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The Daily Star

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We Mourn

S M Ali — 'Ali Bhai' to all of us, is no more. He promised to return home by October 20 after a routine health check-up and holiday in Bangkok. He has kept the promise — and is coming back on schedule, but in a way which is most painful for us to bear.

We, the members of the Star Family, have no language to mourn the demise of our revered Editor, the visionary and founder of this institution. Yet, we

Condolence from Mediaworld

The Chairman and the Board of Directors of Mediaworld Ltd, the owning company of The Daily Star, express their profound grief at the sudden demise of Mr S M Ali, the founder editor-publisher of the paper, and a founder-director of Mediaworld Ltd.

The Board collectively, and all its members individually, acknowledge with highest respect and gratitude the singular contribution of Mr Ali in setting up and making The Daily Star the pre-eminent English language daily in the country. Through his tireless efforts he set new standards for journalism in Bangladesh.

The Board Members extend their deepest, sorrow-filled condolences to Mrs Nancy Ali and to other family members of the deceased.

Azizur Rahman (Chairman), A S Mahmud (Managing Director), A Rouf Chowdhury, Shamsur Rahman, Latifur Rahman and Mahfuz Anam.

Benazir seems set for second term PPP nominee captures post of NA Speaker

ISLAMABAD, Oct 17: Benazir Bhutto appeared set to embark on her second term as Prime Minister after her Pakistan People's Party (PPP) nominee Yusuf Raza Gilani was elected Speaker of the National Assembly here today, report AFP, Reuters.

Ending a week-old political stalemate concerning who commands the majority in the hung Pakistani parliament, Gilani defeated his lone rival Gohar Ayub of former premier Nawaz Sharif's Pakistan Muslim League by a wide margin of 16 votes.

Three members of the Pakistan Islamic Front (PIF) abstained while two MPs from Baluchistan did not cast their votes in the chamber of 201 voting members.

Bhutto's nominee for Deputy Speaker also won by a wider margin. The PPP's Syed Zafar Ali Shah bagged 115 votes against

81 secured by the PML's Nawaz Khokhar for the office. According to the official results Gilani polled 106 against 90 secured by Ayub in the two-man contest.

In the general election Bhutto had a narrow lead of 86-73 over Sharif's PML while independents and fringe party members held the balance of power in the 217-member House.

Both had been claiming they had mustered enough support to form a coalition government. Today's result established the apparent supremacy of Bhutto's party ahead of Tuesday's election for the premiership.

Some analysts said Sharif might have tactically retreated from the race to form a national government to concentrate in his former powerbase of Punjab where he was trying to form a PML-led government.

Western diplomats said the

election of the Speaker was a litmus test of Bhutto's strength to form the federal government and was expected to win her more support in hung parliaments in the provinces in crucial votes this week.

They said independents in the most powerful province would now almost certainly follow the traditions of Pakistan's tumultuous politics by siding with Bhutto, seeing her as the certain future Prime Minister.

Punjab is to elect its Chief Minister on Wednesday. Both Bhutto and Sharif were present in the House as the vote counting was broadcast live, by state-run Pakistan Television.

A beaming Bhutto joined the chorus of deaf-thumping when the result of the election was announced by Mahmood Khan Achakzai who chaired the session.

The 44-year-old Sharif sat grim-faced as his chances of

See Page 12 Col 8

PM leaves for Cyprus tomorrow

Prime Minister Begum Khaleda Zia leaves here tomorrow for Cyprus leading a Bangladesh delegation to the biennial conference of the Commonwealth heads of government there from October 21 to 25, reports BSS.

Foreign Minister A S M Mostafizur Rahman, M Abdul Ghani, MP, Begum Halima Khatun, MP, Foreign Secretary Reaz Rahman, Secretary to the Prime Minister Dr Kamal Uddin Siddiqui, Press Secretary to the Prime Minister M. Mozammel Huq and Director General Syed Muazzem Ali will accompany the Prime Minister.

