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Apology

We regret to say that due to repeated power failures which affected our operation last night, we are unable to produce our normal 12-page issue today. The weekend magazine section, which will carry several features on Kazi Nazrul Islam, will be included in our paper tomorrow. We apologise for any inconvenience caused to our readers and patrons.

—Editor

NEWS BRIEFS

Pak actress Rani dead

KARACHI, May 27: Rani, a renowned Pakistani film and television star, died here today after a three-week illness, the official Associated Press of Pakistan (APP) said. Rani, 50, whose real name was Nastra, acted in more than 150 films in her 30-year career, the agency said. After her marriage with former cricketer Sarfraz Nawaz, she virtually retired from the big screen to focus her attention on television roles, reports AFP.

Reception

Chai Xi, press secretary of the Chinese Embassy in Bangladesh, held a reception at the chancery here yesterday evening. Zhang Xujiang, the new Chinese Ambassador, was present, reports BSS.

Lightning kills 3 in Habiganj

HABIGANJ, May 27: Three persons, including a minor boy, died when hit by lightning at village Pashchimbar under Ajmiriganj thana on Sunday. The victims are Mobin (18), Sabu (16) and Subal (7). Local people said lightning struck them when they were working in the fields, and they died on the spot, reports BSS.

Speaker hails Pak SC judgement

Speaker of the Jatiya Sangsad Sheikh Rezaque Ali last night hailed the judgement of the Pakistan Supreme Court restoring the National Assembly as well as the democratic government of Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif, according to a message received here from Khulna. In a statement, the Speaker said that the judgement would play an historic role in upholding democratic process in the constitutional history of Pakistan, reports BSS.

Bank holiday

The Bangladesh Bank and all other scheduled banks will remain closed on June 1, 2 and 3 for holy Eid-ul-Azha, reports BSS.

Benazir boycotts parliament session

Nawaz Sharif wins vote of confidence

ISLAMABAD, May 27: Pakistan's newly-reinstated Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif won a sweeping victory in a crucial vote of confidence today after Opposition leader Benazir Bhutto boycotted the emergency session of parliament, report Reuters, AFP.

Diplomats said the triumph removed lingering doubts over Sharif's parliamentary strength a day after a historic Supreme Court decision overturning his dismissal by President Ghulam Ishaq Khan last month.

Sharif won the confidence motion with 120 votes. Three late arriving members of the National Assembly, including a former junior minister who quit Sharif's government last

month, added their names to the list. Five dissidents from Bhutto's PDA also voted for Sharif.

Bhutto, her Pakistan People's Party and defectors from Sharif's Pakistan Muslim League party, who had formed the caretaker government after Sharif was sacked last month, boycotted the session.

The combined Pakistani opposition would wage a political struggle against the government in order to force new elections, Bhutto said.

The political crisis can be resolved only by holding elections, she told a news conference after a meeting of opposition groups.

In an implicit reference to

Wednesday's Supreme Court decision, Bhutto said, "whatever the legal decision, the people must get a chance to give their verdict."

The Minister for Parliamentary Affairs, Amir Hussain, called the motion at an emergency session of the House, saying, "The house expresses full confidence in the leadership of Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif."

Members rose to their feet to show their support.

There are 120 votes for the resolution and the motion is adopted, Speaker Gohar Ayub Khan said. Deputies thumped their benches in celebration.

There had needed 109 votes to win a confidence mo-

tion in the 217-member house.

"Now real democracy has been restored in Pakistan," Sharif told the House. "Truth has won and falsehood has been defeated."

The Prime Minister repeated his call to the opposition to join forces to curtail powers that President Ishaq Khan used to sack both Sharif and Bhutto.

"I hope if they cooperate with us we will be able to solve Pakistan's problems," the 45-year-old Prime Minister said.

On April 18, Ishaq Khan dismissed Sharif on charges of nepotism and terrorising his opponents and dissolved the National Assembly, using power



Benazir Bhutto (right) meets Pakistan's former interim premier Balakh Sher Mazari at her residence yesterday. —AFP photo

Benazir 'feels uncomfortable'

ISLAMABAD, May 27: Embittered by a Supreme Court decision that returned her political foe to power, Benazir Bhutto threatened Thursday to resign from the National Assembly, reports AP.

"I feel uncomfortable going back to such a parliament" Ms Bhutto declared, "I never accepted its legality".

In fact, Ms Bhutto and her left-leaning Pakistan People's Party boycotted a vote of confidence which Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif won Thursday. Also boycotting the session were dissident members of Sharif's Pakistan Muslim League.

