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NEWS BRIEFS

Hasina greets Demirel

Opposition leader Sheikh Hasina yesterday congratulated Suleyman Demirel on his election to the office of the President of Turkey. In a message of felicitation, Hasina hoped that the able leadership of President Demirel would usher in a new era in Turkey and strengthen the existing relations between Bangladesh and Turkey. She wished the new Turkish President's good health and long life and peace and progress of the people of his country, reports UNB.

Salary on May 29

Salary of non-gazetted employees of all government, semi-government and autonomous organisations for the month of May will be paid on May 29. The decision was taken as Eid-ul-Azha will be celebrated early June, reports BSS.

Partial solar eclipse May 21

A partial eclipse of the sun will take place on May 21. It will begin at 6-18 minute 48 second pm and will end at 10-19 minute 30 second pm on May 21. The magnitude of the eclipse will be 0.736 and the highest magnitude of the eclipse will occur at 8-19 minute 18 second pm. This will not be visible anywhere in Bangladesh, reports BSS.



A Biman DC-10 arriving from Jeddah with 135 on board overshot the runway while attempting to land in heavy rain early yesterday morning. The aircraft skidded and came to a grinding halt almost a kilometre past the runway but miraculously no one was hurt. The nose wheel of the jet fell off.

All passengers and crew unhurt Biman DC-10 skids off runway

By Staff Correspondent

A DC-10 aircraft of Biman Bangladesh Airlines skidded off the Zia international airport (ZIA) runway Tuesday morning while landing in heavy rain. Biman sources said that all the passengers and crew were unhurt, but the nose and wheels of the aircraft were badly damaged. Biman's BG-036 flight carrying 123 passengers and 12 crew from Jeddah touched down at the ZIA at 7-05 am, but all on a sudden the aircraft skidded and overshot the runway, before getting stuck in a muddy field about a thousand feet from the runway. The Biman authorities said that passengers and crew were

promptly and safely disembarked from the aircraft soon after the accident. "It took only 45 seconds to evacuate all the passengers and crew," claimed a Biman official. A press release issued by Biman said that the visibility was substantially reduced in heavy shower and consequently the aircraft overshot and skidded off the runway. It said that the aircraft could not be retrieved due to inclement weather. The extent of damage can only be assessed after bringing the aircraft to the runway. Necessary repairs would be undertaken expeditiously, the release added.

However, when contacted Biman authorities could not confirm whether it would be possible to return the aircraft by today. "It might take time as the damaged nose-wheel has sunk deep in the mud", a Biman source said. He also mentioned that the Civil Aviation Authority did not possess the necessary equipment, especially a heavy-duty crane, needed for such situations. Meanwhile, a high-powered enquiry committee has been constituted to investigate the incident. The ill-fated aircraft, one of the only four DC-10s of the na-

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For BTV, the mishap never happened!

By Staff Correspondent

News judgement of the BTV continues to defy common-sense, logic and journalistic norms. It also shows a total lack of a sense of responsibility for our own people who were passengers on that flight. Yesterday's nose-dive landing of Biman's DC-10 flight from Jeddah, heavily damaging the plane, but causing no death or injury to the passengers, did not quite merit even a passing mention in BTV's 8 O'clock (Bangla) or 10 O'clock (English) news bulletins. In its place yesterday we got a heavy dose of what various ministers had said and done. Airline accident is big news everywhere in the world, except perhaps in Bangladesh. Is it the argument that since there were no deaths or injuries, it did not merit inclusion in the BTV news? In

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Beijing will help modernise BAF