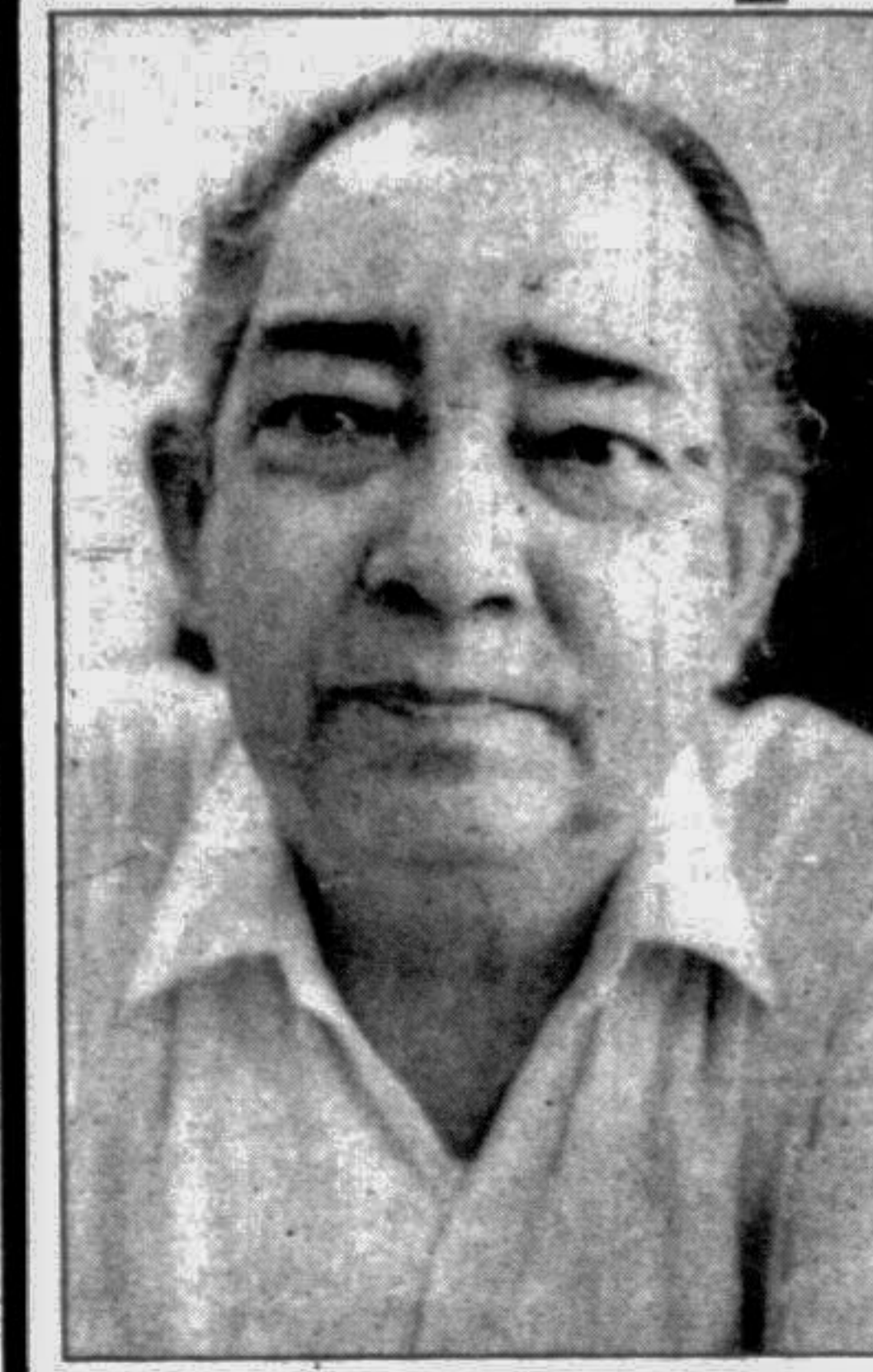
Besides, editor of the Danik Bangla, Ahmed Humayun and the editor of the Daily Inqilab A M M Bahauddin will also accompany the Prime Minister.