Sharif got 120 votes in the 217-member body, with eight abstentions by the small but powerful religious party, Jamaat-e-Islami or Jamiyat-e-Islam.

Ms Bhutto's dreams of a political comeback were dashed

Private agency charts new horizon

By Asiuzzaman

For the first time in the country, a private agency has chartered an aircraft for commercial operation, paving the way for private sector airlines in future, aviation sources said Thursday.

Borak Travels (pvt.) Ltd., the general sales agent for Aeroflot, in agreement with the national carrier, Biman, chartered a Russian-made TU-154m aircraft, operating between Dhaka and Kuala Lumpur since May 20, they said.

The move came amid tremendous rush of passengers, mostly Bangladeshi workers going to Malaysia and coincided with the accident of Biman's DC-10-30 aircraft at the Zia International Airport earlier this month.

The chartered 160-seat aircraft from the Aeroflot initially started with one flight a day but for the past three days it has been ferrying Bangladeshi passengers twice a day.

The development was considered by some aviation experts as a "litmus test" for a private sector airline in this impoverished South Asian nation.

Borak Travels placed the proposal to Biman when several thousand Bangladeshi workers with visas for Malaysia got stranded because of limited flights to Kuala Lumpur, one Biman official said. He added that Biman accepted the proposal, on certain conditions, because the national carrier failed to operate adequate number of flights to Malaysia with its own aircraft.

The Malaysian High Commission in Dhaka issued more than 10,000 visas since May 1 ahead of the May 24 deadline for Bangladeshi workers to enter into that country.

Ties with Riyadh excellent, says Biswas

JEDDAH, May 27: The urgency for greater unity and further strengthening the bonds of friendship among the Muslim nations was emphasised at a meeting between President Abdur Rahman Biswas and King Fahd Bin Abdul Aziz at the Royal Court here Wednesday night, reports BSS.

President Biswas, who is on a visit to Saudi Arabia for performing Hajj, arrived in Jeddah Tuesday. He was accompanied by Begum Biswas and Chief Election Commissioner Justice Abdur Rouf and other members of his entourage.

During the meeting the two heads of state exchanged views on a number of national and international issues including the sufferings of the Muslims in Bosnia-Herzegovina and in Azerbaijan.

President Biswas said that an excellent relationship existed between Saudi Arabia and Bangladesh and under the present democratic government

Wages must be linked with productivity: PM

CHHAGALNAIYA, May 27: Prime Minister Begum Khaleda Zia today expressed her resolve to carry forward the politics of production and development to rid the nation of poverty and match it with other developed countries, reports BSS.

Addressing a huge public meeting at Chhagalnaiya Pilot High School field, she said that the BNP enjoys tremendous popularity and it would leave no stone unturned to remove the vast problems of the people asking them to involve themselves with the ongoing development activities.

She said accountability is a must in a democratic system and added her government would ensure it at all levels. Wages must be linked with productivity, she said, adding those would get more benefit and wages who would produce more.

But those who would be found responsible for the loss of their industrial units would have to answer for it, Begum Zia said.

The Prime Minister said the demands of raising wages and giving bonus every now and then would not be accepted for the sake of encouraging more production, ensuring discipline and turn industrial units profitable.

Citing examples of Japan and Thailand which had achieved tremendous progress in a short period, she said Bangladesh could also be turned into a developed country if we all work unitedly with sincerity and dedication and avoided the path of destruction and disorder.

Akhteruzzaman's ad-interim bail cancelled

A High Court division bench yesterday cancelled the ad-interim bail of Akhteruzzaman Babu, MP, granted by the Sessions Judge, Dhaka on May 5, and directed him to surrender before the Chief Metropolitan Magistrate, Dhaka, within June 12, reports BSS.

The bench comprised of Justice AKM Sadek and Justice Mahfuzur Rahman.

Earlier Akhteruzzaman Babu, one of the accused in the Humayun Zahir murder case, was granted ad-interim bail on surrender by Nasiruddin, Ahmed, District and Sessions Judge, Dhaka, on May 5.

Against the order passed by Sessions Judge, Dhaka, the government filed a criminal revision application before the High Court Division for cancellation of ad-interim bail to Akhteruzzaman.

After hearing both the government and the accused the High Court division set aside the order passed by the Sessions Judge, Dhaka. The Awami League, MP, was wanted by the police in connection with Advocate Humayun Zahir murder case. Humayun Zahir was shot dead in front of his Dhanmardi residence on April 8.

Number of Bangladeshi students in CIS rises sharply

Star Report

More than 2,400 Bangladeshi students have gone to attend universities in the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) on a self-financing basis since 1991.

