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Speaker's ruling on probe body Opposition walks out in protest

By Staff Correspondent

The Opposition in Parliament yesterday staged a walkout in protest against a ruling by Speaker Shaikh Razzak Ali nullifying the formation of a House committee to investigate allegations of irregularities in the Agriculture Ministry.

The Speaker on Tuesday said he found no reason for constituting the special parliamentary probe since the treasury bench and the opposition had failed to agree on the terms of reference of the committee.

Abdus Samad Azad, acting leader of the opposition, alleged in the House that the Speaker had failed to maintain neutrality in formulating the mandate of the committee.

The Opposition demanded that the 15-member committee, headed by Shaikh Razzak Ali himself, be allowed to function to examine the alleged irregularities in the Ministry of Agriculture, Irrigation, Flood Control and Water Development.

Samad Azad said the proposed committee did not die a natural death, as the Speaker put it, rather it was killed.

Speaker Razzak Ali was not in the House while the Opposition leader was accusing him of partisanship. Samad Azad also alleged that the Speaker Tuesday had distorted his own statement made in the House on June 26 and wanted to examine the recorded proceedings of the Speaker's statement.

Prof. AQM Badruddoza Chowdhury, Deputy Leader of Parliament, however, told the House that it was the Opposition which had backed off from constituting the probe committee.

"The Speaker rightly suggested that the committee should confine its investigation to the specific allegations of irregularities made by Tofael Ahmed, Chowdhury said, adding: "The Opposition is now demanding the area of investigation."

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Sick units: New govt initiative unlikely

By Sohail Manzur

The country's sick industries can presently expect very little by way of government initiatives for their rehabilitation.

Although 1556 or so industrial units in the country had been listed by the government's Sick Industries Revival and Rehabilitation Cell (SIRRC) as 'sick' for reasons beyond their control, yet the government is unlikely to make any endeavour or offer any special concession or facilities for their rehabilitation.

The government had provided for a sum of Tk 100 crore in the 1992-93 budget for this purpose, but the entire sum remained unutilised.

Entrepreneurs of the sick industries made repeated efforts to draw the government's attention to their cause during the discussion on the new budget in Parliament last month. They urged the authorities to implement the recommendations of the Sick Industries Cell which, in most cases, held the banks responsible for the problems of the industrial units.

The Finance Minister, however, is sticking to his earlier position that since the banks have been entrusted with the responsibility of rehabilitating the sick units, they should deal with their respective

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Opposition vows to struggle against govt corruption

By Staff Correspondent

The Opposition parties in Parliament yesterday expressed their determination to continue their struggle against alleged government corruption.

The Opposition leaders announced their resolve at a press briefing at the Sangsad Bhavan yesterday evening.

Earlier, they staged a walkout from the Jatiya Sangsad (JS) in protest against the Speaker's ruling which sealed the fate of a proposed JS body to probe into allegations of corruption against Irrigation Minister Majid-ul-Huq and his ministry.

Speaker Shaikh Razzak Ali rejected the idea of constituting

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Members of the Group of Seven (G-7) chat before dinner hosted by Japanese Prime Minister Kiichi Miyazawa at the premier's official residence yesterday. From (Left) are: Italian Prime Minister Carlo Ciampi, German Chancellor Helmut Kohl, French President Francois Mitterrand, British Prime Minister John Major and US President Bill Clinton. — AFP photo

G-7 Summit opens in Tokyo Agreement on tariff cut

TOKYO, July 7: The world's four biggest trading powers agreed today to cut tariffs on a wide range of goods action that US President Bill Clinton said had broken a logjam in the search for a long-stalled GATT accord, reports Reuter.

But Clinton, as well as diplomats and officials at GATT headquarters in Geneva said that, welcome as the tariff-cutting pact was, serious obstacles remained to a new international trade treaty.

The US President, speaking on the opening day of the Tokyo summit of seven top industrial nations, told reporters he was more determined than ever to reach a global trade agreement under GATT (the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade).

He noted that past pledges of the Group of Seven (G-7)—the United States, Japan, Canada, Britain, Italy, France and Germany—to complete GATT talks had gone unfulfilled.

"This year we have recaptured the momentum," Clinton said.

In Geneva, new GATT chief Peter Sutherland welcomed the accord reached in Tokyo between the United States, Japan, Canada and the European Community—the so-called 'Quad'—and hailed it as the signal to relaunch multilateral negotiations.

But an envoy from one key developing country said the Tokyo accord, which would in principle set the guidelines for a treaty in GATT's 116-state Uruguay Round of talks, might not be totally acceptable to all newly emerging economies.

"We need to look at the fine print," the envoy told Reuters. "A lot of people will not be keen to agree on zero-for-zero tariffs in some of the areas the 'Quad' wants them."

