

The Daily Star PUBLIC DEBATE



Today, on Page 4, Syeda Sajeda Chowdhury, MP and Member Presidium of the Bangladesh Awami League, proffers her arguments for holding the next general elections under a caretaker government.

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NEWS BRIEFS

Two die after having liquor

JHENIDAH, May 24: Two youngmen died and two others remained seriously sick after drinking countrymade liquor on the Eid day (Sunday) in Shaikakupa thana. Hospital and family sources said Motieb, 35, and Arjun, 32, died at their houses today. Topen and Polan had been under treatment at Jhenidah Sadar Hospital, reports UNB.

1000 Hajis feared trampled to death in Mina stampede

MAKKAH, May 24: The number of Hajj pilgrims crushed to death in a stampede at Mina Monday could rise as high as 1,000, doctors and diplomats said Tuesday. There was no official figure for the number of people killed when participants in the annual Muslim pilgrimage surged through pedestrian walkways on their way to a symbolic stoning of the devil at the site three miles east of Makkah. Doctors, diplomats and security officials gave estimates ranging from 250 killed to more than 1,000. Sources said ambulances could not reach the scene quickly, which contributed to the high casualty toll, reports AP.

An earlier report said: As many as 250 Hajj pilgrims were trampled to death, security officials said Tuesday.

The state-run Saudi Press Agency said 829 people have died in this year's Hajj for a variety of reasons, including 'old age, heart attacks (and) deaths that resulted because of the heavy throngs throwing pebbles on Monday.' It gave no breakdown or details.

But doctors at the Mina hospital, where some of those injured in the stampede were taken, said the government's overall figure for deaths during this year's Hajj was too low. They said many pilgrims had died since the statement was released early Tuesday.

A Saudi statement on the deaths concluded with a prayer for those who died and hopes they would be considered worthy of going straight to heaven.

Saudi officials said 182 Turks were killed in the crush

No Bangladeshi casualty reported'

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs in Dhaka had not received any report of Bangladeshi casualties in the Mina stampede in which many Hajis are feared to have died, BSS reported last night.

The ministry is in constant touch with the missions in Saudi Arabia, the report said.

Monday, and most of the other victims were Lebanese.

However, Indonesian television, in a live report from Saudi Arabia, cited another official from the Hajj office, Ali Yasmin, as saying 99 per cent of the casualties were from

PM returns

Prime Minister Begum Khaleda Zia returned home around midnight last night from Jeddah after performing holy Hajj, reports BSS.

She was welcomed by the ministers, diplomats, chiefs of the three Services and high officials at the Zia Airport.

Begum Zia went to Saudi Arabia on May 16.

African countries.

Earlier Tuesday, the Iranian daily Kayhan, quoting what it termed 'unofficial sources' in Saudi Arabia, said 700 had died in Monday's stampede.

Saudis had tried to beef up crowd control in the area from Makkah to the cavern in Mina after a similar stampede in 1990 killed 1,426 people.

The pilgrims were crushed Monday in narrow pedestrian paths leading toward a cavern, the sources said, speaking on condition of anonymity. Ambulances could not reach the scene for quick rescue, contributing to the high casualty toll, they said.

