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NEWS BRIEFS

Hasina hosts iftar party

Leader of the Opposition in Parliament and Awami League chief Sheikh Hasina yesterday hosted an iftar in honour of ambassadors, high commissioners, diplomats, heads of different UN missions, editors of the different national dailies, intellectuals, leaders of business community and entrepreneurs and retired high civil and military officials. Held at the Minto Road residence of the Leader of the Opposition, the party was attended by central leaders of the Awami League and mayors elect of Dhaka and Chittagong, reports BSS.

Pak army chief to visit China

KARACHI, Feb 24: Pakistani Army Chief General Abdul Waheed is to visit China next week, a military spokesman said here today. Waheed would hold talks with Chinese officials, on enhancing defence cooperation between the two countries, the spokesman said. Sources said he is expected to explore the possibility of purchasing military hardware, reports AFP.

Jute goods gutted in Khulna city

KHULNA, Feb 24: A godown of jute goods in the city was heavily damaged by fire tonight. According to the first hand information, fire broke out at Kadamtala godown at 9:30 pm. Firemen from the city and Daulatpur rushed to the spot and put the fire out within 30 minutes. UNB.

Discussion on Language Movement

The 'Bhasha Sainik-o-Rajbandhi Parishad' will hold a discussion today at 10 am at the Shilpakala Academy to pay homage to 21 persons for their contributions in the Language Movement, reports UNB.

Sohri, Iftar timings			
Rmdn	Feb	Sohri	Iftar
13	25	—	6:03 pm
14	26	5:03 am	6:03 pm
15	27	5:02 am	6:04 pm

Opposition plans common bill for care-taker govt

By Staff Correspondent

All opposition parties in Parliament, including the Jamaat, agreed yesterday to introduce a common bill proposing elections under a care-taker government and to take a uniform stand on other issues like alleged corruption by the ministers, widespread terrorism and independence of the judiciary.

"We reached a consensus that we will submit one bill unitedly in the House to introduce the provision of a care-taker government," Mohammad Nasim, the Awami League leader and Opposition Chief Whip told The Daily Star.

Three separate bills on the formation of a care-taker government were earlier tabled in the House by the Awami League, Jatiya Party and the Jamaat.

He said the opposition parties also decided to place in the House the documents re-

garding the alleged corruption by the ministers instead of forwarding them to the Speaker.

The unprecedented consensus came at a meeting of all the opposition parties in the fifth Parliament chaired by Leader of the Opposition Sheikh Hasina at her Parliament office yesterday.

This is for the first time in the last three years of the fifth Parliament, that Jamaat-Islami representatives attended such a meeting convened by the Leader of the Opposition.

Among those present at the meeting were Abdus Samad Azad, Tofael Ahmed, Mohammad Nasim, Sajeda Chowdhury, Salauddin Yusuf and Sheikh Fazlul Karim Selim of the AL, Moulana Abdus Sobhan and Sheikh Ansar Ali of the Jamaat, Jatiya Party's Anwar Hossain Manju and

Monirul Huq Chowdhury, Ganatantri Party's Suranjit Sengupta, Workers Party's Rashed Khan Menon, NDP's Salauddin Kader Chowdhury and IOJ leader Maulana Obaidul Huq.

The Opposition party leaders will meet again on Sunday as a follow up of their new common approach, opposition sources said.

At the one and a half-hour meeting yesterday, the leaders said the ruling party had been evading the discussions on alleged corruption and is failing to initiate effective investigations into the allegations.

"We should remain united to divulge the corruption of the government as well as fight for the independence of the judiciary," one AL leader was quoted as saying at the meeting.

According to sources, the See page 12 Col 2

JS ruling on discussion on corruptions Sunday

By Staff Correspondent

Allegations and counter allegations of corruption by members of both the treasury and the opposition benches dominated the proceedings of the Jatiya Sangsad (JS) yesterday.

Accusing each other of corrupt practices, the members of both sides in the House, however, requested the Speaker to fix a date for discussion on the alleged corruptions of the ruling party and the opposition.

The Speaker, hearing both the sides, told the House that he would give his ruling on the issue next Sunday.

Earlier, he said he was ready to allow deliberations on alleged corruptions provided the demands for the debate were made as per rules. The chair, however, apprehended that such a general discussion would not benefit the nation.

"There is also no precedent

that any Parliament anywhere in the world has even discussed an adjournment motion on alleged corruptions of either the government or the opposition in general," the Speaker said, adding there must be 'some substantial proof of corruptions' before any discussion.

Opposition Chief Whip Mohammad Nasim yesterday wanted to know from the chair the fate of the notices of the adjournment motions on the alleged corruptions of 17 cabinet ministers.

The notices were submitted to the Parliament secretariat on Tuesday and the Speaker, while disposing of the notices, had asked the opposition MPs to submit the paper clippings and some 'documents' supporting the allegations of corruption, as re-

See page 12 Col 6

Report on judiciary bill placed

The select committee report on the Constitutional (Amendment) Bill seeking independence of the judiciary and rule of law was placed before the Jatiya Sangsad yesterday, reports BSS.

