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NEWS BRIEFS

Hasina returns

Awami League President and Leader of the Opposition Sheikh Hasina returned home last night ending her visit to Japan and stopover to Singapore. Hasina left for Tokyo on May 8 to lead her party's delegation to the council session of the Socialist International, reports UNB.

Benazir to perform Hajj

ISLAMABAD, May 17: Pakistani Prime Minister Benazir Bhutto will travel to Saudi Arabia this week to take part in the annual Hajj (pilgrimage) to Makkah for the first time, a spokesman said today. Bhutto, who will be accompanied by her husband, Asif Ali Zardari, is expected to leave on Thursday for a two-day visit to Islam's holiest shrine, reports Reuters.

Boat capsizes: 4 bodies recovered

PABNA, May 17: Four bodies of the victims of Monday's boat capsizing in the Padma river in Sujanagar thana were recovered by the local people today. They were identified as Rupali Khatun, 3, daughter of Amir Hossain of Dogachi, Pabna Sadar, Safu, 5, son of Jafar Iqbal of Raninagar, Sujanagar thana, Abdus Samad, 35, of Hatkhali, Sujanagar and Ramisa Khatun, 22, of Ahmedpur, Sujanagar, reports UNB.

JS budget session from June 6

Opposition to stay away till interim govt bill is moved

The Opposition yesterday asked the ruling party to move a bill providing for a caretaker government in the upcoming budget session to resolve the current stalemate in Parliament.

Giving their instant reactions to UNB over the summoning of Parliament by the President yesterday for the budget session on June 6, Opposition Chief Whip Mohammad Nasim, Jatiya Party leader Mizanur Rahman Chowdhury, Ganatantri Party leader Suranjit Sengupta, NDP leader Salahuddin Quader Chowdhury and the Jamaat's Abdul Qader Mollah made identical observations indicating that they would not join the budget session unless their demand is accepted.

The government must accept the demand for a caretaker government to conduct the next general elections before the country plunges into a deep crisis, they said. "Time is running out fast... If the government wants to make the budget session meaningful through the Opposition's participation, it should move a bill for a caretaker government during this session," Mohammad Nasim said.

He said a caretaker government is now a national demand. "We have no way to retreat from our stand," Nasim said. The government should

come forward with an 'open mind' to settle the crisis, he added.

In reply to a question, Nasim said he had a telephonic conversation with the ruling party Chief Whip Khandaker Delwar Hossain yesterday. "We just exchanged pleasantries yesterday," Nasim said, indicating that more talks with his counterpart might take place on the issue of a caretaker government.

He said the opposition parties and groups in Parliament would meet after Eid to decide their course of action.

Jatiya Party acting chairman Mizanur Rahman Chowdhury said, "The ball is in the government's court. If the go-

vernment wants a workable Parliament, it should immediately accept the people's demand for a caretaker government."

"We will stick to our previous stand (not to attend the session) until the demand of the majority people is met. The onus lies with the government," the JP leader said.

National Democratic Party leader Salahuddin Quader Chowdhury said the government seemed to be totally oblivious about the present parliamentary crisis which could assume a 'catastrophic proportion' by the end of the budget session.

He said the credibility of See Page 12 Col 7

Banks directed to disburse industrial loans by June

Finance Minister M Saifur Rahman yesterday directed the bankers for speedy disposal of loan to the industrial investment sector to achieve the target of Tk 1724 crore by June this year, reports BSS.

He was presiding over a meeting at the conference room of the Ministry of Finance to review the performances of the nationalised commercial banks (NCBs) and the development financial institutions (DFIs).

Minister of State for Finance, M Mojibur Rahman, chairmen and managing directors of the NCBs and the DFIs and senior officials of the Finance Ministry attended the meeting.

It was revealed in the meeting that out of the investment target of Tk 1724

crore set for current fiscal year, the banks and DFIs had sanctioned Tk 943.70 crore till April. Of them Tk 584 crore had been disbursed.

Referring to the widespread complaints that the banks were not giving loan to the industrial sector, the Finance Minister asked them to gear up their loan sanctioning and disbursing activities for setting up new industrial units which could stimulate the national economy through creating job opportunities.

