

Suspend UN poll results, demands Phnom Penh

PHNOM PENH, June 6: The Phnom Penh government demanded today suspension of the UN election results until an independent inquiry was held, saying its previous demand for limited new elections was not enough to correct "massive irregularities," reports AFP.

However, a government spokesman hinted that the Cambodian People's Party (CPP) would let the matter drop and accept the election result if the coalition government proposed Thursday by Prince Norodom Sihanouk was allowed to form.

By setting up this national government, we can avoid this situation," senior advisor and Deputy Minister Khieu Kanharith said at a press conference.

The UN Transitional Authority in Cambodia (UNTAC) has already certified the May 23-28 voting process as free and fair. The nearly completed results gave the opposition Royalist FUNCINPEC party 45.3 per cent to the government's Cambodian People's Party (CPP) 38.7 per cent.

FUNCINPEC has accused the CPP of trying to blackmail its way into having more power than it actually won.

CPP spokesman Sokan denied that the new demand came because the government lost the election, and said the government would cede power if the independent panel ruled that CPP lost the election.

"Because the irregularities are so large in number and include so many different types of problems and because the actions of the UNTAC during the electoral process have been placed in question, the CPP requests that the election results be held in abeyance until an impartial panel can hold hearing to consider the large number of election disputes and irregularities," the CPP president Chea Sim said in a letter to UNTAC chief Yasushi Akashi.

Under the UN electoral law, an UNTAC committee can be appointed to investigate complaints, but the government said UNTAC officials would not be impartial judges and de-

manded that all parties agree to independent panel members who would hold public hearings.

An UNTAC spokesman could not immediately be reached for comment.

Meanwhile, Prince Norodom Sihanouk threw up his hands at a public rally Sunday and declared he could do nothing to help save Cambodia until the United Nations left.

Prince Sihanouk said there was nothing more he could do to bring together the government, which holds power, and the opposition Royalist party PUNCINPEC, which fell short of an absolute majority but won last week's election.

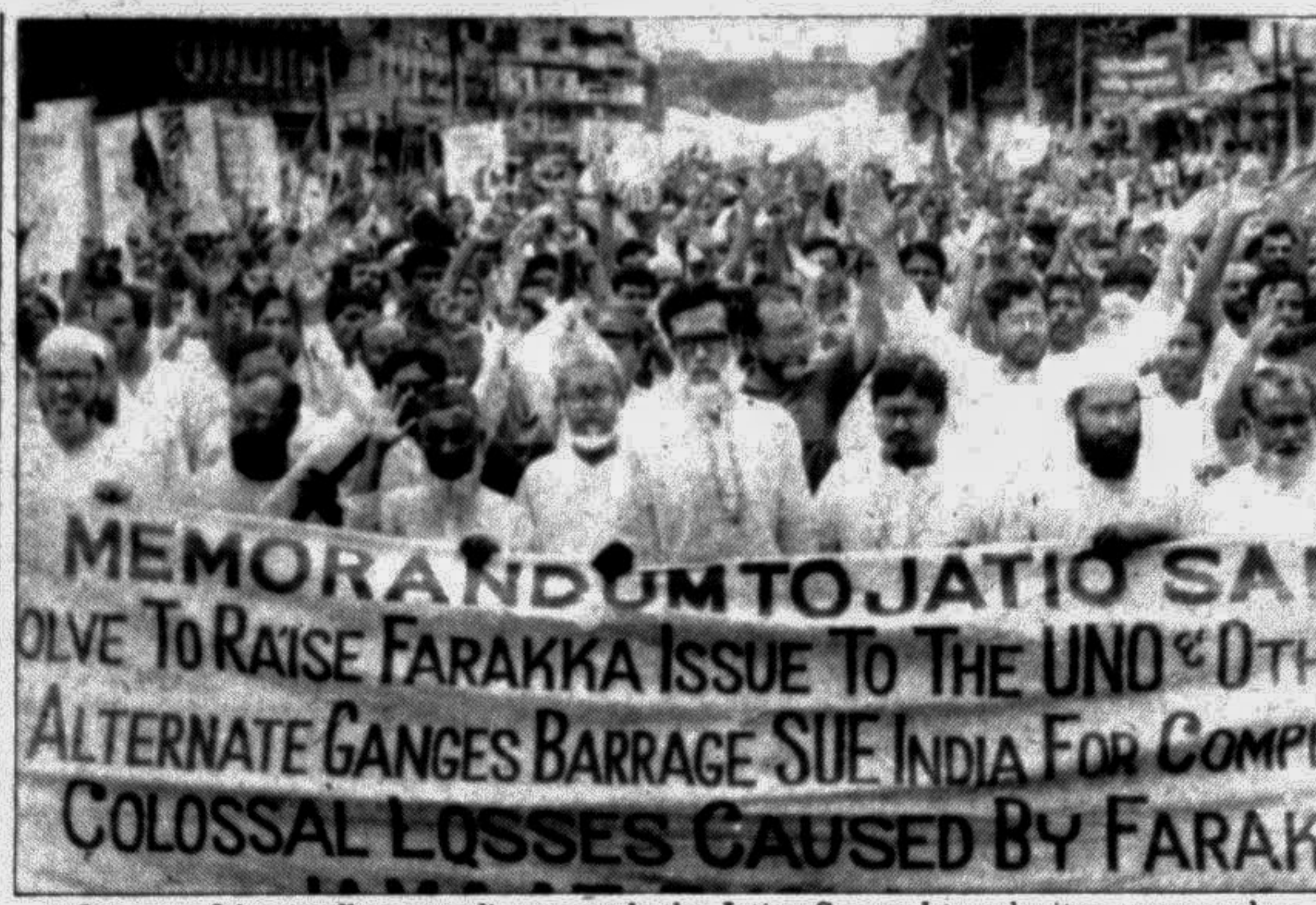
Sihanouk tried unsuccessfully to form a coalition government between the two sides.

