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NEWS BRIEFS

Khaleda to visit
drought-hit areas

Prime Minister Begum Khaleda Zia will visit the drought-affected areas of Lalmonirhat, Nilphamari and Thakurgaon districts today. She will also hold meetings with the local people, district officials and water development officials, reports UNB.

Ministry renamed

The Irrigation, Water Development and Flood Control Ministry has been renamed as the Ministry of Water Resources. A government handout said yesterday the order would take immediate effect, reports UNB.

BUET classes
resume Sept 19

Classes of the Bangladesh University of Engineering and Technology (BUET) will begin on September 19 while its dormitories will be reopened on September 18. The ban on all kinds of processions, rallies, slogans, miking, picketing on the campus will remain in force even after opening of the university, reports UNB.

2 Shantibahini
men held

RANGAMATI. Sept 14: Security forces today arrested two Shantibahini men while they were collecting tolls at Tulabon area of Baghaichhara thana. Police also recovered Tk 14 thousand and receipts of subscription form Aboni Chakma alias Ashish and Tripuri Ranjan Chakma. During interrogation, they reportedly confessed having looted a licensed gun of local chairman about a month ago, reports UNB.

The Daily Star

BHADRA 31, 1401 BS, DHAKA THURSDAY, SEPTEMBER 15, 1994 RABIAS SANI 7, 1415 HIJRI

Opposition conditions for negotiation

By Staff Correspondent

The opposition parties in Parliament yesterday put forward a number of preconditions for resumption of dialogue with the ruling party to end the present political impasse.

"The ruling party should create an atmosphere for dialogue by clarifying in writing its position on the caretaker government issue," Deputy Leader of the Opposition Abdus Samad Azad told a press briefing at the Sangsab Bhaban.

He said that the letter which Deputy Leader of the House Prof Badruddoza Chowdhury had given on September 9 was 'incomplete and a bit vague' as regards the caretaker

dialogue begins, he added.

Awami League leaders Sajeda Chowdhury, Shalauddin Yousuf, Mohiuddin Ahmed, Tofael Ahmed and Colleagues) Sawkat Ali, Jatiya Party's Moudud Ahmed, Anwar Hossain Manju and Monirul Huq Chowdhury, Jamaat's Sheikh Ansar Ali and Gana Forum's Shamsuddoha were present at the press briefing.

Samad Azad said the Opposition parties have been boycotting Parliament sessions for the past six months but the government has taken no initiative to resolve the crisis.

"Parliament has lost its effectiveness. It is convened only

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JS session prorogued

No alternative to talks, says Badruddoza

By Staff Correspondent

The 16th session of the fifth Jatiya Sangsab (JS) was prorogued yesterday with Deputy Leader of Parliament Prof Bodruddoza Chowdhury urging the boycotting Opposition to come forward to end the present political impasse through dialogue.

Deputy Speaker Humayun Khan Panni, who was in the chair, read out the prorogation order of President Abdur Rahman Biswas at 8.00 pm.

The deputy speaker told, the closing sitting of the 10-working day session of the JS that the House had been deprived of valuable Opposition views in enacting various legislations, especially the Company Act, 1994, during the session.

He hoped that the treasury and the Opposition benches would be able to resolve the present crisis through dialogue and resume discharging their respective responsibilities in the House soon.

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Hasina's charges
motivated, says

Home Minister

By Staff Correspondent

The Home Minister yesterday refuted allegations made by Awami League chief Sheikh Hasina that she was kept under surveillance by the government.

"The allegations were completely baseless, fabricated and politically motivated," Abdul Matin Chowdhury said while making a statement in the Jatiya Sangsab on the allegations made by the leader of the opposition at a press conference on Tuesday.

Sheikh Hasina had alleged that her telephones were being bugged, letters censored and that she was being kept under watch by the members of the intelligence agencies.

Terming the allegations a travesty of truth, the home minister sarcastically observed that if the leader of the Opposition did not want the normal security measures provided for her, then there was scope to reconsider it.

Seven uniformed armed police personnel were placed at

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Poor planning, misuse of fund double cost of road project

By S Y Bakht

Poor project formulation and delay in implementation led to an 83 per cent cost escalation of the Tk 222.85 crore Feeder Roads Improvement Project in the greater Mymensingh district.

Official documents reveal that the project turned out to be a prime example of poor planning, mismanagement and misuse of public funds, including excessive expenditure for the services of both local and foreign consultants.

Being implemented by the Roads and Highways Department of the Communications Ministry, the project to improve 310km of roads was originally approved by the ECNEC in 1986-87 and had a completion date of June 1992.

Of the total expenditure Tk 40.15 crore was from internal resources while Tk 182.70 crore was funded under a 54 million US dollar Asian Development Bank credit.

The project was subsequently revised and the total length of the roads was lowered to 284km.

But as of March this year work on only 171km of roads was completed while another 90km was expected to be completed by June last, according to official records. The remaining portion of the

roads, 23km between Tangail and Madhupur, would remain incomplete.

And now the total project cost has jumped by another Tk 140 crore and stands at Tk 362.88 crore. Tk 108.86 crore in government funds and Tk 254.03 crore in project aid.

Earlier last month the ECNEC approved the revised budget of the project, which was included in the Fourth Five Year Plan and the Three Year Rolling Plan.

Finance Minister M. Saiful Rahman, who chaired the ECNEC meeting, was also critical of the poor planning, delay in implementation of the project and the consequent cost escalation, sources attending the meeting said.

It is interesting to note that although the project is yet to be completed, expenditure between 1986-87 and 1992-93 stood at Tk 223.58 crore while that in 1993-94 was estimated to be Tk 139.3 crore.

