid constitutional changes that would reserve the premiership for an elected member of parliament, effectively bringing about his own resignation.

Chamlong, the organiser of two weeks of demonstrations by tens of thousands which ended in slaughter, was conciliatory, saying that 'Suchinda tried to do his best.'

He told a press conference that he had met with leaders of parties from both sides of parliament, where the pro-military coalition that appointed Suchinda has a narrow majority.

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Thai police drag away barbed wire barricades across from the Royal Hotel, which was raided by police Wednesday, as troops withdrew from the embattled area yesterday. — AFP photo

Niru released from jail

Expelled JCD leader Sarauul Haq Niru was released yesterday from Myemstangh jail.

He was arrested on January 23 in 1990 and accused of killing Dr Shamsul Alam Khan Milon. He, along with 12 others, were acquitted of the murder charge on May 13.

Niru told UNB by telephone that he had no plan to form an organisation or join any political party.

'I will always be with the BNP politics, although on many occasions I have had offers to join many parties.'

A large number of people received Niru after he had been released at around 11 Thursday morning.

From the jail gate, he straight went to the major of BNP's founder chairman Ziaur Rahman and placed wreath and offered munajat, the release said.