Talat Sharif, a pilgrim who See Page 12 Col 1

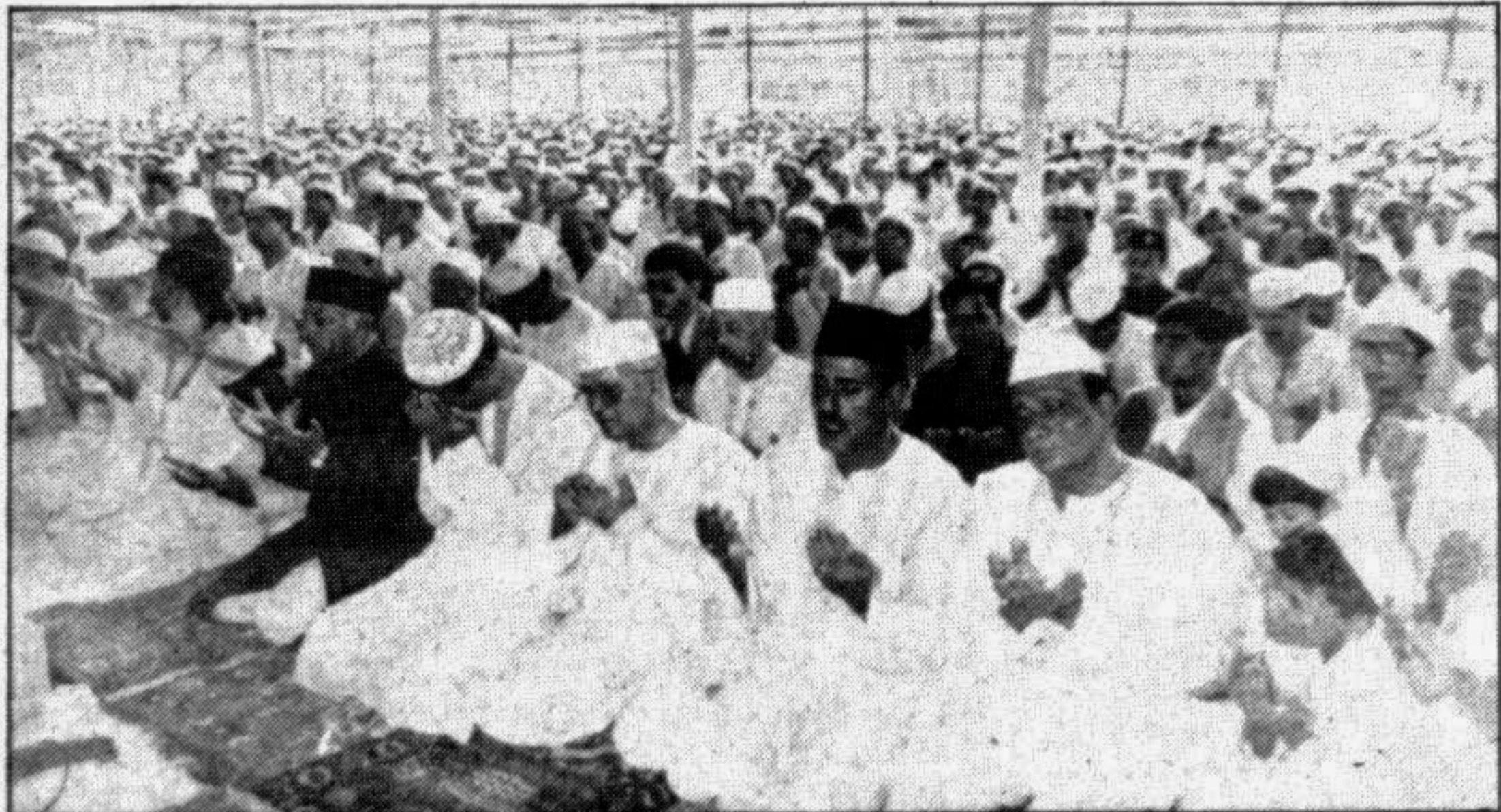
Eid-ul-Azha celebrated

By Staff Correspondent

The holy Eid-ul-Azha was celebrated all over the country Sunday with a pledge to build a happy and prosperous Bangladesh with the spirit of self-sacrifice.

Prayers were offered at the Eid congregations seeking divine blessings while animals were sacrificed in the name of Allah for the salvation of temporal life as well as life after death.

The main Eid congregation in the capital was held at the National Eidgah at the Supreme Court premises in which President Abdur Rahman Biswas, cabinet members, members of the parliament, See Page 12 Col 8



President Abdur Rahman Biswas and several Cabinet ministers offered their Eid-ul-Azha prayers at the National Eidgah in the city Sunday. — Star photo

Heavy fighting in northern Bosnia

SARAJEVO, May 24: The United Nations today reported fighting in northern Bosnia over the past 24 hours after a Muslim-led army attack on Serb positions.

There's heavy fighting going on there, judging by the amount of ammunition they're using, UN protection force spokesman Major Dacre Holloway told Reuters.

The Muslim-dominated Bosnian army in Tesanj was attacking Serb positions in an apparent attempt to advance to a road west of the northern Bosnian town, he said.

"It looks they might be trying to push towards the road," Holloway said.

The UN reported significant shelling in the area with 75 artillery rounds bursting around Zemajevac village on Monday.

10 Bangladeshis arrive from Yemen

The first batch of ten Bangladeshi nationals arrived in Dhaka Sunday morning from Yemen via Bombay by Biman Bangladesh Airlines, according to official sources, reports BSS.

