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NEWS BRIEFS

Biswas, Khaleda greet Wijetunga

President Abdur Rahman Biswas and Prime Minister Begum Khaleda Zia yesterday facilitated Dingiri Banda Wijetunga on his election as President succeeding Ranasinghe Premadasa who was assassinated by a suicide bomber in a May Day rally, reports UNB.

CU degree exam dates shifted

CHITTAGONG, May 8: The degree pass and the subsidiary examinations under Chittagong University scheduled to be held on May 11, 12 and 13 will now be held on June 12, 13 and 14, reports BSS.

Maulana Azizul Haq freed

Shaikhul Hadith Maulana Azizul Haq was released yesterday from Dhaka Central Jail. He was arrested and put under detention on April 9 while leading procession in the city protesting the demolition of Babri Mosque, reports UNB.

500 AL activists join BNP

PABNA, May 8: Some 500 Awami League leaders and activists led by Pabna Poura Commissioner and Joint Secretary of the local unit of the party Firoze Hossain joined ruling BNP today, reports UNB.

Jatiya Sangsad session from today

Budget to wait until another session

By Nurul Kabir

The parliament's business advisory committee, in a dramatic development yesterday decided that the Jatiya Sangsad session beginning today would be of five-days duration "unless any major issue affecting the national interest was raised in the house by either the treasury bench or the opposition," committee sources said.

Despite media impression that the session beginning today would consider and pass the nation's budget for the 1993-94 fiscal the advisory committee yesterday was informed that it would be difficult for the Finance Ministry to place the budget in the

House before the tenth of next month. The business advisory committee, comprising representatives from both the treasury and opposition benches, decides the agenda and tenure of parliament sessions. It was informed about the Finance Ministry's limitations relating to preparation of the budget only when it met yesterday morning just 29 hours ahead of the scheduled opening of the JS session.

The Finance Ministry unofficially informed the parliament secretary of its limitations yesterday morning, parliament secretary sources said.

According to sources close to policy-makers of the ruling Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP), the Finance Ministry yesterday also regretted its inability to the Prime Minister's Office which had wanted the budget to be placed by the third week of May.

In the wake of these developments, the business advisory committee reached an understanding that the session beginning today would be a very short one, mainly to meet the constitutional obligation of holding sessions of parliament after every sixty days.

Deputy Speaker Humayun Khan Panni, Chief Whip and Page 12 Col 4

No progress in govt-SKOP talks

By Staff Correspondent

No progress was made in the government-SKOP talks that resumed in the city yesterday after being broken off nearly two months ago.

The Labour and Manpower Minister Abdul Mannan Bhuiyan convened the bilateral talks ahead of the May 11-13 countrywide labour strike, planned by the Sramik Karmachari Oikya Parishad (SKOP) and five other trade union federations.

The first round of the fresh talks failed to yield any result as the government side offered sector-wise minimum wages while the SKOP leaders reiterated their demand for announcement of the National Minimum Wages Commission report without further delay.

During the one-and-a-half-hour meeting, the Labour Minister once again sought time to implement the National Minimum Wages Commission report, accepted in principle by the government earlier, and urged the strike organisers to call off their proposed 72-hour shutdown. But the labour leaders termed the government proposal as 'nothing new' and expressed their determination to go ahead with

their programme unless the government moved from its original position. The minister told the meeting that sector-wise minimum wages would first be fixed, which would ultimately take the shape of a national minimum wages structure. He further said that the minimum wages in some 15 sectors would be implemented very soon.

Held at the Bureau of Manpower Employment and Training, the discussion was

Hasina's concern

Awami League chief and Leader of the Opposition in Parliament Sheikh Hasina yesterday expressed her concern over the 72-hour strike called by Sramik Karmachari Oikya Parishad (SKOP) beginning on May 11 and demanded a clear-cut announcement from the government regarding the implementation of agreement it made with the SKOP earlier, reports BSS.

In a statement Sheikh Hasina said that the government had signed an agreement with SKOP for implementation Page 12 Col 8

adjourned in the evening to resume at 7 pm today.

The Labour Minister was assisted by whip of the treasury bench in Parliament Ashraf Hossain and some government officials. The SKOP was represented by Dr Wajedul Islam, Abdullah Sarkar, Abdus Salam Khan, Protobuddin Ahmed, Nazmul Islam Khan, Abdur Razzak, Tipu Biswas, Shirin Akhter and others.

Commenting on the outcome of yesterday's talks, SKOP coordinator Dr Wajedul Islam said such dialogue would not progress until the government spells out its terms for the implementation of the agreement it signed on the workers' demands earlier.

