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Announcement

Tomorrow we will publish special article '1995-96 Budget, Political Economy and Party Polemics' by M Syeduzzaman, former finance minister. The article will be published in our focus page (P-5).

Inside Today

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Flood Action Plan versus Jamuna Bridge

by Dr Saleemul Huq
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Making a nuisance of the nuisance law; Bottom-up approach to ensure economic growth; and The double star
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International

Troops repulse Tigers' major counterattack, kill 62
Israel blames Syria for creating crisis in talks
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Business

Country receives \$17.5m FDI in '94
Asian bourses face mixed trading in coming week
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STOCK MARKET

DSE price index	799.93 (-0.24%)
Market capital Tk.	46.81 billion
Transactions in volume	107748
Transactions in value Tk.	14.07 million

Metropolitan

Dhaka Day by Day



Food Frenzy
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NEWS BRIEFS

Aminul Huq's qul today

Qulqhwani of Attorney General Aminul Huq will be held at his 25, Elephant Road residence at 5:30 pm today. Relatives, friends and admirers of the late Attorney General have been requested to attend the Qulqhwani, reports UNB.

Truck strike in Sylhet continues

From Staff Correspondent
 SYLHET, July 15: Second day of the 72-hour strike by the truck drivers in Sylhet passed off peacefully today. Sylhet District Truck Drivers Association called the strike to press the demand for taking punitive steps against the miscreants who beat up the president of the organisation Wednesday.

PLO-Israel talks begin today

ZICHRON YAAKOV, Israel, July 15: Israel and the PLO will launch negotiations on Sunday and continue until they reach a full agreement to extend self-rule across the West Bank, a Foreign Ministry spokesman said. The open-ended meetings will be held at the Carmel Garden Hotel in Zichron Yaakov, near the northern Israeli port of Haifa, in a bid to meet a July 25 deadline, reports AFP.

HSC examinee stabbed in Sylhet

From Staff Correspondent
 SYLHET, July 15: An HSC examinee was stabbed here today by some armed men while he was entering the college. Mobashwir Ahmed Chowdhury came under attack at the college gate at around 1:45 pm and sustained stab injuries in his hands. The cause of the attack could not be known immediately.

Situation improves in North

Floods in 4 dists worsen



Boats replace all other modes of transport in the inundated Ahmadbag area of the city. — Star photo by Enamul Haq

By Staff Correspondent

The flood situation in Gaibandha, Kurigram, Sirajganj and Sherpur districts further improved yesterday but the situation deteriorated in Dhaka, Narayanganj, Manikganj and Munshiganj.

The rivers Buriganga, Turag, Shitalakkhya and some other rivers flowing through Dhaka and the three other districts continued to swell worsening the flood situation.

Low-lying areas in the capital are now being badly hit.

The Flood Information Centre of the Water Development Board said the situation in the capital and Narayanganj might further worsen today.

According to a bulletin issued by the centre, the Buriganga was flowing 5cm above its danger level after registering a further rise by 9cm yesterday. The Turag was flowing 38cm above danger mark at Mirpur point. It rose by 11cm at Mirpur and 8cm at Tongi.

About the overall position of rivers the bulletin said that the Brahmaputra recorded fall at all points while the Ganges, the Meghna and other rivers in the South-Eastern Hill basins recorded both rise and fall.

The flood situation in Mymensingh and Jamalpur would start improving soon while fresh areas of Manikganj, Faridpur, Madaripur, Shariatpur, Munshiganj and Chandpur are likely to be flooded, it said.

Our Narayanganj Correspondent reports: Floods hit three more unions yesterday raising the total number of affected unions to 32 out of the 47 in seven thanas of the district. The three are — Godnail, Sumilpara and Siddirganj. Some 5,000 families have been hit by the flood.

The inundated areas in the port town are four out of its eight wards — Paikpara, Shitalakkhya, Hajiganj and Godnail. Two of the five wards — Sokanda and Bandar — of Kadam Rasul municipality were also submerged.

Flood waters have so far damaged, fully or partially, 2804 dwelling houses, 17 bridges and culverts, 45 schools and 111 miles of road.