He, however, said that attention should be given so that the money disbursed in the form of industrial loan are utilised properly.

Former minister and Chairman of Agran Bank Board of Directors, Dr Fasiuddin See Page 12 Col 1

The Daily Star PUBLIC DEBATE



Today, on Page 4, Suranjit Sengupta, a Member of Parliament from the Ganatantri Party, gives his views in favour of a caretaker government to hold the next general elections in the country.

The Daily Star invites its readers to write in their valued opinions on the subject.



Prime Minister Begum Khaleda Zia being received by Governor Prince Majed bin Abdul Aziz at the Royal Pavilion at the King Abdul Aziz Airport after her arrival in Jeddah Monday for performing Hajj. — PID photo

PM performs ziarat in Madina

MADINA, May 17: Prime Minister Begum Khaleda Zia, who is now in Saudi Arabia to perform the holy Hajj as a royal guest, performed ziarat at the ruzah mubarak of Prophet Hazrat Mohammad (SM) and offered Asr and Magrib prayers at the Masjid-e-Nabubi in Madina Al-Munawwara this afternoon, reports BSS.

Begum Zia, who arrived here this morning by a special aircraft from Jeddah, was received by the Deputy Governor of Madina Sheikh Nasib bin-Saad bin-Al-Hossain at the airport.

Tanzanian Vice-President Dr Salmon Ambar, who is also in Madina called on Begum Zia this morning. After an overnight stay at Madina, the Prime Minister will return to Makkah by special aircraft and perform Umrah tomorrow.

Tk 175 cr loan to BSRS may compound problem

By Sohel Manzur

The Tk 175 crore loan to be given to Bangladesh Shilpa Rin Sangstha (BSRS) through bond sale to 'salvage the debt-ridden' development financing institution (DFI) may prove to be an extra burden to it, according to sources.

The fund is being collected by the Bangladesh Bank through sale of treasury bonds to the banks and financing institutions and will be given to the BSRS soon as loan at an interest rate of six per cent.

The BSRS, which is receiving the loan for a three-year term, will have to repay about Tk 108 crore to the government immediately for 'liquidation of the entire loan liability to the government', the sources said.

The corporation will thus be left with only Tk 67 crore besides its present capital of

Tk 29 crore for financing new projects or providing loans to industrial units for BMRE and working capital.

"It is unlikely that the BSRS will repay the entire loan given to it through bond sale by the stipulated time even without interest," an official concerned said.

The total amount of outstanding loan of the Sangstha to various industrial projects is about Tk 900 crore, of which about Tk 500 crore is now overdue.

The amount of loan recovered in the current fiscal year till this month is Tk 25 crore as against Tk 21 crore in 1992-93 and Tk 18 crore in 1991-92.

So, it will not be possible for the BSRS to repay the loan in time even if the current See Page 12 Col 8

US may put Pakistan on 'terrorist list'

WASHINGTON, May 17: The United States may soon put Pakistan on the list of countries it deems to be backing international terrorism, State Department spokesman Michael McCurry said Monday, reports AFP.

"The activity that we are aware of in support of Kashmiri militants is something that we monitor, and if that were in the category of repeated instances of state sponsorship of terrorism, that could lead to a different determination on the status of US policy toward Pakistan," the spokesman said.

"The Pakistani government is aware that any state supporting terrorism might be put on the list, which would result in restrictions on bilateral diplomatic and trade ties," he said.

Clinton-Rao talks tomorrow

WASHINGTON, May 17: US media say Kashmir will be on the agenda of the Clinton-Narasimha Rao talks here on May 19, reports PTT.

It is not clear whether President Clinton will raise the issue of Premier Rao, who on the basis of the finding of the State Department in the report on global terrorism and the Washington Post despatch, will be fully justified to say that the US was not following its own laws by refusing to brand Pakistan as a state sponsor of terrorism.

However, according to a senior official, the last thing that will happen is the raising of controversial issues by either side.

Both are anxious to strengthen and deepen the relations between the two democracies expand areas of agreement and understand each other's point of view where there are differences, analysts said.

Prices of essentials shoot up

By Staff Correspondent

The prices of edible oil, sugar, fish and chicken spiralled in the city markets with the Eid ul Azha only few days away.