"We will have to wait until September when UNTAC leaves. They will transfer authority to Cambodia and give us independence," he told a government-organised rally of more than 5,000 people.

"I feel like a doctor who has come to heal Cambodia but my medicine is not helpful," Sihanouk said.

He appeared healthy, even though he told UNTAC officials he could not meet with them this weekend because he was ill.

The rally and Prince Sihanouk's remarks were seen as a way to pressure UNTAC into allowing the formation of the coalition government.



A Jamaat-e-Islami rally proceeding towards the Jatiya Sangsad to submit a memorandum yesterday. — Star photo

Jamaat

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Ganges barrage to offset the dehydrational impact of the Indian dam.

In the memo, Jamaat made an appeal to all MPs irrespective of their party affiliations to play a strong role in realising the country's legitimate share of the Ganges water.

The national assembly should take specific steps through discussion in the current session of parliament," it said, urging all MPs to play a bold role in solving the problem.

"India has been behaving with Bangladesh inhumanly violating all international norms and laws," it said and criticised the role of the present government in resolving the Farakka issue and other bilateral issues with India.

Earlier, a rally was held at the Moghbar crossing, which was addressed by Shamsur Rahman, Mohammad Kamruzzaman, Abdul Kader Mollah, Prof Mujibur Rahman, Jasimuddin Sarkar and Dr Syed Abdullah Mohammad Taher. Mominul Islam Patwari presided.

Obituary references

The Jatiya Sangsad yesterday adopted obituary references for three prominent politicians, reports BSS.

They were former member of parliament Lutfar Rahman, former member of the erstwhile Provincial Assembly, Abdus Sobhan and Advocate Kalimuddin Ahmed.

The Speaker Shaikh Razzak Ali moved the motion of obituary references and the House approved it unanimously.

Govt college teachers start token strike tomorrow

Bangladesh Government College Teachers' Association yesterday warned that they would go for an indefinite strike from June 17 if their 12-point demands were not met by today, reports UNB.

The association in a statement also announced an action programme from tomorrow (Tuesday) which will include token work stoppage from 10 am to 12 noon and wearing of black badges.

The token strike will be extended for three hours from June 12 to 15 if the demands are not met till then.

The association said it will launch the indefinite strike from June 17, boycotting the Higher Secondary Certificate Examinations (HSC) scheduled to begin on the same day.

They urged the Prime Minister, Minister for Education, the Finance Minister, State Minister for Education and State Minister for Establishment to help meet their demands.

The demands include compensation and promotion to the affected teachers following direct recruitment to the posts of assistant professors, creation of posts in 233 colleges, particularly in 57 colleges, to increase the standard of education, appointment of new lecturers, promotion etc.

