

The Daily Star

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NEWS BRIEFS

AL seminars on May 28, 29

Awami League has organised two seminars on poverty alleviation and agricultural development in the city. The seminar on "Poverty Alleviation" will be held on May 28. Awami League chief and leader of the Opposition in Parliament Sheikh Hasina will inaugurate the seminar at 3 pm at the Institute of Engineers. Another seminar on "Agricultural Development" will be held on May 29 at the same venue, reports BSS.

Silver worth Tk 30 lakh recovered

A special squad of CID police yesterday recovered five and half maunds of smuggled silver worth about Tk 30 lakh from a factory at Tantibazar in the city. CID police raided Lucky Corporation, a workshop for processing gold and silver at 25, Tantibazar and found the silver from lockers. The factory owner Sukur Mohammad was detained, reports UNB.

Driver killed in road mishap

FARIDPUR, May 24: A truck driver was killed and his helper injured seriously in a road accident on Faridpur-Barisal highway today. Police said Manik Bihari died on the spot and his helper Muhammad Nuruzzaman was seriously injured when the Barisal-bound truck hit a way side tree near the River Institute, reports UNB.

One killed as students, shopkeepers clash

By Staff Correspondent

A college student was killed in a clash between students and shopkeepers at Siddeshwari — just 200 yards from the residence of the Home Minister — in the city Monday. The victim, identified as Kawzar, a first year intermediate student of the Siddeshwari Degree College, was hit by a bullet. Witnesses said the road

communication near the Century Arcade shopping centre and the Siddeshwari Degree College was disrupted for more than two hours during the clash between the shopkeepers and the college students around noon. The clash between the two groups was a sequel to Sunday's incident over toll collection from the shopowners,

said witnesses.

They said that when the clashing groups were chasing each other one of the Ansars who were posted inside the Century Arcade, opened fire from the third-floor of the shopping centre. However, police on duty could not confirm whether Kawzar was hit by the bullet. See Page 12 Col 7



The Siddeshwari Road near the Century Arcade during yesterday's clash in the afternoon between college students and shopowners which left one student killed. — Star photo

Cabinet okays execution of hard rock project

The cabinet yesterday approved the execution of the agreement for development of the Madhyapara Hard Rock Mining Project under financial and technical assistance of the Democratic Peoples' Republic of Korea (DPRK), reports BSS. A report on the outcome of the meeting of the Aid-Group for Bangladesh held in Paris last month was also placed before the cabinet in its regular weekly meeting held at the Bangabhaban with Prime Minister Begum Khaleda Zia in the chair. The DPRK will provide suppliers' credit to the tune of 152.5 million US dollar for the hard rock project. On completion of the project, about one million cubic metre of high quality hard rock worth 144 crore Taka will be extracted annually, which will be used for various construction works and save a huge amount of foreign exchange. The cabinet was informed that during the Aid-Group

meeting, the members of the group noted that the economy of Bangladesh had been successfully mobilised with the initiative of the present government. The meeting also noted that the fiscal deficit, the inflation rate and the current account deficit were all reduced significantly and foreign exchange reserves grew substantially during the period. There was a consensus in the Aid-Group meeting that Bangladesh now has an excellent opportunity to accelerate structural reforms to increase public savings and investment, develop the private sector and augment the pace of human development, the cabinet was informed. The Aid-Group meeting commended the government's commitment in taking up various reform programmes and stressed the urgency of quickening the pace thereof to reap the benefits to these reforms in terms of poverty alleviation.

DC-10 to be towed to hangar today

The DC-10 aircraft of Biman which met with an accident at the Zia International Airport last Tuesday was pulled out of the mud and towed some 1,500 feet after days of strenuous effort, reports UNB. The aircraft was still about 350 feet from the main runway and was likely to be towed to the hangar early Tuesday morning. State Minister for Civil Aviation and Tourism Abdul Mannan, briefing newsmen yesterday evening, said the entire salvage operation was being conducted under the direct supervision of representatives from McDonnell Douglas, the manufacturers of the aircraft. The minister justified the slow pace of the salvage operation by saying that this was to avoid further damage to the aircraft. The minister added that representatives of the insurance company and the General Electric Company See Page 12 Col 2

