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NEWS BRIEFS

Hasina condoles

Hajis' deaths

Awami League chief Sheikh Hasina yesterday expressed her profound shock at the deaths of 13 Hajis in Saudi Arabia and at the death of Lt Colonel Mosaddeq Ali in a road accident in Dhaka. In a message of condolence she conveyed her deep sympathy to the bereaved members of those families and prayed for the salvation of the departed souls, reports BSS.

Mizan in Calcutta

for treatment

Jatiya Party acting chairman Mizan Rahman Chowdhury is now undergoing treatment at the Birla Hospital in Calcutta, India. Mizan Chowdhury left Dhaka on May 1 for Calcutta for treatment. A medical board has been formed for his treatment. The JP acting chairman is expected to return home on May 6, reports BSS.

Khandker Mahbub

Hossain joins JP

Chairman of the executive council of Bangladesh Bar Council and an eminent lawyer Khandker Mahbub Hossain yesterday joined the Jatiya Party. He joined the party at its Banani office in the city when he called on JP's Secretary General Anwar Hossain Manju, a party press release said last night, reports BSS.

Lightning kills 2

From Staff Correspondent

BARISAL, May 3: Two fishermen were killed by lightning during a storm at Daulat Khan thana under Bhola district here this afternoon. The victims, Monirul Islam, 24 and Belal Hossain, 27, were struck by lightning when they were fishing in the river Meghna, adjacent to Daulat Khan.

3 Khulna JCD

leaders held

From Our Correspondent

Khulna, May 3: Three leaders of the Jatiyatabdil Chhatra Dal (JCD) have been arrested from different parts of the city this morning.

The arrested leaders are:

Acting general secretary of city unit Hafizul Rahman, former general secretary of the city unit Arif Iftaque Khan Tuhin and Habibur Rahman, president of Daulatpur day-night college unit.

1435 forms submitted to AL, 1000 to BNP Interview for party tickets from today

By Staff Correspondent

Awami League and BNP today begin interviewing party nomination seekers for the seventh parliamentary elections.

Jatiya Party will start the interview on May 6.

A total of 1,435 nomination forms were submitted to the Awami League office by intending candidates till last night, the deadline, party Joint Secretary Abdul Jalil told The Daily Star. Intending candidates had collected 2,738 nomination forms.

Talking to The Daily Star, BNP office secretary Nazrul Islam said some 1,700 nomination forms were sold till last night of which some 1,000

were submitted by intending candidates.

The Awami League Parliamentary Board headed by party chief Sheikh Hasina is scheduled to start interviewing the nomination seekers from 9 am today at the party's Bangabandhu Avenue central office in the city.

Interviews of the intending candidates from Rajshahi, Khulna and Barisal divisions will be held on the first day today while those from Chittagong, Sylhet and Dhaka divisions will start from the same time tomorrow, said a party press release last night.

AL general secretary Zillur Rahman, who is also the secre-

tary of the 11-member parliamentary board, has requested all concerned to remain present for the interviews.

Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP) has formed a 13-member nomination board headed by party chairperson Begum Khaleda Zia to nominate 300 party candidates for the seventh parliamentary elections.

The board comprising members of the BNP standing committee will interview the nomination aspirants from 9 pm today at the party's election office at Kakrail. Interviews of the intending candidates will start with those

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'58 countries virtually have no free press'

NEW YORK, May 3: More than half the people on earth live in democratic societies, but less than fourth live in countries with a free press, according to a survey released Thursday, reports AP.

"Freedom of the press is a cornerstone of any vibrant democracy," said Adrian Karatnycky, president of Freedom House, a New York-based group that monitors political rights and civil liberties.

Freedom House surveyed the press in 187 countries, 117 of which are democracies. It found that in 58 nations, there is virtually no press freedom and the government maintains a high level of control over the news media, including physical threats against journalists.