"The shutdown would be observed unless we witness any satisfactory progress in our talks with the government," he said.

The SKOP issued a statement last night calling upon all concerned to make the three-day shutdown successful and not to be misled by anything regarding the on-going government-SKOP talks.

Meanwhile, Jute Minister ASM Hannan Shah held a brief Page 12 Col 8

Dhaka urges Yangon to accept UNHCR role in repatriation

From Staff Correspondent

CHITTAGONG, May 8: Bangladesh has proposed involving the UNHCR in the repatriation of the Rohingya refugees inside Myanmar territory to expedite the process.

The fresh proposal was placed before Lt. General Khin Nyunt, Secretary-1 of the SLORC (State Law and Order Restoration Council) of Myanmar when a Bangladesh delegation met him on May 6 after the 14th round of repatriation talks in Yangon. The talks began May 3.

The repatriation talks were attended by a seven member Bangladesh delegation headed by Mohammad Omar Faruk, Divisional Commissioner of Chittagong and refugee repatriation coordinator while a nine-member Myanmar team was led by U Mong Aung, Director General of the Myanmar Manpower and Immigration Department.

Briefing pressmen today on the outcome of the latest round of the talks, delegation leader Omar Faruk said, "We

requested the SLORC leader to agree to the involvement of the UNHCR inside Myanmar to resolve the repatriation issue as early as possible as the role of the UNHCR in the process was already recognised by the Myanmar Foreign Minister during his visit to Bangladesh on April 28 last year.

"But the SLORC General did not give any immediate reply in this regard," Faruk said.

We have repeatedly raised the point of the UNHCR's involvement during the repatriation talks with the Myanmar side," Faruk added.

However, Myanmar has agreed to provide clearance to another 20,000 refugees shortly before the next round of talks, expected to be held by next month, Faruk disclosed, saying "Obtaining quick clearance for the refugees from the Myanmar side was one of the main thrusts in the latest talks."

The Bangladesh delegation also handed over the final list

of 8986 refugees, he said, adding that till May 2, 1993 the Myanmar authorities had cleared the names of 98,865 refugees out of the 2,40,000 names already submitted.

So far, 23,136 refugees in 45 batches have gone back to their homeland in Arakan state of Myanmar, while another 9243 are waiting repatriation in the transit camps. Faruk informed the journalists.

After the repatriation talks the Bangladesh delegation also visited some other parts of Myanmar to see the situation there, Faruk said.

The delegation included, among others, the relief commissioner Golam Murtaza, Sector Commander of BDR Col. Kazi Asraf Uddin Ahmed, DIG of Chittagong Mohammad Salam, the Foreign Ministry's Director on South East Asia Jahangir Sadat and the first Secretary of the Bangladesh embassy in Yangon Nazibur Rahman.

The delegation returned on Thursday night.

Bosnia's 'no' to UN plan

SARAJEVO, May 8: Bosnia's President on Saturday refused to agree to UN-brokered plan for a truce in the embattled Muslim enclave of Zepa, dashing hopes raised after Serbs accepted the proposal, reports AP.

President Alija Izetbegovic refused to accept the plan to demilitarise Zepa — in line with the prior demilitarisation of Srebrenica, another eastern enclave — for fear this would expose disarmed Muslim defenders to a Serb attack.

The Muslim defenders were to be disarmed in exchange for the withdrawal of Serb besiegers and their heavy weapons. Hundreds of civilians have

been reported killed in several days of fighting in the eastern enclave. The UN commander in Bosnia, Gen Philippe Morillon, had hoped to send in UN peacekeepers Saturday.

Morillon had obtained Serb agreement, and pressed Izetbegovic to accept the proposal during two hours of talks Saturday. When Morillon tried to leave for more talks with the Serbs, he was blocked for about a half hour by 60-70 people from Zepa outside the Bosnian presidency.

After Izetbegovic appealed to the crowd, Morillon left in his car together with Gen Sefer Halilovic, the commander of the Bosnian army. The protesters had insisted

that Morillon leave immediately for Zepa, where Muslim defenders were issuing desperate appeals for his presence because it could be "our last day."

Morillon appealed to the crowd to let him go. "I have to go to Pale (the Bosnian Serbs' political headquarters). They are expecting me there every minute, and we are only waiting time. I saved Srebrenica and I will save Zepa, too," he said.

