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The Dhaleswari river in spate following heavy rainfall over the past few days has inundated the approach road to a ferry ghat — Dhaleswari One — on the Dhaka-Mawa Highway yesterday rendering loading and unloading of vehicles perilous. — Star photo

Meena stampede: Search on for more victims

Bodies of 6 Bangladeshi Hajis identified

Six bodies of Bangladeshi Hajis, who were killed in stampede in Meena near the holy city of Makkah, were identified by the Bangladesh embassy officials in Saudi Arabia, Foreign Ministry sources said in Dhaka yesterday, reports BSS.

They are: Akil Mia, son of M Mozammel; Syed Mohammad Mahmud, s/o Abdul Zabbar; Israfil Khan (father-unknown); Shafigur Rahman, s/o Ranju Mia; Mohammad Nurul Huda, s/o Eunus Fariduddin and Mansur Ahmed, s/o Amin.

Some teams under the supervision of Bangladesh ambassador in Saudi Arabia identified

these bodies as per records of the hospitals in Makkah and the adjacent areas.

Bangladesh embassy is also trying to verify an unconfirmed news that more Bangladeshi Hajis were killed in the incident, the sources said.

A Delhi report says, 21 Indian Muslims were killed in the stampede, AFP quoting a Foreign Ministry official said yesterday.

The official, citing the latest reports from the Indian mission in Jeddah, said the number of Indians killed in the stampede during the Hajj pilgrimage was 21 and not seven as announced earlier.

Saudi Arabia announced yesterday that 270 pilgrims died in a human stampede in Meena, according to AP.

An official statement released by the Saudi Press Agency, attributed the stampede to conditions "beyond human endurance."

In all, 829 people died during this year's hajj pilgrimage, the agency reported. They included those trampled to death Monday.

Pilgrims ignored government instructions blared by radios over a period of 10 days to avoid a crush, the statement said.

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India to test air defence system similar to Patriot

NEW DELHI, May 27: India plans to conduct tests soon of an indigenous air defence system similar to the Patriot used by US troops against Iraqi Scud missiles during the Gulf War, the Asian Age newspaper reported today, says AFP.

The air defence system consists of state-of-the-art phased array radar combined with the medium-range surface-to-air akash, or "sky" missile, the newspaper said.

Scientists at the Defence Research and Development Organisation told the daily that the Rajendra phased array radar can track several targets at once and guide a missile in for a mid-air kill.

"It's a fantastic system. Its capability has put India firmly on the world radar map," a radar specialist was quoted as saying.

Issue of caretaker govt BNP may agree to discussion in JS

By Nurul Kabir

Prime Minister Begum Khaleda Zia may agree to discuss the issue of elections under a care-taker government during the upcoming budget session if the Opposition re-joins the proceedings of the Jatiya Sangsad.

A source close to the Prime Minister told The Daily Star last night, she was also ready to request the President for a quick approval of any Opposition-sponsored bill relating to a care-taker government so that it could be taken up for discussion during the budget session scheduled to begin on June 6.

According to parliamentary rules and procedure any bill, the implementation of which

involves spending from the public exchequer, needs presidential approval for being introduced in the House.

However, before making any specific proposal to this end the Prime Minister will discuss her plans at her party standing committee, the top policy-making body of the ruling Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP), which should meet very soon, a top-ranking leader of the party said. That meeting, among other things, will also select a team of negotiators to begin a dialogue, formal or informal, with the Opposition to resolve the present political crisis over the Opposition demand for a care-taker government.

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Pak counter-proposals to US on N-inspections

ISLAMABAD, May 27: Pakistan's Prime Minister Benazir Bhutto said Thursday her country had put forward counter-proposals to a US plan for non-intrusive inspections of Pakistan's nuclear installations, reports AFP.

The counter-proposal was passed on to Washington by President, Farooq Ahmed Leghari, who is in the United States on a private visit, she said at a press conference following her return from a three-day visit to Nepal.

"We are using this occasion to have informal talks with US leaders and explain Pakistan's position following US Under Secretary of State Strobe Talbott's trip to Islamabad in April, she added.

Benazir did not elaborate on the contents of the counter proposals.

Foreign Minister Sardar Assef Ahmed Ali said last week that Washington had proposed a "non-intrusive" inspection of Pakistan's nuclear plants to verify that Islamabad was not producing nuclear weapons. He added that Pakistan was prepared to consider non-physical verification of its programme.

The US proposals followed Talbott's talks on the nuclear issue with Pakistani leaders, when the two sides agreed to pursue a policy of "quiet diplomacy" to improve bilateral relations.

President Leghari, who in United States to attend his son's graduation, held talks with US Secretary of State Warren Christopher and met Vice President Al Gore, while officials of the two countries

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Hanoi for exchange of ideas on economic reforms

By Staff Correspondent

Dhaka and Hanoi have entered a new phase of relations that will help strengthen economic, scientific and technological cooperation between the two countries, Vietnamese Foreign Minister Nguyen Manh Cam said in Dhaka yesterday.

