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NEWS BRIEFS

Hasina shocked

Awami League president Sheikh Hasina expressed her shock at the death of 29 girl students in a boat capsized in south Indian state of Tamil Nadu yesterday. In a message of condolence, she prayed for the peace of departed souls and sympathised for the members of the bereaved families, reports UNB.

SSC exams in Cox's Bazar begin today

The SSC examinations which was suspended at eight centres in Cox's Bazar district due to cyclone begin today as usual, an official handout said yesterday. The examinations in these centres were suspended by order of the local administration, reports BSS.

Paddy procurement drive from today

The Aman-Boro paddy procurement drive for the current year begins today, an official handout said in Dhaka yesterday. Three lakh seventy-five thousand metric tons of paddy and 2.50 lakh metric tons of rice will be procured this year, reports BSS.

Cyclone death toll 193: Prices of essentials double

Bodies of 28 foreigners found near Teknaf

Star Report

Cox's Bazar district authorities have so far recovered 28 bodies of foreign nationals killed in fishing boat capsizes during Monday's cyclone, according to the official sources.

They said that the Thana Nirbahi Officer of Teknaf had sent a radio message to the Cox's Bazar district control room yesterday stating that all the bodies had been buried in Teknaf.

However, their identities could not be ascertained, but the officials believed the victims were either Thai or Burmese fishermen whose boats were wrecked while fishing in the Bay.

According to another message from Cox's Bazar, bodies of 13 ship-wreck victims were

buried at the Shilkali beach in Baherchhara union of Teknaf while nine others were laid to rest at Jahajpora beach yesterday.

Police yesterday morning recovered another body from the Cox's Bazar beach.

Villagers of Cox's Bazar and Teknaf said that many bodies, which were washed ashore during high tide on Thursday night, again drained down to the sea during low tide yesterday.

A total of 165 people were earlier reported killed in the cyclone that mauled the southern areas of Cox's Bazar district and Banderban on Monday evening, causing massive destruction to property.

With the recovery of the

bodies of foreign nationals, the death toll rose to 193, including 86 Rohingya refugees.

Our Cox's Bazar Correspondent adds: Prices of Food and other essentials have almost doubled in the rural markets of the cyclone-battered Cox's Bazar district adding to the sufferings of the people.

While visiting different rural 'hats' in Teknaf and Ukhia thanas yesterday, this correspondent found that prices of food, spices, fuel and house building materials have gone up sharply due to severe scarcity and short supply of those.

Coarse rice is now selling at an average of Taka 20 a kilo-

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3 NDP men killed in Rauzan gunbattle

Form Staff Correspondent

CHITTAGONG, May 6: Three activists of the National Democratic Party (NDP) were killed in a gunbattle with their rivals at Rauzan today.

The dead were identified as Ezhar Miah, 65, Shamsu Miah 22, and Yusuf, 18. Ezhar Miah was a local UP member who was kidnapped by terrorists while returning from a wedding party last night, police said.

The terrorists, at 10 am today, took Ezhar to remote hill-bound Panchpukuria village under Haladia union of Rauzan thana reportedly to kill him

but were prevented by some NDP activists who wanted to rescue him. This led to an armed encounter between the two groups.

The gunbattle which continued for four hours upto 2 pm left the three NDP activists dead while the killers fled into hilly areas bordering Rangamat district, police added.

Meanwhile, NDP leaders here in a statement blamed the local Awami League-backed Chhatra League activists for the killing.

They demanded immediate arrest of the murderers.

Arms recovered from Polytech hostel: 16 held

By Staff Correspondent

Police in a surprise raid on a hostel of the Dhaka Polytechnic Institute yesterday afternoon recovered huge quantity of arms and ammunition and arrested 16 people.

Eleven of those arrested identified as non-students, were staying in the hall illegally.

A team of the Detective Branch (DB), led by its Deputy Commissioner (DC), raided Latif Chhatrabash of the Institute at 3 in the afternoon. During the raid, two rifles, one gun, over 50 rounds of bullets 21 live crackers and raw material of crackers were recovered.

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Worst fighting in Yemen

DUBAI, May 6: Yemeni troops loyal to President Ali Abdulla Saleh advanced on Aden, former capital of South Yemen, from four sides and said they would not stop until they took the city, a North Yemeni statement said today, reports Reuter.

The London-based Middle East Broadcasting Corporation quoted the statement as saying 'loyal forces' would not stop their advance until 'the situation in Aden is under control'.

The claim could not be confirmed as Aden has been cut off from the outside world since Wednesday, when fighting between northern and southern troops loyal to Vice-President Ali Salem Al-Baidh broke out.