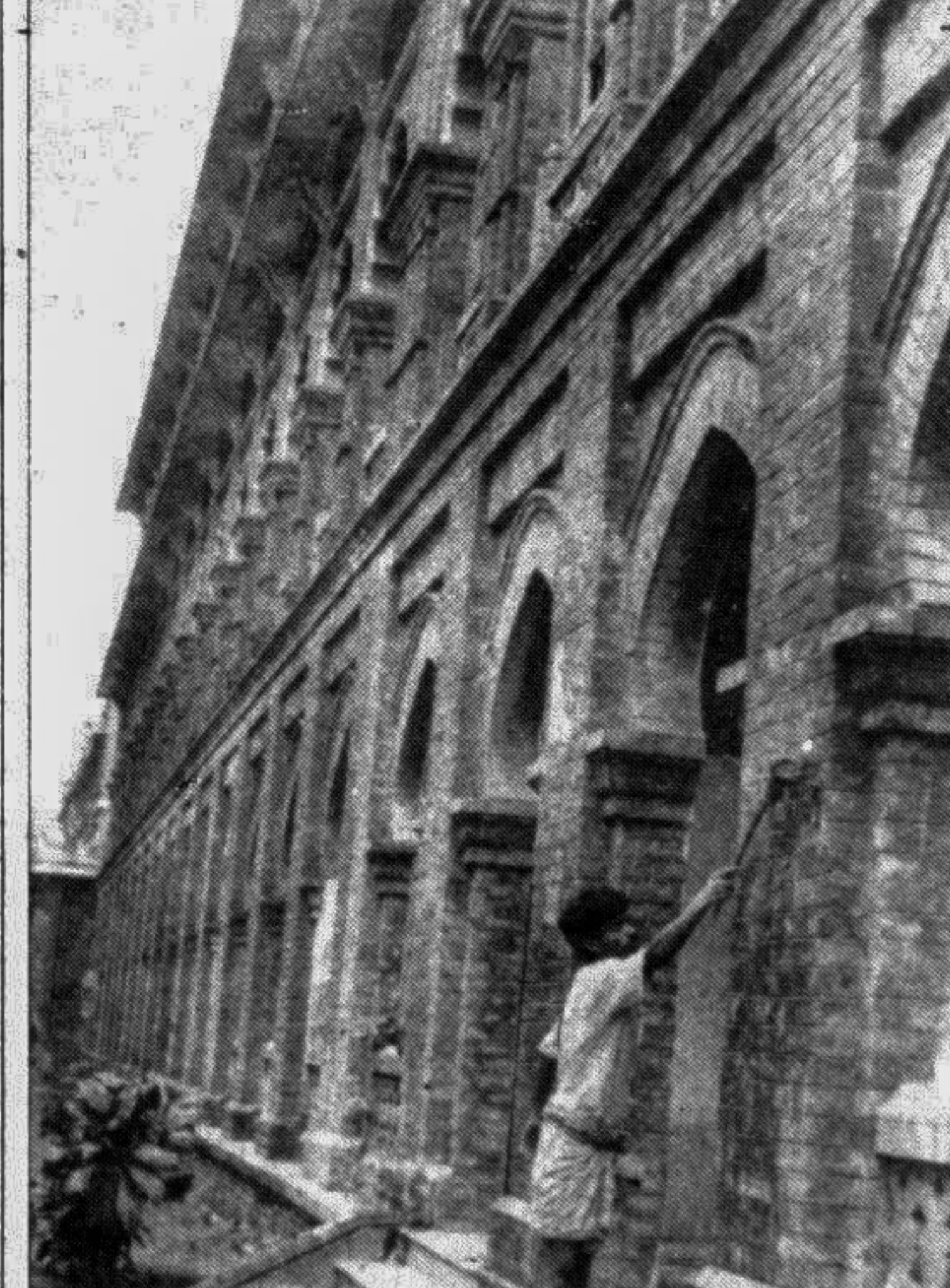
China yesterday assured its continued cooperation to Bangladesh in modernising its defence, particularly the Air Force, reports UNB. The assurance came from the visiting Commander of the People's Liberation Army (PLA) Air Force Lt General Cao Shuang Ming when he called on Prime Minister Begum Khaleda Zia at her office. Gen Cao, who arrived in Dhaka Monday, termed the relations between China and Bangladesh as traditional and very cordial. He informed that his visit — first to a foreign country as chief of the PLA Air Force — is aimed at knowing the activities of the Bangladesh Air Force. He also conveyed a message from Chinese Premier Li Peng to Prime Minister Khaleda Zia. Knowing about the illness of the Chinese Premier, Begum Zia wished his early recovery. Welcoming the Chinese Air Force Commander, Begum Zia said there is a wide scope for further enhancing trade and other bilateral relations between the two countries. China has been of great assistance to Bangladesh at dif-

