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## NEWS BRIEFS

#### Saifur leaves for Istanbul

Finance Minister M Saifur Rahman left for Istanbul yesterday evening on a week-long official visit to Turkey and Germany. He is leading a five-member Bangladesh delegation at the 9th meeting of the Organisation of Islamic Conference for Commercial and Economic Cooperation (OIC-CEC) among the OIC member countries scheduled for Istanbul September 2-4. On the second leg of his tour, Saifur Rahman will leave Istanbul for Bonn on September 5 for a 3-day official visit at the invitation of the German government, reports UNB.

#### SPGRC appeal to foreign guests

The Stranded Pakistanis General Repatriation Committee (Eljaz) yesterday urged the foreign dignitaries attending the current council session of the Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP) to visit their camps to see their condition, reports BSS.

## Two-day fourth BNP national council begins

# Khaleda urges all to bury hatchet, work for nat'l development

By Staff Correspondent

Prime Minister Begum Khaleda Zia yesterday appealed to all political parties and groups to bury the hatchet on differences and work unitedly for the welfare and real benefit of the people and the nation.

"Let us make democracy really meaningful, the democracy that we have achieved at the price of the sacred blood of hundreds of thousands of martyrs," she urged in a conciliatory tone. "Let us resolve all our differences and crises, whatever these (may) be, through discussions in Parliament."

The Prime Minister also called on the opposition parties to help bring an end to terrorism, corruption and anarchy by establishing rule of law and freeing the country from the

curse of external dependence. Criticising those who incite communalism, for personal or political gains, Begum Zia said they should be identified and dealt with firmly. "Communalism is against democracy," she pointed out.

People of this country are god-fearing but never fanatic; peace and harmony have always prevailed here, she said. "I would like to categorically state that this country belongs only to its 120 million people."

"Bangladesh is neither the sole property nor exclusive inheritance of anyone," she declared. Begum Zia was addressing a huge gathering of party workers, councillors and central leaders at the inaugural session of the 2-day national council of the ruling Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP) at the wide Manik Mia Avenue.

The BNP chairperson urged her party members to build re-

sistance against all intrigues, corruption and terrorism and asked them to reach out to the grassroots level to supplement government efforts in meeting the basic human needs.

Calling for forging a solid unity based on Bangladeshi nationalism, Begum Zia also urged all to uphold the politics of consensus initiated by Shaheed President Ziaur Rahman.

The inaugural session was also attended by 25 foreign dignitaries from China, Germany, Indonesia, India, Iran, Japan, Nepal, Pakistan, Sri Lanka and representative from the Palestine Liberation Organisation (PLO). A large number of diplomats were also present.

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## Khaleda's tribute to Sk Mujib earns applause

By Staff Correspondent

Prime Minister Begum Khaleda Zia yesterday paid tribute to Sheikh Mujibur Rahman amidst cheers and clappings from thousands of her party activists at the inaugural session of the BNP's fourth national council in the city.

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Prime Minister Begum Khaleda Zia addressing the opening function of the fourth national council of the Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP) at the Manik Mia Avenue in the city yesterday. Party Secretary General and LGED Minister Barrister Abdus Salam Talukder, Agriculture and Irrigation Minister M Majid ul-Haq are seen on her right while Law Minister Mirza Golam Hafiz and Deputy Leader of Jatiya Sangsad Prof Badruddoza Chowdhury are on her left. — Star photo

## Dhaka awaits Delhi's positive response on water sharing: PM

By Staff Correspondent

Prime Minister Begum Khaleda Zia said yesterday India was yet to convey any practical proposal to resolve the water-sharing issue despite a promise made by Prime Minister Narasimha Rao.

"So far we have received no practical proposal in this regard and the people of Bangladesh are patiently awaiting a positive response from India," Begum Zia, who is also the chairperson of the Bangladesh Nationalist Party, said during the inaugural session of her party's two-day national council.

"India will not do anything in the sharing of Ganges water which will cause unnecessary hardship to Bangladesh," Rao was quoted by Begum Zia as having said during a meeting between the two leaders.

In the 71-minute speech Begum Zia said Bangladesh has been striving hard to strengthen ties with all countries on the basis of mutual respect and friendship.

She said her government fol-

lows the fundamental principle—friendship towards all and malice towards none.

"Our relations with the superpowers have improved; our ties with the Islamic world have become closer and we have done our utmost to maintain good ties with our neighbours," she said at the Manik Mia Avenue.

## Asghar Khan condemns Pak atrocities in '71

By Star Correspondent

Pakistani politician Air Vice Marshal (ret) Asghar Khan Wednesday strongly condemned the atrocities wrought upon the people of Bangladesh in 1971 and termed it as an act of "autocratic stupidity."

"I raised my voice 20 years ago against the autocratic stupidity that has caused you pain and suffering which you will

Begum Zia said "We have had to cope with the serious consequence of the Gulf war, this devastating cyclone of 1991, the influx of the Rohingya refugees and forced eviction of their own citizens from India to Bangladesh on the pretext of expelling so-called illegal immigrants during the past two and a half years."