They also demanded implementation of some decisions already taken at meetings between the association and the authorities in recent months.

DCCI chief

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compared to those on raw materials and components imported by local industries, produced same products have rendered these units sick."

The DCCI president called for a more pragmatic approach to rationalise direct taxes in order to encourage savings and investments.

Call to include jute spinning under WB reform plan

By Staff Correspondent
The Bangladesh Jute Spinners' Association, at a meeting Sunday, urged the government to bring the jute spinning mills under the World Bank proposed reform programmes for the jute sector.

The meeting, presided over by the president of the Bangladesh Jute Spinners' Association (BJSA), reviewed the overall problems of the jute sector and the spinning sector in particular and proposed some measures to solve the various problems.

The proposals include a reduction of the interest rate on working capital, introduction of a flexible exchange rate, withdrawal of the 'peak hour' electricity rate for the export-oriented industries, exemption of 'tax at source' on the export value and providing the jute exporters with export incentives.

The meeting felt that Bangladeshi exporters were not being able to compete with the exporters of India and some other neighbouring countries because of irrational currency exchange rates.

It also alleged that the scheduled banks of the country did not reduce the interest rate on working capital although the Bangladesh Bank had reduced the bank rate.

The BJSA meeting urged the government to extend the time-limit for repayment of loans of the jute mills and to waive interest.

Top level changes in admin

Director General of Bangladesh Television Anisul Huq Chowdhury has been appointed Officer on Special Duty (additional secretary) in the Ministry of Establishment, reports BSS.

AKM Salamattullah, who was Officer on Special Duty (additional secretary) in the ministry, has been appointed Director General of Bangladesh Television.

Meanwhile, M Saiful Islam, Officer on Special Duty of the ministry of establishment (additional secretary), made Chairman of Bangladesh Export Processing Zone Authority (BEZA).

M Golam Kibria, Officer on Special Duty (additional secretary) of the same ministry, has been appointed Chairman of Bangladesh Inland Water Transport Authority (BIWTA).
The services of Brig (ret) Chowdhury Khalequzzaman, Chairman of Bangladesh Fisheries Development Corporation, has been placed under the Ministry of Foreign Affairs for appointment as ambassador.
Cirdap programme officer Dr Saleuddin Ahmed has been appointed Director General of Bangladesh Academy for Rural Development (BARD), Comilla for two years term.

The Midnight File

Ruling party leading in Spanish polls

MADRID, June 6: The first three exit polls broadcast by Spanish television showed the ruling Socialist Party slightly ahead of the opposition Conservative People's Party in today's legislative election, reports AFP.

Indian troops kill three infiltrators

NEW DELHI (India), June 6: Indian troops shot and killed three guerrillas trying to cross from Pakistan into the disputed state of Kashmir, Press Trust of India reported. Pakistani soldiers fired Saturday at Indian troops to divert their attention as the infiltrators cross into India, Press Trust reported. Indian troops returned fire, killing three infiltrators and wounding several others, Press Trust reported. Defense ministry spokesman were not immediately available for comment, reports AP.

Britain to deploy women soldiers in Ireland

LONDON, June 6: Britain will deploy armed women soldiers on patrols in Northern Ireland for the first time in the autumn, the Ministry of Defense said Saturday. A spokesman said for the first time women will drive armoured personnel carriers into the most dangerous parts of the British-ruled province, where more than 3,000 people have died in political and sectarian violence since 1969, reports AP.

Seen from the Gallery

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Minister, Mirza Golam Hafiz which, curiously enough, appeared to be addressed more to the Prime Minister sitting next to him than to either the House or the Speaker, did not cut much ice. The argument mainly consisted of citing a 1974 precedent during which the then President left the country without naming an acting President. While it was refreshing to observe that the ruling BNP had finally found something of the pre-75 period worthy of reference and even of emulation, yet the point remained that the country was without a clear chain of command during the absence of the Head of State on a Hajj pilgrimage.

Speaking for the treasury bench Rafiqul Islam Miah and Nazmul Huda, both barristers, said that the need for naming an acting President arises only in the case of the inability of the President to carry out his functions and that such was not the case. Some, including Nazmul Huda, went on to further state that before leaving President Biswas had left satisfied and confident that the functions of the Presidency would be carried out smoothly during his absence and therefore there was no need for naming an acting President.