Briefing newsmen at the Foreign Office here yesterday, Foreign Secretary Reaz Rahman said during the Commonwealth meeting, Begum Zia would meet leaders of the members state and was expected to make positive contribution to the image-building of the country.

The five-day biennial gather-

See Page 12 Col 5

S. M. Ali passes away



Syed Mohammad Ali, the founding editor and publisher of The Daily Star, passed away due to kidney failure in a Bangkok hospital yesterday at 8 am (BST). He was 65.

Long suffering from rheumatoid arthritis, S M Ali, the initials by which he was widely known, was rather belatedly diagnosed late last month to have been suffering from lung cancer.

He went to the Thai capital on October 1 where he was under treatment at the Samitivej Hospital.

The news of his expiry, which reached Dhaka within minutes yesterday morning, took his colleagues at The Daily Star, as also the nation, by total surprise. Everyone was shocked beyond words by the suddenness of his demise, because given his strong-willed, self-effacing style and total professional commitment, he had not given any one of his colleagues the slightest indication about the seriousness of his ailments.

Even in his last office memo to the staff on September 30 — the day before he left — he specifically mentioned that he would be back by October 20.

He also reaffirmed the same sentiment in his last signed article, "My World", which appeared in the paper on the same Friday he flew out of the capital.

Under a separate sub-heading "My World" in a Suspended Animation, he took his leave saying: "As I will be going on two to three weeks' leave for my regular medical check-up, See Page 12 Col 1



Benazir Bhutto (C), co-chairperson of the Pakistan People's Party (PPP) with her husband Anis ul-Hasan Bhutto (L) eating sweets in Islamabad Sunday to celebrate the election of her party's Yusuf Raza Gilani as Speaker of the National Assembly. — AFP photo

Another vanishing act in Ctg

From Staff Correspondent CHITTAGONG, Oct 17: Another businessman reportedly went into hiding from the city's important business centre Khatungon, sources said.

Md. Ishaque, owner of Ishaque & Brothers, allegedly swindled nearly Tk one crore from different business men promising to supply imported goods, sources said.

But Ishaque recently fled Khatungon after closing down his office when his creditors were pressing him for either the delivery of the promised goods or return of the money advanced, sources added.

When contacted over telephone Khatungon police said they had not yet received any complaint in this regard.

A few days ago, a marwar family did a vanishing act after working for some Southeast Asian newspapers in important positions.

Another report says, miscreants allegedly snatched Taka See Page 12 Col 8

The nation condoles

By Staff Correspondent A pall of grief and sadness hung low over the country as the news of the demise of S M Ali, founder-editor of The Daily Star spread yesterday.

Cross section of people, including readers of the newspaper, paid their deep respects to the memory of the veteran journalist of the country.

Some of them came to The Daily Star office while others phoned in to offer their heartfelt sympathies.

The President President Abdur Rahman Biswas expressed his deep shock and sorrow at the sad demise of S M Ali.

In a message of condolence, the President said Ali was a renowned and talented journalist of the country. He also earned a reputation while working for some Southeast Asian newspapers in important positions.

In his death, Bangladesh has lost a distinguished editor of the contemporary period. President Biswas said, adding: "His contributions to the development of modern journalism will long be remembered."

The President conveyed his heartfelt sympathies to the members of the bereaved family and prayed for the peace and salvation of the departed soul.

The Prime Minister Prime Minister Begum Khaleda Zia expressed her profound grief at the death of S M Ali and said "In the death of Ali the country had lost a veteran journalist."

In a message of condolence, she recalled the contribution of Ali to the field of journalism and said he had served the country and the profession with distinction for a long time.

His death has created a void in the field of journalism which will be difficult to fill, Begum Zia said.