According to BIWTC sources, the Shitalakkhya rose by 2cm yesterday and was flowing 12cm above the danger level.

With the swelling of river Meghna, the Baidder Bazar Launch Ghat in Arakhar thana was washed away and the bazar areas were inundated.

Meanwhile, government has sanctioned Taka 50,000 in cash, 50 MT of wheat and 1,000 tons of biscuits as relief.

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Presidential reference on absentee MPs

SC begins hearing legal experts today

By Staff Correspondent

The Appellate Division of the Supreme Court is scheduled to begin today hearing eminent legal experts on the first ever Presidential reference to the court seeking interpretation of constitutional provisions regarding the continued absence of opposition MPs from Parliament sessions and vacation of their seats.

The full-bench five-judge Appellate Division with Chief Justice ATM Afzal in the chair will start the hearing at 9 this morning and continue without adjournment. Other judges of the Appellate Division are Justice Mostafa Kamal, Justice Latifur Rahman, Justice Mohammad Abdur Rouf and Justice Ismail Uddin Sarkar.

The Supreme Court has invited Dr Kamal Hossain, Barrister Ishtiaque Ahmed, Barrister Rafiqul Haq, Khaddar Mahbubuddin Ahmed, SR Pal and the president of the Supreme Court Bar Association to give their views on the points mentioned in the reference. The court is also to hear Barrister Asrarul Hossain, who has been appointed by the government specially for this case.

The presidential reference was made on July 4 after over 140 opposition MPs' absence from the House crossed the 90-day constitutional limit on June 19.

President Abdur Rahman Biswas in his reference under Article 106 of the Constitution sought the Supreme Court's interpretation on four points. These are: (1) Can the walkout and the consequent period of non-return by all the opposition parties taking exception to a remark of a ruling party minister be construed as 'absence' from parliament without leave of parliament occurring in Article 67 (1) (b) of the Constitution resulting in vacation of their seats in the parliament?

(2) Does boycott of the parliament by all members of the opposition...

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Commentary

For whose benefit is this charade?

by Mahfuz Anam

Horse trading in politics, is something we have gotten used to. But the sordid level to which it has recently come down is something we have never seen before. Promise of overlooking questionable past, assurances of power or of business favour in the future or some sort of exalted foreign assignment etc. are 'commodities' that are offered in exchange for party-jumping in politics. However what has been happening for a few months now, and which is most dramatically illustrated in the latest case of the Jamaat MP, Moulana Shakhawat Hossain of Jessore, is that the office of the Prime Minister has been dragged into this shameful process, significantly compromising the dignity and honour of the highest elected office of the country.

Over the last several months a total of six MPs from Jatiya Party were reported to have joined the ruling party at one point or the other. These MPs are Mahmudul Hasan, Ehadur Rahman, Sherfuddin Khushru, Abdul Majid, Paritosh Chakravarty and Hafizur Rahman Pramanik. For several of them, special functions were organised at the PM's office (why not the BNP office? Does it not consti-

tute misuse of public property and funds? Unless of course, enticing defection from the opposition camp has now come to be considered a government function. If so, then I humbly apologize for not being upto date on the functions of a democratic government) to welcome the JP defectors to the BNP fold. Against three of the above six, Jatiya Party formally gave notice, asking the Speaker to invoke Article 70 of the Constitution which says that any MP defecting from the party from which he got elected, will automatically lose his seat. As a part of the procedure, the Speaker sent the notice to the Election Commission, which issued show-cause notices against defecting MPs, and organised hearings on the issue.

It is at this stage that the situation really gets bizarre and obnoxious, and enters a stage that must concern us all, as citizens. In written submissions to the Election Commission, Mahmudul Hasan, Ehadur Rahman Chowdhury and Paritosh Chakravarty claimed that they have not resigned from Jatiya Party, and that they have not joined BNP. As for their meetings with Begun Zia, they

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World Bank report on Dhaka's policies

Labour market segmented, full of inequities

Labour market in Bangladesh is highly segmented and full of inequities, reports UNB.

Making this observation, a recent World Bank report implicated the government policy of intervention to determine wages as largely responsible for the creation of an inequitable labour market benefiting only the urban formal sector workers.

