

The Daily Star PUBLIC DEBATE



Today, on Page 4, Motia Chowdhury, MP and Secretary, Agriculture and Cooperatives, Bangladesh Awami League, argues in favour of holding the next general elections under a caretaker government.

Readers' opinions on the subject are welcome.

Computer Special

Today's issue of The Daily Star contains an 8-page tabloid on Computer Special

Inside Today

International

Rwandan rebels cut off army's last avenue of retreat

ROK asks US not to resume high-level talks with North Korea
Page 5

Business

DCCI assures cooperation in boosting exports

China to open railways to foreign management
Pages 6, 7

Feature

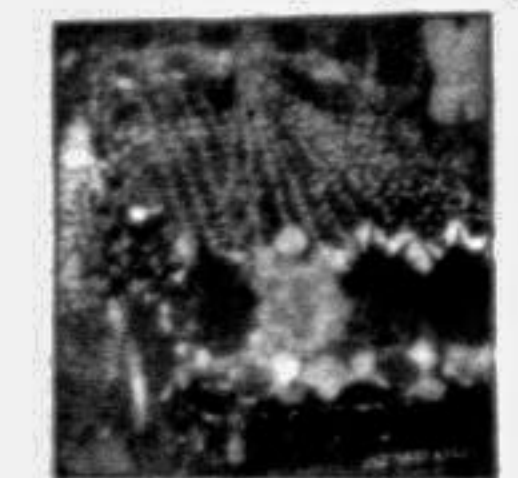
Health

Tobacco or Health: Time to Make the Choice

India's 'Invisible' Menace
Page 8

Metropolitan

Dhaka Day by Day



The Lustre of Tying Bridal Knot
Page 3

NEWS BRIEFS

PM's donation

Bangladesh ambassador to Japan Mahbubul Haq handed over a cheque for US dollars 5,000 to the Director of Tokyo Metropolitan Kita Medical and Rehabilitation Centre for the handicapped recently on behalf of the Prime Minister of Bangladesh Begum Khaleda Zia, according to an official handout. The Prime Minister visited the centre during her visit to Japan in March this year and offered this donation to purchase toys for the children of the centre, reports BSS.

AMA Muhiit Gano Forum coordinator

By Staff Correspondent

A M A Muhiit, member of the Gano Forum Presidential Council, was made coordinator of the party at a meeting of the standing committee on Monday.

Two die in B'baria road mishap

BRAHMANBARIA, May 30: Two passengers of a tempo were killed and 7 others injured when the running 3-wheeler was crashed by a truck from opposite on Sylhet-Brahmanbaria highway today reports UNB.

Israel frees hundreds of Palestinians

JERUSALEM, May 30: Israel began releasing hundreds of Palestinian prisoners today in line with the PLO autonomy accord, which calls for the gradual release of 5,000 detainees, reports AP.

The army said six buses left the Keziot prison in the southern Negev desert, two to the Gaza Strip and four to the West Bank. A military official, speaking on condition of anonymity, said hundreds of Palestinians would be released by the end of the day.

At the Nahal OZ checkpoint inside Gaza, buses dropped off 63 released prisoners at a roadblock manned by Palestinian police.

Some of the prisoners jumped through bus windows to hug the policemen. The police shot in the air to celebrate, then distributed flowers and sweets to the freed men.

After the initial welcome, Palestinian police escorted the released prisoners through another roadblock where they were met by dozens of family members who greeted them with hugs and kisses.

Since the May 4th signing of the autonomy accord in Cairo, Israel has freed about 1,300 prisoners, but the slow pace has frustrated Palestinians and fueled opposition to the agreement.

Monday's releases were the first since Israel completed its withdrawal from the Gaza Strip and Jericho on May 18th.

Meanwhile, Palestinian gunmen today ambushed soldiers on the frontier between the autonomous Gaza Strip and Israel. One soldier was killed

in the gun battle, possibly by friendly fire, the army said.

