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NEWS BRIEFS

MOU on air services with Uzbekistan

Bangladesh and Uzbekistan in Dhaka yesterday signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) on air services between the two countries. Under the agreement, the national airlines of Bangladesh and Uzbekistan will operate two flights each per week to each other's capital. The MOU was signed at Biman Bhavan following a two-day meeting between the visiting 4-member Uzbek delegation and the officials of Civil Aviation and Tourism Ministry and Biman, reports UNB.

CU holiday July 13-15

CHITTAGONG, July 6: The offices of the University of Chittagong will remain closed from July 13 to July 15, on account of rainy season, reports BBS.

RU students observe strike

RAJSHAH, July 6: A student strike was observed on the Rajshahi University campus today in protest against the arrest of two Chhatra Oikya leaders, reports UNB.

Heroin recovered, two arrested

By Staff Correspondent A special squad of CID police recovered 500 grams of heroin worth about Taka 30 lakhs and arrested two persons in this connection from a hotel at Islampur Road in the city Monday. The persons arrested were Mehedi Hasan, 25, and Yunus, 26. Police sources alleged that the persons were the members of an international drug trafficking chain.

No agreement on terms of reference Formation of JS probe body now uncertain

By Staff Correspondent

The idea of a parliamentary probe committee to examine opposition allegations of irregularities in the Ministry of Agriculture, Irrigation, Water Development and Flood Control was all but abandoned yesterday.

The fate of the committee appeared to have been sealed in the Jatiya Sangsad (JS) last night following the failure of the treasury and opposition benches to agree on the committee's terms of reference.

Seventeen legislators of both benches debated the terms of reference, proposed by Speaker Shaikh Ruzsak Ali in the House for more than four hours yesterday evening.

The Speaker, while proposing the terms in black and white, maintained that the committee should investigate

only into the specific allegations made against the Agriculture Minister and his ministry by Awami League (AL) lawmaker Tofael Ahmed in the House on June 26.

The chair argued that since the proposed committee was to be a special body under a particular clause of the Rules of Procedure of Parliament, it had to probe into specific allegations only.

The treasury bench accepted the Speaker's proposal but the Awami League rejected, it saying that limiting the scope of investigations would frustrate the spirit behind the committee's formation.

The AL demanded that the terms of reference submitted by it on Monday be accepted by the Speaker.

Jatiya Party leader Barrister

Moudud Ahmed, Jamaat-Islami leader Matur Rahman Nizami, Workers Party leader Rashed Khan Menon and Suranjit Sengupta of the Ganatantri Party urged the Speaker to take more time before finalising the committee's mandate for the sake of unanimity. These leaders felt that the committee would not be able to function effectively without a consensus on the terms of reference.

The treasury bench leaders, on the other hand, argued that there are parliamentary standing committees on each and every ministry to monitor their regular functions.

The concept of a special parliamentary probe committee arises solely in cases of 'special and specific' allegations, they

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Menon, Mannan start latest row

Deputy Speaker Humayun Khan Panthi yesterday sent a call notice of Rashed Khan Menon to the Standing Committee on the Civil Aviation and Tourism Ministry for scrutiny of alleged corruption and irregularities regarding a tender, reports UNB.

The allegation referred to the approval of tender by the Civil Aviation Ministry for construction of four boarding bridges at Zia International Airport.

The chair gave the ruling following persistent demands by opposition members, including Menon, who alleged that the Civil Aviation Ministry had resorted to irregularities in giving the work order to Z-Way Company of America in a 'motivated and pre-planned' manner.

State Minister for Civil Aviation and Tourism Abdul Mannan opposed sending the notice to the Standing Committee. Refuting Menon's allegation, he claimed that the work order was given to the Z-See Page 12 Col 1

Pak opposition's ultimatum to Sharif for polls

ISLAMABAD, July 6: The Pakistan Opposition has delivered an ultimatum to the government of Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif, threatening a major demonstration here unless elections are called within the next four days, reports AFP.

Sources said a long march on Islamabad would be held between July 9 and July 11.

Unlike a previous march by the Opposition on the capital in November, which was aborted, the new call late Monday for a mass demonstration comes amid a political crisis as Sharif engages in open conflict with head of state Ghulam Ishaq Khan. He faces opposition in the four provinces and the army is becoming increasingly impatient.

We are giving four days to Nawaz Sharif to announce elections otherwise he will face an

unprecedented show of power by the masses, said Nawabzada Nasrullah, one of the leaders of the Opposition at the conclusion of the all parties conference (APC).

The APC groups all the parliamentary and extra-parliamentary Opposition parties, including the Pakistani Peoples Party (PPP) of Benazir Bhutto.

Several thousand militants and Opposition sympathisers demonstrated Saturday in Lahore against the government.