The report, Bangladesh: Labour Market Policies for Higher Employment, has attributed the inequities in the country's labour market to government's bias to urban wages, reflected in public sector pay policies and a minimum wage.

It revealed that real wages in rural areas continued to fall since the mid 1980s in contrast to constant rise in urban areas.

Real rural wages fell by up to 48 per cent between 1986 and 1993 while wages of unskilled workers in the public sector or of urban construction workers rose between 10 and 33 per cent during the period, the report said.

An unskilled public sector worker earns nearly three times as much as a similarly unskilled agricultural worker in Rangpur, it said while pointing to government policy of maintaining ur-

ban wages 'above the supply price of labour'.

The World Bank report spoke heavily against government's intervention to determine wages in the formal sector which it said, was leading to inefficiency on one hand and, on the other, holding back private investment crucial to fight rising unemployment.

The report further charged the government's intervention with political motivation. 'Too much weight is given to political considerations and productivity and PEs' (Public Enterprises) capacity to pay is rarely considered.'

World Bank argued that labour regulations protect 'less than 10 per cent' of the country's total labour force, estimated 59 million in 1994, which is growing at the rate of 3 per cent.

'Labour regulations protect less than 10 per cent of the labour force who have regular formal employment, but hurt poor informal rural workers whose chances for obtaining better jobs are reduced.'

The report cautioned against a national minimum wage saying that such provision would seriously limit expansion of formal employment and

thus lower wages.

If national minimum wage is fixed Tk 900 a month for which the trade unions are pressing the government, it could lower wages by 2.5 per cent in real terms. Because, what the report forecast, higher cost would discourage the industries from expanding employment and output.

'The cost of this policy will be borne by the millions of rural workers who aspire to a formal job... It could help few insiders with good jobs at the expense of many less privileged outsiders,' warned the report.

Sounding a note of caution against any sort of government interventions in the labour market that could give wrong signal to private investment, the World Bank report said Bangladesh required to double its private investment level to tackle its rising unemployment.

With some 1.8 million people entering the country's job market every year, unemployment is now running at 26 per cent.

According to the report, Bangladesh must grow at around 8 to 10 per cent to create enough employment opportunities for its growing labour force.

FM likely to visit Yangon next month

Foreign Minister A S M Mostafizur Rahman will pay an official visit to Myanmar shortly to promote relations between the two South Asian neighbours, reports UNB.

'The planned trip is aimed at promoting Dhaka-Yangon ties in all fields of cooperation,' Foreign Secretary Farooq Sobhan told members of the Overseas Correspondents Association, Bangladesh (OCA) here yesterday.

During the five-day visit expected to take place in the first week of August, Mostafizur will hold talks with the Myanmar Foreign Minister covering the entire gamut of bilateral relations as well as regional and international issues of common concern.

Mostafizur is likely to meet some other ministers in Yangon.

The Foreign Secretary said the relation between Bangladesh and Myanmar has improved satisfactorily and is moving forward although it was cold in three and a half years following the influx of Rohingya refugees in 1991.

He said significant progress has been made in bilateral trade and economic cooperation.

The Foreign Secretary said that of a quarter million Rohingya refugees who took shelter in Bangladesh early 1991, more than 190,000 have so far returned to their homeland voluntarily.

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Manpower export market shrinking

By Staff Correspondent

The traditional manpower market in the Middle East has shrunk due to policy changes in those countries and the trend will continue, the Labour and Manpower Secretary said yesterday.

Manpower export to Malaysia has also remained suspended for an indefinite period from January last year. Despite the suspension, Malaysia is recruiting Bangladeshi workers under a special arrangement, he said.

The Middle East, specially Saudi Arabia, and Malaysia are the biggest importers of Bangladeshi workers who annually send home over a billion dollars.

The only prospective market now is South Korea which will recruit 3500 workers from Bangladesh this year, Labour Secretary Dr Mohammad Harun-ur-Rashid said at a press conference.

The conference was attended by, among others, Labour and Manpower Minister Mir Shawkat Ali, Director General of the Bureau of Labour and Manpower Abdus Sattar Khan and some officials of the Labour and Foreign Ministries.