She expressed her heartfelt See Page 12 Col 3

'My World' in a Suspended Animation

Excerpt from S M Ali's regular column 'My World'. This was his last piece, written a day before his departure from Dhaka on October 1. The column also appeared on the same day.

As I will be going on two to three weeks' leave for my regular medical check-up, a bit of rest and an overdue holiday, in that order, probably from this afternoon, this column will not be appearing for next three Fridays. During my absence, Executive Editor Mahfuz Arif will be in charge of the paper as the Acting Editor.

Condolence book

A condolence book has been opened at The Daily Star office at Road No 3, House No 11, Dhanmondi Residential Area. The condolence book will remain open from 10 am to 10 pm till October 20.

Militants threaten to blow up Hazratbal Mosque Talks on to end stand-off

SRINAGAR, Oct 17: Indian forces on Sunday negotiated for the surrender of Muslim separatists who have taken over Kashmir's holiest shrine and threatened to blow it up, report AP, AFP.

In the second day of the standoff at the Hazratbal Mosque in Jammu-Kashmir state, the official negotiators made progress when the militants dropped a demand for the withdrawal of the 400 soldiers surrounding the mosque.

But the insurgents also demanded an end to the military siege and a lifting of Srinagar's curfew. The forces are likely to reject that because such concessions could allow many towns people to flood into the shrine and help the rebels slip away.

"It is very tense in here," a militant named Omar said from the shrine in a telephone interview. "The simple people inside don't have water or food. Today, authorities cut the water pipes. It is very difficult for the 175 people inside."

He said the people only include eight militants with six

weapons, but police said 60 armed rebels are in the mosque. Some insurgents reportedly were prepared to blow up the shrine with gun powder they spread around, but that could not be confirmed.

The threat was conveyed to Wajahat Habibullah, a Kashmir administration official who held a face-to-face meeting with the militants inside the shrine, sources said.

Two rounds of negotiations were held just outside the mosque in Srinagar on Sunday between a police official and a guerrilla.

"I tried my best," said police Inspector-General Ashok Kumar Suri, walking away from the mosque compound through a narrow lane. "Now I will ask my superiors for instructions."

"I assured them their lives and property will be safe. We don't want bloodshed," Suri said. But he refused to discuss safe passage for the gunmen. More talks were scheduled Sunday night.

As the siege of the shrine continued 11 Muslim separatists were killed by security

forces in the border town of Bandipora in an unrelated gun battle.

Neighbouring Pakistan, which disputes Kashmir's 1947 accession to India, condemned the siege meanwhile as an example of India's "callous disregard for the religious sentiments" of Kashmiri Muslims.

Benazir Bhutto said today the setting ablaze of a Muslim shrine was one of the worst acts of brutality and barbarism of modern times.

It was a conspiracy against Muslims of India which exposes New Delhi's claims of secularism, she said.

The rebels in the shrine defied calls for an unconditional surrender, demanding that the authorities permit them to hand over a holy relic preserved in the complex to Muslim clergymen and the 'general masses', officials said.

They also demanded the lifting of a curfew so residents could make their way to the shrine to take possession of the relic, a single hair that Muslims believe comes from the beard of the Prophet Mohammed.

Star girl child Round Table

By Staff Correspondent

Representatives of different organisations working for the welfare of the girl child, in a Round Table organised by The Daily Star yesterday, stressed the need for amendment to the existing laws discriminating against the rights of women and the girl child.

The Daily Star organised a Round Table on The Girl Child: Some Priority Concerns yesterday evening at Hotel Sheraton in which 18 representatives of different organisations, including the Unicef, were present.

The participants in the programme — moderated by the Executive Editor of The Daily Star Mahfuz Anam — also observed that the present social system in the country was not in favour of the girl child's education.

The participants suggested that some legislation related to marriage and property in the country should be amended and the laws should ensure equal rights of women, specially the girl child.