Diplomats in neighbouring Oman said today that fighting between the rival troops were underway in both Aden and Sanaa, capital of Yemen since North and South Yemen merged four years ago.

ADEN, May 6: Southern warplanes fired missiles at the presidential palace in the Yemeni capital Sanaa today, leaving the palace in flames, officials here said, reports AFP.

Warplanes from both sides have launched air raids on Aden and Sanaa and diplomats said one missile narrowly missed Saleh's presidential palace in the capital.

It was not clear if one side was gaining the upper hand as

most communications with Yemen remained cut.

'Do not underestimate the ability of southern troops. They have given Northerners a bloody nose in several clashes prior to the unity accord,' a Western diplomat in Sanaa told Reuters before the latest round of fighting.

The prospect of all-out civil war increased as Aden Radio in the south said northern fighter planes bombed Aden's airport, power station, oil refinery, port and television station.

Several people were killed and wounded when the airport's terminal building was hit, the Radio said. Diplomats had said the airport was badly damaged in an earlier air raid.

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A Palestinian woman offers sweets to Japanese Foreign Minister Koji Kizawa during his visit to Jericho in the West Bank Thursday. Kakizawa visited a Jericho hospital which is to receive three million dollars worth of equipment from Japan as part of a Japanese pledge to help develop Palestinian self-rule. — AFP photo



Britain's Queen Elizabeth prepares to board the new Channel Tunnel Eurostar train at Waterloo Station, London yesterday, on her way to France for a joint official opening ceremony of the Channel Tunnel. — AFP photo

Queen, Mitterrand open Eurotunnel

FOLKESTONE, May 6: Queen Elizabeth II and President Francois Mitterrand, along with the royal Rolls Royce, rode a train today under the English Channel after inaugurating the \$15 billion Channel Tunnel, the first land link between France and Britain, reports AP.

The two heads of state, side by side in a light rain, cut a red-white-and-blue ribbon of Calais lace at the French end of the tunnel, the high point of daylong celebrations on both sides of the Channel.

'We now have a land border, Madame,' Mitterrand told the Queen. 'Calais is no more than half an hour from Folkestone.'

Later, the two climbed into the Queen's burgundy Rolls Royce and drove slowly onto one of the new shuttle trains for the journey back to a sec-

ond ceremony at the English terminal in Folkestone.

The pageantry was highly symbolic, with one of mankind's greatest engineering feats ushering in a new era in the two countries' fractious history.

Mitterrand and other speakers, though not the Queen, hailed the tunnel's completion as a triumph for European unity. There was no mention of the fact that regular train service is still not running through the costly undersea passage a year after it should have opened.

The Queen, who gave her speech in French, said the two nations had put their sometimes violent past behind them to create a link which mixed 'French élan and British pragmatism.'

'This is the first time in

history that the heads of state of France and Britain have been able to meet each other without either of them having to travel by sea or air,' she said.

'To rejoice what nature separated some 40 million years ago has been a recurring dream of statesmen and engineers for several centuries.'

The 'Chunnel' will link Britain and the mainland with high-speed passenger trains between Paris, London and Brussels, and with shuttle trains piggy-backing automobiles and trucks between the French and British coasts. There will also be freight trains.

Eurotunnel, the Anglo-French operator, hopes shuttles can start ferrying trucks in a few days. Passenger trains

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Big fire at Siddhirganj sub-station

From Our Correspondent

NARAYANGANJ, May 6: A national power grid sub-station at Siddhirganj was totally damaged in a fire this evening.

Consequently electricity supply to most parts of the Siddhirganj industrial area, Bandar thana, Sonargaon thana and Narayanganj town remained suspended from 6:30 pm.

Witnesses said the fire broke out from sparks emitted from a transformer next to the grid sub-station at Siddhirganj.

The sparks fell on the 33 kv Kanchan breaker from which a serious fire broke out in the

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Saifur pleads for scrapping sleepy meetings of ADB

Finance Minister M Saifur Rahman has pleaded scrapping of sleepy meetings like the annual meeting of the Board of Governors of the Asian Development Bank (ADB) held every year spending a lot, reports UNB.

A report by Kevin Rafferty in this regard, headlined 'Sleepy Meetings Must Be Scrapped' was widely covered in the much circulated ADB daily, The Emerging Markets, on Thursday.

The French daily reported that the Bangladesh Finance Minister met ADB President Mitsuo Sato and Japanese Finance Minister Hiruhiso Fujii at Nice in France on Thursday.