"We have laid a new foundation of relations... we will work together for mutual benefits in common fields," Cam told a crowded press conference at the state guest house Padma at the end of his three-day visit to Bangladesh.

He said during the past 20 years the two countries steadily improved their relations and faced no problems.

Both the countries are now carrying out similar economic

reforms and can help each other in different fields, Cam said.

During his visit, the Vietnamese minister held meetings with the President, the Prime Minister, the Foreign Minister and the members of business community.

Cam expressed satisfaction at the outcome of his visit. "We have identified a number of areas but infrastructure development and renovation is our high priority and some Bangladeshi entrepreneurs showed interest in this field," he said.

Under the present economic reform programmes, both Bangladesh and Vietnam are attracting foreign investors

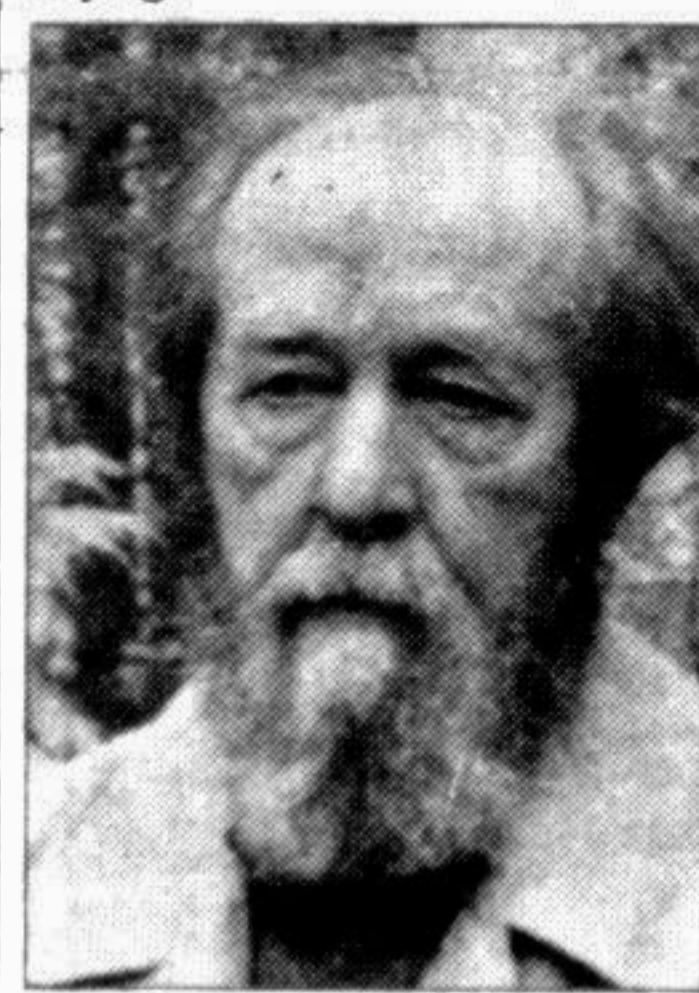
to their country, Cam said. Since 1988 when Vietnam liberalised its economic policy, some 920 companies from more than 40 countries have invested about 8.5 billion US dollars, he added.

"The US companies started pouring into Vietnam following the lifting of embargo by the Clinton administration," the minister said.

He ruled out any possibility of manpower export to Vietnam as the country itself is a manpower exporter.

Cam referred to the two bilateral agreements signed by him and his Bangladeshi counterpart A S M Mostafizur Rahman and said the agreements

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Solzhenitsyn back home

MAGADAN, Russia, May 27: Alexander Solzhenitsyn touched the soil of his native Russia Friday as he returned home after 20 years in exile, saying the world must not forget the millions who died in Soviet labour camps, reports AP.

Russia's greatest living See Page 12 Col 4

4 JP leaders to settle Anis issue

By Staff Correspondent

The secretary of the Jatiya Party yesterday delegated power to four top leaders to settle the issue arising out of the removal of Anisul Islam Mahmood from the party presidency last week.

A meeting of the party secretary chaired by Secretary General Khaledur Rahman Tito decided to leave the matter to Mizanur Rahman Chowdhury, Kazi Zafar Ahmed, Moudud Ahmed and Shah Moazzem Hossain for settlement.

Some 34 members attended the meeting.

Difference of opinion surfaced following the removal of Anis. More than 15 top ranking leaders demanded withdrawal of the order.

To counter anti-jute campaign Exporter countries plan common strategy

By Inam Ahmed

The jute growing countries including Bangladesh have been preparing a common strategy to counter increasing attacks by some western consumers against the natural fibre.

"The grower countries must organise themselves to fight unitedly for survival in the western markets which are flooded with synthetic rivals," a high official of the International Jute Organisation (IJO) told The Daily Star last night.

The European Association of Users of Jute Goods (EA-UJG) has voiced reservations against packing products like food items with jute on the ground that it contains batching oil which is a health

hazard. The association has also been pointing to the fact that jute, because of its bulk, often poses a big problem. The importers have to pay more to hire trucks for carrying it to dumping grounds.

