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NEWS BRIEFS

TCB exports 20 tonnes of rice

Trading Corporation of Bangladesh (TCB) has exported 20 metric tons of Katarivogue rice to a private enterprise in Saudi Arabia. To implement the rice export programme of the government following a bumper harvest, TCB is trying to explore export market of fine rice like Kalizira, Chingura and Katarivogue in different countries, reports UNB.

Rocket service at night closed

Paddle steamer Rocket service at night will remain closed following the damage to different signals, including buoy light, in the river routes by recent incessant rain and floods. The timeschedule in daytime remains unchanged, said a press release from the Bangladesh Inland Water Transport Corporation yesterday, reports UNB.

Orientation class of SSMC Aug 1

The orientation class of the 1st year MBBS for the session 1992-93 of Sir Saitmullah Medical College will be held at Lecture Gallery No. 1 at 10:00 am on August 1. Students and their local guardians have been requested to attend the orientation class, an official handout said yesterday, reports UNB.

Exodus of southern Lebanese: Death toll 86

Israel pounds ports of Sidon, Tyre

SIDON, July 28: Thousands of Lebanese fled the southern ports of Sidon and Tyre on Wednesday after Israeli gunboats, jets and helicopters bombarded the cities, which were crammed with refugees, reports AP.

The exodus came as hostilities entered a fourth day. At least 20 inland villages were hit by Israeli warplanes and artillery barrages, Lebanese radios reported.

The attacks raised the death toll to at least 86, most of them Lebanese. More than 408 people have been wounded. The United Nations has estimated that before Wednesday's violence more than 335,000 Lebanese had been displaced by the bombing.

Israel's offensive, which began Sunday, is its broadest operation since its 1982 invasion of Lebanon.

Wednesday's targeting of Sidon and Tyre appeared aimed at creating a refugee crisis and pressuring the Lebanese government and their Syrian backers to force guerrilla groups to end attacks against Israeli soldiers and civilians.

TYRE, July 28: Israeli gunners kept shelling areas of South Lebanon today after Israeli army radio announced a temporary ceasefire over a broad area, witnesses said, reports Reuter.

"We say to the residents of Lebanon: Your government can use the Lebanese army to prevent Katyushas (rockets) being fired on Israeli settlements," Israeli Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin said. "Only if the fire ceases on the northern settle-

ments can you return to your homes."

Eight Israeli soldiers have been killed in south Lebanon this month. Two Israelis have been killed and at least 26 wounded by rockets fired by Arab guerrillas since Sunday.

On Wednesday, four Israeli missile boats opened fire on Sidon, Lebanon's third largest city, where the population of 300,000 has been swollen by refugees.

Panicked families crowded into cars, trucks and buses and turned Lebanon's coastal highway into a four-lane traffic jam headed toward Beirut.

"I can't take it any more," said Mansour Mandour as he prepared to leave Sidon. The 80-year-old man had fled the village of Jibsheh to the east and said the town of 5,000 was being shelled.

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Commentary

Stop this Israeli madness

By S M Ali

Whether it involves a calculated risk or a reckless gamble, the Israeli raid on the civilian population in southern Lebanon, with warplanes and combat helicopters, borders on the most barbaric offensive launched by Tel Aviv since it set up the self-imposed security zone in a neighbouring country ten years ago.

After four days of bombardments and rocket attacks, in this undeclared war, over 300,000 men, women and children have been forced out of

their shattered homes, heading for Beirut for safety. They have become yet another stream of refugees, a burden on the international community — and on the conscience of the world.

All this is part of Tel Aviv's plan to clear the area of the civilian population to facilitate its drive — and possible elimination — of the Iran-backed Hizbollah guerrillas who are accused of killing some Israeli soldiers and civilians — perhaps no more than a dozen at

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Bombardment to go on, says Rabin

JERUSALEM, July 28: Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin announced Wednesday that Israel's air and artillery bombardment of guerrilla targets in Lebanon would go on, reports AFP.

"Israeli forces will continue their operations in Lebanon until we have brought security to the north," he told parliament.

Rabin earlier held an emergency cabinet meeting today to decide whether to step up 'operation accountability' against guerrilla targets in Lebanon, official sources said.

A new salvo of Katyusha rockets hit northern Israeli, military sources said, as senior army officials weighed the possibility of pushing the devastat-

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WB stops disbursement of IWT-3 credit

By Sohel Manzur

The World Bank (WB) has suspended disbursement of credit for the Third Inland Water Transport Project (IWT-3) worth 64 million US dollar because of non-performance regarding the action plans suggested by the bank as pre-conditions for the loan, according to official sources.

The suspension order will be effective from August 1 and should the government fail to make satisfactory progress in implementing the action plans within another 30 days the credit will be cancelled, the sources say.