"As the right to vote is increasingly recognized the world over, it is critical that the right to seek, receive and impart information through

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7 eminent personalities join BNP

BNP chairperson and former prime minister Begum Khaleda Zia yesterday called upon the people to vote for the BNP to turn Bangladesh into an economic emerging tiger side by side protecting sovereignty, flourishing democracy and improving the lot of the common man, reports BSS.

The BNP chairperson was welcoming the new comers into her party at the BNP Kakrail election office in the city yesterday afternoon. Former ministers Mahbubur Rahman and Mansur Ali, former state minister Nazimuddin Al Azad, Bangladesh Teachers Association president Professor Asadul Hoq, Prokrishi secretary general Abu Hena, former member of the BNP assembly Advocate Altaf Hossain and Dr Salauddin Babar of Savar yesterday joined the BNP.

Begum Zia called upon all

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Forge unity of pro-independence, non-communal forces: GF

By Staff Correspondent
Gono Forum yesterday called for forging a national unity of the pro-independence, non-communal forces committed to democracy and development.

The call came from a meeting of the party's standing committee, which has chaired by its acting president Ziaul Haq, according to a party press release.

The meeting noted that massive use of black money was the main hindrance to creating a congenial atmosphere for a free and fair election.

In a resolution, the meeting said that the electoral programme should be formulated to meet the challenges of the 21st century and of democracy and development.

The ensuing election bears great importance for achieving economic emancipation, building a terrorism-free civil society and materializing the hopes and aspirations of the people, it said.

Since its inception, Gono Forum has been demanding

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Jamaat's polls manifesto today

By Staff Correspondent
Jamaat-e-Islami Bangladesh will release its election manifesto through a press conference tomorrow. Amir of Jamaat Golam Azam will release the manifesto at the Al-Huda auditorium and will also address the press conference.

Meanwhile, the Jamaat announced yesterday that it will hold another rally at the city's Manik Miah Avenue on June 8 to wrap up its election campaign.

Pollsters forecast that the Conservatives would end up with 28 per cent of Thursday's vote compared to 43 per cent for Labour in the last major test at the polls before the next general election that must be called within a year.

With only a few hundred of the seats to be counted, the Conservatives had lost 554 of the roughly 1,000 seats they were defending. Labour won 451 and the centrist Liberal Democrats gained 142.

But senior Conservatives were defiant, pointing to a three per cent rise in their support since last year when a disastrous local election result put Major's future on the line, and a three per cent drop in Labour's support.

The idea that this has got anything to do with the general election at all is just to split in the face of reality, said Deputy Prime Minister Michael Heseltine.

But Labour leader Tony Blair hailed his party's 17 per cent lead over the ruling party as "spectacularly good results."

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AFP photo

Controversial Hindu guru Chandraswami is surrounded by Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) men upon his arrival in a wheelchair at New Delhi Airport yesterday.

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Unplanned shrimp farms, catching of fries

Fish resources depleting in Sundarbans

By Sharier Khan back from Khulna

Unplanned growth of shrimp farms and catching of fries in the greater Sundarbans, criss-crossed by innumerable rivers and canals, have caused depletion of fish resources by at least 70 per cent in the area in last one decade, according to officials and local people.

According to the Forest Department officials in the Sundarbans, some small rivers have dried up partially while some others have narrowed down in the last 10 years. "One 200 feet rivulet has narrowed down to mere 10 feet," an official said.

In many areas, people have blocked canals or diverted streams obstructing normal flow of water. This has caused

rapid sedimentation, he said.

Some 120 species of fishes are found in the rivers and canals of the Sundarbans, world's largest mangrove forest covering an area of 5,700 sq km.

According to a Forest Department report, fisherman catch over 3.4 crore shrimp fries each year and sell those to the hatcheries.

This correspondent, during his recent visit to the Sundarbans saw thousands of people including children catching shrimp fries with ultra fine nets. They also catch fries of other fishes, throw those away damaging the fish population.

The report notes that since those people get financial incentive, it is not possible to

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4 more BNP men held Rail links with Mymensingh yet to be restored

KISHOREGANJ, May 3: Train services on Dhaka-Brahmanbaria-Mymensingh route were disrupted for the second day today as supporters of BNP reportedly uprooted rail tracks in Kotiadi thana demanding the release of a former MP.