Sharif, who was today attending the Istanbul summit of the Organization of Economic Cooperation, said before leaving that the crisis was 'artificial and deliberately created by certain political forces.'

He reiterated that he had no intention of calling elections before the end of his mandate in 1995.

Cabinet for keeping farm prices stable

The cabinet yesterday approved in principle the recommendations of the Ministry of Agriculture relating to the steps to keep prices of agricultural products stable and improve the economic condition of the farmers, reports BBS.

The approval was given at the regular weekly meeting of the cabinet held at Bangabhaban with Prime Minister Begum Khaleda Zia in the chair.

The details of the steps to be taken, both on long-term and short-term basis, will be examined by a high-level committee and their recommendations will be placed before the cabinet for consideration.

The cabinet also approved the draft of a bill to amend the Supreme Court Judges (Leaves, Pension and Privileges) Ordinance-1982 which aims at enhancing the pension amount of the Supreme Court

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G-7 summit opens in Tokyo today Clinton, Miyazawa claim progress in resolving trade disputes



TOKYO, July 6: World economic superpowers Japan and the United States reported progress today in resolving a long-running trade dispute threatening the success of the G-7 rich nations' summit about to open in Tokyo, reports Reuter.

President Bill Clinton flew in and immediately plunged into discussions with host Prime Minister Kiichi Miyazawa, hoping to smooth ties ruffled by persistent huge Japanese trade surpluses.

Both men later told reporters they made progress in their one-hour meeting. Clinton told reporters as he met Japanese Prime Minister Kiichi Miyazawa, "I do believe we made some progress" in the talks aimed at settling a new framework to govern economic relations between the two financial superpowers.

Miyazawa was also asked how the trade talks were going. "People are working very hard on that now," he said.

The two leaders were meeting ahead of the Group of Seven (G-7) industrial nations' summit opening in the Japanese capital on Wednesday.

Clinton and Miyazawa said negotiators would continue discussions in hopes of an accord over the next few days as they and the leaders of Britain, France, Italy, Canada and Germany meet to discuss global economic issues.

The three-day meeting begins tomorrow with other inter-

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Pranab Mukherjee to resign temporarily

NEW DELHI, July 6: Indian Commerce Minister Pranab Mukherjee will have to resign, at least temporarily, because he cannot be elected to Parliament within the required time, the Press Trust of India (PTI) reported on Tuesday, says Reuter.

Mukherjee was inducted into the cabinet on January 17 and under Indian law had six months to enter Parliament. All government ministers have to be members of one of the Houses of Parliament.

3 Indians die in road mishap

By Staff Correspondent Three Indian businessmen and their local driver met a tragic end in a road accident on the Dhaka-Chittagong highway near Choudagram in Comilla Monday afternoon.

The victims were going from Dhaka by a Nissan Petrol Jeep to Chittagong when a bus coming from the opposite direction hit them head on. Three of the victims died on the spot while another died at the Comilla Sadar Hospital.

The victims were identified as P.V Paul, Ranjan Chopra, Sanjay Singh and the driver of the vehicle Hanif.

It deceased P.V Paul and Ranjan Chopra were garments buying agents with offices in Dhaka. Sanjay Singh, also an Indian national, had come here recently as a representative of a Hong Kong company.

Autopsy on the bodies was carried out at the Comilla Sadar Hospital yesterday morning after which the bodies of the Indians were

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Govt to cut re-lending rates for public agencies

By Inam Ahmed The government will substantially lower its re-lending rates to the public agencies during this fiscal year.

According to a highly placed Finance Ministry source, the rates will be lowered by two to three per cent.

The government re-lends the foreign assistance it gets from the donors to the agencies for different projects and the interest rates are fixed depending on the domestic inflation rate and sometimes, the conditionalities set by the donors.

Sources said the public agencies showing encouraging signs of performance and viability would get loans at a minimum repayment rate. In previous years, the re-

lending rates varied between 11.5 per cent and 12.5 per cent, but for some agencies, it was even as high as 18 per cent.

Sources said with the cuts in re-lending rates, the government would be able to reduce the losses in the public sector.

The World Bank, in the last Paris Consortium meeting, had asked the government to lower the losses in the public sector from the staggering Taka 1500 crore to 1200 crore.

Other than cutting down interest rates, the government has also asked the public agencies to reduce their costs by at least 20 per cent through different administrative mea-

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Myanmar won't issue transit passes unless 'smuggler' freed

From Our Correspondent

COX'S BAZAR, July 6: The Myanmar authorities have informed Bangladesh that they would not issue transit passes and would keep the transit boat service suspended unless the alleged Myanmar heroin smuggler Zahir Ahmed, arrested by the Bangladesh Rifles (BDR) is released.

This was conveyed by the Deputy Director of the Myanmar border immigration headquarter, U Min Thu to the commanding officer of the 39th Battalion of the BDR, Major A.K.M Nazimul Islam during a flag meeting at Arakan Maiday.