AL meet agrees on agitation

By Staff Correspondent

The Awami League (AL) has decided to prepare for an all-out agitation against the government very soon. The decision was taken by the members of the party's central working committee last night. The ALCWC's two-day meeting ended at 11.15 last night following a three-day extended meeting of the party which concluded Saturday evening. The district-level leaders attending the extended meeting pressed the party high command for launching an agitation against the government, disciplinary measures against Dr Kamal Hossain and avoiding any alliance with other opposition forces if it meant a sharing of seats in the next parliamentary polls. The AL central working committee yesterday agreed on the need for an alliance

with other opposition parties to achieve victory in the planned agitation. The committee, however, observed that it was too early to think about the question of sharing seats with others in the next polls. On the issue of Kamal Hossain, the meeting felt that it would be better to ignore Kamal's activities than to take any measures against him. The party high command dismissed Kamal's ability to successfully float an effective political party, meeting sources said. Abdus Samad Azad and Abdul Mannan, presidium members of the party, however, felt that the issue should be settled for the sake of sparing party activists from embarrassment. The meeting also felt that the party high command should look at all the various

charters of demands put forward by professional groups before preparing the party's own charter of demands for the planned agitation. Rahmat Ali, MP, an influential member of the ALCWC, however, felt that the party could easily launch the agitation on the basis of the problems being faced by the peasant community. The meeting authorised party chief Sheikh Hasina to finalise the charter of demands for the planned agitation against the government. Sources said that the AL chief would consult the advisory council of the party while preparing the charter. The leaders who addressed yesterday's meeting included, among others, Zohra Tajuddin, Zillur Rahman, Amir Hossain, Amu, Mirza Sultan Raza and Mahmudur Rahman Manna.

Talks with Myanmar Home Minister today

By Staff Correspondent

The Home Ministers of Bangladesh and Myanmar will hold informal talks on the repatriation of Rohingya refugees, border demarcation and other bilateral issues at the state guest house Meghna today. The visiting Myanmar Home Minister, Lt Gen. Mya Thin, will lead his country's 11-member delegation at the talks, officially being called an "informal meeting," while Home Minister Abdul Matin Chowdhury will head the Bangladesh team. The two neighbouring countries separated by the Naf river, have a 175-kilometre common border. More than 25,000 of some 2,65,000 Myanmar Muslims who crossed into Bangladesh in 1991 have so far voluntarily returned home. Mya Thin is scheduled to call on President Abdur Rahman Biswas this morning before the talks. The Myanmar Home Minister arrived in Dhaka Sunday on a five-day official visit. Mya Thin is also scheduled to meet Foreign Minister ASM Mostafizur Rahman, Communications Minister Oli Ahmed and State Minister for Relief Lutfur Rahman Khan before departure for home on Thursday. Meanwhile, the Myanmar Home Minister had a river-cruise in the Meghna yesterday accompanied by his Bangladesh counterpart Abdul Matin Chowdhury.

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Talks on Chakmas' repatriation from tomorrow

A two-day official-level meeting between Bangladesh and India begins Wednesday at Agartala across the border to work out modalities of repatriation of the Chakmas refugees encamped in south Tripura, reports UNB. The meeting is taking place as per an agreement reached by the two countries during Communications Minister Oli Ahmed's recent visit to India for starting repatriation of the refugees from the Chittagong Hill Tracts within a month. In a joint statement issued simultaneously from Dhaka and New Delhi on May 10 at the end of Oli's 8-day tour of India, the two countries agreed to resolve the outstanding issue through resettlement of the Bangladesh tribal people. A four-member delegation will be led by Home Secretary Ajmuddin Ahmed at the Agartala talks. Other members of the Bangladesh delegation are Secretary of the Special Affairs Division Nasrullah Khan, Joint Secretary of the Ministry of Home Affairs MA Hannan and Director (South Asia) at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs Saiful Ameen Khan.

Sylhet JCD leader hacked to death

SYLHET, May 24: Unidentified armed men hacked to death a BA (pass) final year student of Sylhet Government College last night. Witnesses said the attackers with sharp weapons stopped Nuruzzaman alias Dulal, a leader of the BNP-backed Jatiyatadai Chhatra Dal (JCD) of the college, near the hostel of the institution while he and two of his friends were travelling by a rickshaw at around 11 pm. The youths hit Dulal repeatedly with sharp weapons until he died. Police today filed a case against nine persons in connection with the murder following statements by Dulal's friends who claimed to have identified the killers.

EC experiments with voters' ID cards

By Nazmul Ashraf

The Election Commission (EC) has started experimenting with the idea of introducing identity cards for the voters.

Officials say, the Commission has already started a "development project" under which identity cards will be issued to 20,000 voters of Dapunia union of Sadar thana under Mymensingh district.