The gunmen fled into Gaza, and Palestinian police officials said steps would be taken to arrest them.

It was the second Palestinian attack on Israeli troops since Israel withdrew from Gaza.

In response to the shooting, Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin's ruling Labor Party said such attacks could not be tolerated and called for changing the autonomy accord if the Palestinian police don't take efforts to catch the assailants.

Under the autonomy accord, it is up to the Palestinian police in most cases to arrest and prosecute Palestinians who attack Israelis and flee into the autonomy zone, said an army official.

Kamal repeats call for consensus on nat'l issues

Gano Forum president Dr Kamal Hossain yesterday reiterated his call for the political parties to hammer out a national consensus on fundamental issues at this critical juncture when our cherished values are in jeopardy and a hard-earned democratic order is at stake, reports UNB.

He was exchanging views with the editors of national newspapers and news agencies as well as senior journalists at the VIP lounge of the National Press Club.

Making a pointed reference to the current political stalemate which has rendered Parliament virtually ineffectual and redundant, the Gano Forum chief said the prolonged boycott of Parliament sessions could by no means help resolve

the political crisis facing both the party-in-power and the Opposition.

He suggested a meaningful and unconditional dialogue between the two sides to devise ways and means of overcoming the deadlock. The dialogue, he suggested, must be open and made transparent so that the people may know which party was saying what. There should be no hide-and-seek between the political parties and the people on issues of fundamental nature affecting the nation, Dr Kamal added.

Asked if he was talking of a parley between the ruling party and the Opposition in Parliament, he evaded a direct answer, saying only that the

See Page 12 Col 8

NDP leader urges govt to resolve political crisis

National Democratic Party (NDP) leader Salahuddin Quader Chowdhury, MP, yesterday described the Opposition demand for a caretaker government a "crucial issue" and asked the ruling BNP to concentrate on the crux of the problem for its solution.

Talking to UNB, Chowdhury said the Opposition demand for an interim administration to hold general elections and the present impasse in Parliament had stemmed from the three-and-a-half-year rule of the BNP.

"The demand for a caretaker government has become rather a crucial issue because of our total experience of the constitutional BNP government."

See Page 12 Col 5



Security policemen arresting Masakatsu Nozoe (ground), a member of an ultra-nationalist group, just after he fired a bullet at the ceiling of a Tokyo hotel lobby in front of former Japanese premier Morihiro Hosokawa yesterday. — AFP photo

Bangladesh's inflation lowest in SAARC

Bangladesh topped the list among the SAARC countries in terms of low inflation and current account balance, officials said quoting the index of economic development published in the Asia Week, reports UNB.

The Hong Kong-based news magazine in its economic development index shows that the country's inflation rate is less than 2 per cent while its current account balance stands at 50 million US dollars in 1994.

The inflation rate is 5.9 per cent in India, 5.8 in Nepal, 13 per cent in Bhutan, 17.2 in the Maldives and 9.5 per cent in Pakistan in the current fiscal year.

Bangladesh's current account balance is Tk 196 crore or 50 million US dollars while all the rest six SAARC nations are having negative CAB.

The CAB of India is minus 6,000 million US dollars, of Nepal — 200 million, Bhutan — 60 million, Maldives — 30 million, Sri Lanka — 500 million and Pakistan — 2,500 million dollars.

The purchasing power parity of Bangladesh is 3rd with 1206 US dollars and export earning in 1994 rose to 2,100 million dollars placing itself in the 4th position among the SAARC nations.

India's export earning rose to 19,500 million US dollars followed by Pakistan with 7,400 million dollars. Export earning of Sri Lanka stood at 2,400 million dollars while it is 400 million dollars in the Maldives, 300 million dollars in Nepal and 100 million dollars in Bhutan.

The foreign exchange reserve of Bangladesh is the second highest after India.

Country's foreign currency reserve in the current fiscal stood at 2.3 billion US dollars while it is 10.2 billion in India.