Experts feel that the arguments of the treasury bench are quite untenable and that the government was at fault in not having named an acting President. The Constitution, according to them, is very clear on the subject — that in case of absence of the President on

trips abroad, the Speaker should act on his behalf. If one takes a liberal view of it all, it can perhaps be said that we live and learn, and in this case also we are learning from experience. The treasury bench, therefore, should admit that there was an oversight and put the matter behind them.

However, a point needs to be made that there appears to be a reluctance on the part of the ruling party to adhere to some of the constitutional provisions that are usually conformed to in a parliamentary system. There is the more serious case of the failure of the government to name an acting Prime Minister when Begum Zia is on her trips abroad. Why is this reluctance to clearly identify the chain of command in the cabinet? The obvious impression that such reluctance gives is that the PM is either not willing, or is not in a position, to name a Number Two in her cabinet. Hence she is unable to designate an acting Prime Minister. This does not speak of a well-disciplined party, nor of a well-organised cabinet. These are ordinarily small things, but in times of crises may portend very serious consequences. Some critics say that the PM herself is reluctant to name an acting PM for reasons best known to herself.

Whatever may be her inner compulsions, it is definitely a bad government practice. The chain of command must be clear and the hierarchy in the government should be unambiguous and for the public to see and know. Parliament did well to discuss the acting President issue. It must also be said that the debate, refreshingly for a change, was conducted not on partisan lines, but with the seriousness and dignity that the issue deserved. Compliments to all the members who took part in it. Let us have more of such serious and well-focused debates.

Opposition

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The Speaker repeatedly announced the name of Mirza Azam of the AL who was top among the 53 members listed for discussion on the topic but Azam remained unmoved in his seat heeding his senior party colleagues' signal not to speak.

Chief Whip of the Opposition Mohammad Nasim took the floor and said that "We should honour the business advisory committee's decision. The committee had also considered the problem of the journalists covering the parliament regarding their deadline." The Speaker said the advisory committee had not taken any such rigid decision. The committee left it to the Speaker's discretion, he said, adding that "If necessary I can continue beyond nine."
Deputy Leader of the Opposition Abus Samad Azad then conceded "You have the authority". But he added that the members had participated in an exhaustive day-long session and most of his own party colleagues had already left the House believing it would continue only until 9 pm.
The Speaker insisted that the absentees would be given the chance tomorrow (Monday) and requested a continuation of the day's proceedings for another half hour since only one out of the four bills was passed until then.
But the Opposition remained adamant and were preparing to walk out when the Speaker again asked the Deputy Leader of the House to suggest ways to resolve the matter.
Prof Chowdhury said "It is up to you. If you think that the bills can be passed by tomorrow then you can adjourn the House for the day."
Thus the Speaker adjourned the House till 10 am Monday. By this time 20 minutes of his proposed half hour extension had already elapsed.

Lively debate in JS

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the minister added.

As many as 16 MPs from both benches took part in the debate with both the Prime Minister and the Leader of the Opposition present in the House.

The opposition MPs maintained that Article 54 clearly stated that the Speaker would function as the acting President in the absence of the President. They said that this constitutional obligation was breached and criticised the ruling party for its reluctance to admit the mistake.

Barrister Moudud Ahmed of the Jatiya Party (JP), referring to the 1974 ruling, said that the then Speaker's ruling was virtually designed to cover a similar lapse. Such mistakes should not be repeated, the JP leader asserted. Moudud suggested that the treasury bench should not hesitate to admit the mistake.

Salahuddin Qader Chowdhury, the solitary National Democratic Party (NDP) member, observed that as per the Constitution, the Speaker automatically became the acting President the moment the latter had left the country.

The functions performed by Shaikh Razzak Ali during May 26 to June 5 as Speaker were not beyond question," the NDP leader said, adding "The acting President can not function as Speaker."
Tofael Ahmed of the AL said that there could not be a constitutional vacuum in case the President went abroad. He said that when the then President Sheikh Mujibur Rahman went to Jamaica in 1975, Syed Nazrul Islam was made the acting President.