'These meetings are too ritualistic. After a few Go-

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Production boom expands foodgrain markets

By Inam Ahmed

The country's foodgrain markets have expanded rapidly in recent years due to a spurt in food production and this has helped the government make a series of major adjustments in the food policy.

The marketed volume of foodgrain has increased from only 15 per cent 20 years ago to over 50 per cent today as the farmers now have surplus cereal stocks.

The country's largest rice market — Badamtali Ghat in Dhaka — housed only four wholesale shops in 1968. The number has now increased to over 300, resulting in stiff competition among rice

sellers. This healthy competition has also improved market integration where the wholesalers have to know the prices prevailing in different regions of the country, according to a study by Dr Steven Hagblade, a researcher of the International Food Policy Research Institute (IFPRI), which was made available to The Daily Star.

Moreover, the production boom has led to growth in privately owned grain stocks, which have roughly doubled since 1960. 'In the lean season, just before aman harvest,

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ANC falls short of two-third majority Mandela appoints Mbeki first vice president

JOHANNESBURG, May 6: South Africa's President-elect, Nelson Mandela, announced his first cabinet appointment today, naming ANC chairman Thabo Mbeki as his First Deputy President, reports Reuter.

Mandela said outgoing white President, F W de Klerk, whose 1990 decision to scrap Apartheid spelt the end of white minority rule, would probably be second Deputy President.

'I have chosen Thabo Mbeki as a deputy president. I am travelling with him to Cape Town today to meet President de Klerk to discuss his (Mbeki's) role, as the First Deputy President and De Klerk

as probably the second Deputy President.' Mandela told a US television network in an interview.

Mandela, who will be sworn-in as president on Tuesday, broke the news in an interview with the McNeil-Lehrer news-hour, a public broadcasting service show in the United States, filmed for screening later today.

AP adds: The Independent Electoral Commission today declared South Africa's first multiracial election free and fair, and said the African National Congress won with 62.65 per cent of the vote.

The ANC fell short of the key target of a two-thirds par-

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15 killed, ten missing in Bhola launch capsized

At least 25 passengers were feared killed after their overloaded motor launch had capsized in Tetulia river in Bhola district yesterday, reports UNB.

Officials in Bhola confirmed the deaths of 15 people travelling by the Baulal-bound launch from Char Kukrimukri in Charfashion thana. They said 5 to 10 passengers were still missing.

Witnesses said the launch having a capacity of 50 to 60 passengers was carrying about 200 passengers. The accident took place near the Goshairhat terminal at around 12:30 pm when the Sareng of the launch tried to make a sharp turn after a brief stoppage at the terminal.

Most of the passengers swam ashore. Of the victims 13 are children and 2 women. The launch was salvaged but rescuers were still searching for missing people.

Striking teachers postpone sit-in

By Staff Correspondent

The striking teachers of non-government educational institutions have postponed their proposed indefinite sit-in from May 11 at the premises of Central Shaheed Minar in the capital.

The postponement was decided at a meeting of the Central Liaison Committee of the agitating teachers yesterday for relief operation in the cyclone-hit areas of Cox's Bazar.

The meeting, however, decided that the striking teachers of greater Dhaka would stage a hunger strike at the Shaheed Minar on May 11 and those outside Dhaka would participate in token hunger strike at their respective district headquarters on that day.

Yesterday's meeting chaired by M Akhteruzzaman discussed ways of collecting money from the non-government teachers for relief work and preparations for the planned agitations. Committee leaders said they want to hold press conferences at the districts on May 10-11 to explain the legitimacy of their demands and agitations. Besides, they will meet leaders of different political parties including the ruling BNP and those of professional groups. A committee was formed in this connection.

An extended meeting of the committee's representatives from across the country will be held in Dhaka on May 14 to decide the future course of action, the Liaison Committee decided.

UNHCR official in city to assess damage to Rohingya camps

By Staff Correspondent

UNHCR director of the Regional Bureau of Asia and Oceania Werner Blatter arrived in the capital from Geneva yesterday evening to make an on-the-spot assessment of the damage caused by the recent cyclone to the Rohingya refugee camps.

During his stay in Bangladesh, Blatter will call on ministers and high officials to discuss issues of common concern.

On Monday, he will visit Cox's Bazar and Teknaf and make a serial and ground survey of the affected Rohingya campus.

Blatter will be accompanied by Canh Nguyen-Tang, UNHCR representative in Bangladesh.

On Tuesday the UNHCR director will have a meeting with the donors and leave Dhaka the same afternoon.

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