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NEWS BRIEFS

Hajj flight BG 037 leaves today

By Staff Correspondent
The Jeddah bound non-balletic Hajj flight BG 037 of Biman, scheduled to leave Dhaka Wednesday, will now take-off at 6.30 pm today (Friday). A Biman Bangladesh Airlines press release said that the flight was canceled due to certain mechanical fault.

BNP emergency meeting today

An emergency meeting of the Joint Secretaries General of BNP, the President and General Secretary of the Dhaka Metropolitan City Committee and the presidents and general secretaries of the front organizations of the party will be held today at 5.30 pm at the party central office. BNP Secretary General and LORD Minister Barrister Abdus Salam Talukdar has requested the Joint Secretaries General and leaders of the Dhaka City Committee, Jubadai, JSSS, Chhatra Dal, Sramik Dal, Mohila Dal, Krishak Dal, Sechchhasavok Sangathan and Ulama Dal to attend the meeting in time, reports BSS.

Sircar left out in the cold

Bipartisan call to include MPs in thana edn body

By Staff Correspondent

A rare but welcome example of bipartisanship left Education Minister Barrister Jamiruddin Sircar out alone in the cold at the Jatiya Sangsad Thursday.

Opposition members grilled the minister for the decision to constitute the thana education committee headed by the Thana Nirbahi Officer (TNO) without any role for the elected representatives in the important matters of primary and secondary education at the local level.

The overwhelming support from both the treasury and opposition benches for the proposal to make Parliament members chairmen of the committees in their respective constituencies led Deputy

Leader of the House Prof Badruddoza Chowdhury to declare: "Since there is a unanimity among the members for the proposal I will attract the attention of the Prime Minister regarding the matter."

However, the Education Minister remained adamant and refused to budge from his position, saying that the decision to form the thana education committee was an administrative directive. He insisted that it was the prerogative of the government to dictate its composition.

Earlier, taking the floor on a point of order, senior Awami League member Salahuddin Yusuf attracted the attention of the Speaker on the composition

of the committee which he said, did not include any member from among the elected representatives of the people.

Backing him up, opposition chief whip Mohammad Nasim noted that MPs were not even included as advisors in this important committee when Parliament members were made chairmen of the recently constituted thana health committees.

"It is not a partisan issue," Nasim said. "As elected representatives Parliament members should be made advisors of the crucial committee instead of giving bureaucrats a free reign."

The opposition chief whip's

Jatiya Sangsad prorogued

By Staff Correspondent

The ninth session of the country's fifth Parliament ended last night with Professor Badruddoza Chowdhury, Deputy Leader of the House, urging members of the Jatiya Sangsad for utilising future sessions for 'meaningful discussions'.

Opening on Sunday, the session had just five sittings with the last one meant for the private members yesterday.

The prorogation order of President Abdur Rahman Biswas was read out by Speaker Shaikh Razzak Ali at 10:10 last night.

The proceedings of the session were dominated mainly by political issues, especially the Nirmul Committee movement, rather than debates on matters affecting the economic interests of the people.

Badruddoza Chowdhury, in his winding up speech last night, observed that both treasury and opposition benches

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SKOP shutdown concludes

By Staff Correspondent

The concluding day of the 72-hour labour strike passed off peacefully throughout the country yesterday.

The SKOP leaders claimed that the workers observed the three-day shutdown wholeheartedly to protest the government's reluctance on resolving the labour issues while the authorities termed the strike as being devoid of reality and logic when most of the major demands had already been fulfilled.

The three-day work-stoppage by the industrial and other workers ends at 6 this morning.

No untoward incident was reported yesterday in connection with the strike that began Tuesday morning in demand of the implementation of government-labour leaders' records providing for, among other issues, fixation of a national minimum wage.

Yesterday's work abstention was more effective than on the previous days since the Awami League-led opposition parties observed a 6 am-2pm hartal across the nation.

Making a statement in the Jatiya Sangsad, Labour and Manpower Minister Abdul Mannan Bhuiyan said yesterday that the government had not breached the understanding reached with the SKOP earlier. The problem had been created by the SKOP itself by the addition of newer demands to their five-point demands time and again.

He said that the responsibility of the strike would lie with the SKOP leaders and not with the government.