In the previous weeks, garlic, ginger, canned powder milk and Najir Shai rice registered a steady price rise. Soybean oil jumped from Tk 47 per kg to Tk 52-55. A five litre soybean oil can now costs Tk 255 and a four litre can sells at Tk 195 which were Tk 240 and Tk 190 a few days ago.

Meanwhile adulterated oil has flooded the market with soybean being mixed with palm oil.

The price of mustard oil has also increased by Tk 5 per kg which now sells at Tk 60.

Although there is no shortage of supply, the price of sugar has shot up to Tk 32-33 from Tk 28 per kg. Wholesalers say, the Sugar and Food Industries Corporation has reduced the allocation of sugar by five tons per dealer which led to the price increase by Tk 100 to 110 per ton.

But the corporation says, this is not correct. According to the corporation officials the wholesalers are themselves responsible for the price hike.

The prices of all types of big

fish have also gone up by Tk five to 20 per kg. Ruhl, Katla or Pangas are being sold at Tk 140 to 160 per kg.

The chicken is almost beyond the reach of the common man. An average-size chicken sells at Tk 70 whereas the price was Tk 55 to 60 weeks ago.

The price of ginger has registered a sharp rise. The price has gone up to Tk 48 per kg from Tk 28 while that of good quality garlic to Tk 60.

See Page 12 Col 8

JCD sweeps Dhaka College polls

By Staff Correspondent

The Jatiyatabadi Chhatra Dal (JCD) nominated Harun-Javed panel swept all the posts in the Dhaka College students union elections held yesterday, according to college sources.

Seven panels contested the elections.

College sources said some 3,000 students out of 4,265 cast votes in the polls held from 8 am to 2 pm.

However, voting was See Page 12 Col 4

Myanmar invites Bangladeshi investors

Myanmar Minister for Trade Lt Gen Tun Kye called on the Bangladeshi big companies to do business in Myanmar and make best use of its abundant natural resources in the wake of its transition to market economy, reports BSS.

Speaking at a dinner hosted by him here last night at Hotel Sonargoan, the Myanmar Minister said his government has set a legal framework to encourage foreign investments and participation of both national and foreign private companies.

He said in the new economic structure wide incentives have been introduced by its foreign investment law.

The Myanmar Trade Minister said following introduction of market economy and encouragement of privatisation, a number of large transnational corporations and companies are now making investment in Myanmar. The total value of foreign investment in different areas has already exceeded one billion US dollars, he added.

The visiting minister said in the changing economic scenario his country looks forward to further development and strengthening of trade and friendship with her close neighbour Bangladesh.

'Thrust on agri sector can double per capita income'

By Staff Correspondent

Bangladesh can double its per capita income in the next seven years if it gives increasing thrust on the rural sector, particularly agriculture.

"We must give emphasis on increasing all types of agricultural production, including crop diversification and development of livestock and fisheries if we are to attain this goal."

This was said by Khurshid Alam, Governor of Bangladesh Bank, before the members of the American-Bangladesh Economic Forum at its monthly luncheon meeting at the Dhaka Sheraton yesterday.

The meeting chaired by Forrest E Cookson, president of the forum, was also addressed by Mahes Rao, executive vice president and A Gafur, executive secretary.

The Bangladesh Bank Governor said "We have some competitive advantage and we must make use of it to increase domestic production and boost exports."

He said the present per capita income of 210 dollars can easily be doubled in the next few years if the current investment rate of 13 to 14 per cent of the GDP could be increased to 18 to 19 per cent.

The Unresolved Farewell

By Arshad Mahmud

Nearly four months after he made a farewell call on President Abdur Rahman Biswas the Iraqi Ambassador, Zahir Mohammad Al Omar is still in Bangladesh and there's no sign yet he's leaving the country any time soon.

"This is highly unusual," a Foreign Ministry official said. "We're not sure what to do about it."

An ambassador, said the official, normally leaves the country of his accreditation within a week after his farewell call on the head of the state marking the end of his tenure.

To be sure, staying beyond that period doesn't amount to any serious breach of diplomatic norms, but it could be a cause for embarrassment for both the host government and the envoy as well.