See Page 12 Col 7

World No-Tobacco Day today

World No-Tobacco Day will be observed today in the country as elsewhere round the globe as part of international campaign against smoking, reports UNB.

Gunfire near Hosokawa: One arrested

TOKYO, May 30: A gunman fired a bullet at the ceiling of a Tokyo hotel lobby in front of former prime minister Morihiro Hosokawa today and was arrested, police said, reports Reuter.

Security policemen guarding the ex-premier took custody of the assailant, identified by NHK television as a former member of an ultra-nationalist group.

Police declined to comment on the identity of the gunman or his motive.

Hosokawa was whisked away in his limousine shortly after the incident, which took place in the lobby of the Kelo Plaza hotel in west central Tokyo.

Hosokawa was attending a rally of the Tokyo chapter of his troubled Japan New Party (JNP).

Hosokawa, Japan's foremost anti-graft campaigner, was forced to resign from office last month over a personal loans scandal, similar to the ones that felled his predecessors from the long-ruling Liberal Democratic Party (LDP).

Many NJP members have been demanding that Hosokawa step down as party head.



BNP Chairperson and Prime Minister Begum Khaleda Zia, along with her cabinet colleagues, placing wreaths at the mazar of Shaheed President Ziaur Rahman on the occasion of his 13th death anniversary yesterday. — Star photo

Opposition leaders in JS to meet

June 5

By Staff Correspondent

The leaders of the opposition parties in Parliament will meet on June 5 to decide whether to attend the budget session of the Jatiya Sangsad (JS), scheduled to begin on June 6.

The opposition had threatened to boycott the session unless the BNP agreed to move a bill seeking constitutional provision for holding general elections under a caretaker government. The opposition also abstained from participating in the proceedings of the last session to press home their demands.

Meanwhile, the largest opposition in the Jatiya Sangsad, Awami League (AL), will hold a meeting of its parliamentary wing on June 6.

Body to oversee border trade with Myanmar likely today

By Staff Correspondent

The government is likely to form a high-powered committee today to supervise an expedite the process of implementing the border trade accord with Myanmar, according to official sources.

The committee will comprise officials from the Ministry of Commerce, Export Promotion Bureau (EPB), National Board of Revenue (NBR) and some other government agencies concerned. The terms of reference of the committee is, however, yet to be formulated.

The first meeting of the committee may also be held today at the Ministry of Commerce immediately after its formation.

The border trade accord, signed in Dhaka on May 18 by Commerce Minister M Shamsul Islam and his Myanmar counterpart Tun Kyi will be signed today.

See Page 12 Col 5

HC rule against minimum wages for launch workers

A division bench of the High Court has asked the government to show cause within three weeks why the minimum wages board award for the inland water transport sector should not be declared to have been announced without lawful authority and of no legal effect, reports UNB.

The division bench comprising Justice Ismyeeluddin Sarker and Justice Hamidul Haque yesterday issued a rule upon the government also to explain why the condition of the minimum wages board should not be declared of no legal effect.

Three organisations had jointly filed a writ petition alleging that such a minimum wages board cannot be established for the inland water transport sector as there are special laws enacted in 1965 as well as in 1992 to deal with the wages and conditions of service of the workers engaged in the sector.

The organisations are Launch Owners Association, Cargo Vessels Association and Passengers Carriers Association.

Barrister Moudud Ahmed appeared on behalf of the petitioners. He was assisted by Azizul Haque and Kazi Mizanur Rahman.

Zia's contributions recalled

By Staff Correspondent

The 13th anniversary of the death of President Ziaur Rahman was observed throughout the country yesterday with due solemnity recalling his glorious role in the war of independence and contribution in building the nation.

Zia was assassinated by a group of army mutineers at the Chittagong Circuit House on May 30, 1981.

The day's programmes included hoisting of party flag at halfmast on the offices of the BNP, founded by Zia, placing of wreaths at his mazar at Sher-e-Bangla Nagar in the capital, offering of feteiha, Quran khwari and mullad mahfil, wearing of

black badges, feeding of the destitute and discussion meetings.