He urged the opposition leaders to use joint wisdom to

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Ogata visits Rohingya camps today

The UN High Commissioner for Refugees Dr Sadako Ogata, now on a four-day visit to Bangladesh, is due to fly to Cox's Bazar today to visit some refugee camps, reports UNB.

She told the agency yesterday that a UN mission, which includes a UNHCR official, is currently visiting Myanmar's western Arakan province as part of confidence-building for safe and voluntary repatriation of the Rohingya refugees.

"This is a positive step towards repatriation of all the Rohingya refugees who crossed into Bangladesh in 1991", Dr Ogata said.

The visiting UN High Commissioner for Refugees hoped that the trip of the UN mission to the region, which is home of the Rohingyas should pave the way for their total repatriation.

4 camps to be set up to receive Chakmas

CHITTAGONG, May 13: Khagrachari district administration has taken up a programme to receive the Chakma refugees to be repatriated from India.

An official source told BSS here tonight that initiative had been taken for setting up four reception camps at Ramgar, Matrangra, Pujgang and Khagrachari sadar of the hill district.

The Chakma refugees, after being repatriated from Tripura of India, would be accommodated in these camps, the source said.

Twenty nine thousand nine hundred and twenty Chakma refugees of about 7,000 families have been staying in six camps of Tripura, the local administration estimates. The source said, of them, about 3,000 refugees voluntarily came back to Bangladesh during the past years.

The refugees would stay in the camps till their resettlement with full dignity, safety and security. They would get free accommodation and food in the camps, the source further said.

IRRI - Boro procurement from tomorrow

Irri and Boro paddy procurement drive will begin tomorrow throughout the country, reports BSS.

The procurement prices of Irri-Boro paddy have been fixed at Taka 225 and Taka 602.83 while per maund and per quintal of rice fixed at Taka 356.40 and Taka 954.88 respectively for the current season with a view to maintaining the market price of food-grains stable and encouraging the farmers to produce more grains.

One lakh tonnes of paddy or equivalent quantity of rice will be bought from the farmers directly with the aim of achieving procurement target of two lakh tonnes paddy during the current season. At least one bag of paddy weighing 65kgs will be procured for the convenience of small and marginal farmers and highest quantity of five tonnes of paddy will be procured from a farmer at a time.

The rest one lakh tonne of paddy would be procured from the mill owners and through tender.

Rice and paddy will be procured according to the directive of the government. For details, people have been advised to contact concerned food officials at district and thana levels.

Diethylene glycol is a free importable item

Bangladesh had imported diethylene glycol worth Taka one crore 21 lakh 18 thousand during the period 1985-90, Commerce Minister M K Anwar informed the Jatiya Sangsad yesterday, reports BSS.

Replying to a question from Mirza Golam Azam of Awami League the minister said, no permission or licence was needed for import of diethylene glycol as it was incorporated in the list of free importable items.

When the attention of the minister was drawn by a member to the use of diethylene glycol in paracetamol syrup

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Hartal observed

By Staff Correspondent

A nationwide eight-hour hartal was observed peacefully Thursday barring some stray clashes in Chittagong and Dhaka, witnesses and police said.

At least 50 people were injured in the port city of Chittagong when police clashed with pickets while in the capital six persons were injured when a group of unidentified youths hurled home-made bombs at the pickets and also in police action.

Twenty-four persons were arrested in Chittagong. The hartal was called by 14 opposition parties including the Awami League to protest alleged government repression on opposition leaders and workers and demanding trial of Jamaat chief Golam Azam.

The hartal coincided with the last day of the three-day strike by the Sramik Karmachari Otkiya Parishad (SKOP).

In Dhaka, police used tear gas and went into action when pickets near the High Court, Gulistan and Purana Paltan areas turned violent.

The pickets were attacked by unidentified hoodlums who hurled crackers from inside the Osmani Uddyan (park),

witnesses said, adding that police baton-charged the pickets who chased the attackers and tried to pull down the railings of the park.

At least four people were injured in cracker and cocktail blasts and police action.

The pickets briefly brick-battled the police and damaged two yellow-plated vehicles of UN organisation near the High Court. Police fired two tear gas canisters to disperse the agitators injuring two.

Anti-hartal elements armed with stick gathered near the south gate of the Baitul Mukarram mosque and engaged in chases and counter-chases which fortunately did not go out of hand because of timely police interception.

The hartal supporters alleged that the 'trouble mongers' belonged to the Jamaat-Shibir-Jubo command clique.

