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NEWS BRIEFS

Indian fish seized

JHENIDAH, Apr 15: Police seized about 60 maunds of Indian Ruhi fish worth about Taka two lakh from a Dhaka bound night coach here on Thursday, reports UNB.

Four pirates held

CHITTAGONG, Apr 15: A patrol craft of the Bangladesh Navy seized a mechanised Shampan and arrested four pirates from the outer anchorage in the small hours yesterday. The arrested persons were preparing for dacoity in a merchant ship, says a press release.

The Daily Star

Over 100 countries represented at Marrakesh World trade pact signed

MARRAKESH, Morocco, Apr 15: Ministers from more than 100 countries signed here today an historic world trade agreement in a marathon four-hour ceremony in the Ornate Salle Royale of the Marrakesh Palais des Congres, reports AFP.

Morocco's Commerce Minister and host of the Uruguay Round closing conference, Moudad Cherif, was the first to step across the marble-tiled floor to the plain black table where copies of the final act accord were piled up, one for each signatory, neatly tied with blue ribbon.

After the Moroccan official, 108 ministers from participating countries signed in alphabetical order, beginning with Algeria and concluding with Zimbabwe.

Some 125 countries are signatories to the accord but not all were represented here.

Most of them also signed the accord setting up a new world trade organisation (WTO) replacing the Geneva-based General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT), which has operated on interim basis since 1947.

Ministers and delegates earlier rose from their seats and cheered as the conference chairman, Uruguay's Foreign Minister Sergio Abreu Bonilla, officially closed the meeting, and seven and a half years of often acrimonious talks, at 1025 GMT.

Nonetheless it was a tiring experience for GATT Director General Peter Sutherland, who was present throughout.

He started the ceremony standing behind the signers seat but had collapsed into a chair long before the end, and heaved a huge sigh of relief when the pen had been poised for the last time.

Ministers representing some 125 countries in the GATT talks made the pledge in a joint declaration as a four-day meeting to sign the GATT treaty neared its close.

Ministers expressed their

determination to resist protectionist pressures of all kinds," the statement said.

The three-page declaration said the World Trade Organisation (WTO), set to be the GATT's more powerful successor, "ushers in a new era of global economic cooperation."

It said, "Ministers undertake, with immediate effect and until the entry into force of the WTO, not to take any trade measures that would undermine or adversely affect the results of the Uruguay Round negotiations or their implementation."

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9 killed, 20 missing in launch capsized

From Our Correspondent

NARAYANGANJ, Apr 15: At least nine persons, including five children and two women, were drowned when a Chandpur-bound passenger launch capsized at the confluence of the Shitalakhya and Dhaleshwari rivers Thursday morning.

Survivors claimed another 20 of nearly 150 passengers of the launch were still missing.

BIWTA sources said the launch 'ML Shakhawat' sailed from the Narayanganj BIWTA terminal for Matlab of Chandpur district at 9 am and collided head-on with a sand-loaded mechanised boat near the Gopchar buoy at 9:45 am.

The engine-boat broke into pieces and sank immediately.

The sareng (aunch pilot) tried to run the unstable launch aground at the nearby Char Kishoreganj, survivors said, but it sank before reaching the sandbank.

At this stage, they said, most of the passengers swam ashore while the rest were either trapped in the hull of the sunken vessel or drowned in the river.

Divers recovered eight bodies from the sunken launch while another was found floating.

Among the nine dead, eight were identified as Sultana (9), daughter of one Sultan Mia of Shahidnagar, Narayanganj; Marjina (13), daughter of Abul Hossain of Charsapur, Daudkandi under Comilla district, Shahnaz Begum (45) and her daughter Poly (6) of Massakhi, Chandpur; Parul (8), daughter

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1 killed, 50 hurt

Fire at Postogola,
Razabazar

By Staff Correspondent

A female worker Beauty was charred to death and at least 50 others injured when a fire broke out in a garments factory at Postogola in the city around noon Thursday.

In another big fire over 50 shacks were gutted in a slum at East Razabazar in the evening on the same day.

Fire broke out on the second floor of Wanders Garments at 9 am Thursday at Alam Market at Postogola.

Some 50 staff of the garments factory, most of them women, were also injured in stampede.

Firemen said that the local people had put off the flame

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ESHO HE BAISHAKH: Artistes of the Chhayanaut rendering songs at a function welcoming the Pahela Baishakh at the Ramma Park in the city Thursday.

— Star photo

Heat, load-shedding and water crisis make city life miserable

Star Report

Regarding the power crisis, Power Development Board officials said that the 210MW Rauzan Power Plant in Chittagong had tripped due to a technical problem last Tuesday.

