

Inside Today

International



US to press Rao for a cap on N-arms production

Police deployed around Saudi embassy in Tehran
Page 5

Business

Cyclone causes loss of Tk 30 cr in shrimp producing farms

Russian pilots go on strike over safety, pensions
Pages 6, 7

Women on the Move

Their strength is in their numbers; Empowering rural women; Women fighters find themselves forced back to the kitchen; So, what is a fatwa; and A violation against humanity
Page 8

Metropolitan

Dhaka Day by Day



Promoting the Welfare of Children
Page 3

NEWS BRIEFS

President assents to six bills

President Abdur Rahman Biswas on Tuesday assented to six bills passed by the Jatiya Sangsad. The bills are: the Existing Laws and Legal Instruments (Adaptation) Bill, 1993, Bangladesh Shilpakala Academy (Amendment) Bill, 1994, the Post Office (Amendment) Bill, 1993, the Highways (Amendment) Bill, 1994, the Jatiya Sangsad Secretariat Bill, 1994 and the Police Officers' (Special Provisions) (Amendment) Bill, 1994, reports UNB.

Three UP members held in Cox's Bazar

COX'S BAZAR, May 18: Police today arrested three members of the Hoakikong Union Parishad on a charge of misappropriating relief materials sanctioned by the government for the cyclone-affected people here. Teknaf thana police also recovered nine bundles of corrugated iron sheets from the UP members Anwarul Islam, Ali Akbar and Kala Mia of Ward Number Three.

DU vacation from Saturday

The Dhaka University will remain closed from Saturday for a 41-day Eid and summer vacation. The scheduled masters and honours examinations will, however, be held despite the vacation, official sources said today. The classes of the university will resume on July 1 while the offices, seminars and library of the varsity will reopen on May 28. The transport section will also open on the day, reports UNB.

Lightning kills one in Jhenidah

JHENIDAH, May 18: A young man was killed and two women were injured in separate incidents of lightning during a storm in Sadar thana today, reports UNB.

Border trade accord with Yangon signed

By Staff Correspondent

Bangladesh and Myanmar signed a bilateral border trade agreement in Dhaka yesterday. The trade protocol was signed by Commerce Minister Shamsul Islam and Myanmar Trade Minister Lt. General Tun Kyi at the state guest house Padma in the presence of officials of the two countries.

As per terms of the agreement, the two countries will be able to trade goods between Teknaf region of Bangladesh and Maungdaw area of the Rakhaine state of Myanmar. Border trade is expected to commence by the middle of next month.

The border trade agreement would be valid for one year but would be automatically renewed annually, unless either of the sides object to it.

The government in Yangon

has earlier signed border trade agreements with China and India.

After signing of the trade agreement, Shamsul Islam and Tun Kyi spoke briefly to newsmen explaining the salient features of the agreement. The visiting minister also replied to some questions from reporters.

Both the ministers hailed the signing of the agreement and said it was a definitive step to strengthen the economic ties between the two countries.

Shamsul Islam said that the agreement was a 'turning point' in the relations between the two neighbouring nations.

"Let the Naaf river become a river of friendship," he said.

The Commercial Minister complimented the visiting

Trade Minister for showing interest in joint venture proposals and said that both Dhaka and Yangon were interested in holding single country trade fairs in their respective capitals by December next.

The Myanmar minister, reading out in English a written statement, said that the border trade agreement reflected the sincere desire of the two countries to bolster their bilateral trade.

He expressed the hope that the agreement will not only further improve the existing trade relations between the two countries but also enhance economic and technical cooperation.

The Myanmar minister said that the agreement had been signed under the umbrella of See Page 12 Col 1

4 killed, 56 hurt as storms hit 2 dists

Nor'westers lashed Magura and Sirajganj yesterday killing four people and injuring 56 others, reports UNB.

Meanwhile, Dhaka experienced 36 mm of rainfall, the highest recorded in the country yesterday.