Morillon said Gen Ratko Mladic, the Serb commander, had agreed to allow regular deliveries of humanitarian aid to Zepa and Gorazde, another Muslim enclave in the east. Page 12 Col 6



Prime Minister Begum Khaleda Zia presenting a gold medal to one of the recipients at the fourth convocation of the Bangladesh University of Engineering and Technology in the city yesterday. —PID photo

Engrs asked to evolve ways for fighting poverty

Prime Minister Begum Khaleda Zia yesterday asked engineers and technologists to innovate effective technologies and work untiringly for poverty alleviation and freeing the country from backwardness, reports UNB.

"Development of technology is essential for national prosperity... We cannot depend only on foreign technology for utilising our available potentials. We have to innovate appropriate technology with assistance of engineers, architects and scientists," she said addressing the Convocation of Engineering and Technology (BUET).

A total of 551 graduates of 1988-89 session were conferred Bachelor's degree and 60 others Master's degree while one obtained doctorate at the function. The Prime Minister, who is Chancellor of Universities, also presented gold medals to 25 students of different sessions for meritorious results in their examinations.

Professor Mohammad Yunus, founder of Grameen Bank, was Page 12 Col 3

PM seeks consensus on development

By Staff Correspondent

Prime Minister Begum Khaleda Zia Saturday underlined the importance of a national consensus for economic uplift, which she said was possible despite differences of opinion.

"All of us seek development (of the country) despite our differences in opinion and (political) affiliations, so we can hold identical views on the question of development," she said, while addressing the inaugural session of the 3-day tenth biennial conference of the Bangladesh Economic Association (BEA) at the Engineers' Institution auditorium.

The Prime Minister, however, pointed out that violence, frequent strikes, destructions, anarchy and indiscipline could never help the development process.

"Resources can not be generated if production is hampered and our sorrows and poverty will not be removed if the resources are not generated," Begum Zia said. She urged all sections of

the society, including the economists, to consolidate the economic momentum gained during the last two years.

"We do not claim that we have achieved a lot, but I hope you will agree with me that we had a good start," Begum Zia told the country's leading economists.

Presided over by Dr. Muhiuddin Khan Alamgir, President of BEA, the inaugural function was also addressed by Finance Minister M Saifur Rahman, General Secretary of BEA Dr Debapriya Bhattacharya and the Chairman of the conference preparatory committee Ki Khaleda.

The Prime Minister said that private initiative was the main theme of democracy and hence her government had initiated the process of encouraging private initiative as the driving force behind the socio-economic development.

She said that the government had adopted programmes from the creation of favourable investment climate. Page 12 Col 7

Nirmul adamant to stage sit-in in front of JS

By Staff Correspondent

Security around the Jatiya Sangsad has been beefed up as the Nirmul Samannaya Committee, remained adamant to stage a sit-in today before the parliament which goes into session today.

Nirmul Committee leaders Saturday held a meeting to review the situation, while their supporters took to the city streets in favour of the sit-in.

The authorities, however, imposed a ban on processions and rallies in and around the parliament building, effective from Saturday midnight till the session is prorogued.

Vehicle owners have been asked to avoid the Shahbagh, Bangla Motor and Katabon crossings between 2 pm to 7 pm today.

Official sources said that a large contingent of police would be deployed near the Bangla Motor crossing where the committee supporters are expected to gather before marching towards parliament house. Page 12 Col 3

Import policy criticised

By Staff Correspondent

The Bangladesh Chamber of Industry (BCI) Saturday criticised the current import policy of the government saying the "anomalous" policy was increasingly weakening private sector industries.

"The major flaw of the policy is the disparity in the taxes imposed on imported raw materials and finished items," Sharif Afzal Hossain, acting president of the Bangladesh Chamber of Industry (BCI) said at a press conference at the BCI office at Dilkusha.

He said that heavy duty and other taxes on raw material imports had pushed up the production costs of the local industries. On the other hand, low tariffs on imports of finished items had created an unhealthy competition.

The criticism comes on the eve of the Jatiya Sangsad Sunday and in the wake of reports that the government was planning further liberalisation of the import policy.

Sharif Afzal Hossain claimed that half of the country's 4,000 private sector industries had become sick because of the present policy. "We need no incentives

from the government. We just need a sound import policy, consistent with other newly industrialised countries," he said, citing the examples of Taiwan and South Korea.

"Our policy should be 'Nurse the baby, protect the child and free the adult,'" he added.

The acting BCI chief said that because of the policy the textiles, rubber belting, malamine, ceramic, battery and electric meters sectors were the worst affected.

He said the garments sector was growing fast only because it was almost out of the purview of the government's import policy.

Seeking protection for the manufacturing sector he alleged that a free import policy was a "suicidal step" for a country like Bangladesh where the industrial sector contributes only eight per cent to the gross domestic product.