Myanmar Home Minister due May 24

Myanmar Home Minister Lt General Mya Thinn will arrive in Dhaka on May 24 on a four-day official visit, reports UNB. Official sources said the visit would take place at the invitation of Home Minister Abdul Matin Chowdhury. During his stay in the capital, the Myanmar minister will discuss with his Bangladeshi counterpart bilateral issues, the sources said. General Mya is also expected to meet some other government leaders. The two countries are currently engaged in repatriation of nearly a quarter million Myanmar refugees who had crossed into Bangladesh in 1991. An official handout yesterday said Myanmar Ambassador U Soe Myint yesterday called on Home Minister Abdul Matin Chowdhury at his office. They discussed matters of mutual interest with emphasis on the progress of the repatriation of the refugees. They also discussed narcotics control measures and emphasised the need for joint efforts in curbing cross-border drug abuse and drug trafficking. During the discussion, the envoy expressed his country's earnest desire to solve the refugee problem by ensuring their safe, speedy and voluntary return.

DU will honour Nobel winner Salam May 23

The Dhaka University authorities will award an honorary Doctor of Science (DSc) degree to Nobel laureate Professor Abdus Salam on May 23 in a special convocation. Pakistani scientist Professor Salam will become the 33rd recipient of the honour from the Dhaka University which is awarding the degree after 19 years. Prime Minister Begum Khaleda Zia will, present the award at a colourful ceremony to be held at the ninety years old Curzon Hall of the university. Some 11 hundred distinguished guests including teachers of the DU, ministers, secretaries and heads of foreign missions are expected to attend the ceremony. This special convocation was originally scheduled for last February but could not be held. See Page 12 Col 3



Curzon Hall, a DU landmark built in 1904 and named after George Nathaniel Baron Curzon of Kedleston, the then Viceroy and Governor General of India, getting a facelift ahead of the special convocation May 23 to confer an honorary degree of Doctor of Science to Nobel laureate physicist Professor Abdus Salam. —Star photo

AL-led opposition declares BNP supporting Jamaat-Shibir to stay in power

Fourteen opposition parties led by Awami League (AL) yesterday urged the pro-liberation minded people to unite against the "autocratic" government which has been engaged in repression on people and politicians to serve the interest of anti-liberation forces. The opposition parties at a rally held at the Bangabandhu Avenue last evening said that the government was trying to curb the fundamental rights of the people by banning public rallies and arresting political activists under the Anti-Terrorism Act. The leaders said that the Jamaat-Shibir axis was out to destroy the sovereignty of the country yet BNP was supporting that axis to stay in power. See Page 12 Col 6

Lankan ruling party suffers worst electoral debacle

COLOMBO, May 18: Sri Lanka's ruling party today suffered its worst electoral debacle in 16 years as the fragmented opposition made a stunning comeback to capture three crucial local government bodies, reports AFP. President Dingiri Banda Wijetunga's United National Party (UNP) was humiliated in the western province at Monday's poll and was also left without a working majority in two more important councils, officials results showed. The UNP got 41 seats in the 104 member western council, which governs the capital Colombo, while an alliance led by former premier Sirima Bandaranaike won the chief ministership here with 45 seats. Another opposition party, the Democratic United National Front (DUNF), a breakaway faction of the UNP, took a king-making 17 seats. The DUNF has a working arrangement with Bandaranaike's alliance to oust the ruling party. The ruling party retained power in four of the seven councils and maintained its traditional position of being the largest single party in most places, particularly rural areas, despite opposition forecasts of a whitewash. AP adds : The governing United National Party claimed the results were a victory, but opposition parties did better than expected. The opposition had boycotted the 1988 election that set up the councils, and the UNP had governed them all unopposed. A final count showed the

UNP won a majority in four councils, a plurality in two and narrowly lost the largest council in the Western Province, where the capital is located. If opposition parties form a coalition, they can take control of the two councils where the governing UNP only won a plurality. "This is a great victory for the UNP," said the party's assistant secretary, Gamini Athukorale. "We have won most of the rural areas. This endorses the government's present policies and gives us a clear mandate to go on." The election was the first since the assassinations of President Ranasinghe Premadasa on May 1 and of a top opposition leader, Lalith Athulathmudali, on April 23. No violence was reported in the election.