The Dapunia scheme has been taken up as a rural case for experiment while another such case would be taken in an urban area. Both the cases are being taken under the EC's one-year pilot project for computerising all necessary facts regarding elections. However, an urban area for the experiment is yet to be selected.

Mohammad Zakaria, Joint Secretary of the EC, told The Daily Star yesterday that identity cards for the voters of other parts of the country would be decided on the basis of the experiences gathered from these two experiments.

"We will go for a greater programme only if the findings of these two experiments are found to be feasible," he informed this correspondent.

The EC has collected all necessary facts about the voters of Dapunia and these are now being processed with the

help of computers. The authorities last week also published a notice inviting interested organisations to participate in taking photographs of the voters in Dapunia.

Adequate number of personnel will be deployed to visit each and every part of the selected union for taking snaps of the voters.

Every voter's number will be visible in the negative film, but won't be seen in the photos, to be used for the identity card. The authorities will preserve all the negatives with a view to checking any fraud in voting.

The planned identity card will contain all the facts of a voter in his/her voter-list under the existing system. Besides, a stamp-size (3x2.5 cm) photo will be pasted on the card. The EC hasn't yet printed the card.

The offices of the District Election Commissioner will distribute the cards among the voters.

"But new laws need to be enacted for the use of ID cards in election," an official pointed out.

"No step has so far been taken in that regard," he said. The experiment in Dapunia is expected to be completed in the next two months, the official added.

Govt firm to implement privatisation policy

Finance Minister M Saifur Rahman yesterday said the government was determined to implement its policy of privatisation to stop the drain on the national exchequer caused by the huge losses of the public enterprises, reports BSS.

Saifur Rahman was speaking at the first meeting of the newly-constituted Privatisation Board, held at the Planning Ministry. Planning Minister AM Zahiruddin Khan attended as a special guest.

The Finance Minister said the government was fully committed to implementing the stabilisation and economic reform programmes to improve the investment climate and encourage economic activities in the country. The government has set up the Privatisation Board to carry out the privatisation programme. It is an autonomous

body with its own budget. There is a full-time chairman, two full-time members, eight part-time members and an adequate number of other supporting technical staff.

Speaking on the occasion, the Planning Minister said privatisation process would help improve the efficiency and management of the privatised enterprises and will also attract new investment in various sectors. The government policy is to privatise public enterprise through direct tender sale or offering of public shares and sale to employees and management.

He said units for privatisation should be carefully selected and their accounts audited to find out their net worth. The procedure should be transparent so that there is no misgiving or confusion regarding the privatisation process.

Pre-shipment inspection proposal shelved

Star Report

A proposal to reintroduce pre-shipment inspection on imports in the next budget has been kept in abeyance. The Internal Resources Division (IRD) had recently suggested that the inspection should be reintroduced on some items like sugar, salt, cement, chemical products and dyes to check evasion of duty by some importers.

However, the cabinet, after detailed discussions, has reportedly shelved the proposal and suggested that the IRD may reintroduce it after further examination of the possible implications.

The government had introduced the inspection system in the last budget but had to withdraw it in the face of strong protest and resentment from the importers, especially the garments exporters who have to import fabrics and other accessories for their products.

However, the latest proposal of inspection sought to exempt the small importers and garments industries from the procedure. The IRD observed that introduction of pre-shipment inspection would free the importers from the present problems of high tariff value while at the same time increasing collection of taxes.

On the other hand, the government is learnt to have taken the view that introduction of the inspection system would enhance the cost of imports, adversely affecting the market.

It was also observed that introduction of the procedure in neighbouring countries had yielded little result.

The introduction of the system was earlier approved by the Executive Committee of the National Economic Council (ECNEC), sources said.



Nazrul's birth anniversary today

By Staff Correspondent
Today is the 11th of Jaistha, the 94th anniversary of the birth of Kazi Nazrul Islam, the national poet.

Elaborate programmes have been planned by the government and various socio-cultural organisations to celebrate the 'rebel' poet's birthday all over the country.

Radio and Television will put up special programmes while the national dailies will bring out supplements with articles highlighting the contributions of the poet.

The day begins with placing of wreaths at the mazar of the poet near the Dhaka University Central Mosque and offering of fatcha by different organisations. Prime Minister Begum Khaleda Zia will inaugurate a four-day national programme at the Shilpakala Academy at 7.15 this evening. See Page 12 Col 1

Barisal Medical College closed sine die

BARISAL, May 24: The authorities of Barisal Sher-e-Bangla Medical College ordered the college closed for indefinite period following an incident involving a doctor and a police officer, reports BSS.