The report along with the bill as amended by the select committee was laid before the House by Housing and Works Minister Rafiqul Islam Miah on behalf of the Chairman of the select committee and Minister for Law, Justice and Parliamentary Affairs Mirza Golam Haiz.

The bill in original was submitted by Salauddin Yusuf (AL) in accordance with the agreed out-line of the three alliances — fifteen party alliance, seven-party alliance and five-party alliance — for protection of the fundamental rights of the people, independence of the judiciary and ensuring rule of law.

See page 12 Col 1



Foreign Minister A S M Mostafizur Rahman (R) receiving the visiting Chinese Vice-Premier and Foreign Minister Qian Qichen (L) at the Zia International Airport yesterday. — PID photo

Dhaka to work with Beijing for global peace: FM

Bangladesh is looking forward to continued Chinese initiatives towards promoting global peace and security and encouraged at its constructive role in Asia, particularly in this region.

This was stated by Foreign Minister A S M Mostafizur Rahman at a dinner given in honour of visiting Chinese Vice Premier and Foreign Minister Qian Qichen last night, reports UNB.

"Dialogue and cooperation is increasingly replacing conflict and confrontation in international relations. China's contributions to this process are acknowledged and admired by us. We are looking forward to continued Chinese initiatives towards promoting global peace and security."

The Foreign Minister said the people of Bangladesh

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Bilateral talks today

China will never seek hegemony: Qian

Chinese Vice Premier and Foreign Minister Qian Qichen said last night that his country will never seek hegemony but remain a force for preserving world peace and stability, reports UNB.

"We will by no means seek to establish spheres of influence or military bases at any place on earth. China is and will remain a force for preserving world peace and stability," Qian Qichen said at a banquet given in his honour by his Bangladesh counterpart A S M Mostafizur Rahman.

"Absurd and groundless," said Qian Qichen referring to the recent allegations about the 'China threat' or even China's expansion into the Indian Ocean.

"We have made it clear on many occasions that China unswervingly pursues and in-

dependent foreign policy of peace and will never seek hegemony," he said.

Reciprocating the sentiments expressed by Foreign Minister Mostafizur Rahman in his address of welcome, the Chinese leader said he is convinced that cooperation between China and Bangladesh in all fields will further develop in depth and breadth with concerted efforts of the two countries.

The Chinese Vice Premier said China and Bangladesh are friendly neighbours which enjoy profound traditional friendship.

The two countries are carrying out fruitful cooperation in the economic, trade, scientific and technological, cultural and other fields and have supported each other and coop-

See page 12 Col 4

No scope for JS debate on corruption: BNP

By Staff Correspondent

The policy makers of the ruling Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP) said that there was no scope for a general debate in JS on alleged corruption as agreed upon in Parliament yesterday by both the opposition and treasury benches.

In an informal meeting of the policy makers immediately after the session, they concluded that "the discussion must be held within the per-view of existing parliamentary rules," according to a top BNP leader who attended the meeting.

According to the rules, the House can debate any charges of corruption against any minister or member after it is substantiated by necessary documents.

Later in the afternoon, the standing committee of the BNP resumed its meeting with Prime Minister Begum Khaleda Zia in the chair. The meeting was adjourned until today.

No substantive discussion was made during the half an hour meeting at the Tejgaon office of the Prime Minister.

The committee may discuss the latest parliamentary developments as well as organisational matters today.

Doctors in Barisal on strike

From Staff Correspondent

BARISAL, Feb 24: Doctors of the Sher-e-Bangla Medical College and Hospital (SBMC) and Sadar Hospital here have gone on strike for an indefinite period from today.

The strike was called by the Bangladesh Medical Association (BMA), Barisal unit and the Internee Doctors Association (SBMC) protesting the beating up of Dr Sajal Banerjee, an Assistant Professor of the Cardiovascular Department of the Medical College by two relatives of a patient, Advocate Ismail Hossain Khan.

Advocate Khan died of a massive cardiac arrest at the hospital. Meanwhile, critically in-

See page 12 Col 3

Dilemma over loans to BSB, BSRS projects

By Sohail Manzur

The nationalised commercial banks (NCBs) of the country are hesitating to provide working capital to the BSB and BSRS financed projects because of the lack of equal right (pari passu) on their fixed and floating assets.

According to banking sources, the existing rules are not enough to protect the interests of the banks, rather the rules often create complications in disbursement and realisation of loans.

Under the existing rules, the BSB (Bangladesh Shilpa Bank) and BSRS (Bangladesh Shilpa Rin Sangstha) have to issue no objection certificate to the banks every year for providing working capital to the projects. The two DFIs (Development Financing Institutions) also permit the banks to establish second charge on the fixed assets of the projects.

As the first charge on the assets remains in favour of the BSRS and the BSB (enabling

them to sell the assets without any permission from the banks, the NCBs have been facing difficulties in realising the loans, the sources pointed out.