The World Bank, in a letter issued to the Secretary of Economic Relations Division (ERD) of the Ministry of Finance Tuesday, said the bank, in its earlier letter, insisted the government take at least some minimum immediate actions in line with the WB recommendations.

These included approval of

the technical assistance for the project provided by the Finnish government, approval of the management consultants, approval of local consultants, and opening of a special account for the project.

"Since the above-referenced actions have not been taken, and despite repeated requests, the Ministry of Shipping and other implementing agencies have been unable to implement the project with due diligence and efficiency, as agreed in Section 3.01 of the Development Credit Agreement (DCA), we have decided to suspend disbursements for this project," the WB letter says.

The International Development Agency (IDA) credit for the project is about 45 million dollars while the Finnish International Development Agency (FINNIDA) and Japan had agreed to provide 5 and 0.7 million dollars respectively as grants for the project. The gov-

ernment's contribution was fixed at 13.5 million dollars.

According to concerned sources, the government's reservations about the WB's prescription, especially after signing the DCA, is likely to seriously strain its relations with the bank.

The Ministry of Shipping and its two departments — the BIWTC and BIWTA — considered the action plans or conditionalities unacceptable, although those were agreed earlier by the government and the IDA during negotiations, the sources said.

The WB, in its letter to the ERD issued May 5, justified its recommendations and said, "If these actions are further delayed beyond July 1, 1993, the IDA would be constrained to exercise remedies provided in the DCA, including suspension of disbursements and eventually cancel the credit."

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Rao survives no-confidence

NEW DELHI, July 28: Indian Prime Minister PV Narasimha Rao narrowly survived a no-confidence vote in Parliament today, staying off a united opposition bid to unseat his 25-month old Congress (I) Party government, reports AFP, AP.

The Lok Sabha, or the Lower House, rejected the no-confidence motion 262-248 with eight abstentions after three days of debate during which opposition leaders launched a bitter tirade against Rao.

A total of 518 members were present in the legislature when the vote was taken.

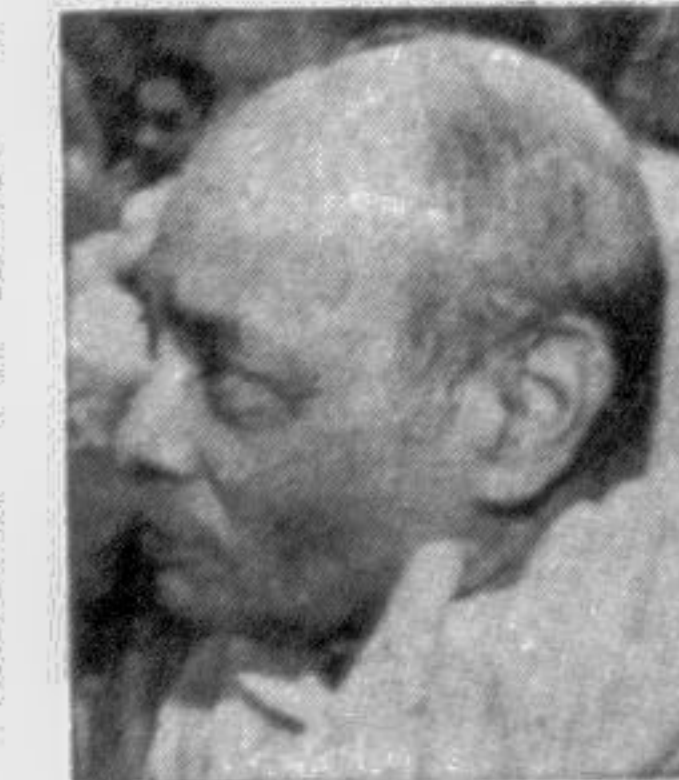
The opposition seemed to have a slight edge going into the electronic ballot, but Members of Parliament who cast their lot with the Congress (I) at the last minute ensured the government's survival.

It was the third no-confidence motion Rao's minority government has defeated since it came to power in June 1991. The victory means Rao, 72, can continue opening India's closed economy and battling the

Hindu fundamentalists who have sparked Hindu-Muslim violence that has killed 3,000 people since 1990.

"This is the time to keep our

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Narasimha Rao heads cool and concentrate on development," Rao told legislators in a speech just before the voting took place.

Rao now will propose a constitutional amendment that

would allow Parliament to ban parties or groups that promote religious hatred. It would also forbid candidates who won elections by introducing religious topics or symbols during campaigns from taking seats in federal and state legislatures.

The legislation is clearly aimed at the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP), Parliament's largest opposition group and Rao's arch-enemy.