US trade representative Mickey Kantor said the pact paved the way for "the biggest tariff cut in history" and would help create about 1.4 million jobs in 10 years in the United States alone.

Kantor told reporters he

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Iraqi parliament wants to try Clinton

BAGHDAD, July 7: The Iraqi parliament said today it wanted to put US President Bill Clinton on trial for the June 27 missile attack on Baghdad that killed six civilians, reports AFP.

The parliament also said it would seek compensation for victims of the attack on the Iraqi intelligence headquarters.

Several nearby homes were destroyed as US warships fired 23 Cruise missiles at the intelligence compound. It was badly damaged, according to journalists who visited residential areas nearby.

The strike came in retaliation for an alleged Iraqi plot to assassinate former US president George Bush during a visit to Kuwait in April. Iraq has denied the charge.

After the 1991 Gulf War, which evicted Iraqi troops from Kuwait, Baghdad formed a committee to try Bush as a war criminal.

Garments workers call for 48-hr strike July 19-20

The National Garments Workers' Federation has called for a 48-hour strike in the garments industries on July 19-20 to press for realisation of an 8-point charter of demands including higher wages, reports UNB.

The federation demands include declaration of a national minimum wage for garment workers, total implementation of labour laws and enforcement of effective measures to solve the problems of the garments sector.

Leaders of the federation told a press conference in Dhaka yesterday afternoon that the garments workers were forced to work for 16-18 hours a day although labour laws and the ILO Convention provides for an 8-hour working day.



The accused Salma and her husband Yusuf Karim and (bottom) the victim Hafeza. — Star photo

Maid murdered in city

By Staff Correspondent

Police arrested one Yusuf M Karim, 40, and his wife Salma Karim, 35, for their alleged involvement in the death of their teenage maid servant at Mirpur yesterday morning.

Salma, a housewife, reportedly beat maid Hafeza, 15, to death for allegedly stealing Tk 500 from their Barabagh residence under Mirpur thana Tuesday afternoon, police sources said.

Hafeza, daughter of one Abdur Rahim of Dhoaura thana under Mymensingh district, had been working at Karim's house for the last two months.

Mirpur police intercepted a microbus, Dhaka JA 5079 in which Karim had been going to Mymensingh, near the Mirpur Heart Foundation at about 10 in the morning and recovered Hafeza's body.

Sources said Karim, a businessman, had hired the microbus for Tk 4000.

Bosnia issue dominates dinner table

TOKYO, July 7: Discussion about the conflict in Yugoslavia dominated the dinner table of the leaders of the Group of Seven (G7) industrialised nations meeting in Tokyo today, a Japanese official said, reports Reuter.

Prime Minister Kiichi Miyazawa suggested before the two-hour meal that the heads of state and government from the United States, Germany, Japan, France, Italy, Canada and Britain discuss ways to strengthen the United Nations and the nuclear non-proliferation Treaty.

During most of the meal, however, the talk centred on the conflict in Bosnia-Herzegovina, with some leaders even blaming the Treaty of St Germain signed after World War One to carve up

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Banking law: Small investors feel stifled

By Inam Ahmed

The Banking Companies Ordinance, amended recently to discourage monopoly in the purchase of bank shares, is also discouraging the small investors, according to concerned circles.

Clause 14 of the ordinance says that any prospective buyer has to submit an undertaking that he does not hold any shares in the said bank anonymously.

As a result, the banks are now demanding affidavits from all investors, including the small ones, sworn by either a magistrate or a notary public, before any share transaction.

But the small investors, large in numbers, may find this bothersome and shy away, capital market experts apprehend.

Share market experts feel that the affidavit should instead be made mandatory for only those who wish to buy at least one per cent of the total paid up capital of any bank.

"Such a measure would check the trend towards monopolising the shares and would not harass the small investors," a source in the banking sector said.

"But if the existing clause remains, the banks will face a major cash crisis in the capital market," he said on condition of anonymity.

These experts, however, were quick to appreciate the provision of the amended ordinance.

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Bodies of Indian businessmen likely to be sent home today

By Staff Correspondent

The bodies of three Indian nationals who were killed in a road accident on the Dhaka-Chittagong Highway Monday are expected to be flown to New Delhi today by British Airways.

Arrangements have been made for the trip by the relatives of the deceased in cooperation with the local authorities and the Indian High Commission.