A violent storm pounded a bazar in Shalikhah thana yesterday, killing four and injuring 50.

Officials and local people said the telephone exchange at Arpara Bazar collapsed in the storm that also damaged many shops and houses in the district.

The casualties occurred in house collapse.

The dead were identified as Ganendranath, 35, of village Kulia, Nangipal, 40, and Akram Hossain, 30, of village Turagachi and Rabiul Islam, 32, of Kechundubi village.

Ten of the injured have been admitted to Magura Hospital while the rest 40 to

Shalikhah Hospital.

Of the 10 admitted to Magura Hospital, the condition of three — Alek Khan, 65, Abdul Khaleque, 70, and Hasina Begum, 40 — was stated to be serious.

Power supply and telecommunication remained snapped following the storm that occurred at 4:00 pm. Several telephone poles broke down.

At least six people were wounded seriously and more than 600 shops and houses damaged in another storm that swept Raiganj and Shajadpur thanas of Sirajganj yesterday afternoon.

The nor'wester also uprooted many trees and damaged crops.

Local administration sources said six villagers were injured when walls of their houses collapsed on them during the storm at about 4:30 pm.

Ten missing as launch capsizes near Barguna

From Staff Correspondent

BARISAL, May 18: At least 10 passengers of a launch were missing as ML Suravi capsized in the river Bishkhalee under Barguna district last night.

Two of the missing passengers were identified as Noorjahan, 30, and Nurul Islam, 60.

The launch carrying over 100 passengers was caught in a nor'wester at Tulatuli near the Barguna launch ghat on its way to Barisal from Pal-harghata. The launch met with the accident at 8:30 pm when the serang tried to anchor the vessel at a nearby island.

Local people and the Red Crescent members rescued most of the passengers.

Police are guarding the place of the accident as four rifles belonging to the Ansars on duty are believed to have been left on the sunken vessel.

The DC and the SP of Barguna visited the spot.

BNP to take fresh move to end JS impasse

By Nurul Kabir

The ruling Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP) leaders would take fresh initiatives to bring back the opposition MPs to Parliament during the budget session, party leaders said.

The budget session of the Jatiya Sangsad will begin at 3 pm on June 6.

The opposition parties boycotted the last session to press home their demand for constitutional amendments seeking the holding of general elections under a caretaker government. The opposition MPs, however, are yet to decide whether they would attend the budget session.

The BNP Secretary General and LGD Minister Abdus Salam Talukder told The Daily Star yesterday evening that he and his party would continue to make efforts to make the opposition return to Parliament. "We tried before and during the last JS session to bring them back to the House. We have not abandoned the process of negotiations with them," Talukder said, adding he has already had talks with some opposition leaders in the first fortnight of the current month and he was still maintaining contacts with 'some' of them to resolve the present political crisis.

The minister, however, declined to mention the names

of the opposition leaders as well as the contents of the negotiations for the greater interest of democracy.

Talukder also told The Daily Star that besides him, other members of the party's standing committee — the highest policy making body of the BNP — are also supposed to take initiatives for negotiating with the boycotting opposition MPs.

Replying to a question the BNP Secretary General said, he was not aware that the leader of the House and Prime Minister Khaleda Zia had taken any personal initiative to resolve the crisis.

Member of the BNP standing committee and Minister for Public Works Rafiqul Islam Mia told this correspondent last night that his party believes in the politics of consensus. "We shall definitely take fresh initiatives to bring back the opposition MPs to the House, during the budget session," the works minister said.

The minister also felt that an understanding between the treasury and the opposition benches was a must to ensure a healthy growth of parliamentary democracy. "The BNP would try its best to resolve the impasse created by the opposition boycott of Parliament," he said.

See Page 12 Col 8

Opinion poll 70 pc favour elections under caretaker govt

A recent opinion poll conducted by a research and marketing organisation in Dhaka City and its surrounding areas showed seventy per cent favoured elections under a caretaker government, reports UNB.

