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NEWS BRIEFS

Hasina visits ailing Nasiruddin

Awami League President and Leader of the Opposition in Parliament Sheikh Hasina yesterday visited elderly litterateur Mohammad Nasiruddin at the Suhrawardy Hospital. Hasina stayed there for some time and enquired about his treatment. Nasiruddin was admitted to the hospital Tuesday with cardiac complications, reports UNB.

Lunar eclipse May 25

A partial lunar eclipse will take place on May 25, an ISPR press release said in Dhaka yesterday. The moon will enter penumbra at 7-18 am and will leave penumbra at 11-43 am on the same day. However, the moon will enter umbra 8-37 am and will leave umbra at 10-23 am. The magnitude of the eclipse will be 0.249. This eclipse will not be visible anywhere in Bangladesh.

Tk 20,100 cr proposed budget outlay

By Inam Ahmed

Finance Minister M Saifur Rahman is expected to present the national budget for 1994-95 in Parliament on June 9 with a total estimated outlay of about Tk 20,100 crore.

This will be the sixth budget to be presented by Saifur Rahman, the country's 11th finance minister.

According to sources, a meeting of the budget formula-tors yesterday with the Finance Minister in the chair set the revenue expenditure at about Tk 9,500 crore and revenue receipt at Tk 13,800 crore.

The proposed budget outlay has been viewed by experts as a major success of the government as it aims at curbing the growth of revenue expenditure, which is mainly used for salaries and wages of gov-

ernment officials, and increasing receipts which last year totalled Tk 12,335 crore.

No new taxes have been proposed in the budget, sources said. Strengthening of the VAT collection system and the projected increase in the GDP will ensure receipt of the extra money. The VAT net is likely to be expanded to some areas previously exempted.

The budget will aim at achieving a GDP growth of seven per cent during '94-'95 as against an estimated GDP growth of five per cent this fiscal year ('93-'94).

During the analysis of the achievements of this fiscal year's budget projections, it was observed that the revenue receipt would see a slight shortfall from its stipulated Tk 12,335 crore and would stand

at around Tk 12,000 crore.

However, the government was successful in curtailing its revenue expenditure slightly. It stood at about Tk 9,250 crore as against the projected Tk 9,300 crore. This is the first time that the revenue expenditure has been below the proposed level, sources pointed out.

According to the sources, the new budget will concentrate on expediting the economic reform process and will aim at increasing the investment-GDP ratio to 18 per cent.

There is likely to be some 'rationalisation' in the tariff structure and imports will be further liberalised in line with the 'globalisation' of the economy. Some tax incentives for the export-oriented industries are also likely, sources said.

PM performs umrah

MAKKAH, May 19: Prime Minister Begum Khaleda Zia, who is now in Saudi Arabia to perform the holy Hajj, today performed umrah here, reports BSS.

She also took part in a special munajat seeking prosperity, peace and welfare of the people and development and progress of Bangladesh and solidarity of the Muslim ummah.

Begum Zia arrived in Makkah by a special aircraft from Madina this morning and after performing umrah she left for Mina in the afternoon.

The Prime Minister, who has come to perform Hajj at the invitation of the custodian of the two holy mosques King Fahd bin Abdul Aziz, yesterday offered prayers and took part in a munajat at the Rauyatul Jannat in Madina al-Manawara.

Begum Zia performed ziarats at the rauza mubarak of Prophet Hazrat Mohammad (SM) in Madina al-Manawara yesterday and day before yesterday.

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FM due May 25 Accord with Hanoi on economic cooperation likely

Dhaka and Hanoi are expected to sign an agreement on general economic cooperation during Vietnamese Foreign Minister Nguyen Manh Cam's forthcoming visit to Bangladesh, reports UNB.

The proposed accord will mainly cover economic fields including joint venture, investment and trade.

Cam is scheduled to arrive in Dhaka on May 25 on a three-day visit to Bangladesh, the first by a top Vietnamese government leader in recent years.

Official sources said yesterday the Vietnamese minister, who will be leading a six-member delegation during the visit, is likely to call on President Abdur Rahman.

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Japanese trade team due June 11

A 25-member business delegation of Japan Federation of Economic Organisations (Keidanren) will arrive here on June 11 on a four-day visit to explore the fields of Japanese investment in Bangladesh, according to a message received here yesterday, reports BSS.

This was informed by Keidanren Chairman Gaishi Hirawa to Bangladesh Ambassador to Japan Mahbulul Haq in a recent meeting between them in Tokyo.

The delegation, comprising leading businessmen of Japan, will be led by Chairman of Marubeni Corporation Kazuo Hanawa.

Fire at Rampura power station

The Rampura power station caught fire yesterday disrupting electricity supply to Rampura, Maghbazar, Malibagh, Mouchak and adjoining areas in the city for more than five hours, reports UNB.