But the BDR officials told their Myanmar counterpart that charges against Zahir would be investigated and necessary actions taken against him.

Yangon has suspended the transit facility for the last five days.

Kashmir violence death toll rises to 47

SRINAGAR, July 6: At least 47 people, mostly Muslim militants fighting Indian rule in the northern state of Jammu and Kashmir, were killed in gunbattles raging across the Himalayan region, police and rebel sources said today, reports Reuter.

The militants retaliated against security forces, assaults by kidnapping three government officials in Kashmir's Baramulla district today, they said.

Lift arms embargo on Bosnia: Mostafiz

By Staff Correspondent

Foreign Minister ASM Mostafizur Rahman yesterday opposed any sort of ethnic partitioning of Bosnia-Herzegovina and called on the international community to lift the arms embargo to enable the Bosnian Muslims defend themselves.

"We oppose the dismemberment of Bosnia-Herzegovina and the ethnic partitioning of the country among Serbs, Croats and Muslim which will eventually lead to the elimination of the Muslims from their motherland," he said while inaugurating a day-long seminar on the Bosnian crisis at the BANSOC auditorium.

The Foreign Minister also strongly advocated for lifting the international arms embargo on

Bosnia. The arms embargo has exposed the virtually unarmed Bosnian Muslims to a great threat as it has not disarmed the aggressors. . . . Therefore, it is morally indefensible to compel one party to the conflict to face the other without the means of legitimate self-defence," the minister said.

The Foreign Minister reiterated that despite its poor resources, Bangladesh is ready to accept Bosnian refugees, should the need arise.

A message by Prime Minister Begum Khaleda Zia was also read out at the inaugural session which was presided by Ahmed Farid, Secretary, Science and Technology ministry and a former ambassador.

Begum Zia urged the international community to urgently take more decisive action to reverse this aggression against the Bosnian Muslims and safeguard its sovereignty, territorial integrity, security and safety of the people.

Otherwise, a whole population will be wiped off the face of the European continent, Khaleda said in the message.

The Prime Minister expressed deep concern at the brutal aggression against the defenceless Bosnia-Herzegovina, a member of the United Nations, unleashed by the illegal and immoral Serbian aggression.

The horrible incidents of violence, rape, murder, genocide

and ethnic cleansing taking place in Bosnia now, have caused consternation all over the world, she said.

Begum Zia voiced the joining of the people and the government of Bangladesh with the rest of mankind "in unequivocally condemning these acts of barbarity, heartless cruelty and crime against humanity."

We have also lent resolute support to the just struggle of the people and government of Bosnia-Herzegovina, the Prime Minister said.

Subscribing to the affirmation of the sovereignty, territorial integrity and political independence of the republic of Bosnia and Herzegovina, Foreign

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Malaria, AIDS main threat: WB

By Staff Correspondent

A return of malaria and an AIDS pandemic are still the major threats facing the world although general health care has improved remarkably during the past four decades, the World Bank (WB) said yesterday.

"By 2000 the growing toll from Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome (AIDS) in developing countries could easily rise to more than 1.8 million deaths annually," the WB said in its World Development Report-1993 re-

leased simultaneously across the world.

The malaria parasite's increased resistance to available drugs could lead to a doubling of malaria deaths to nearly two million a year within a decade, the report, titled 'Investing in Health', says.

It says over the past forty years, average life expectancy has improved more than during the entire previous span of human history. According to the report, in 1950 life expectancy in the developing

countries was only 40 years which increased to 63 years in 1990.

Twenty-eight out of every 100 children died before their fifth birthday in 1950 but in 1990 the number fell to ten. However, for Bangladesh, the rate is still higher than the normal at 137 per thousand.

The successes owe in part to growing incomes and increasing education around the globe and also because of governmental effort to expand

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40m people will carry HIV by century end: WHO

The World Health Organisation (WHO) has warned that about 40 million people around the world will carry HIV, the virus for deadly AIDS (Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome), by the end of the century, reports UNB.

With perhaps one million deaths from AIDS per year, an estimated 10 to 15 million children could lose their parents across the globe to the disease before the year 2000.

This was disclosed at a press conference in Dhaka yesterday on the occasion of publication of World Population Report: 1993 of the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA).

The WHO global programme on AIDS reports that about 2.5 million cases of AIDS have occurred. Some 13 million men, women and children had been infected with the AIDS virus HIV from the start of the pandemic to January 1993.

There were an estimated 1 million new infections in the second half of 1992, the majority in South and South-east Asia and in Sub-Saharan Africa.

WHO estimates that there will be 40 million infections by the end of the century, and perhaps a million deaths a year.

The break-up of AIDS infections are Africa has had over 7.5 million HIV, America over 2 million, Western Europe about 500,000, North Africa and the

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