Additional expenditure was shown on account of land acquisition, consultancy fees and building embankments while a number of new expenditures were included in the project cost.

According to the documents, as the widths of some of the roads were increased

from 12 feet to 18 feet, land acquisition costs jumped from Tk 1.62 crore to Tk 21.93 crore while the cost of building embankments increased from Tk 13.93 crore to Tk 47.12 crore.

Furthermore, expenses on account of consultancy fees jumped from Tk 11.65 crore to Tk 21.69 crore and it was attributed to the delay in implementation.

Local and foreign consultancy services were increased from 172 man months for foreign consultants and 661 man months for local consultants to 217 man months and 998 man months respectively.

New expenditures included in the project were Tk 11.47 crore for road maintenance, Tk 26.92 crore as miscellaneous expenses, Tk 66.51 lakh for equipment, Tk 2.15 crore for the purchase of six jeeps and laboratory expenses of Tk 42.38 lakh.

The Planning Commission noted that although the implementation period of the project was between 1986-87 and 1991-92, the actual period would continue till 1994-95. This has resulted in the cost escalation by 83 per cent. The commission also commented that the additional expenses for consultants was "excessive."

He will also exchange views on various issues before the

Jamalpur gets gas

JAMALPUR, Sep 14: Jamalpur, an economically backward district, was brought under the gas distribution network today to speed up the pace of development in the area, reports UNB.

Prime Minister Begum Khaleda Zia formally switched on a gas burner at the police line ground here in the afternoon, saying social and political stability is necessary for development activity, investment and progress in the country.

"The opposition programmes like hartal, blockade and siege are injurious to the people," she said, adding all should refrain from these anti-development activities for the sake of maintaining the present trend of development.

"This is why we are proceeding with patience and tolerance. The people are the source of our strength in this regard. The country's development programmes are being run with people's continued support and participation. We will march ahead along with the people," she told a function.

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Khaleda's call to resist politics of hartal

JAMALPUR, Sep 14: Prime Minister Begum Khaleda Zia today lashed at the Opposition agitation and urged the people to stand against the politics of hartal, destruction, anarchy and indiscipline hindering development programmes, reports UNB.

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Indo-Pak cricket clash today

Sports Reporter

Bitter rivals and neighbours India and Pakistan clash in a crucial tie of the ongoing four-nation Singer World Series one-day cricket tournament in Colombo.

Bangladesh Television will telecast the day-and-night encounter live, starting at 2:25 pm BST.

Apart from its traditional spicy flavour, the matchup of the subcontinental superpowers holds significant bearing as far as this tourney is concerned after hosts Sri Lanka made their way to the final, leaving the fight for the other slot wide open.

Statistically, India are in a better position with one victory.

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ECNEC approves Tk 271 cr Rly project

The Executive Committee of the National Economic Council (ECNEC) at a meeting yesterday approved Tk 271 crore second phase railway rehabilitation project, reports UNB.

The project, involving foreign exchange component of Tk 205 crore, which will be provided by the Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA), is aimed at procuring locomotives and railway coaches.

The project is expected to be completed by 1998-99, said a PID handout.

The meeting was informed that Bangladesh Railway under its another project has procured 21 broad gauge passenger coaches costing Tk 33 crore involving Danish assistance of Tk 21 crore.

Finance Minister M. Saiful Rahman presided over the meeting held at the Secretariat cabinet room.

Agriculture Minister M. Majid-ul Haq, Commerce Minister M. Shamsul Islam, Religious Affairs Minister Muhammad Keramat Ali, State Minister for Planning Dr A. Moyeen Khan secretaries concerned and members of the Planning Commission attended the meeting.

4 die in N'ganj bus plunge

From Our Correspondent

NARAYANGANJ, Sep 14: Four persons, including a college teacher, were killed and 30 others injured when a mini bus skidded off the Dhaka-Munshiganj highway and fell into a ditch at Char Syedpur this morning.

Two of victims trapped in the sunken minibus were identified as Prof Hasna Banu, 45, head of the Bangla Department of Haraganga Government College, Munshiganj and Dilip Sheel, 25, a medical representative of a pharmaceutical company. The two other deceased, both female, aged about 25 and 50, could not be identified immediately.

According to police and witnesses, the minibus fell into the eight-feet-deep ditch while allowing another bus to pass from behind.

The Munshiganj-bound mini bus from Dhaka met with the accident at about 8.30 in the morning.

All the bodies were sent to the Narayanganj General Hospital for autopsy.

Forex retention quota raised to 15 pc of FOB

Foreign exchange retention quota for the merchandise exporters has been raised from the current 10 per cent to 15 per cent of the FOB (free on board) value of their exports, reports UNB.

This quota can be retained in foreign currency accounts by the exporters with the commercial banks in Bangladesh, the Bangladesh Bank announced yesterday.

Funds from these accounts may be freely used by the exporters for export promotion and other genuine business purposes.

The retention quota, introduced in June 1992 as part of the liberalisation programme, so far allowed the exporters to retain 10 per cent of the FOB value of their export earnings in foreign currency accounts.

Retention quota in respect of low domestic value addition and service sector will remain unchanged at 5 per cent.



Prime Minister Begum Khaleda Zia yesterday inaugurated the supply of natural gas to Jamalpur at a function in the district town.



C'wealth Secy-Gen due today

The Commonwealth Secretary General, Chief Emeka Anyaoku, arrives in Dhaka today on five-day official visit to Bangladesh.

He will be accompanied by senior officials from the Commonwealth Secretariat.

Anyaoku is expected to discuss with government leaders about Commonwealth's role in various political, social, economic and environmental issues as well as ways and means to further strengthen the existing functional cooperation between Bangladesh and the Commonwealth Secretariat.

He will also exchange views on various issues before the