Ten Bangladeshis, belonging to three families, have been repatriated at the initiative and expense of Bangladesh government.

High officials of Foreign office were present at the Zia International Airport to receive the repatriated Bangladeshis.

The families of Abdul Gafur and Shaiful Alam comprising seven members left for Chittagong from the Zia International Airport while Alamgir Mollah's three-member family went to their Mirpur residence in the city.

Banks still stuck with excess liquidity

By Inam Ahmed

The country's commercial banks continue to possess excess liquidity despite the government's repeated attempts to improve their lending positions, according to concerned sources.

The Finance Ministry in the past months has been urging the banks, especially the nationalised commercial banks (NCBs), to lower lending rates and improve credits to the investors. But these seem to have had little impact on the banks stuck with the huge excess liquidity. The net excess liquidity of the banks stood at about Tk 600 crore as of march this year while the gross excess liquidity position is Tk 1750 crore, sources said.

Most banks in their effort to cope with the situation had gone for cuts in their deposit and lending rates, but this has hardly improved the scene, bankers say.

According to the rules, the commercial banks have to maintain 20 per cent of their total liabilities as statutory deposits with the Bangladesh Bank (BB) in cash or government securities. The rest 80 per cent of the liabilities must be turned into assets and if they fail to do so, the shortfall is considered as excess liquidity.

The net excess liquidity is measured by deducting advances from deposit positions See Page 12 Col 4

South Yemen secedes from union Scud kills 13 in Sanaa

SANAA, Yemen, May 24: North Yemen said Tuesday its forces will retaliate for a missile attack on the capital in which an official said 13 people were killed, reports AP.

Southern Yemen, which seceded from its union with the north last week aimed civil war, denied its forces fired on Sanaa. Aden radio claimed the northern leadership "fabricated the explosion" to cover for plunging Yemen into war. The statement implied northern forces fired on their own capital to justify their onslaught against the south.

Yahya Zahir, security director for the Sanaa municipality,

told The Associated Press 12 people were killed and 103 wounded when a Scud missile struck the densely populated neighbourhood of Al-Qaa Monday night. He said one of the wounded died in hospital overnight.

Zahir's death toll was lower than an initial count of 30 reported by rescue workers Monday. There was no explanation for the discrepancy.

At least eight homes were demolished in the attack, Zahir said.

The missile crashed close to the newly built 500-bed Jumhuriya hospital, severely damaging the facility. About 70

patients and two physicians were wounded by flying glass shards and debris as windows and door were blown out. The north's Sanaa radio carried a statement from President Ali Abdullah Saleh saying, "The cowardly criminals will not escape punishment."

Earlier, northern troops scored new territorial gains in the oil-rich Shabwah province in a drive to control the country's most valuable economic resources.

Associated Press correspondent Jerome Socolovsky visited Ataq, capital of Shabwah province, on Monday.

Sushmita Sen crowned Miss Universe

NEW DELHI, May 24: Miss Universe Sushmita Sen has drawn an outpouring of scorn and ridicule from the Marxist rulers of her native Bengal after becoming the first Indian to win the prestigious beauty crown, reports AFP.

Ganashakti, mouthpiece of the Communist Party of India-Marxist, slammed the Miss Universe contest Monday as a 'capitalist conspiracy to exploit Asian women as 'consumer goods', newspapers reported today.

In a front-page editorial dripping with satire, the Bengali-language publication ridiculed Indian newspapers, state-run television and even See Page 12 Col 6



Mohammad Nasiruddin passes away

By Staff Correspondent

Mohammad Nasiruddin, the living legend, is no more. He breathed his last in Dhaka's Suhrawardy Hospital on Saturday afternoon at the age of 106.

He had been suffering from cardiac ailments and old age complications and was in coma since May 17 when he was admitted to the hospital in a critical condition.

He left behind his wife only daughter, Noorjahan, editor of the weekly Begum, a pioneer Bengali magazine for women and a host of relatives. The centenarian journalist and litterateur was laid to eternal See Page 12 Col 7

rest at the Shaheed Buddhijibi Graveyard at Mirpur on Sunday. His namaz-e-Janaza was held at the Baitul Mukarram mosque after the Eid congregation.