True, Al-Omar is not circulating anymore, largely keeping himself confined to his official residence in Gulshan. Enquires made to the Iraqi embassy here only met with a standard reply: "Officially we don't have any ambassador."

But the embassy staff didn't confirm or deny the ambassador's prolonged stay.

"We've officially said goodbye to him," another Foreign Ministry official said with an

impish smile on his face. What he meant is that the government no longer is under any obligation to treat him as a diplomat, let alone an ambassador.

To be fair, Al-Omar is not making any contact with the Foreign Office, let alone asking for any favour from the government. In all fairness, it's not causing any diplomatic tension between Baghdad and Dhaka.

Yet his unexplained prolonged stay raises a profound question: why is he sticking around for so long even after he said formal goodbye to the host country?

One reason, according to a source who knows Al-Omar pretty well, could be that his successor has not been named See page 12 Col 3



Hafizuddin Ahmed, MP, a star footballer of yesteryears and former president of the Bangladesh Football Federation, reaches out for the lucky winner as the chief guest at the draw for The Daily Star World Cup '94 Quiz No 4 at the auditorium of the Jatiya Press Club yesterday. — Star photo

Fatima, lucky little girl from Sylhet

By Staff Correspondent

A teenage girl student of Sylhet, Fatima Razzaque, won the first prize in the lucky draw of The Daily Star World Cup Quiz No 4 held at the Jatiya Press Club auditorium yesterday.

Fatima, daughter of M A Razzaque, who became the proud owner of a 21-inch Philips Powervision Colour TV, comes from village Sattish, post office Ranaping (3163), Sylhet.

Major (Retd) Hafizuddin Ahmed, MP, a former president of the Bangladesh Football Federation, who attended the function as chief guest, distributed prizes among the winners of Quiz 3, the draw for which was held on May 8.

In yesterday's lucky draw, a BUET student, S M A Kashem (Nizam), resident of the Ah-

sanullah Hall and Md Arif-ul-Islam of 76/1/1 North Jatrabari (Bibir Bagicha), Dhaka, won the second and the third prizes respectively.

Besides, five fourth prizes were won by Mohammad Lakioutullah of 3 G. Hope Apartments, 21 Siddheswari, Dhaka, Md Jalaluddin Iqbal of 4/1 Iqbal Road, Mohammadpur, Dhaka, Tanzin A Shah of 29 Ring Road, Shyamoli, Dhaka, Faruk Hossen Khan of 7141 A, Dhalpur, Dhaka and Abdul Baten of the Computer Unit, Customs House, Chittagong.

As many as 21,724 entries were received for the fourth of the six-part quiz competition, out of which 10,795 were found all correct.

Speaking on the occasion, See Page 12 Col 4

LUCKY WINNERS of The Daily Star WORLD CUP QUIZ

Following are the lucky winners of The Daily Star World Cup Quiz No. 4, the draw for which was held at the Jatiya Press Club auditorium yesterday:

- First Prize (One)
  - Fatema Razzaque (13)
    - Vill. Sattish, P.O. Ranaping (3163) Sylhet
- Second Prize (One)
  - S.M.A Kashem (Nizam) (26)
    - 413, Ahsanullah Hall, BUET Dhaka-1000
- Third Prize (One)
  - Md. Arif-ul-Islam (31)
    - 76/1/1 North Jatrabari Bibir Bagicha Dhaka-1204
- Fourth Prize (Five)
  - 1. Mohd. Lakioutullah
    - 3 G Hope Apartments, 21, Siddheswari Road, Dhaka
  - 2. Md. Jalaluddin Iqbal (30)
    - 4/1, Iqbal Road, Mohammadpur Dhaka
  - 3. Tanzin A. Shah (22)
    - 29, Ring Road, Shyamoli Dhaka
  - 4. Faruk Hossen Khan (21)
    - 7141 A, Dhalpur Dhaka
  - 5. Abdul Baten (25)
    - Computer Unit, Customs House Chittagong

The prizes will be handed over to the winners during the lucky draw for Quiz No. 5, to be held at the Jatiya Press Club next month.

The winners of Quiz No. 4, named above, are requested to contact The Daily Star office to claim their prizes.

(See the correct answers to Quiz No. 4 on Page 11)