

## 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 Madernahal area near Razzan thana headquarters early today. About 20 dacoits carrying seven rifles and six sawed of 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 ballottee 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 Hajis missing till last night are: Garibullah Mondal - Passport No: 5355, Imdadul Haque Mollah - 5472, Ali Akbar Majumder - 1529, Ayub Ali - 1466, Kartan Bibi - 4625, Abul Hossain - 2382, Nuruddin Bhuiyan - 1927, Ramizuddin Kazi - 2645, A Mannan Bhuiyan - 2002, Mozammel Ali - 2968, Ahmed Ali Sardar - 4597, Abdul Wahab Chowdhury - 4132, Mahbubur Rahman Chowdhury - 4191, Kasimuddin - 4494, Fazlur Rahman - 4365, Sheikh Yusuf Ali - 5913, Montajuddin Dhali - 6049, Mozzem Hossain - 3521 and Abdul Aziz - 5885.

The message further said Bangladesh Ambassador to Saudi Arabia CM Shafi 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 Bimans 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

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.

Enterprises in the manufac-

## 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 Jahanara Begum.

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

See Page 12 Col 1



Relatives of Kazi Nazrul Islam visited his mazar in the city on the occasion of the national poet's 95th birth anniversary yesterday. — Star photo

## Environmentalists for legal battle No action yet against 903 'polluter' units

By Staff Correspondent

Hundreds of industrial units identified as "environment polluters" continue to discharge wastes as environmentalists prepare for a legal battle with the government after five years of wait-and-see.

Bangladesh Environmental Lawyers Association (BELA) has recently sent legal notice to the secretaries of ministries of industries, and environment and forests, and also the Director General of the Department of Environment (DOE) demanding "justice to the people and their environment".

The association also wanted to know what measures had been taken so far against the polluters.

The erstwhile Department

of Environment Pollution Control in 1986 identified 903 mills and factories across the country as "environment polluters" and advised the industries ministry to ensure that these units adopt protective measures.

The government, in a gazette notification on June 5, 1986, published a list of the industries identified as 'polluters' after an extensive survey by the pollution control department.

A time-frame of three years was given by the department, now the DOE, to enable all the industrial units to adopt measures to control environment pollution. The time-frame had expired on June 4, 1989.

See Page 12 Col 7

## Heavy shower in city

By Staff Correspondent

A heavy downpour yesterday afternoon in the capital and some other parts of the country lessened the intensity of the May heat. More importantly it helped cleanse the atmosphere of the all-pervading stench caused by the careless disposal of the remains of animals sacrificed during the three days of Eid-ul-Azha.

The Met Office in Dhaka recorded 53 millimeters of rain that continued for nearly two hours.

The highest amount of rainfall was recorded at Rangpur where 86 millimeters drenched the northern district.

The downpour caused waterlogging at many places of the capital where people were seen wading through knee-deep water. Scores of automobiles got bogged in the middle of numerous pools, marooning

See Page 12 Col 8



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.

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

## 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 cannot be changed.

Since democracy is one of the fundamental principles of the present constitution a government elected democratically through the people's verdict cannot be substituted by an unelected, undemocratic and transitional government, even for a short period, he stressed.

In an exclusive interview

with BSS he said an independent Election Commission vested with more powers, if necessary, under a democratic government could ensure free fair election. The Election Commission 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 de-

See Page 12 Col 4

## Computerised rly ticket sale by Oct 1

By Sharier Khan

A computerised system of ticket selling and booking at seven railway stations in the Dhaka-Chittagong route is likely to start by October 1, sources said.

A private company, Technohaven, is currently developing the system to computerise ticket counters of 30 stations in the east zone of Bangladesh Railway (BR) by March next year for better customer service.

The Technohaven has signed an agreement with the BR recently to install computers in the 30 stations out of a total of 42 in the east zone.

As per the agreement, the company will computerise ticket counters of seven stations in the Dhaka-Chittagong route by December 20 next.

President of Technohaven

See page 12 Col 3

## JP divided over the removal of Anis

Star Report

The recent removal of former foreign minister Anisul Islam Mahmud from the party presidium has given rise to serious differences of opinion within the ranks of the Jatiya Party.

About 15 central leaders of the JP have sided with Anisul Islam to protest the 'order' given by acting Chairman of the party Mizanur Rahman Chowdhury dropping him from the presidium, party sources said.

The JP high command has convened a meeting of the Party secretariat on Friday to review the situation.

JP sources said that 'supporters' of Anisul Islam held a meeting at the residence of Ziauddin Ahmed Bablu following the May 18 removal and rejected the order saying "It is not a party

decision."