"Religion cannot be the trump card of any political party for all times to come," Rao said in a hard-hitting speech at the end of a three-day debate on the no-confidence motion.

"You have got addicted to using religion," he said, looking at the BJP benches.

Rao's latest no-confidence motion was sponsored by a leftist coalition and supported by the right-wing BJP.

The two groups had set aside their traditional enmity to come together against Rao in Parliament where the opposition and the governing Congress Party

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Flood-hit villagers provide their own solution by cutting a channel in the Netrakona town protection embankment Tuesday. Such desperate, often short-sighted measures, reported quite regularly from around the country during times of floods, cause more harm than good. One such incident in Zakiganj of Sylhet on July 26 led to an armed clash which left five people dead and scores of others injured when the BDR personnel had to open fire to prevent the cutting of a levy built with the country's scarce resources. —Star photo by AKM Mohsin

Flood waters continue to recede Shortage of drinking water, medicines aggravate people's sufferings

By Staff Correspondent

Acute shortage of drinking water coupled with lack of emergency medical supplies worsened the diarrhoeal situation in the flood-hit districts where water has begun to recede slowly, according to reports received in Dhaka yesterday.

Except the Surma, Kushiyara, Gumti and the Meghna, all the rivers of the country were now flowing below the danger levels.

Our correspondents from different flood-affected districts reported Wednesday that diarrhoea and other water-borne diseases have broken out in

their areas, particularly affecting the children.

Water-logging, lack of drinking water and poor supply of oral rehydration saline (ORS) have helped spread the intestinal diseases fast, the reports pointed out.

Measles, diarrhoea and several other gastro-intestinal diseases usually break out when flood waters begin to recede.

Our correspondents said that the diarrhoeal situation in Chittagong, Sylhet, Netrakona, Sunamganj, Moulvi Bazar, Kurigram, Comilla, Strajganj, Kishoreganj, Brahmanbaria and Jamalpur further deteriorated

Wednesday. Meanwhile, six more people lost their lives Wednesday either by drowning or by snake bite and electrocution.

Our Sherpur correspondent reported that four people were drowned at sadar thana.

Our correspondent from Netrakona said that two people, including one 12-year-old boy, were electrocuted in Purbodhala thana of the district.

Meanwhile, the Water Board's Flood Forecasting Centre (FFC) officials Wednesday forecast that the flood situation in Sylhet, See Page 12 Col 6

Feni telephone exchange inaugurated

Prime Minister Begum Khaleda Zia yesterday inaugurated the installation of a new 500-line telephone exchange at Feni by making a call from the capital, reports BSS.

The Prime Minister talked to Post and Telecommunications Minister Mohammad Keramat Ali, who was at the other end at Feni.

"Today is a happy day for the inhabitants of Feni. The expansion of the Feni telephone exchange by installing a new 500-line is undoubtedly a happy news for the people of Feni," she said over telephone.

The Prime Minister said the expansion would help improve the telecommunication system between Feni district headquarters and other thanas.

Moreover, she said, works on the installation of digital radio link for the improved communication system in the thanas of the district were also progressing fast.

Begum Zia extended her greetings to the inhabitants of Feni on this occasion.

PM visits flood-hit areas Banks asked to grant fresh loans to farmers

By Staff Correspondent

KURIGRAM, July 28: Prime Minister Begum Khaleda Zia today directed all concerned to take necessary steps for providing the flood-hit farmers with facilities like agricultural loans for quick recovery of the loss caused by the current flooding in the country, reports BSS.

"We must ensure that the farmers who have been affected by the floods must not face any difficulties to cultivate the crops again which have been damaged in the floods," she said adding if needed the farmers had to be allowed to take loans for second time. The Prime Minister directed the Agriculture Bank to take steps in this respect.

Begum Zia was addressing the district level officials of Kurigram and Gaibandha where she went to see the flood-affected areas.

Social Welfare Minister Tarique Islam and local Member of Parliament Rebeka Mahmud accompanied the Prime

Minister.

On her arrival at Kurigram, the worst flood affected district of the northern part of the country, the Prime Minister went to the affected areas of Pateswari, Beparihat, Kzirchar and Barabari along the river Dharla on boat.

Begum Zia talked to the affected people and enquired about their welfare.

While addressing the officials the Prime Minister called upon them to work hard for rehabilitating the flood-hit people of the areas.

Begum Zia said, "We have to live with calamity and the people have to be motivated to face the situation with courage and fortitude."

The Prime Minister underscored the need for proper implementation of food for work programme to construct the damaged embankments in the areas. She said Public Health and Engineering Department See Page 12 Col 3

Emergency meet of JP presidium

By Staff Correspondent

Presidium members of the Jatiya Party yesterday began an emergency meeting to review the situation arisen out of the recent move by Shamsul Huda Chowdhury and his followers.