The survey also indicated that 37.4 per cent of those polled believed free and fair elections are possible under the present government.

The respondents, both urban and rural, were picked at random from various socio-economic and professional groups to avoid any serious bias.

The respondents answered structured questionnaires designed to elicit their opinion vis-a-vis the holding of general elections under a caretaker government.

The interviewees included 209 service-holders, 190 businessmen, 70 professionals, 57 teachers, 202 students, 131 workers and 141 persons from different other occupations.

They comprised 859 males and 141 females with the rural-urban ratio being 322:678.

According to the opinion poll, conducted by the Development Research Partners (DRP), 71.8 per cent of the 209 service-holders opted for elections under a caretaker

See Page 12 Col 6

Rao vows to keep Kashmir forever

CAMBRIDGE, May 18: Indian Prime Minister P V Narasimha Rao vowed Tuesday that the strife-torn state of Kashmir, considered a possible flashpoint for a nuclear war, will remain Indian forever, reports AP.

"It belongs to the Indian people and it shall belong — it will belong — to the Indian people always," Rao said after delivering a lecture at Harvard University.

Rao spoke at Harvard before an audience of more than 600 people as part of a six-day visit. He was to address a joint session of Congress Wednesday and to meet with President Clinton Thursday.

American policymakers are worried about the situation in Jammu-Kashmir, where sepa-

ratist rebels are fighting for the Muslim majority state's independence from Hindu-dominated India.

US officials fear the struggle could lead to a nuclear war between India and Islamic Pakistan, which supports the rebels. The two countries have fought three wars since the partition of the Indian subcontinent in 1947 and reportedly came close to nuclear clashes in 1966 and 1990.

But the United States has failed to persuade India and Pakistan to open their nuclear programmes to inspection, take part in regional talks on arms control, or sign the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty.

US officials hope to win more cooperation during this visit when Rao is looking for

US backing for his economic reforms and promises of more trade.

Asked by a student if the American nuclear worries threatened improvement in relations between the two countries, Rao said, "You will see that there will be no difficulty on this score. Please wait for a couple of days more." He didn't elaborate.

Rao also shrugged off a question about whether human rights violations are occurring in Jammu-Kashmir, saying, "It's not going on the way you've described it."

He said the state was being torn by "terrorism being exported from another country into Kashmir" and that he wanted to maintain the coun-

See Page 12 Col 1

Meghna-Gumti Bridge opens by Oct 15

The Bangladesh-Japan Friendship Bridge-2 under the title 'Meghna-Gumti Bridge' will be opened to the vehicular traffic latest by October 15 this year, reports BSS.

Communications Minister Col (Retd) Oli Ahmed said this while he was casting jointly with the Japanese ambassador in Bangladesh Shigeo Takenaka the final concrete placement to connect the Comilla side with the Dhaka side on the middle point of the bridge yesterday.

The 8,203 billion yen (about Taka 320 crore) bridge, constructed by the Japanese construction company Obayashi Corporation, is situated some 40 kms from Dhaka on the Dhaka-Chittagong Highway.

Addressing the officials and engineers of Japan and Bangladesh as well as the newsmen at the site Col Oli Ahmed said the construction of the longest ever bridge was

See Page 12 Col 7

All formalities for second Buriganga bridge complete

The Executive Committee of the National Economic Council yesterday completed all formalities, including financing procedure, for constructing a second Buriganga Bridge at Babu Bazar at a cost of Tk 120 crore, reports UNB.

All expenditure for construction of the bridge would be borne by the government in view of non-availability of foreign donors on acceptable terms and conditions.

Finance Minister M Saifur Rahman, who presided over the ECNEC meeting, asked the Communications Ministry to immediately start the construction work of the bridge.

"If necessary, funds will be released and all requisite expenditure to build the proposed bridge be met from the current year's budget," he said.