The fire originated from electric short circuit at about 12 noon and damaged two circuitbreakers of the powerhouse.

Firefighting vehicles from Tejgaon and Khilgaon fire stations rushed to the spot and extinguished the blaze by 12.40 pm.

2 bodies found in sunken launch

From Staff Correspondent BARISAL, May 19: Two bodies were recovered today from the sunken launch M L Suravi in the river Bishkhalee in Barguna district.

They were identified as Rizia (seven months old) and Nur Islam, 7. Meanwhile, the BIWTA vessel Hamza reached the area in the evening to salvage the launch.

AL drafts outline for power transfer

By Nazmul Ashraf

The Awami League has prepared a draft outline of a caretaker government for holding the next general elections, party sources said.

The draft, penned by a sub-committee of the party, calls for transfer of power from the present elected government to an interim administration 90 days ahead of the elections. However, the head of state — the President — will continue in his office until his successor takes over.

According to the draft outline, to be modified by incorporating the views of other opposition parties demanding a caretaker government, the Chief Justice will take over as the prime minister and form a government comprising 'non-partisan' and 'neutral' persons following expiry of the term of the elected government, 90 days before the elections.

The sub-committee has suggested amendments to the

relevant articles of the Constitution to implement this 'formula' of power transfer. The persons in the interim government will be barred from contesting the elections, the draft says.

The eight-member AL sub-committee, headed by Abdull Momen, further recommended that the Election Commission be given additional powers to conduct elections "smoothly and without any hindrance."

The sub-committee has prepared its set of suggestions in consultation with constitutional experts, the sources said.

The outline would soon be submitted to party chief Sheikh Hasina, who is scheduled to place the same at a meeting of the party's policy-planners for adoption after the Eid-ul-Azha.

Once approved, the sub-committee members said, a

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Rafiq dismisses call for caretaker bill

Works Minister Rafiqul Islam Mia yesterday dismissed the Opposition demand that the government should come up with the much-talked-about caretaker government bill.

"It is not our concept. A caretaker government is their concept. Any party or individual Member of Parliament may come up with a bill in accordance with the Constitution and the rules of procedure of the House," Rafiq told UNB when his attention was drawn to the Opposition claim.

Leader of the Opposition Sheikh-Hasina was reported to have said that they would consider returning to parliament if the government came up with a caretaker government bill.

Rafiq, who is also a member of the BNP standing commit-

tee, the policy-making body of the ruling party, said if the Opposition thought there were loopholes in the existing polling system, they should come up with suggestions to improve it.

The entire Opposition, having a strength of 156 in the 330-member House, boycotted the last session of Parliament demanding of the government a bill providing for a caretaker government for conducting the general elections. They stood firm in continuing the boycott of Parliament which is due to begin its budget session on June 6.

"Time and the people will determine our course of action," Rafiq said when asked about the probabilities in case the Opposition continues boy-

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The lucky few among the home-bound passengers heave a sigh of relief after finding for themselves a place on the roof of a motor launch at the Sadarghat terminal yesterday.

Bus operators make hay the illegal way Extortion raises price, lessens cattle supply

By S Ashfaquul Haque

Taking advantage of the rush of home-going passengers ahead of the Eid, inter-district bus operators have been charging nearly 30 to 35 per cent higher fares on almost all routes.

Given the mad rush of people leaving the capital to celebrate Eid with their kith and kin in the villages or district towns, the unscrupulous bus drives and conductors start cashing in from almost a week before by arbitrarily charging exorbitant sums. This, too, over and above the often disparate fares for the same distance on the same routes.

Almost every home-bound passenger that this correspondent spoke to at the various city bus terminals yesterday expressed anger at the situation while at the same time accepting their helplessness. They blamed the authorities for not doing the needful to prevent this recurring phenomenon. The poor passengers have little option but to dig deeper into their pockets

and fork out the extra money, which can be quite a sum for the poorer ones with large families.

Bus tickets for Rangpur, which should cost Tk 140, were sold for Tk 180 and more, while a Rajshahi ticket was sold at Tk 150 instead of the normal Tk 120.

At the Gabtoli terminal yesterday, this correspondent found all the ticket counters closed. The touts were having a field day selling their stock of the precious tickets at high premiums. When this correspondent wanted to buy a ticket for Rajshahi, he was asked to pay Tk 250 for the privilege of making the trip to join his family at this time of the year.

While talking to this correspondent, Mahbubur Rahman, a senior bank official said, "We are living in a peculiar country where there is no law." He had to pay Tk 160 for a ticket of the Diganta Paribahan, a private bus service, for a passage

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With only two days left for the Eid-ul-Azha, the 20 temporary cattle markets set up by the Dhaka City Corporation (DCC) were yet to witness brisk business yesterday.

Supply of cattle is less' this year also, as in the previous year. The price of cattle is also higher than that of last year.