According to the sources, the working capital for any industrial unit is sanctioned against its pledged assets and hypothecation. The pledged assets remain under the control of the banks, but the hypothecations remain with the entrepreneurs. When the industry terms sick for any reason, the banks have to face problems in realising the loans against the hypothecation.

Meanwhile, a high level meeting held last year at the Ministry of Finance agreed that only a pari passu on the fixed and floating assets of a particular industrial unit, which has to take loan from various institutions, can protect the interests of the institutions and ensure quick recovery of loans. The ministry however is yet to issue any order in this regard.

Aziz still at large: All police attempts fail

By Staff Correspondent

The police have raided all possible hide-outs to nab Alhaj Abdul Aziz, main accused of the Nawabganj killings, but all their attempts ended in failure until yesterday. Six people had died in the incident on January 31.

A police source told The Daily Star yesterday that the police had raided different places in Mymensingh, Nar-singdi, Munshiganj, Kishoreganj, Noakhali, Feni, Faridpur, Chittagong and other areas but Aziz and his family members are still at large.

The sixteen other accused are also absconding. The police believe some of the accused may have left the country.

However, police officials believe that Aziz continues to remain in the country but they are uncertain about his whereabouts. Meanwhile, the police have

arrested another person for his alleged involvement in the January 31 killings. Nur Mohammad alias Budda was arrested from Narsingdi on Tuesday raising the arrest figure to 13.

Budda was sent to the Dhaka Central Jail yesterday after interrogation in the city's Detective Branch at Minto Road, according to a DB source.

A commissioner candidate for Ward No 59, Alhaj Abdul Aziz along with his accomplices attacked the supporters of Humayun Kabir, commissioner elect, leaving six people dead and many others injured on the day following the polls.

Humayun Kabir lodged a case with Lalbagh police accusing 18 people including Abdul Aziz of the multiple murders.

Taka devalued further

By Inam Ahmed

The Bangladesh Bank has further devalued the Taka by six paise to a dollar with immediate effect from Thursday, according to Finance Ministry sources.

The Bangladesh Bank's buying rate for one US dollar will now be Tk 40.03 and the selling rate Tk 40.23.

The devaluation became inevitable because of a decrease in deflation rate and depreciation of partner countries' currencies.

The deflation rate is now approaching to a zero inflation from the deflationary trend. The inflation rate was minus .38 per cent in December last year. It now stands at minus .03 per cent.

This is the third time that the government had devalued its currency this year.

The last devaluation was a result of the Chinese devaluation of its currencies.

The country's exports will now be more competitive, financial experts said, adding that the country can accommodate another two to three per cent devaluation at this moment.

Japanese emperor to host luncheon for Khaleda

The emperor and empress of Japan will host a court luncheon at the imperial palace in honour of Prime Minister Begum Khaleda Zia during her forthcoming visit to Japan, reports BSS.

This was announced in Tokyo by the Director-General for Public Information and Cultural Affairs of the Foreign Ministry of Japan, a message received here yesterday said.

Prime Minister Begum Khaleda Zia, who is likely to pay an official visit to Japan from March 28 to April 1, will be received in audience on March 31 at the imperial palace by their majesties of the emperor and empress.

The announcement said the Prime Minister of Japan and Mrs Hosokawa will host a dinner at their official residence in honour of Begum Khaleda Zia on March 29.

Begum Khaleda Zia will hold a press conference on the concluding day of her five-day visit at the National Press Club in Tokyo, it added.

The announcement further said some business organisations will host a luncheon on March 30 in honour of Bangladesh Prime Minister.

IMF warns against using its name

The International Monetary Fund (IMF) has warned against using its name in connection with issuance of various denominated instruments or offers of participation in certain financial schemes, reports UNB.

The warning, issued from Washington by the treasurer of the IMF, was available from Bangladesh Bank yesterday.

"The Fund does not issue any obligations called 'Prime Bank Notes, Prime Bank Guarantees, Bill of Exchange or Bill of Equity or extended any credit lines through commercial banks or other agencies,'" said IMF clarifying its position.

"Moreover, the IMF does not guarantee debentures or other financial instruments issued by a member country or any other entity. It does not issue to countries or to outside parties an IMF Number, IMF Country Registration Number, See page 12 Col 3

NDP men attack a Raozan village: Woman shot

From Staff Correspondent

CHITTAGONG, Feb 24: A group of armed activists of the National Democratic Party (NDP) reportedly attacked Andamanik village of Raozan thana last evening firing indiscriminately, police said.

During the attack one Jesmin Aktar, 22, received serious bullet wounds while she was standing in front of her house. Police said adding that a cow was also hit.

The injured Jesmin was admitted into the Chittagong Medical College Hospital where her condition was stated to be critical.

Police informed that some Chhatra League activists immediately launched a counter attack forcing the NDP activists to flee the village. Police rushed to the spot after the incident.