Mostafiz calls on Kuwaiti Amir

Foreign Minister ASM Mostafizur Rahman called on Amir of Kuwait Sheikh Jaber Al-Ahmed Al-Sabah and handed to him a message from Prime Minister Begum Khaleda Zia on Monday, reports UNB. The Foreign Minister also met Kuwaiti Prime Minister Sheikh Saad Al-Abdullah Al-Salam Al-Sabah, Defence Minister Sheikh Ali Salem Al-Sabah and Interior Minister Sheikh Ahmad Al-Hamoud Al-Jaber, according to a message received in Dhaka yesterday. He also held official talks with the Deputy Prime Minister in charge of the Foreign Ministry on ways of enhancing bilateral cooperation. During the talks, Mostafiz reiterated Bangladesh's continued support for the implementation of all UN resolutions in support of the cause of Kuwait, particularly the demand of release of all Kuwaiti prisoners of war still held in Iraq.



Police raided the Latif Hostel of Tejgaon Polytechnic Institute yesterday. —Star photo

Two arrested in police raid on polytech hostel

Detective branch police yesterday raided Latif Hostel of the Tejgaon Polytechnic Institute at Tejgaon, arresting two persons and recovering illegal arms and ammunition. Police swooped on the hostel just a day before the institute's students' union elections. One of the arrested persons — Abdul Alim Khan alias Tipu, a third year student of the institute — was wanted in connection with the murder of a student leader named Shakeel. The other arrested person, identified as Tatyubur Rahman Akhand, 22, was an outsider, said police. Shakeel Mahmud, general secretary of the students' union. See Page 12 Col 3

Series of dacoities in 24 hours

A series of daring dacoities on highways and houses across the country in last 24 hours ending Tuesday night left at least 15 people injured while valuables worth lakhs of taka were looted. Reports reaching UNB of office said bandits looted two night coaches on highways in Bogra and Jhenidah and houses in Bogra and Manikganj. The worst of these robberies occurred at Amdala village in Shibhalaya thana of Manikganj district Monday night where four people suffered bullet wounds as bandits decamped with looted goods firing guns on villagers. Dacoits made their escape with looted valuables and cash worth about Tk 200,000. A report from Bogra says a daring dacoity left nine passengers of an interdistrict night coach injured while the dacoits looted cash and kind worth about Tk 3 lakhs on the Nagarbari-Bogra highway Monday night. The bandits stopped the Dinajpur-bound bus from Dhaka at Ullapara and attacked the passengers with sharp weapons while snatching their belongings. Two trucks also fell victim of robbers on the same route at the same night. Fourteen cattle and cash amounting to Tk 50,000 were looted in the heists. In another incident at Maltinagar in Bogra town, a gang of dacoits looted 35 tolas of gold ornament and cash Tk 50,000. See Page 12 Col 5

Fahd for cut in foreign labour

DUBAI, May 18: Saudi Arabia's King Fahd has urged the kingdom's state sector employers to cut reliance on expatriate labour by recruiting more Saudi nationals, reports Reuter. Around three million expatriates work in Saudi Arabia, mainly in oil and construction industries, financial institutions and government offices. The total population of Saudi Arabia is estimated at 17 million. A statement by deputy minister for information Mohammad Masoud, published by the official Saudi press agency on Monday night, said King Fahd made the call for more Saudi workers at a weekly meeting of cabinet ministers. It said, King Fahd supported a recommendation by a labour force committee which said Saudis who had necessary qualifications should be recruited in place of expatriates.