There is a high demand in Bangladesh for jobs abroad while the job opportunities are shrinking. This

Fire at ZIA terminal building

By Staff Correspondent

A fire broke out at the main terminal building of Zia International Airport (ZIA) yesterday morning.

Normal operation and activities were disrupted for about three hours as thick smoke from the fire at the third floor engulfed the terminal building.

The fire reportedly originated from electric short circuit in a staff canteen at the third floor at about 7:50 am, according to sources.

None was, however, injured in the fire. Some furniture and other materials in the canteen were burnt, fire service sources said.

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Myanmar junta to retain its role

YANGON, July 15: Myanmar's ruling military today again stressed the vital role it says it must play in the country's future while democracy leader Aung San Suu Kyi said the army's position must be acceptable to the people, reports Reuters.

An article published today in the state-run New Light of Myanmar newspaper, widely regarded as an organ of the military government, reiterated the armed forces' desire to hold a central role in any future government.

'The Tatmadaw (armed forces) responsibilities are not over with the writing of a firm constitution,' the article said.

Translating a document into deeds might not be so easy all the time. That is why the Tatmadaw has asked for a role in future Myanmar political leadership.

but they considered that confrontation,' she said. 'If they really have the best interests of the nation in mind they should be more conciliatory, they should be willing to make some moves.'

'The military should play a role in Myanmar but it should be acceptable to the people,' she said.

The 50-year-old democracy leader, who was unconditionally released from six years of house arrest on Monday, said she has become more mature in her dealings with people like the military.

She said she releases now is the time for dialogue and she wants to find a way for both sides to compromise for the best of the country.

'We have to move with the circumstances and times, and change tactics and actions accordingly,' she said she asked if she planned to change her previous style of speaking at large rallies to drum up support for

democracy.

'But I don't think the public can ever be ignored,' she said. 'It's very important I keep in touch with them and their mood.'

Aung San Suu Kyi was placed under house arrest in July, 1989, for 'endangering the state' after making outspoken attacks on the military government.

She said she began her quest for democracy after the killings began in 1988 when thousands of people were killed or imprisoned during a brutal military crackdown on prodemocracy demonstrations.

'I think it was when the shooting started in August,' Aung San Suu Kyi said when asked when she decided to take up politics, 'because I did not think this was a healthy system.' Since her release on Monday, Aung San Suu Kyi has met with fellow democracy campaigners including re-

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Labour attache in KSA removed

By Staff Correspondent

Labour and Manpower Minister Mir Shawkat Ali yesterday said he has ordered removal of the labour attache in Bangladesh embassy in Saudi Arabia.

The order was issued two weeks ago following reports that over 200 Bangladeshi workers, sent there by six Bangladeshi companies, had been without jobs for the last two years, Shawkat said at a press conference here.

'It is very much possible that some unscrupulous labour attaches or government officials are involved in manpower business or underhand deals,' the labour minister said.

The minister was also asked how, instead of facing action, one of those six defaulting companies were permitted to send some 350 workers to Korea.

Shawkat said that the six default-

Rajuk Commercial Plot Auction Notice

Most suitable Commercial-cum-Residential Plot No. 107/A, Sector-7 having road facilities on two sides at Dhaka-Mymensingh Road, more or less 961.89 Sqr. Metre (14 katha 6 chhatak) and Plot No. 38, Road No. 2, Sector No. 3 measuring more or less 888.00 Sqr. Metre (11 katha 2 chhatak) of Uttara Model Town, Dhaka will be allotted for 99 years lease on open auction.

Applications on prescribed form with terms and conditions to be obtained from Sonali Bank, Rajuk Bhaban Branch, Dhaka on payment of Tk. 500 (Tk. five hundred) only in cash for each set (Non-refundable) and will be received by the Deputy Director (Estates) from the intending bidders up to 2:00 PM on 30.7.95.

The auction will be held on 31.7.95 in the Conference Room, 3rd floor of the Rajuk Bhaban, Dhaka at 10:00 AM.

Chairman
 DFP-17271-12/7 Rajdhani Unnayan Karttripakkha
 G-1082 Dhaka