Talking to The Daily Star on Thursday, Igor N Sarkisian, education attaché at the embassy of the Russian Federation, said that this figure indicates a sharp rise in recent years compared to the fact that only about 2,000 students from this country went to the erstwhile Soviet Union on scholarships during the 1972-91 period.

After the disintegration of the Soviet Union and the formation of the CIS in 1991 there were about 400 Bangladeshi students left in the former Soviet republics. Of them, 280 were in Russian universities, he said.

He added that the Russian government is continuing to provide them with the scholarships until they complete their education, while noting that many have since completed their courses.

However, he pointed out that the Russian government and other CIS governments have stopped providing new scholarships to foreign students since the break-up of the Soviet Union. Foreign students are now allowed to attend institutions in the CIS only on a self-financing basis.

"There have been lot of requests from Bangladeshi students for attending universities in the CIS under the new rules," Sarkisian said.

While 542 Bangladeshi students went to the CIS during 1991, as many as 1,500 went in 1992 and another 400 during the first five months of 1993.

Nearly 90 per cent of the Bangladeshi students have joined universities in Russia and Ukraine while the others are attending universities mostly in Azerbaijan and Uzbekistan, the embassy official noted.

The average cost of attending academic institutions in the CIS is about 1,500 US dollars per year which includes tuition, room, board and even health insurance expenses. However, a student on a shoe-string budget can manage with just 800 dollars a year at some institutions.

Sarkisian noted that since all universities continue to remain state institutions and supported by government grants, expenses of all students, including foreigners, are subsidised.

Although the universities in the CIS can now admit foreign students directly, he said, three Bangladeshi firms have been designated as consultants to recommend eligible students for admission in academic institutions in the former Soviet republics.

Trade Empire, Surma Education Consultants Company and Druzba Overseas Company were engaged by Inkorvuz, a Russian education ministry organ dealing with the admission of foreign students in the CIS, to check transcripts and other papers of applicants before recommending them for admission.

There are also a number of unauthorised firms, claiming to represent universities in the CIS, operating in Bangladesh against whom allegations of fraud have been levelled.

Some Bangladeshis are using the student visas to enter Russia as a transit point for going to western Europe.

Sarkisian advised all students seeking admission in universities in the CIS to contact the Russian embassy to

Khaleda welcomes Sharif's return to power

Prime Minister Begum Khaleda Zia yesterday welcomed the reinstatement of Nawaz Sharif as Prime Minister of Pakistan terming the Pakistan Supreme Court verdict as an assertion of the rule of law and democracy, reports BSS.

"The verdict of the Supreme Court has reasserted the rule of law and democracy in Pakistan", Begum Zia said in a message sent to Pakistan premier Nawaz Sharif.

The Prime Minister also felicitated Nawaz Sharif on the reinstatement of the National Assembly and his democratically-elected government in Pakistan.

"I also congratulate you on the renewed confidence entrusted upon you by the National Assembly of Pakistan", Begum Zia said.

Begum Zia expressed the hope that the existing friendship which so happily characterised the relationship between Bangladesh and Pakistan would grow stronger in the years to come.

She also wished Sharif's good health, happiness, long life and his continued services for the wellbeing and prosperity of the friendly people of Pakistan.

No alternative to movement: Hasina

Leader of the Opposition in Parliament Sheikh's Hasina yesterday alleged that the "inefficiency and failures" of the BNP government had pushed the nation towards a "devastating crisis", reports UN3.

"There is no alternative to movement. We must unitedly stand against repression and violation of the constitution by the government. We must voice our protest," Hasina told an extended meeting of her youth front, the Jubo League.

The Awami League President said the law and order situation has deteriorated alarmingly and the economy has been shattered during the rule of the present government which has now begun a false campaign against the opposition to cover up its "misdeeds".

Recalling the aims of the anti-autocracy movement, Hasina said people had expected that their welfare will be the prime concern of the government. "But what are we observing? ... The country is being governed in the same autocratic style of the past. The power has been concentrated in the hands of the same vested groups."

The Opposition leader alleged that the BNP which came to power following an "entente" with Golan Azam and Jamaat had betrayed the blood of the martyrs.

It is the inherent character of the BNP to betray the causes of the people and the nation, Hasina observed. "We are not surprised at BNP's betrayal with us in the parliament. The main objective of the BNP is to stick to power," she said.

Hasina said the ruling BNP has no capability to protect democracy. She said due to ineptitude of the government, democracy is now at stake despite "unprecedented" cooperation from the Awami League.