Cattle traders attributed this to increase in the transportation cost of cattle and realisation of 'toll' by extortionists and also by a section of law-enforcing agency personnel.

Herds of 'cattle and goats from different rural areas, however, continued to reach the 20 temporary markets.

The prices of small-sized cattle varied between Tk 4500 and Tk 6000 while medium-sized cattle were selling at around Tk 8000 yesterday.

The asking price of a bull at the Gabtoli market yesterday was Tk 1.15 lakh.

Most of the people were seen buying small-sized cattle.

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7 killed, 49 hurt in road mishaps

By Staff Correspondent

At least seven people were killed and 49 others injured in road mishaps in Dhaka, Chittagong and Sirajganj yesterday.

Our DMCH Correspondent says, one person was killed and four others injured when a speeding truck ran over a group of sleeping people on a pavement at Jatrabari early yesterday.

A 40-year-old Abdul Mannan died on the spot while Enayet, 25, Enamul, 35, Razzak, 40,

and Jahangir, 30, were injured and admitted to the Dhaka Medical College Hospital (DMCH).

Police arrested the truck driver Mohammad Mojibur Rahman and seized the truck.

The accident occurred at about 2 am, according to Demra police.

UNB adds, three people were killed and 25 injured in separate road accidents on the Chittagong-Dhaka highway yesterday and Wednesday night.

Police said a Chittagong-bound truck collided head on with a Sonapur-bound coaster in Solimour area in Shitakundu thana at about 10 am yesterday.

Abdul Gafur, 35 and another unidentified man, aged about 28, died on the spot while 20 others were injured in the accident. They were admitted to Shitakundu Health Complex.

In another incident, a speedy truck rammed a tempo on the highway in Bhatari area

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Mohammedans tall defender Kaiser Hamid makes one of his customary surges up as teammate Alamgir's long throw flies into the heart of Muktiyoddha defence with Masud Rana (behind) trying to thwart the attack. Mohammedans won 3-1.

MSC in DMFA semis

Sports Reporter

Holders Mohammedan Sporting Club came back from behind to beat strong Muktiyoddha Kira Chakra 3-1 in an exciting but lapse-ridden encounter in the third Dhaka Metropolitan Football Association (DMFA) Cup at the Dhaka Stadium yesterday.

The eventual winners, who with last night's win almost confirmed the top position in their group, trailed the first half 0-1.

Playing against a team that along with two other top clubs

left Mohammedans in the lurch at the outset of this year's domestic football season by luring away some of their key players, the youthful black-and-whites found themselves in the soup when the star-studded Muktiyoddha looked poised to lead the first half two-nil.

Former Mohammedan striker Intiaz Ahmed Nakib managed to hit the bar at his second attempt after referee Mansur, who had a busy day.

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The Daily Star PUBLIC DEBATE



Today, on Page 4, Amir Hossain Amu, Member of the President, Bangladesh Awami League, argues why the next general elections should be held under a caretaker government. Readers' opinions on the subject are welcome.

Steps taken to evacuate Bangladeshis from Yemen

The government has taken measures for evacuation of about 300 Bangladeshis living in war-torn Yemen, sources here said yesterday, reports UNB.

First batch of 10 Bangladeshis is expected to return to Dhaka in a couple of days from Yemen.

A handout of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs said an Indian ship meanwhile evacuated 60 Bangladeshi nationals who had already arrived in Bombay yesterday. The Bangladesh High Commission in New Delhi has been advised to arrange for their repatriation to Bangladesh.

No Bangladeshi has so far been injured or killed in the conflict in Yemen, it added.

The handout also said that an arrangement had also been

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\$ 4.75m US aid for Rohingya repatriation

By Staff Correspondent The US government will provide 4.75 million dollars to the UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) and the World Food Programme (WFP) to assist in the voluntary repatriation and resettlement of Rohingya refugees.

The WFP will receive 0.5 million US dollars and the remaining 4.25 million will be used by the UNHCR.

The UNHCR and WFP have asked donors for 38 million US dollars to mount a two-year programme to repatriate the Rohingyas and help them resettle in their homes in Myanmar.

The US contribution represents approximately 25 per cent of the amount needed for this year, according to a USIS press release.

The USA contributed a total of 12 million dollars in 1992 and 1993 to support the UNHCR's relief programme in the refugee camps in Bangladesh.

Zuhair still Iraqi envoy, says Foreign Office

The attention of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs has been drawn to a news item regarding the status of Iraqi Ambassador Zuhair Mohammad Al-Omar in Bangladesh, a Foreign Office press release said here yesterday, reports BSS.

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs has not made any such observation on this subject as was made in the news item under reference. In fact, according to the existing practice and international convention, Zuhair Mohammad Al-Omar is still the Ambassador of Iraq in Bangladesh.

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