After a more than five-hour of discussion at the residence of the party's senior Vice-Chairman and acting chief Mizanur Rahman Chowdhury, the meeting was adjourned until this evening, a party leader said.

A group of leaders suggested expulsion of presidium member Shamsul Huda Chowdhury and his associates while another group wanted to observe the situation until August 1, the leader said.

Former Speaker Shamsul Huda Chowdhury has convened a meeting of 'like-minded' party workers and leaders on Sunday, branding the present leadership 'autocratic'.

The presidium may take a decision today.

Party sources said Barrister See Page 12 Col 6

BNP finalises list of councillors

By Staff Correspondent

The ruling Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP) has finalised the number of councillors who will vote in its upcoming National Council scheduled for September 1-2.

Some 2,017 councillors from across the country would participate in the council session, the fourth since the party's founding in 1978. Chowdhury Tanvir Ahmed Siddiky said yesterday at an informal briefing of a select group of mediemen at the party's Naya Paltan central office.

The council would coincide with the 15th founding anniversary of the party on Sept 1.

Some 1134 councillors have been elected from the thana and pourasava levels, 296 from the district and city levels. Besides, all the 173 MPs of the party, its 231 Central Standing Committee members and another 183 councillors have been

nominated by the party chairperson Prime Minister Begum Khaleda Zia, Tanvir Siddiky, a BNP vice chairman, said.

He declined to comment on the agenda of the council, saying only that "eleven sub-committees, including one on amendments to the party constitution are working on contentious issues."

The Council Preparatory Committee convenor said that the district and thana-level leaders and workers have already started sending their recommendations on different issues they want discussed at the council session.

The 11 sub-committees would study the recommendations of the grassroots level workers and leaders, Siddiky said.

He said that 15 of the 64 district conferences were yet to be See Page 12 Col 7

Study report on admin reform today

By Staff Correspondent

An advance copy of the 'Public Administrative Sector Report,' prepared by a team of UN experts, is expected to be submitted to the officials of the Establishment Ministry today.

The report contains the findings and final recommendations of the UN technical team, compiled on the basis of hard data.

The study was taken up at the behest of the Bangladesh government which indicated a desire to restructure the entire administrative system in a democratic climate, ensuring greater transparency and accountability.

Prime Minister Begum Khaleda Zia on several occasions expressed her interest in bringing about meaningful administrative changes. She herself has retained the important portfolio of Establishment.

The UNDP, under its fifth country programme for Bangladesh, reached an agreement with the government to 'engage in an exercise to develop prescriptions for change' See Page 12 Col 5

Message to PM

Ghali assures of UN aid

The United Nations Secretary General, Boutros Boutros-Ghali, has expressed deep sympathy at the loss of lives and property in Bangladesh due to flood, reports BSS.

In a message to Prime Minister Begum Khaleda Zia, he said, "I was deeply saddened to learn that so many people have lost their lives because of flooding in Bangladesh. I hope that the search for those who are still missing will prove successful. I wish to assure you that the United Nations system stands ready to lend whatever assistance it can to alleviate the suffering caused by the flooding."

I extend to you, your excellency, to the government and people of Bangladesh, and particularly to the families of the victims my sincere condolences and heartfelt sympathy."

Special JS body on Irrigation Ministry meets today

The Special Parliamentary Committee to probe into allegation of corruption against the Irrigation and Flood Control Minister and his ministry resumes its meeting at 5:00 pm today, reports UNB.

The Committee is expected to continue its exercise to finalise the terms of reference before taking up the task of investigation into the allegation brought by Awami League leader Tofael Ahmed in Parliament on June 14 and 26.

It was reported earlier that the Committee faced a deadlock as opposition members on it insisted on thorough inquiry while the government side was firm in its stand to look into the specific allegation.

The Committee in its meeting today may appoint a chairman to act in the absence of Shaikh Razaque Ali who is expected to leave for London on August 1 for treatment.

DU teachers elect Deans, Senators today

By DU Correspondent

The Dhaka University teachers will elect six Deans and 35 teachers' representatives to the University Senate today.

The elections will be held at the Teachers Students Centre (TSC) from 8 am to 2 pm.

The teachers from four separate panels — Blue, Pink and two factions of the White group, one led by Prof Sirajul Islam Chowdhury and another led by Prof Iajuddin Ahmed — are participating in the polls.

Teachers belonging to different panels were seen busy campaigning throughout the day yesterday.

Earlier this month a group of teachers led by Prof Iajuddin Ahmed, who returned recently to the University after his tenure as the Chairman of the Public Service Commission, convened a meeting and See Page 12 Col 4