She accused the administration of misusing Anti-Terrorism Act against the opposition, including the leaders and workers of Awami League and its front organisations. She said her party workers were being arrested on "false" allegations throughout the country.

Hasina alerted her youth workers about a "conspiracy" against the Awami League and called for fanning all anti-Awami League designs by strengthening the Jubo League.

Two minor boys drown in city

By Staff Correspondent

Two schoolboys drowned in a pond at Natun Paltan, Azimpur, in the capital Thursday.

The boys were identified as Atiqur Rahman, 12, and Al Amin, 9. They were students of Class VI and IV respectively of the Natun Paltan Line High School, family members said.

The tragedy took place when the two friends went for a swim in a pond inside the Irani graveyard at Natun Paltan — just beside the school — during their tiffin break at 1 pm.

Witnesses said that some local people recovered the bodies from the pond after about an hour.

Atiq was the son of a businessman Abdul Mannan Mollah of 52, Peelkhan Road while Al Amin resided at 38/16, Azimpur, Chhoto Daira Sharif. His father, Mobarak Hossain, is also a businessman.

Elections erase Khmer Rouge from Cambodia's future: Sihanouk

PHNOM PENH, May 27: The idea of the Khmer Rouge joining a government of reconciliation seemed dead today after head of state Prince Norodom Sihanouk said the success of UN-run elections had erased the radicals from Cambodia's future.

"We are a Sihanoukist party. What Sihanouk decides, that is what we do," You Hockry, cabinet director of the royalist opposition party Funcinpec, told Reuters on Thursday.

Funcinpec, a French acronym for National United Front for an Independent, Neutral, Peaceful and Cooperative Cambodia, is expected to do well when balloting started on Saturday after six days of voting.

The party, led by Sihanouk's son Prince Norodom Ranariddh, had, during the election campaign, pressed the idea of a reconciliation government.

Such a government would have included the Khmer Rouge, which has dropped out of an all-faction peace pact, refused to participate in the elections and done everything it could, including violence, to keep Cambodians from voting.

Despite the Khmer Rouge efforts, nearly 90 per cent of registered voters refused to be intimidated and cast their votes in the first multiparty election in Cambodia for decades.

Prince Sihanouk said on Wednesday the huge turnout was a historic defeat for the Maoist guerrilla faction that would remove it from Cambodia's future.

The Khmer Rouge put Cambodia through a Maoist revolution in the 1970s that killed a million people through execution, disease, starvation and forced labour.

It was driven from power by a Vietnamese invasion in 1978 but remained a powerful military force and for this reason was included in the UN peace process.

Prince Sihanouk said the government that would emerge from the election could decide whether or not to offer the Khmer Rouge a role.

You Hockry said there was no possibility of the Khmer Rouge joining a government,

Ogata invited to visit Myanmar: Mya Thin

Myanmar Home Minister Lt. General Mya Thin yesterday said that the repatriation of the Myanmar refugees would be completed "as soon and as quickly as possible," reports BSS.

Talking to newsmen at the Zia International Airport ending his four-day official goodwill visit to Bangladesh, he said the Rohingya refugees would be repatriated till the last man.

Asked for his message to the Myanmar refugees, Mya Thin said, "Come back and build the nation."

Home Minister Abdul Matin Chowdhury saw his Myanmar counterpart off at the airport. Present, among others, were the Acting Home Secretary Saifur Rahman, Myanmar Ambassador to Bangladesh Soe Myint and the Bangladesh Ambassador to

Myanmar Mustafa Faruque Mohammad.

The Myanmar Home Minister said his visit had been "cent per cent successful."

"We came here on a goodwill visit for better relations, among not only two brothers but also two twins. Our purpose has been fully achieved," he said.

The Myanmar Home Minister, replying to a query, said that the Myanmar government had invited the UN High Commissioner for Refugees Dr Sadako Ogata.

"We have invited Dr Ogata. The visit will take place at a mutually convenient date," said the minister.

Asked by what time his country expected the repatriation to be completed, he said, "as I said before, we would like

Triangular clash leaves 38 hurt in Chokoria

From Our Correspondent

COX'S BAZAR, May 27: At least 38 people, including eight policemen, were injured in a three-pronged clash near the Chokoria thana complex Thursday afternoon.

The clash followed sit-in programme of the Chokoria Unnayan Sangram Parishad which called for development of the area and resignation of the Thana Nirbahi Officer (TNO).

Witnesses said that the clash ensued after an armed group, opposing the sit-in programme, attacked the people who laid siege to the thana headquarters at around 3 pm. It flared up as police resorted to baton-charge on the clashing groups, they added.