The victims — B V Paul, Ranjan Chopra and Sanjay Singh — were leading garments businessmen. B V Paul was heading the operations of FSC Ltd, a garments buying

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NEWS BRIEFS

Alim, Fazil exams begin today

Alim and Fazil examinations of the year 1993 of Bangladesh Madrasah Education Board will begin today (Thursday). A total of 40,159 students will appear in the examinations at 185 centres throughout the country. Of them, 27,000 students for the Alim examination and 13,159 for Fazil examination. Besides, the Kamil examination of the Board will begin on July 10 (Saturday). About 8,000 students will sit for this examination, reports UNB.

Police team off to Y'slavia

A five-member police team left for Yugoslavia last night to join UN Peace Mission. The team comprised of two sub-inspectors, one sergeant, one ASI and a Habildar.

Inspector General of Police ASM Shahjahan bade farewell to the police team at Police Headquarters in the morning, reports UNB.

Six hurt in city violence

By Staff Correspondent

At least six persons were reportedly injured when a group of unidentified people blasted crackers and fired gunshots at Nimtoli area of Rayer Bazar in the city last night.

The violence was centered around local rivalry in the area, police said.

Scam: Rao aide to be grilled

NEW DELHI, July 7: An Indian Parliamentary panel probing India's largest stock market fraud on Tuesday decided to question an aide of Prime Minister P V Narasimha Rao on a broker's charge that he gave Rao a suitcase stuffed with money, reports AFP.

The joint parliamentary committee (JPC) investigating the 1.3 billion dollar securities scam that shook India's financial system last year, said it would send "interrogatory letters" to the premier's aide and six others stock market broker Harshad Mehta's allegations that he paid 330,000 dollars to Rao in November 1991.

The JPC identified the aide as R K Khandekar, a junior civil servant and Rao's Private Secretary, accused by Mehta of receiving the suitcase in the premier's New Delhi residence.

Khandekar has so far neither denied nor confirmed Mehta's claims.

Among the others to be questioned will be the industrialist son of a deceased member of Rao's ruling Congress (I) Party, named by Mehta as a link between the Prime Minister and himself, JPC chief R N Mircha said.

A Deputy Finance Minister will receive a similar questionnaire for his alleged links with the controversial stockbroker, the JPC Chairman added.

"There was total consensus in the JPC and the decision to

send questionnaires was across party lines," Mircha said of the meeting of the all-party committee set up last August to probe the stock scam.

Seventeen of the 30 members on the powerful committee belong to Rao's Congress (I).

The 72-year-old Prime Minister has denied receiving the money saying the allegations by Mehta, the kingpin of the 1.3 billion dollar securities fraud, were a plot to discredit him and destabilise the ruling party.

Party colleagues have rallied around the Prime Minister, alleging that Mehta is being used by opposition parties in a smear campaign aimed at ousting

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Opposition to wait for response from Sharif

ISLAMABAD, July 7: A multi-party conference today decided to relax its ultimatum to Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif to call elections within four days or face a public storming of the capital, opposition leader Benazir Bhutto said, reports AFP.

Bhutto said the all party conference (APC) comprising more than 20 parliamentary and extra-parliamentary opposition groups, made the decision "to wait for a response" from Sharif as he had to visit Turkey as head of the Pakistani delegation at the current 10-nation summit of the Economic Cooperation Organisation (ECO), she told reporters here.

The APC will meet in the Punjab capital Lahore on Saturday to consider the political situation and devise its future strategy, Bhutto said.

On Monday the APC threatened to stage a "long march" in Islamabad as a demonstration of "people power" if Sharif failed to respond positively within four days to their demand for an announcement on new elections.

The decision to extend the deadline was taken at a meeting at Bhutto's residence here lasting more than three hours. Two Chief Ministers leading provincial governments hostile to Sharif in the Punjab and the North-West Frontier Province also attended the opposition meeting.

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Polythene pollution threatens environment

By Staff Correspondent

Nearly half a million used polythene bags are dumped in the Dhaka City everyday. Of this 80 per cent block the sewerage systems because only 20 per cent of such garbage can be cleaned from the city dustbins.

This was revealed during an open discussion on the impact of polythene bags on the environment held in the city yesterday under the aegis of Environment and Social Development Organisation (ESDO), a non-governmental body.

The ESDO, in a paper quoting Dhaka City Corporation (DCC) sources said, the manholes in many areas overflow with foul sewage because polythene bags block the drainage flow.

The programme, presided over by chairperson of the ESDO Shirin Ahmed, was addressed among others, by State Minister for Irrigation and Water Development Mosharrar Hossain Shajhan, as chief guest, labour leader

Manzurul Hasan Khan as special guest, Ubting — an NGO — organiser Farida Akhtar and others.

The ESDO paper said that the use of polythene bags was increasing alarmingly and there were 171 government sanctioned polythene bag factories in the capital city. In addition, there were over 200 such factories operating illegally.

The paper warned that prolonged consumption of food

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