But jute experts and exporters here have expressed surprise over the association's observations.

"We had conducted a broad-based study that clearly established that jute, because it is bio-degradable, is an environment friendly product.

On the contrary, synthetic alternatives to jute are anti-environment," the IJO official said.

Exporters in Bangladesh See Page 12 Col 7

Draft PLO constitution calls Jerusalem capital

PARIS, May 27: A draft PLO constitution calls Jerusalem the eventual capital of Palestine, a position Israel has adamantly opposed, a French newspaper reported, says AP.

The constitution, still to be reviewed and approved by the Palestine National Council headed by PLO chairman Yasser Arafat, would also establish a multiparty democracy with religious and human rights guarantees.

Extracts of the more than 100-article draft document, written by a French lawyer commissioned by Arafat, were published Thursday and Friday in the conservative daily Le Figaro.

"Jerusalem is the capital of Palestine," said Article 5, but it added: "During the transition period, Palestinian authorities

could decide on another city in Palestine as the seat of government."

Ensuring access to Jerusalem by all faiths, Article 31 says "Jerusalem is the holy city of three monotheistic religions."

"Conforming to the spiritual heritage of Palestine, it is the duty of Palestinian authorities to favour conditions necessary to the coexistence of the religions, in Jerusalem as well as in the whole of Palestine," in said.

The government will be carried out by a president with a five-year term that can be renewed once, said the document prepared by lawyer Jean-Marc Varaut, a professor at the Institute of Criminology in Paris.

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The Daily Star PUBLIC DEBATE



Today, on Page 4, Farida Rahman MP and a front-ranking leader of the ruling BNP, argues why the next general elections should not be held under a caretaker government.

Readers' views on the subject are welcome.

PM's gifts for Hasina have no link with politics: Zillur

Awami League General Secretary Zillur Rahman yesterday blasted a section of the press for publishing concocted and fictitious reports and articles on the country's present political crisis to 'mislead' the people, reports UNB.

In a statement, he said "even misleading advanced news" on a meeting and discussions between the Leader of the House and the Leader of the Opposition are being published. Publication of such reports at this "critical juncture of the nation" has further complicated the situation, he added.

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China, Russia sign cooperation agreements

BEIJING, May 27: The Russian and Chinese prime ministers signed agreements Friday to cooperate in managing their long border and in trade, agriculture, and environmental protection, reports AP.

The signing ceremony capped a 2 1/2-hour meeting between Russian Prime Minister Viktor Chernomyrdin and his Chinese host, Li Peng.

The Chinese Foreign Ministry and Chernomyrdin both said the talks were friendly and fruitful.

Li said he was satisfied with the "smooth development" of relations between the two countries over the past few years, ministry spokesman Wu Jianmin said. But Li said trade,

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BNP programmes on Zia's death anniversary

The Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP) has drawn an elaborate programme to observe the 13th death anniversary of the founding chairman of the party and proclaimer of independence Shaheed President Ziaur Rahman, reports BSS.

The Jatiyatabadi Samajik Sangstha will organise 'Ziaur Rahman memorial speech 1994' at the Shilpakala Academy tomorrow at 5 pm, screening of a documentary film on the life and works on Shaheed Zia and a two-day photography exhibition the same day.

The JASAS will also organise a similar programme on May 30 at the Zia Museum at Chittagong Circuit House.

Placing of wreaths at the mazar of Shaheed Zia on May 30 at 9 am, milad mahfil will also be held at the mazar premises. Party flag will be flown at half mast at the party central office.

A discussion meeting will be held on June 2 at 4 pm at the National Museum auditorium under the auspices of the BNP.



A teenaged girl holds a placard denouncing growing child labour in Pakistan during a protest rally in Karachi yesterday. A study says, some eight million children are forced to work in factories, particularly in the carpet industry in Pakistan. — AFP photo

NEWS BRIEFS

Biswas condoles deaths of Hajis

President Abdur Rahman Biswas yesterday expressed his profound grief and sorrow at the deaths of the Hajis in Mina stampede. In a condolence message President Biswas conveyed his deep sympathy to the members of the bereaved families and prayed for the peace of the departed souls, reports BSS.

Hasina's tribute to Shilpacharya

Awami League President Sheikh Hasina yesterday paid rich tribute to the memory of Shilpacharya Zainul Abedin on the occasion of his 18th anniversary of death, reports UNB.

Two killed in road mishaps

SIRAJGANJ, May 27: Two people, including a minor girl, were killed today in separate road accidents in Kamarkhand and Royganj thanas of the district, police sources said. The dead were identified as Mina Khatun, 8, of Utrichar Bhadrachal in Makarkhand thana and Naziruddin, 50 of Shahebganj in Royganj thana, reports UNB.

Quake jolts Tokyo

TOKYO, May 27: Tokyo was rocked late today by a strong earthquake, which also hit Yokohama, television reported. The quake struck at 11:53 pm local time (20:53) although there were no immediate reports of damage or casualties, NHK television said, reports AFP.

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