The meeting also decided to select local lowest bidder to construct the bridge as quotations from foreign firms were high. The lowest quotation received from an international construction firm to construct only the main bridge was Tk 111 crore. On the other hand, a reputed local firm quoted Tk 60 crore, including the cost of flyover construction.

"We could save crores of taka by selecting local firms with local technology which is at par with the international standard for construction purposes," the Finance Minister said.

"It has been sometimes a practice of the donor agencies to impose a condition for selecting foreign firms causing us heavy losses," Rahman told

See Page 12 Col 8



Communications Minister Oli Ahmed laying concrete mixture between the last span and the rest of the Meghna-Gumti Bridge on the Dhaka-Chittagong highway during yesterday's linking ceremony. — Star photo

By-election to Bogra-4 JS seat July 7

By Staff Correspondent

The by-election to the Jatiya Sangsad's vacant seat of Bogra-4 will be held on July 7 next.

The Election Commission (EC) yesterday announced the by-election schedule through a gazette notification.

According to the schedule, the candidates will have to submit their nomination papers to the Returning Officer or the Assistant Returning Officers on June 8 and the papers will be scrutinised on June 9. The last date for withdrawal of candidature is June 15.

The EC has appointed the Deputy Commissioner of Bogra as the Returning Officer and the Thana Nirbahi Officers of Kahalu and Nondigram thanas as Assistant Returning Officers to conduct the by-polls.

The Bogra-4 seat fell vacant following the death of Azizul Haque, MP of the ruling BNP.

The EC has banned campaigning of any kind for the by-election three weeks before the day of balloting — June 16 — under the provision of the People's Representation Order of 1972.

Meanwhile, the largest opposition Awami League and the second biggest Jatiya Party have decided to boycott the Bogra-4 by-election as they

See Page 12 Col 8

Authorities warn

Buy aircraft or licences for STOL service to go

By Asiuzzaman

The authorities may cancel the provisional air transport operating licence (PATOL) if the licensed companies fail to procure aircraft to start STOL service soon, Civil Aviation Ministry sources said.

"We gave them enough time. Initially they showed interest but have so far failed to bring aircraft," a top official of the ministry said adding that "we invested a lot of money for this purpose."

In such a case, the ministry may urge Bangladesh Biman to operate short take off and landing (STOL) service between Dhaka and six other destinations in the country.

The Civil Aviation Authorities of Bangladesh (CAAB) issued PATOL to six private firms in January after the government approved a proposal from the ministry in May to open domestic skies to private entrepreneurs.

The firms are: Borak Air, Green Air, Falcon Aviation Ltd, Parabat Air Ltd, Royal Bengal Airlines and South Asian Airlines.

By February, the CAAB completed reconstruction and renovation of seven STOL ports at Lalmonirhat, Shamser Nagar, Thakurgaon, Ishurdi, Barisal, Comilla and Dhaka at a

cost of Tk three crore.

Communication equipment under visual flying rules (VFR) have also been installed at the ports, a ministry source said. "The airstrips are now complete for STOL operation," he added.

Three of the licensed firms informed the CAAB that they would bring their aircraft within a short time, one source said. But they did not give any letter to the authorities confirming the arrival of the aircraft, the source added. Meanwhile, the PATOL-holder companies bargained with the authorities to extend the runway, now 2150 ft in length, so that they can operate bigger aircraft.

A STOL aircraft can carry 15 to 22 passengers which, some of the companies say is 'not viable'.

One company even printed the tickets for several routes and is now looking for suitable aircraft. It published an advertisement in the Flight International magazine after abandoning the plan to procure aircraft from Russia, a company source said.

Most of the firms opted for Russian aircraft because these are cheaper than any other aircraft, sources said.