During the hartal hours, some rickshaws plied in different parts of the city but the roads near the Bangabandhu Avenue, Purana Paltan and Topkhana areas were totally barren of vehicles.

Shops and business establishments were closed while bank transactions were thin. Attendances in the offices

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EQUALITY OF THE SEXES: A pro-hartal picketeer gives vent to her feelings about a 'delinquent' rickshaw during the hartal hours in the city yesterday. — Star photo



DRAWING THE LINE: Riot police in full battle gear on a city thoroughfare during yesterday's half-day hartal. — Star photo

NAM ministers plan meetings to increase S-S cooperation

NUSA DUA (Indonesia), May 13: Non-Aligned Movement (NAM) Ministerial Committee ended a three-day meeting here today, with an agreement to hold meetings to prepare concrete South-South cooperation schemes, reports AFP.

The ministers, from the 37 of NAM's 108 member states, also threw their weight behind the bid of Indonesian President Suharto, current NAM Chairman, to address the G-7 leaders at their next summit in Tokyo in July.

"The time for concrete action has come and these (resolutions) must be implemented with commensurate speed," Indonesian Foreign Minister Ali Alatas told the closing plenary session.

The backing for Suharto's initiative to address the G 7 industrialised countries summit in Tokyo came in a separate statement in which the 37 said he should be able to 'present the views and new orientations of NAM' to the group.

"Politically and psychologically, it would be good to be seen that the north, represented by the seven powerful economies of the G-7 sits down and discusses ways to face and overcome global economic problems in this fast changing world," Alatas said after the support statement was issued.

G-7 leaders have yet to agree to Suharto addressing them at the Tokyo summit, saying they would be prepared to meet him separately.

A press communique issued at the end of the NAM standing ministerial committee (SMC) for economic cooperation said it had agreed to hold meetings in various fields to prepare concrete South-South cooperation programmes.

"Expanded economic cooperation among developing

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Bali meet praises Dhaka's call for N-S dialogue

Indonesian President Suharto is likely to visit Bangladesh sometime before the year-end, Foreign Minister ASM Mostafizur Rahman said on return from Jakarta.

Mostafiz, who returned Dhaka yesterday morning after attending the NAM Ministerial meeting in Indonesia, told UNB at the airport that during his meeting with Suharto, he renewed the country's invitation to the Indonesian head of state to visit Bangladesh.

Mostafiz led a five-member Bangladesh delegation to the second NAM Ministerial Meeting on Economic Cooperation

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Probe report on Saipem Energy Ministry faults method of findings

By Inam Ahmed

The Energy Ministry does not seem satisfied with the findings of the Iqbal Mahmood Committee report on alleged bungling in the North-South Pipeline Project involving Italian contractor, Saipem.

Ministry sources said that many of the findings of the committee's report lacked reliability owing to the absence of proper methodology in its investigations.

The ministry's own findings regarding the report suggest that the committee did not attach proper importance to "universally recognised and dependable" methodology in collecting information through interrogations and discussions with the persons related to the project.

The committee also reportedly did not take any written statements from the persons

concerned, nor did it feel the necessity to adequately substantiate its comments and observations.

The ministry observed that many of the suggestions and comments of the committee were unreliable because of these lapses.

The Iqbal Mahmood Committee also ignored a number of important people who were involved in the primary stages of the project, ministry sources said.

The time spent by the committee in interviewing the persons listed was rather inadequate. The ministry believes the committee spent very little time for this purpose. For example, according to sources, the committee's investigators spent only 20 to 25 minutes with Lutful Matin,

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Storms hit 2 districts One killed, 2 ferries run aground

PAJNA, May 13: An old man was killed and 15 others were injured in a storm that swept the district this afternoon damaging dwellings and crops, reports UNB.

Two fishermen were missing after boat capsized in the Padma during the norwester, which battered more than 200 houses.

Samed Ali, 62, of Hamichapur in Sadar thana died when his thatched house collapsed.

Six others in the thana were wounded during the

storm. Two of them were admitted to Sadar Hospital. The rest were injured in five other thanas — Santhia, Atgharia, Bhangura, Faridpur and Chatmohor.

During the storm, two fishing boats sank in the Padma near Mularchar after which two fishermen were missing, said Bararampur Union Chairman Mosharraf Hossain.

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