

## Inside Today

## International

India's Chief Election Commissioner forced to reschedule polls



Benazir seeks Koirala's cooperation to promote peace in South Asia

Page 5

## Business

Four more container jetties may be installed in Ctg port

150,000 families forced to work as unpaid 'volunteers', Myanmar govt in exile alleges

Pages 6, 7

## Women on the Move

Freeing the woman's body: Central to equality; Laws that permit inequality; and Is education an impediment to employment?

Page 8

## Metropolitan

## Dhaka Day by Day



A Freedom Fighter's Heroic Struggle

Page 3

## NEWS BRIEFS

## King Fahd greets Biswas

Saudi King Fahd Bin Abdul Aziz Al-Saud, the custodian of the two holy mosques, has facilitated President Abdur Rahman Biswas on the occasion of the holy Eid-ul-Azha. In a message, the King prayed to Almighty Allah to make happy return of the occasion to the President and brotherly people of Bangladesh and to the Islamic nations with the utmost welfare and success, reports UNB.

## Hasina condoles deaths of Hajis

Awami League chief and leader of the opposition in Parliament Sheikh Hasina yesterday (Wednesday) expressed deep shock at the deaths of Hajj pilgrims in a stampede in Makkah. In a message of condolence the Leader of the Opposition prayed for the salvation of the departed souls. She also expressed sympathy to the bereaved families, reports UNB.

## Petrol pump, shops looted in Ctg

CHITTAGONG, May 25: Armed bandits looted about Tk 4.4 lakh and valuables from a petrol pump and two shops in Madarmahal area near Raiganjha headquarters early today. About 20 dacoits carrying seven rifles and six sawed off rifles allegedly snatched Tk 3.2 lakh and goods from a petrol pump; Tk 12,000 from a confectionery and Tk 70,000 and cigarettes worth Tk 36,000 from a grocery at about 1:30 am, reports UNB.

## 19 Bangladeshi Hajis still missing

Four out of 23 Bangladeshi ballotee Hajis who were missing since Saturday, returned to their respective lodgings in Makkah yesterday, according to the latest information received here last night, reports BSS.

The officials of Bangladesh Mission in Saudi Arabia have also visited different hospitals in Makkah and identified three bodies, presumably of Bangladeshi Hajis. But their identity could not be ascertained, the message said.

It is very difficult to know the exact news about the Hajis who went to perform hajj on P form as they make most of their lodging and other arrangements privately. Still, the Bangladesh Mission is conducting enquiries about them, the message added.

The message further said Bangladesh Ambassador to Saudi Arabia CM Shafiq Shami in cooperation with the embassy and the consulate officials and

local volunteers are working to find out the details of the dead and missing Bangladeshi Hajis.

Meanwhile, the first return-hajj flight of Biman Bangladesh Airlines has reached Dhaka yesterday from Jeddah with 301 Bangladeshi Hajis on board.

The return Hajj flights of Biman will continue up to June 9 carrying the pilgrims who performed hajj under government management.

The Minister for Religious Affairs Muhammad Keramat Ali who led the government Hajj delegation this year to Saudi Arabia is now staying in Makkah and has been keeping contact with the appropriate authorities there to ensure the well-being of Bangladeshi Hajis.

## VAT rules likely to be amended

Star Report

The government is likely to amend the existing VAT rules to increase collection and at the same time stop harassment of the taxpayers, according to official sources.

The amendments will, however, be made immediately after announcement of the national budget for fiscal 1994-95.

According to a top official of the National Board of Revenue (NBR) the amendments will be brought on the basis of the Board's surveys on the sweetmeat producers, hotels and restaurants in Dhaka.

He said the NBR as part of the experiment, has fixed flat rates of value added tax (VAT) for the owners of these enterprises instead of the present 15 per cent charge on their

Enterprises in the manufac-

See Page 12 Col 1

total volume of sales.

The new system proved successful in the case of the sweetmeat shops but failed to achieve the target in the case of the hotels and restaurants, the NBR official said. The main problem was in fixing the rates for particular types of hotels or such enterprises. He said the owners of the hotels and restaurants and the NBR officials had failed to agree on the proposed rates.

Although the modified system was introduced only for the sweetmeat producers, hotels and restaurants in Dhaka, other service sector enterprises and small scale manufacturing units will also be included.

At the beginning rich tributes were paid to the memories of centenarian jour-

See Page 12 Col 1

## Celebrations of Nazrul's birthday begin

Deputy Leader of the House Prof A Q M Badruddoza Chowdhury yesterday underscored the need for proper evaluation and projection of the writings and contributions of the National Poet Kazi Nazrul Islam, reports BSS.

Prof Chowdhury was inaugurating a four-day national level celebration of the 95th birth anniversary of the poet at the Shilpakala Academy auditorium.

Similar programmes have also begun at Trishal (Mymensingh) and Comilla.