They also shared the view that there were some very good laws in the country, but those were not either enforced or See Page 12 Col 8

22 projects sanctioned for DEPZ so far

Star Report

Twenty-two industrial projects with an investment outlay of over 71 million US dollars have been sanctioned so far at the newly opened Dhaka Export Processing Zone (DEPZ).

According to official sources, three of the approved projects, with a total investment of over three lakh dollars, have already gone into production and another four are expected to begin operation within a month.

Formally inaugurated by the Prime Minister in June, the first phase of the DEPZ, with 60 plots, has already been completed and most of the plots have been allotted. The Bangladesh Export Processing Zone Authority (BEPZA) is planning to start work on the second phase, with about 50 plots, soon.

BEPZA is currently processing another 30 investment proposals for the DEPZ. Located at Savar, the DEPZ is spread over an area of 142 acres.

A garments accessories unit owned by South Korean investors started production at the DEPZ in June while a tex-

AL mass contact tour from Oct 28

The Awami League will begin a week-long mass contact tour at the thana level from October 28 to mobilise public opinion in support of the party's various political and economic demands, reports UNB.

The demands include repeal of the Indemnity Ordinance, removal of the 'corrupt' ministers, trial of Golam Azam as 'war criminal', repeal of the Anti-Terrorism Act, reduction of prices for agri-inputs, fair prices for farm produces, implementation of the demands of students and workers, creation of job opportunities, stoppage of repression on opposition, withdrawal of 'false' cases and release of opposition leaders and workers.

GF for united efforts to solve Farakka issue

By Staff Correspondent

The Gano Forum (GF) yesterday demanded the government initiate a 'national move' for a permanent solution to the Farakka Barrage problem by involving the Jatiya Sangsad, the experts and the masses in the process.

The demand was made in a resolution adopted by the two-day GF central council meeting that concluded at a city restaurant yesterday with the party chief Dr Kamal Hossain in the chair.

The resolution said such a permanent solution could be reached through adequate diplomatic efforts, bilateral talks and taking into consideration the alternative proposals in this regard. The international policy on water sharing could help the people being affected by the barrage and the Prime Minister of Bangladesh, as Chairperson of the SAARC, could also contribute to the creation of an atmosphere of regional cooperation by successfully handling the matter, it added.

The meeting urged the government to remain above partisan interests while initiating a national consensus on the Farakka issue.

The two-day meeting which began Friday heard 70 GC members

Procession at Rajshahi Varsity lathicharged

RAJSHAHI UNIVERSITY, Oct 17: Police lathicharged a mourning procession led by mother of Shaheed Rimu on the campus today and rounded up five student leaders, reports UNB.

Some 10 students were also injured in the beating by police who said the processionists violated ban imposed on political activities at the trouble-ridden university, which reopened on Saturday after 27 days' of closure since the killing of Jubayer Chowdhury Rimu in the September 19 violence.

Among those arrested today, three were identified as Layeb Uddin Labu, general secretary of the Chhatra League (M-D) RU unit, Chhatra Union activist Sharifuzzaman and Chhatra League (B-R) supporter Monwar Hossain.

Witnesses said police charged baton on the mourning procession, led by Rimu's mother Helena Chowdhury, as it neared the RU branch of Agrani Bank after holding a rally at the Shaheed Minar on the campus at noon.

The rally condemned the killing of Rimu and demanded immediate arrest and trial of the killers.

It was addressed, among others, by Helena Chowdhury, RUTA President Qayes Uddin and Chhatra Motry's RU unit President Sedakat Hossain Babul Khan. A message from Convener of the Ghatok Dalal Nirmul Committee Jahanara See Page 12 Col 6

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Supplement

Today's issue contains a 2-page Special on the Unicef cartoon series MEENA Pages 6 and 7



Participants in The Daily Star Round Table on the "Girl Child: Some Priority Concerns" held at the Hotel Sheraton yesterday. — Star photo