"We do not want spoon-feeding, but we do seek a favourable climate and policy support for our industries," he said, adding that "instability and frequent changes in policy Page 12 Col 8

Khaleda opens Tagore's birth anniversary programme

By Staff Correspondent

Prime Minister Begum Khaleda Zia Saturday said that the best way to show respect to Rabindranath Tagore would be to establish peace and stability in society and attain self-reliance.

"Poet Rabindranath Tagore had advocated for peace throughout his life and called for shunning the path of hatred and malice," the Prime Minister pointed out while inaugurating the four-day national celebrations of the 132nd birth anniversary of the Nobel laureate at the Shilpakala Academy auditorium yesterday evening.

"Rabindranath discovered that the real Bangladesh was its villages and that is why he laid emphasis on its development in this thoughts and his works," she added. Page 12 Col 5

Top economists fault govt's reforms policies

By Staff Correspondent

Speakers at a discussion in the city Saturday called for a total re-evaluation of the government's economic reforms programme.

They also termed the privatisation process, initiated under the programmes, as defective.

The discussion, organised on the occasion of the tenth biennial conference of the Bangladesh Economic Association at the Institution of Engineers, was addressed among others by eminent economist Rehman Sobhan, World Bank official O Sadaat, Moazzem Hossain Khan, Sardar Syed Ahmed and S M Ather.

Rehman Sobhan, in his written speech, said that Bangladesh had experimented for at least a decade with structural adjustment reforms, the outcome of which had been far from satisfactory.

"About the only area where some improvement has been recorded, and this only in the last two years, is a slight upturn in revenue collections," he said, and added that the effort, whilst modest, should be Page 12 Col 6

Govt orders Manju's release

By Staff Correspondent

The government Saturday ordered the immediate release of Jatiya Party MP Anwar Hossain Manju.

A source said that Manju might be released from the Rajshahi Central Jail today (Sunday).

Special Branch picked up Anwar Hossain Manju—printer-publisher of the Daily Ittefaq—from his Dhanmondi residence on April 21 under Section 3 (1) (a) of the Special Powers Act (SPA).

On the following day, Manju was produced before the Chief Metropolitan Magistrate and sent to the Dhaka Central Jail with a 120-day detention order. The very next day he was shifted to the Rajshahi Central Jail.

Later the government made out its grounds for the detention order under Section 8 of the SPA bringing three charges against Manju, according to a top level source.

According to this source, the charges included an objectionable speech by Manju at a meeting of Jubo Sanghati at Tongi on February 6 in which Page 12 Col 7

Make Nirmul's march a success: AL

Awami League at a meeting of its working committee in Dhaka yesterday called upon the people to make the Nirmul Coordination Committee's march toward Jatiya Sangsad a success, reports UNB.

Leader of the Opposition in Parliament and Awami League President Sheikh Hasina presided over the weekly ALWC meeting at the party's central office.

The meeting in a resolution expressed concern over the deteriorating flood situation in Sylhet, Moulvibazar, Habiganj and other areas of the country and demanded immediate despatch of relief materials to the affected areas.

Formal talks on Chakma repatriation held

AGARTALA, May 8: A formal meeting between Bangladesh and India held here today at the office of the Chief Minister of Tripura on Repatriation of Chakma refugees from the camps of Tripura, reports BSS.

In the beginning of the meeting, State Minister for External Affairs of India Salman Khurshid who accompanied Bangladesh Communications Minister Oli Ahmed in a special flight from New Delhi today, gave a brief resume of the background about the repatriation of Chakmas. They met the meeting has ushered in a new chapter in the friendly relations between the Page 12 Col 4

the Bangladesh minister and the member of his delegation. The Communications Minister gave a detailed briefing of his discussions with the tribal leaders of Bangladesh and his excellent discussions with the central ministers in New Delhi.

The Bangladesh minister and the State Minister for External Affairs of India said, "we have assembled here today and sat down in a formal meeting to work out the modalities and schedule for the repatriation of Chakmas." They met the meeting has ushered in a new chapter in the friendly relations between the Page 12 Col 4

Judge declines to continue Aurango's trial

By Court Correspondent

District and Sessions Judge, Dhaka, Nasiruddin Ahmed, Saturday, postponed the trial of Awami League MP Hema yetullah Aurango — accused of the murder of Naik Ali Azam of the DGF — for an indefinite period.

Without assigning any particular reason the Judge said yesterday he felt embarrassed to proceed with the trial of the case.

After examining 12 witnesses, the prosecution had completed its arguments and the Court had fixed Saturday for argument by the defence. Page 12 Col 7