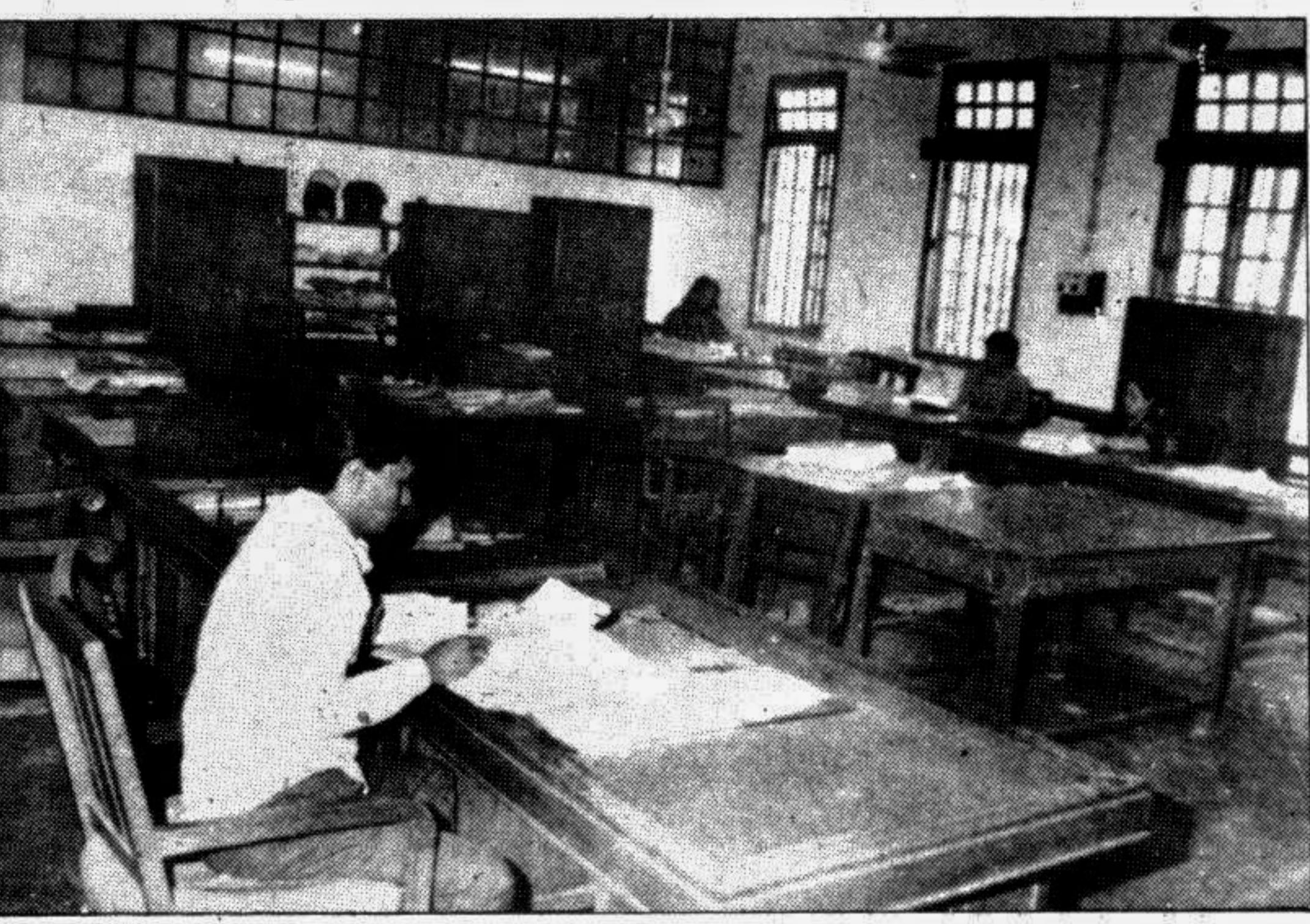
The function, organised by Ministry of Cultural Affairs in collaboration with Shilpakala academy, was chaired by State Minister for Cultural Affairs Prof Jahana Begum.

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See Page 12 Col 1

Some of the party leaders, who are also ministers, were learnt to have communicated to the prime minister that the mainstream Opposition was still inclined towards boycotting the coming budget session of Parliament until the ruling party agreed to move a constitution amendment bill providing for general elec-

See Page 12 Col 3



The holiday mood prevailed at the Secretariat yesterday despite the end of the Eid festival.

— Star photo

## PM reviews situation with party leaders

By Staff Correspondent

Prime Minister and BNP Chairperson Begum Khaleda Zia had an informal meeting with some of her party leaders at the Sugandha last night to get the latest picture of the country's political situation, ruling party sources said.

The premier, who was away from the country for a week, returned home Tuesday night after performing hajj.

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See Page 12 Col 3

## Huda rejects idea of caretaker govt

Information Minister Nazmul Huda said in Dhaka yesterday that formation of a caretaker government replacing a democratically elected one had no constitutional or legal basis.

Quoting a judgement of the Supreme Court on the 8th Constitutional Amendment, the Information Minister said the basic and fundamental principles of the Constitution could be made more independent and strong by eliminating any lapses, he added.

Huda said to make the election system successful, good intention of the political forces is the most important factor. The political parties could hold discussions to achieve this purpose, he added.

When asked why the BNP was now objecting to the Opposition demand for a caretaker government for holding free and fair elections when it itself had raised such a demand, Huda said an independent Election Commission vested with more powers, if necessary, under a democratic or legal basis.

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