She said Bangladesh had made significant headway in resolving the Rohingya refugee problem by directly involving the United Nations and also held important discussions and signed an agreement with India on the Chakma refugee issue.

The Prime Minister reiterated "We have left open the door for dialogue on sharing of river waters and solution of the issues without jeopardising the interest of Bangladesh," as this problem is related to the very existence of the people of this country.

She pointed out that her government's diplomatic achievement, delegates

## BNP delegates demand full-time Secy Gen

By Staff Correspondent

A number of councillors demanded a full-time secretary general for the party, free from ministerial pre-occupations so that he could give a big thrust to organisational activities.

The councillors were taking part in discussions at the closed-door second session of the fourth national council of the party at the Sugandha office of the Prime Minister and party chairperson Begum Khaleda Zia. The session began at 4:30 pm yesterday and was adjourned at 9:30 pm to resume at 9 am today.

A total of 35 councillors took part in the discussions in presence of Begum Zia after Secretary General Abdus Salam Talukder placed his annual report before some 2000 councillors.

Some of them pointed out the lack of coordination between the central leaders and thana-level workers.

Meeting sources said the councillors expressed disappointment at the factionalism in

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## Only 2 opposition MPs attend

By Staff Correspondent

Only two opposition Members of Parliament attended the opening ceremony of the fourth national council of the ruling Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP) at the Manik Mia Avenue yesterday.

Shahjahan Siraj of the Jatiya Samajtantrik Dal (JSD) and Shamsuddoha of the Communist Party of Bangladesh (CPB-reformist) — both of whom joined the Gano Forum last week — were seen in the guests' row alongside with the ruling party MPs.

The ruling party invited all the opposition MPs, presidents and secretaries of the major political parties except the Freedom Party, the Nationalist Democratic Alliance (NDA) and Jamaat chief Golam Azam to the inaugural ceremony that coincided with the 15th founding anniversary of the party.

BNP sources said Col (Reid) Star Page 12 Col 7

## WB to help augment power generation

By Special Correspondent

Although its ban on new lending to the power sector in Bangladesh is still effective, the World Bank (WB) will assist PDB to rehabilitate two hydro-electric units at Kaptai and to augment the Ishurdi 230-KV sub-station.

Rehabilitation of the two hydro-electric units at Kaptai and addition of 3x75 MVA transformers at the Ishurdi sub-station will involve a foreign exchange cost of over 30 million dollars. The World Bank will provide this money by redirecting unutilised funds in the WB financed 16 towns power distribution project.

Rehabilitation of the two existing units at Kaptai will extend their service life by 25 years. Augmentation of the Ishurdi sub-station will enable full utilisation of the East-West power inter-connector. The

WB's ban on new lending to the power sector and PDB's inability to generate funds to carry out essential maintenance of generating capacity have led to a backlog in major repair work.

The PDB has an installed capacity of generating 2,500 MW of electricity. At present nearly a third of this capacity is out of commission owing to lack of maintenance.

Rehabilitation of Kaptai and augmentation of the Ishurdi sub-station were originally planned as part of a WB financed power rehabilitation project. This project was negotiated in April 1990 but the WB refused to go ahead with credit approval in view of PDB's poor operating performance. The Power Rehabilitation Project has been in the cold storage since then. Even though the project

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## News Analysis

# Shifting away from political rhetoric

by Mahfuz Anam

If the inaugural speech of Prime Minister Khaleda Zia yesterday is any indication, then the fourth council session of the Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP) is likely to opt for continuity in the area of party policies, and concentrate its full energy on party organisation. The organisational momentum that has been generated in preparing for this council session is likely to be further accelerated, with the idea of consolidating and strengthening party organisation at the grassroots level.

In strengthening the organisation, there is little likelihood of a major shake-up at the central level. Changes, if any, may take place at the lower levels. As one delegate told me "Eighty per cent chance, Salam Talukder will remain the party Secretary General." The BNP chief's speech was an elaborate

catalogue of her party's success, which amounted to an indirect plea for status quo as far as policies are concerned. Her hour-and-a-quarter-long speech was replete with claims of all-round success which rivalled most governments in the world, in terms of being able to deliver on pledges.

In the midst of the claim to flawless governance, there were sure signs of the slogan chanting, banner waving, populist party, getting down to the serious business of governing, and growing wiser in the process. The most striking example of this gradually maturing party, and its leadership, is the clearly discernable shifting of the rhetoric from the political to the economic. It is worthy of note that instead of the usual acrimonious and overly sweeping attack on the opposition —

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## PLO, Israel yet to finalise ME peace deal

OSLO, Sept 1: PLO and Israeli negotiators recessed Wednesday morning after non-stop talks to finalize a Middle East peace deal, a Norwegian official said, reports AP.

A source said the main topic of the talks was Israeli recognition of the Palestine Liberation Organization. He also said the talks were moved after news reports about the Oslo sessions.

The meetings, conducted under Norwegian leadership, went on while negotiators from the two sides gathered in Washington for another round of peace talks.

"I can't comment on whether they reached an agreement or who was there," Jan Egeland, Norway's Foreign Ministry undersecretary, told The Associated Press.