The Daily Star PUBLIC DEBATE



Today, on page 4, **Barister Nazmul Huda, Minister for Information and Vice Chairman, Bangladesh Nationalist Party, advances his arguments against holding the next general elections under a caretaker government and gives his 9-point suggestion to resolve the issue.**

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

PM prays for welfare of Bangladesh in Madina

MADINA, May 18: Prime Minister Begum Khaleda Zia today offered prayers and took part in a munajat at the *rauzatul jannat* at Masjid-e-Nabubi in Madina Al-Manawara here seeking from the Almighty Allah peace, prosperity and welfare of the people and progress and development of Bangladesh and greater unity of the Muslim *ummah*, reports BSS.

Begum Zia, who is now in Saudi Arabia to perform the holy Hajj at the invitation of the custodian of two holy mosques King Fahd bin Abdul Aziz, performed *ziyarat* at the *rauzah mubarak* of prophet Hazrat Mohammad (SM) in Madina Al-Manawara today and yesterday. She was also shown around the holy mosque here

See page 12 Col 3

Fate of country's biggest fishing co now uncertain

From Staff Correspondent

CHITTAGONG, May 18: The fate of the country's biggest fishing company, Sea Resources Ltd, based here has become uncertain following the closing of its godowns and seizure of vital equipment by the police recently.

The precipitate police action, in which all the navigational and communication equipment of the Thai-Bangladesh joint venture have been seized, has made the company's 14 seagoing trawlers inoperative.

Sea Resources Ltd, a joint venture with a Thai fishing company — Hardford Ltd — is now likely to incur a monthly production loss of over Taka four crore and the country also will be deprived of a huge amount of foreign exchange, company officials said.

Besides, around 2500 people, both directly and indirectly dependent on the company as its employees, crew members and labourers, are likely to lose their jobs if the company collapses, the officials feared.

The Port Police, after a two-day raid on the godowns of Sea Resource Ltd today completed the shifting of the seized navigational and communication equipment worth Taka two

See Page 12 Col 4

Dhaka concerned at war in Yemen

Bangladesh has expressed deep concern and anguish over the current civil war in Yemen, reports UNB.

"Bangladesh expresses sorrow at the fratricidal conflict and appeals to her Yemeni brothers to close ranks and peacefully settle all their differences through dialogue and understanding," a Foreign Office spokesman said yesterday.

He said Dhaka also welcomed the recent appeal made by the OIC Secretary General where he, inter alia, reaffirmed his readiness for initiating Islamic mediation.

When his attention was drawn to the situation in the civil war-torn Yemen, the spokesman said the Foreign Ministry had been monitoring the situation.

See Page 12 Col 5

Pakistan softens stand on N-plan

ISLAMABAD, May 18: Pakistan is ready to consider inspections of its nuclear programme and hopes US weapons sales can resume by the end of this year, Foreign Minister Sardar Asif Ali said today, reports Reuters.

Diplomats said Pakistan appeared to be gradually softening its stand that it would only accept international verification of its nuclear arsenal if arch-foe India also submitted.

"We are hopeful that this problem can be and should be solved by the end of the year," Ali told reporters.

He said Islamabad had identified a shift in US policy toward Pakistan, and said the issue of Pakistan's nuclear policy was likely to come into the

limelight during the visit to the United States by President Farooq Leghari this week.

"The US is satisfied through its own technical means that Pakistan has not produced a nuclear weapon," Ali said.

"If beyond this, the US needs other means of verification, for example non-intrusive inspections, we have asked them to send technical proposals and we will have a look at them," he said.

Pakistan has long maintained that it has attained a nuclear capability but says a political decision has been taken not to manufacture nuclear weapons.

Political analysts said Pakistan and the United States might try to evolve a formula

by which Islamabad would submit to nuclear inspections without infringing the programme's secrecy, which Pakistani officials believe is its strongest deterrent factor.

"We may agree to an inspection as long as it is not physical," Ali said. "If once they send us technical proposals we will make up our mind whether to agree or not."

However, Ali stressed that Islamabad had not changed its demand that inspections should include India.

India, which carried out its only nuclear test exactly 20 years ago, insists its nuclear programme is peaceful and has refused to sign the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty

See Page 12 Col 5