The Party leaders who attended the meeting included Reazuddin Ahmed Bhola Miah, Dr T I M Fazle Rabbi, Sheikh Shahidul Islam, Col (Retd) Zafar Imam, Kazi Feroz Rashid, Nital Roy Chowdhury, Mostafa Jamal Haider, Ruhul Amin Hawlader, Col (ret'd) A K M Gaffar, Barrister Abul Hasnat, Mahmudur Rahman Chowdhury, Justice Habibul Islam Bhuiyan and Abdus Sattar, sources said.

The charges brought against Anisul Islam Mahmud are anti-party activities like creating factions in Chittagong unit of JP. Party insiders said the former foreign minister was vocal against the party's acting chairman and proposed that acting chairmanship should rotate among the four

See Page 12 Col 8

## US allays Pak fear over Indian missiles

WASHINGTON, May 25: The United States has assured Pakistan of its awareness of the danger involved in the situation resulting from deployment of Prithvi missile by India and reaffirmed its commitment to making all possible efforts to prevent the exacerbation of the security environment in South Asia, reports AFP.

Talking informally to newsmen after US Secretary of State Warren Christopher's call on him, Pakistani President Leghari said he mentioned the danger of a nuclear arms race if India is allowed to go ahead with the deployment of the Prithvi missile.

"I was assured that the United States is aware of the danger involved in the present

situations," Leghari told newsmen. "The US desires to play a helpful role to arrest the danger of a nuclear arms race in South Asia," he added.

He said he underlined Pakistani concerns about the grave situation in Kashmir and the need for the United States — the sole superpower to play a role in resolving the dispute. He strongly urged that the US should help to ameliorate the human suffering in Indian held Kashmir.

Leghari said he and Secretary Christopher discussed the nuclear non-proliferation issue and the Pressler problem. He said official consultations would be held between Pakistan and the United States in Washington on US proposals on non-proliferation and secu-

urity in South Asia.

"Both sides look forward to progress in these consultations," the president remarked adding: "we have been assured that the United States does not seek any objective that would jeopardise Pakistan's security."

President Leghari, however, emphasised that on matters of international and regional importance like Kashmir, and question of nuclear non-proliferation, the relationship has a multi dimensional concern to Pakistan, India and the United States. "We want an equitable resolution of these issues," he added.

The President said Pakistan would never agree to anything that impinges on the security concerns of the country.

## The Daily Star PUBLIC DEBATE



Today, on Page 4, M Saifur Rahman, Finance Minister and Member, Standing Committee, Bangladesh Nationalist Party, puts forth his arguments against the need for holding the next general elections under a caretaker government. Readers' views on the subject are welcome.

## Visit to usher in new era of friendship, says Vietnamese FM

Vietnamese Foreign Minister Nguyen Manh Cam said yesterday, strong ties of friendship between Dhaka and Hanoi will contribute to promoting peace and stability in Asia, reports UNB.

Cam, who arrived in Dhaka yesterday afternoon on a three-day visit to Bangladesh, hoped that the visit would not only help strengthen the existing relations between the two countries but would also usher in a new era of friendship.

"It will also set concrete steps towards deepening ties between the two countries," the Foreign Minister of the Socialist Republic of Vietnam told newsmen at the Zia International Airport.

He expressed his happiness at the trip enabling him to land in Dhaka after 18 years. "It's a great joy to visit Bangladesh," he said.

The Vietnamese FM, who is leading a six-member delegation, will have official talks with his Bangladesh counterpart ASM Mostafizur Rahman on bilateral matters as well as regional and international issues of common concern.

See Page 12 Col 5

## Fishing company directors get anticipatory bail

By Staff Correspondent

A vacation Bench of the High Court yesterday granted anticipatory bail to Abdur Rouf Chowdhury, Managing Director, Sea Resources Ltd and two other Directors, namely, Shafiuddin Chowdhury and Bahauddin Chowdhury.

The bails were granted in connection with the Chittagong Bandar PS (Port Police) Case No 24 (4/94) dated April 28, 1994 now pending in the court of the Chief Metropolitan Magistrate, Chittagong.

## Suranjit clarifies press report

The following letter was sent to The Daily Star by Suranjit Sengupta, Member of Parliament of the Ganatantri Party:

"The report captioned 'Suranjit may join AL' appearing in your esteemed daily on May 21 is highly misleading.

"It has caused a lot of embarrassment for me personally. To make matters straight, let me say in clear and categorical terms that I have not written any letter to Awami League President Sheikh Hasina. This is farthest from the truth.

"Let it be noted that there is no such tradition in our politics that a political leader will join a party by submitting an application to a party chief. This is embarrassing both for the political leader concerned and the party in question. To make it further clear, joining of a political party by a leader generally marks the culmination of a political process."



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