Mohammad Nasim, chief whip of the opposition, accused the government of "its tendency to justify mistakes."
Information Minister Barrister Nazmul Huda told the House that the President, on the eve of his departure for Saudi Arabia, had considered a past ruling on an identical issue. Parliament should honour the ruling of a past Speaker. The minister observed that the ruling given by the Speaker in 1974 was perfectly valid today and President Biswas had done nothing unconstitutional.
Works Minister Barrister Rafiqul Islam Miah, although defending the Law Minister, observed that the Constitution in fact did not contain any particular provision to deal with such situations. The minister, however, felt that the House

5 Iraqis to die for war crimes in Kuwait

KUWAIT, June 6: Five Iraqis were sentenced to death in Kuwait today on charges relating to Iraq's seven-month occupation of the Emirate, the official Kuwait news agency KUNA reported, says Reuter.

KUNA said the five were convicted of attempting to recruit Kuwaitis to join Iraq's ruling Baath Party following the August 1990 invasion of the Emirate.

Diarrhoea claims 1698 in four months, JS told

A total of 1,698 people died of diarrhoea disease in the country in last four months till April 30, Deputy Health Minister Sirajul Haq told the parliament yesterday, reports UNB.

He was replying to a question from Mohammad Abdus Shaheed of the Awami League.

Some opposition MPs, including Mohiuddin Ahmed of the Awami League, refused to accept the official figure of death claiming that the actual figure should be higher than quoted by the minister.

According to available figures, some 310 people died of the disease in Laxmipur, 267 in Pirojpur, 192 in Patuakhali and 180 in Barguna.
Two killed in road mishaps
By Staff Correspondent
Two people including a minor girl were killed in separate road accidents in the city yesterday.
Our Dhaka Medical College Correspondent reports, a ten-year-old girl was killed and three others were injured when a speeding jeep ran over an auto rickshaw near Shabujbag police station early Sunday.
Meanwhile, in another accident at Dholaipur in the city an unidentified rickshawpuller, 50, died on the spot when a truck dashed his tri-cycle near Geet-Sangeet Cinema hall Sunday noon.

Guru's attempt to 'exorcise' India of violence ends in fiasco

AYODHYA, June 6: Fears of possible clashes between rival devotees and a boycott by Hindu priests marred a controversial Indian guru's plans to hold a prayer meeting today near the toppled Babri Mosque, reports AFP.

Residents of this holy pilgrimage town in northern India mostly stayed indoors as carloads of Hindu priests arrived to attend globe-trotting Guru Chandraswami's "Som Yagya," or prayer by fire, for world peace.
"Let there be peace on earth," a handful of Hindu priests chanted after the ceremonial fires were lit some three hours before the guru arrived in a convoy of 60 vehicles filled with followers, bodyguards and paramilitary troops.

Jeeps fitted with loudspeakers cruised the town announcing the arrival of the millionaire guru who holds sway over much of the Indian leadership and counts royalty, film stars and captains of industry among his devotees.
"I am here," the bearded and portly Chandraswami announced on arriving at the sparsely attended venue some 900 feet from the ruins of the mosque destroyed by Hindu extremists on December 6.
A crowd of about 2,000 people had gathered in the tent

Floods in Tripura, Assam, Meghalaya

NEW DELHI, June 6: Thousands of people were rendered homeless in India's remote north eastern villages and towns after heavy rains and floods the state-run television reported today, reports AFP.

The flash floods, caused by monsoon rains, had inundated low-lying areas across the states of Assam, Meghalaya and Tripura, the television said.

In Tripura, more than 10,000 villagers fled after their mud-and-brick homes came under a sea of water, it added. Officials said rivers in all the states had crossed the danger mark and were still rising.

Letter bomb explodes in Bombay

NEW DELHI, June 6: A "letter bomb" exploded today inside a letter box in India's Bombay city, causing damage but no injuries, the Press Trust of India (PTI) reported, says AFP.

The blast ripped apart the letter box located outside a railway station, destroying all mail, PTI said. Police said the explosion was caused by a letter apparently stuffed with chemicals.

WB economist

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necessary to review and upgrade the economic analysis of the project.
The World Bank official will also conduct studies on the country's transport sector and recommend ways for its development.
He will study the master-plan for the country's ports and their trade facilitation system and recommend measures for integration of the Dhaka, Chittagong and Mongla ports.
The WB economist will also review the Rural Roads and Market Project, the Port System Development Project, the Third Inland Water Transportation Project and some other WB-financed projects during his visit.