Deputy Leader of the Jatiya Sangsad Prof AQM Badruddoza

Editorial on Page 4

Chowdhury, Amanullah Chowdhury MP, Mohiuddin Ahmed MP, Rahmat Ali, MP, Dr. Ashraf Siddiqi, Prof. Anisuzzaman, Prof. Abul Kashem Fazul Haq were the notable among the thousands of others from the literary, cultural, political and



Nazrul's birth anniversary today

By Staff Correspondent

The 95th birth anniversary of National Poet Kazi Nazrul Islam will be observed throughout the country today.

Different socio-cultural or-

Editorial on Page 4

ganisations as well as the government have planned programmes in observance of the day.

The birth anniversary of the "Rebel Poet" will be celebrated under government auspices in See Page 12 Col 1

India suspends construction of 4 N-reactors

NEW DELHI, May 24: India's Atomic Energy Regulatory Board halted the construction Tuesday of four nuclear reactors after it found dangerous building flaws, reports AP.

The order came after concrete slabs caved in from the dome of a reactor being built in the southern town of Kaiga, injuring 13 people, on May 13.

A probe into the accident found that the construction of some joints was not according to the approved plan, said A Gopala Krishnan, the chairman of the Board.

"A review of the construc-

See Page 12 Col 2

Pakistan to seek US involvement in resolving Kashmir issue

WASHINGTON, May 24: Pakistan's President Farooq Leghari said Monday he would seek the 'active engagement' of the United States in resolving the Kashmir issue with India, reports Reuter.

"I shall convey to the US leadership our desire for America's active engagement to help in resolving the Kashmir dispute," he said after a meeting with US Secretary of State Warren Christopher.

Leghari, who is in Washington on a private visit, met Christopher briefly in a downtown hotel.

He said he would also seek US involvement in "halting the massive violations of human rights" in Kashmir and "promoting arms control and non-proliferation in South Asia."

Moves underway for Khaleda-Hasina talks

Government and Opposition negotiators are planning a summit between Prime Minister Begum Khaleda Zia and Leader of the Opposition in Parliament Sheikh Hasina to break the lingering stalemate in Parliament before the ensuing budget session.

Sources told UNB last night that the negotiators from both the camps felt the urgency for such talks at the highest political level on some burning national issues, including a caretaker government to hold the next general elections.

All the opposition groups boycotted the last Parliament session and threatened to abstain from the coming budget session to press the ruling party to bring a bill in the House creating a constitutional

provision for a caretaker government.

The sources indicated that if Leader of the House Prime Minister Begum Zia were to extend a formal invitation to Leader of the Opposition Sheikh Hasina for discussing the issues that have led to the current crisis, the Opposition might respond positively to such an overture.

"If there is any formal invitation from the Leader of the House for a dialogue outside the chamber of Parliament, we may sit with the government," said a senior Opposition leader on condition of anonymity.

A similar talks, between the Leader of the House and the Deputy Leader of the Opposition had taken place in Parliament See Page 12 Col 2

Economic accord with Hanoi tomorrow

By M Anwarul Haq

Dhaka and Hanoi will sign an agreement for joint economic cooperation tomorrow.

The agreement will be signed during the three-day official visit of the Vietnamese Foreign Minister Nguyen Manh Cam, scheduled to arrive in the city this afternoon.

Authoritative circles indicated that officials of the two countries will discuss mainly the economic issues and identify the possible areas of trade and economic exchange.

Till now economic and business links between Bangladesh and Vietnam have been on a very limited scale. In 1990-91, Dhaka's exports

were around two million US dollars while imports were only around US 5000 dollars. The signing of an economic trade protocol is expected to open up a new horizon in the trading arena of the two countries.

The Vietnamese Foreign Minister is scheduled to call on President Abdur Rahman Biswas and Prime Minister Begum Khaleda Zia.

Nguyen Manh Cam will meet the Bangladesh Foreign Minister Mostafizur Rahman and the two leaders are expected to hold talks on the entire gamut of bilateral rela- See Page 12 Col 8

Two murdered in city

By DMCH Correspondent

Two persons — a school teacher and a factory worker — were murdered in the capital during last three days.

A teacher of the Tejgaon Polytechnic High School, Matiur Rahman, 48, was found dead in his room at 91 Kathalbagan Monday.

Dhanmandi police recovered the body of the teacher and sent it to the Dhaka Medical College Hospital (DMCH) morgue for autopsy.

Being informed by the teacher's nephew, Mohammad Kasem, police broke open the room which was under lock and key and found the decomposed body lying on a pool of blood. The body was wrapped See page 12 Col 3



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