The present amount of load-shedding is about 280MW across the country.

The demand for power has suddenly increased. Even if the Rauzan plant starts supplying 210MW to the national power grid, the amount of load-shedding would be 70MW, a PDB official said.

The Dhaka Electric Supply Authority (DESA) told The Daily Star last night that the situation had worsened in the city because of a 132 KV transformer went out of order four days ago.

As a result, five DESA substations in Mirpur, Satmasjid

Road and Zigmatola had been compelled to continue load-shedding in these areas for the last few days.

In Zigmatola and Satmasjid Road, the amount of daily load-shedding is no less than 8 MW, a DESA official said.

Presently over 1000 transformers under the DESA remain overloaded, the DESA official informed this correspondent. Maintenance of the equipment had almost stopped for the last two years due to absence of funds.

The World Bank and other donors had completely suspended assistance for the power sector of the country because of system loss. Because of this there is now an acute fund crisis.

Regarding the water crisis, DESA sources informed that

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26 killed as US jets mistakenly down 2 choppers over Iraq

WASHINGTON, Apr 15: US military officials ordered pilots to take a less aggressive stance in northern Iraq after two American fighter jets shot down two US Army helicopters, killing all 26 people on board, reports AP.

Defence Secretary William Perry, in an interview with Associated Press Network News, said Thursday he's taken several steps to ensure the incident isn't repeated. The jet pilots mistook the choppers for Iraqi aircraft violating the no-fly zone, he said.

The secretary said he could not describe the exact steps taken for security reasons, but presumably guidelines under which pilots attack targets have been made more strict or the authority for firing must come from higher-level officers.

Questioned how such a

tragedy could occur, Perry replied, "There were errors. There were human errors, probably, and there might be process or system errors as well."

The secretary said he has postponed a trip to Japan and South Korea to make sure two separate investigations of the incident had begun.

At an earlier Pentagon briefing, Perry said the fighter pilots mistook the UH-60 Black Hawk choppers for Iraqi "Hind" helicopters.

Both jets apparently had the helicopters in sight during the daylight mission and both fired missiles, Perry said. An AWAC's reconnaissance plane was over the helicopters' flight.

The pilots of the F-15s feel they had positively identified

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Merry-making,
mishaps
mark Pahela
Baishakh

By Staff Correspondent

Merry-making as well as mishaps marked the advent of the Fifteenth Bengali century Thursday, Pahela Baishakh — the first day of the Bengali calendar year 1401 BS.

As crooners sang in chorus welcoming a new sunrise at the Ramma batamul in Dhaka, a river-craft collision in Narayanganj district only a few hours later left at least nine people dead.

In keeping with tradition, Pahela Baishakh celebrations were orchestrated across the country through cultural functions, colourful processions, Baishakhi mela (country fairs) and 'halkhata', or opening of new accounts by the shopkeepers.

Thursday was a public holiday.

In Dhaka, the Pahela Baishakh festivity started at a minute past midnight with See Page 12 Col 4

Li Peng likely
to visit Dhaka
by year-end

The Chinese Premier Li Peng Thursday said that he would like to visit Bangladesh in the latter half of this year while meeting the Foreign Minister A S M Mustafizur Rahman in Beijing, reports BSS.

The Chinese Premier was responding to a letter of invitation from Prime Minister Khaleda Zia that was handed over to him by the Bangladesh Foreign Minister, according to a message received in Dhaka.

The dates for the visit would be worked out through normal diplomatic channel, the message added.

The Chinese Premier said See Page 12 Col 8

Govt considering
to set up divn
in Sylhet: Saifur

MOULVIBAZAR, Apr 15: Finance Minister M Saifur Rahman said the government is actively considering to set up an administrative division in Sylhet, reports UNB.

The minister also added that a decision to this effect and regarding such other demands would be taken soon.

He was addressing a gathering organised in observance of the Bengali New Year day here on Thursday.

Finance Minister said the long standing hopes and aspirations of the people of the North Eastern region would be fulfilled by establishing a new administrative division at Sylhet.

Saifur also distributed a cheque worth Tk 11 lakh among various educational institutions of the district.

Syedhi fails to hold rally in Kushtia town

From Our Correspondent

KHUSHTIA, Apr 15: The district administration imposed Section 144 of the BPC from 7 am till midnight tonight in the entire municipal area here in apprehension of trouble.

Section 144 was imposed by the district administration to avert possible political clashes following plans by a front organisation of the Jamaat-e-Islami to hold a rally to be addressed by Delwar Hussain Syedhi.

However, a meeting by the rally organisers was held three miles off the district town at Bartul near the power station, which was addressed by Delwar Hussain Syedhi.

No untoward incident was reported.