Three local BNP leaders, including former MP Maj (Retd) Akhteruzzaman, were arrested on Wednesday night after BNP activists staged agitation protesting the detention of a Jubadal leader.

Railway sources said about 200 feet of rail tracks were uprooted near Gochihata rail station. Kotiadi police arrested four people for trying to obstruct the repair work.

The train communication is expected to be restored tomorrow (Saturday).

Meanwhile, police arrested four BNP men today. They are: district JCD convener Waliullah Rabbani, district BNP Organising Secretary Jahangir Alam Molla, and Jubadal leaders Radhan and Mintu Helal.

JCD and Jubadal activists brought out processions in the town demanding their immediate release and transfer of the OC of Kotiadi thana.

Bus plunge kills 2 in N'ganj

From Our Correspondent

NARAYANGANJ, May 3: Two people were killed and 35 others injured in a bus accident on Madanganj-Narasingdi road at Uttar Lakham Khola, Madanpur under Bandar thana of the district this morning.

The accident occurred when the Sylhet-bound bus fell into a roadside ditch at around 10:30 am, according to witnesses.

The bus was on its way to the mazar of Shahjalal in Sylhet from Madanganj.

The dead were identified as Akatunnessa, 65, and Akatullah, 55.

Of the injured, five were admitted to the Dhaka Medical College Hospital in critical condition. They are Rahim, 25, Hashem, 45, Siddique, 50, Billal, 25 and Shupi, 22.

Nine others were admitted to Narayanganj Hospital. They are: Zakir, 10, Ayesha, 38, Fatema, 36, Meherunnessa, 40, Sakhina, 12, Kamruzzaman, 20, Hira, 16, Al-Amin, 15 and Siraj, 28.

The driver of the bus fled away immediately. The bodies were sent to the Narayanganj Hospital morgue for autopsy.

Mysterious fire engulfs rebel party HQs in Kashmir

SRINAGAR, May 3: A large fire broke out at the headquarters of a powerful forum of Muslim separatists and political organisations here on Thursday, police said. reports AFP.

The fire engulfed the three-storey office of the All Party Hurriyat (freedom) Conference (APHC) in Srinagar's posh Rambagh residential district late Thursday, the police said.

"We are investigating the mysterious fire," a police spokesman said in this state summer capital and added that there were no reports of casualties.

The anti-Indian APHC was scheduled to hold a meeting Thursday on the upcoming elections in Kashmir in its headquarters but postponed the talks for a day, party sources said.

The APHC, an umbrella forum of 30 Muslim separatist and regional political parties, opposes India's plans to conduct elections to Kashmir's six parliamentary constituencies later this month.



AL General Secretary Zillur Rahman addressing party workers after opening the party's election office at Road No. 12 in Dhanmondi yesterday.

AL prepares to kick off polls campaign

By Reaz Ahmed

Awami League is ready to launch an all-out campaign for the seventh parliamentary elections after finalisation of the party's nominations and declaration of its polls manifesto this week, according to party sources.

The Awami League Parliamentary Board headed by party president Sheikh Hasina will start interviewing the nomination seekers from today at the party's central office at Bangabandhu Avenue. The party earlier extended the time limit for collection of application forms by the intending candidates till 6 pm yesterday.

Senior party leaders put their heads together over the last few days to analyse the party's position on region basis in the 1991 parliamentary elections, the sources said.

The sources told this correspondent that there was strong possibility of Sheikh Hasina contesting the polls from at least two constituencies, one from Tungipara-Kotalipara (Gopalganj-3) and the other from Pirganj (Rangpur-6) where she lost to Jatiya Party chairman H M

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Sheikh Hasina, who turned home on May 1 after performing Hajj, is now passing busy days consulting campaign strategy, party nominations and other issues with senior party colleagues, the sources said.

To build up a vigorous election campaign, Awami League is learnt to have initiated a video documentary, projecting the party's role in achieving</