But another official close to Norway's team at the talks said the negotiators had not finished their work, the official, who spoke on condition of anonymity, said he thought the talks were moving because news reports revealed the Oslo location. He did not say where they would resume.

Israel had refused for years to deal with the PLO on the grounds that it was a terrorist organization dedicated to the Jewish state's destruction.

Negotiators also ran into problems over phrasing of an agreement on Palestinian self-rule in some of the Israeli-occupied territories, the source said.

He said the meetings had been underway almost continuously since August 20, when PLO and Israeli officials initiated an agreement in principle covering key issues.

The director of Israel's Foreign Ministry, Uri Savir, confirmed Wednesday in Brussels, Belgium, that he had been at the talks in Oslo. He declined to discuss them, but said he did not expect to meet with PLO representatives in Brussels.

A PLO official in the Belgian capital, Chawki Armali, also said no contacts were planned with Israelis there.

Asked if the latest round of Oslo talks had been successful, he said: "All I can say is that they are close to an accord that will be signed very soon, probably in the United States."

## PPP to improve lot of poor, ties with US

ISLAMABAD, Sept 1: Benazir Bhutto on Wednesday formally launched her campaign to return to power, promising extensive help for Pakistan's poor and an improvement in strained relations with the United States, reports AP.

Bhutto, the only woman ever to lead a modern Muslim nation, is expected to face a close contest in the Oct 6 balloting with arch-rival Nawaz Sharif, the former businessman who replaced her as prime minister in 1990.

Our economy is in a mess today, Bhutto said in announcing the PPP's campaign manifesto at a hotel in Islamabad, the capital. "Where is the economic miracle promised by Nawaz Sharif?"

Bhutto proposed a range of ambitious development programme for the poor at a time when Pakistan's government al-

ready is spending beyond its means.

She pledged to provide property for landless peasants and health care for all by the end of the decade, and said her party would create a universal education system. Barely a quarter of Pakistan's 120 million population is literate.

Bhutto's proposals, which would necessitate increased government spending, appear at odds with economic reforms recently introduced by Moeen Qureshi.

Qureshi, a former World Bank vice president, who is not contesting the election, has initiated belt-tightening reforms that have led to higher prices of basic goods such as bread, cooking oil and gasoline.

Bhutto said she would review those measures to make sure there is less burden on the poor.

## Miladunnabi observed

Holy Eid-e-Miladunnabi was observed throughout the country Tuesday offering special prayers for the continued peace, progress and prosperity of the country and greater unity and fraternity of the Muslim Ummah, reports UNB.

Various political, social, cultural and religious organisations held Quran Khwari, Milad Mahfil and discussions on the occasion of the birth and death anniversary of Prophet Hazrat Muhammad (SM).

Speakers at the seminar and symposia on the significance of the day called for practising teachings and ideals of the Prophet (SM) in individual, social and public life to build a decent and exploitation-free society and for salvation in the material world and the world here after.

The capital city wore a festive look as main thoroughfares

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## AL to submit memos to DCs, TNOs on Sept 8

By Nurul Kabir

The Awami League (AL) yesterday decided that all the district and thana level units of the party would hand over an identical memorandum to the concerned Deputy Commissioners (DCs) and Thana Nirbahti Officers (TNOs) on its Peasants Day scheduled for September 8.

A meeting of the party's Central Working Committee, held last evening, approved the text of the memorandum containing problems and demands of the country's peasant community.

According to the meeting sources, the memorandum, addressed to the Prime Minister Begum Khaleda Zia, will be signed by the district and thana level units of the party.

The meeting also decided that the party's central body members would go to their respective localities on September 6 to make the Peasants Day programmes a success. The

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## Yangon's clearance to 10,000 more Rohingyas soon

Myanmar has agreed to give clearance to another 10,000 Rohingya Muslims within a month to return home from the refugee camps in Cox's Bazar, reports UNB.

The assurance from the Myanmar officials came yesterday at the talks with their counterparts in Dhaka who pressed for expediting repatriation of the refugees who crossed over to Bangladesh in 1991.

Chittagong Divisional Commissioner Omar Faruque who led the home side at the talks at the state guest house Padma told newsmen that the Myanmar team had committed to give clearance to another 10,000 refugees within a month.

The Myanmar side at the talks which lasted about two hours was headed by Immigration Director General U Maung Aung.

The Myanmar team arrived here Tuesday morning.

## Gunmen fire on Pak procession: 27 killed

QUETTA, Sept 1: Twenty-seven people were killed when gunmen fired on a procession of supporters escorting a powerful tribal chief of file nomination papers for October elections, news reports said Tuesday, reports AP.

It was the first reported incident of election-related violence. In an apparently unrelated incident, six people were killed when gunmen strafed a mosque packed with worshippers in the eastern city of Lahore, the state-run Associated Press of Pakistan news agency reported.

Authorities in the Punjab city said it was unrelated to the October election campaign.

In Quetta, Zulfiqar Ali Magai, a chief in Pakistan's southwestern Baluchistan province, was on his way to file papers for the October 9 provincial election when gunmen opened fire on a procession of his supporters, the English-language daily The News reported. Twenty people also were injured.