In the capital, President Abdur Rahman Biswas placed wreaths at the mazar of Zia in the morning. He stood there in silence for some time and prayed for peace of the departed soul.

Prime Minister Begum Khaleda Zia accompanied by her cabinet colleagues, placed wreath and offered feteiha at about 9:30 am. Besides, thousands of leaders and workers of the BNP and its front organisations also visited the mazar to pay tribute to the memory of

See Page 12 Col 1

Tk 135 cr CCC budget for next fiscal

CHITTAGONG, May 30: A Tk 135 crore budget of the Chittagong City Corporation for 1994-95 was announced today, reports UNB.

Mayor of the port city ABM Mohiuddin Chowdhury announced the budget in a general meeting attended by Ward Commissioners and officials, at the corporation auditorium this afternoon.

It showed an opening balance of Tk 4,22,38,000, receipt of Tk 34,37 crore from last year's arrears, Tk 8,71,49,000 from fresh taxes, Tk 12,74,91,000 from surcharge, Tk 10,35,50,000 from the corporation's own resources, Tk 1,10,25,000 from miscellaneous income, Tk 3,31,65,000 from subsidy and

relief, Tk 41.41 crore development allocation, Tk 14.60 crore sanctioned for environmental development project and Tk 2 crore from other sectors.

Mohiuddin Chowdhury said the city corporation had planned to set up a Mother and Child Care Centre in every ward for ensuring health care facilities to the poor.

Besides, a high school will be set up in every Ward, he said.

Terming the budget people and development oriented, the Mayor sought cooperation from all in developing the port city.

The current year's budget allocation for the city was Tk 120.43 crore 85 thousand.

Abahani meet Brothers in today's final

Sports Reporter

Abahani Krira Chakra and Brothers Union meet in the final of the third Dhaka Metropolitan Football Association (DMFA) Cup, the curtain-raising tournament of this year's domestic football season.

The match kicks-off at 5:30 pm at the Dhaka Stadium.

Abahani, who are yet to win this meet, having reached nearest to their goal last year before losing to arch-rivals Mohammedans in the final, will be extra keen this time to annex the only trophy in the local circuit that has eluded them so far.

The Dhanmondi outfit, one of the two most popular teams, will look forward to avenge their defeat to former champions Brothers Union in their last group engagement at the round robin stage.

Brothers, who won the first DMFA Cup jointly with Mo-

See Page 12 Col 7

Dhaka may raise Farakka issue at Cairo meet

Bangladesh is expected to raise the desertification situation in the country to the NAM Foreign Ministers' conference beginning today in Cairo, reports UNB.

One-third area of the country shows the signs of turning into desert due to unilateral withdrawal of the water of the international river Ganges by India at the Farakka barrage.

Bangladesh is also likely to highlight the environmental degradation caused by the manipulation of the natural flow of the river in the four-day conference, being attended by the Foreign Ministers and other Ministers of 110 countries, a source said in Dhaka yesterday.

Foreign Minister A S M Mustafaqur Rahman, who is the Egyptian capital, was a four-member Bangladesh delegation.

See Page 12 Col 5

Tornado hits Jamalpur: 50 injured

JAMALPUR, May 30: At least 50 people were injured and some 10,000 houses damaged when a tornado lashed eight villages in Melandah thana of the district Sunday night, officials said, reports UNB.

The storm struck the villages at around 10:30 pm with a speed of upto 90 km an hour, destroying shanties, cutting electric power lines, uprooting trees and causing damages to standing crops on about 2,000 acres of land.

At least 200 families were rendered homeless in the affected villages of Meghabari, Nayanagar, Shahajadpur, Chatahd, Dighalbari, Adipalt, Jalalpur and Melandah thana headquarters.

QUIZ-5 COUNT DOWN

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You can still send Entries for Quiz 5 up to June 5, 1994 (10PM)