College sources said Additional Police Super of Barisal Hemayetuddin misbehaved with Dr Osman Ghani, which created an uneasy situation and forced the authorities to declare the closure of the college. The doctors went on a wild cat strike.

The Barisal branch of Bangladesh Medical Association and internecine doctors in a joint meeting demanded exemplary punishment of the person responsible for creating the trouble. They also demanded that the matter should be resolved within 7 days, otherwise they would continue their strike.

Meanwhile, police sources said Dr Ghani did not attend the minor daughter of Hemayetuddin when the child was brought to him by her mother with cut in the leg. Hearing this, Hemayetuddin rushed to the hospital and created the trouble.

Sovereignty threatened: Mushtaque

From Staff Correspondent

CHITTAGONG, May 24: Nationalist Democratic Alliance (NDA) Chairman Khandakar Mushtaque Ahmed today at a press conference here said that the independence and sovereignty of the nation is threatened by conspirators both inside and outside the country.

The NDA Chairman alleged that some anti-national forces had emerged to expose the country to "captive sovereignty" as desired by neighbouring conspirators.

"We want to live independently and we don't want captive sovereignty," Mushtaque warned.

Held at a local hotel the press conference was also addressed by Col (Retd) Abdur Rashid, Executive Chairman, and Anwar Zahid, Secretary General of the NDA.

Khandakar Mushtaque said that his alliance would welcome any move to formulate a code of political conduct for political parties in the country. He said that his alliance does not believe that restrictions should be imposed on the freedom of the press.

Expressing concern over repression on Muslims in some parts of the world including Bosnia-Herzegovina and Palestine, he called upon the Muslim countries to build a strong unity and face the challenge.

Bosnian Serbs reject proposal to post border monitors

SARAJEVO, May 24: The leader of the Bosnian Serbs on Monday rejected a proposal to post monitors along Bosnia's border with Serbia, further eroding support for the latest peace formula, reports AP. The formula, which drew favourable comments from Bosnian Serb leader Radovan Karadzic on Sunday, called for safe havens to be set up to protect Bosnian Muslims and for monitors to be deployed along Bosnia's border with Serbia. But Karadzic on Monday said posting border monitors

constituted a "violation of sovereignty." "The only solution is to accept a proposal put forth by the United States to monitor the border from the air," he told the Yugoslav news agency Tanjug. Bosnia's Muslim president, Alija Izetbegovic, rejected the plan Sunday, calling it an attempt to herd his people into "reservations" and to recognise Serb aggression in 13 months of war that has left 138,000 people dead or missing. Although Muslims compose the biggest ethnic group

in Bosnia, Serb forces control about 70 percent of Bosnia and Croats have most of the rest. The reaction from Karadzic and Izetbegovic could hold up the plan announced in Washington on Saturday by US Secretary of State Warren M. Christopher and the foreign ministers of Russia, Britain, France and Spain. Izetbegovic called on his forces "to use all means avail-

able to defend the independence and sovereignty of Bosnia-Herzegovina." "We are not going to waste any more time... in futile negotiations," he said. MEDJUGORJE (Bosnia), May 24: A Joint Croat-Muslim command in Mostar fell apart today less than a week after being set up under UN auspices to try to end communal war in the key southwest Bosnian city, UN officials said, reports Reuters.

Objection to the plan also emerged Sunday in the US. Senate Minority Leader Bob Dole said he was "deeply disappointed" because the plan "amounts to writing off Bosnia as a state by ratifying the status quo on the ground." Bosnia's Muslim-led government prefers an international peace plan drafted by mediators Cyrus Vance and Lord Owen that would divide Bosnia among the three warring parties — Serbs, Muslims and Croats. Christopher said the Vance-Owen plan was a blueprint to be used later. And Russian Foreign Minister Andrei Kozyrev on Monday insisted the plan was alive despite its rejection by the Bosnian Serbs, who would have been forced to relinquish some territory and their dreams of

linking up with Serbia. The Muslims and Croats have approved the Vance-Owen plan. "We will not take the Bosnian Serbs' 'no'; neither will we agree to the Bosnian Muslims' 'no' because this new concept... because this will mean 'no' to any reasonable political solution," he said. Meanwhile The Security Council on Monday shelved the Vance-Owen peace plan and turned to the new US-endorsed strategy of containing the war. [Earlier Story on Page 5]