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12 PAGES REGULAR PLUS MAGAZINE: PRICE TAKA 9.00

AL, BNP hold lively debate on CHT bills

By Nazmul Ashraf The Jatiya Sangsad Special Committee yesterday witnessed a very "lively and constructive" debate on the CHT bills.

The bills were placed in the Sangsad on Sunday and sent to the Special Committee for scrutiny the following day.

BNP lawmakers attended the committee meeting for the first time since it was formed 21 months ago. Jatiya Party MPs also participated in the meeting, lasting more than six hours from 4 pm, at the Sangsad Bha-

According to lawmakers of both Awami League and BNP at the meeting, they had a legal debate on certain provisions in the bills, especially that on the formation of a Regional Council for the three hills districts -Rangamati, Khagrachhari and Bandarban.

Top leaders of both the parties told The Daily Star that in the meeting, they tried to con-See Page 12 Col 8

BNP breached accord violating JS rules: PM

By Staff Correspondent

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina has condemned the 'unruly postures' by lawmakers of the main opposition BNP in the Jatiya Sangsad on Wednesday and termed the incident a threat to democracy.

"They (BNP lawmakers) have done it to destroy democracy and demean the Jatiya Sangsad," she said at a press briefing at the International Conference Centre at the Prime Minister's Office yesterday afternoon.

Sheikh Hasina, also Leader of the House, said it was unfortunate that the Deputy Leader of the Opposition led BNP legislators towards to Speaker's rostrum and the former Speaker also took part in the unpleasant activities.

She noted that the Leader of the Opposition did not even express sorrow for such untoward See Page 12 Col 6

4 BNP activists remanded, 10 get bail

By Court Correspondent The Chief Metropolitan Magistrate's Court yesterday rejected the bail prayer of four BNP activists arrested during the hartal hours on Wednesday and placed them on a 3-day re-

The court, however, granted bail to 10 other BNP activists

arrested on the same day. One of the remanded activists Nasiruddin Pintu, president of Dhaka City Unit of JCD. was arrested from the Lalbagh area along with a few other party workers during the hartal

After the arrest, Lalbagh thana sent Pintu to Dhaka Central Jail under the Special Powers Act without producing him in the court.

Pintu's lawyers, while pray-See Page 12 Col 1

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Liquor shops at Gaibandha attacked: OC suspended

VOL. VIII NO. 84 REGD. NO. DA 781 INTERNET: http://www.dailystarnews.com BAISHAKH 4, 1405 BS DHAKA FRIDAY APRIL 17, 1998 ZILHAJ 19, 1418 HIJRI

Death toll rises to 50

By Staff Correspondent

At least 32 more people died the GSH. A total of 127 patients have and 61 others were under so far been brought to the GSH treatment till last night as an unspecified number of people from different areas of the town since late Tuesday, a doctor of fell sick reportedly after taking the hospital said yesterday adulterated liquor at Gaibandha town Tuesday evening. evening. With this, the death toll

"We are still receiving patients", the doctor said while talking to The Daily Star over telephone. Till yesterday 148 patients were shifted to the RMCH as their condition dete-

riorated, he said. The doctor said that most of the patients were brought to the hospital late. As a result washing of the stomach was not pos-

sible in many cases. Our Correspondent reported late last night that some agitated people ransacked two liquor shops at Gaibandha town. Besides, the officer-incharge of the Sadar thana was

suspended for negligence in dis-

charging his duty. A five-member RMCH medical board was attending the patients and investigating the incident. Most of the dead were from the sweepers' community.

Meanwhile, police sealed a number of homeopathic pharmacies and illegal liquor shops in the town. However, police were yet to

arrest anyone in connection

with the incident till last night,

the duty officer of Gaibandha Sadar thana said. Police suspected that the adulterated home-made liquor was sold from some shops in Natunbazar area in the town. Most of the people who took the liquor were residents of Mun-

shipara, Purbapara, David

Pashchimpara areas.

Company Para, Sarkerpara and

When contacted, a senior official of the Department of Narcotics Control (DNC) in the city said that the liquor, a mixture of rectified spirit and other intoxicants, might have been adulterated with cheap varnishing raw materials including methanol.

The DNC has already started investigation into the Gaibandha incident, the official

At least 15 people were killed in a similar incident in the city's Tejgaon area in the first week of January. Earlier, in May 1996, eight people died and more than 30 fell sick after taking adulterated liquor in the city's Rampura-Badda area. The liquor was sold from a homeopathic medicine shop near Rampura bridge.

18 killed as truck, minibus collide in Gaibandha

From Our Correspondent

RANGPUR, Apr 16: Eighteen people died on the spot and at least 30 were injured, ten critically, when a minibus collided with a truck at Singha Danga in Gobindaganj thana of Gaibandha district today.

sons were admitted to Rangpur Medical College Hospital. Doctors in the hospital said the death toll may rise as ten of the injured people were in critical condition.

District administration sources said the minibus from Dinajpur was on way to Bogra when it met with the tragic acthe dead persons were from Rangpur, police and administration sources said.

The news of the accident was announced over microphone at Rangpur and Gobindaganj by the district administration to inform the people.

Heart rending scenes were created at the spot of the accident and at the hospital where thousands of people gathered to enquire about their relatives. UNB adds from Gaibandha:

Among the dead, three were identified as Rabiul (30), Jabed Ali (25) and Dhalu (35).

Condition of 23 persons are stated to be critical at the Rangpur Medical College Hospital. They are: Momin, Alauddin, Raja Mia, Rakhu, Sobhan,

BNP protests Chair's refusal to allow its MPs to speak

The BNP members in parliament yesterday protested the 'one-eyed' behaviour of the Chair in a unique manner by sitting with their backs towards the Chair, reports UNB.

from the incident rose to 50,

police and hospital sources

said. Three of the victims were

Rangpur Medical College Hospi-

tal (RMCH) and 25 died at the

Gaibandha Sadar Hospital

dent reported that five others

died at their residences in the

that 44 including four female

patients were under treatment

at the RMCH and 17 others at

Our Gaibandha Correspon-

Sources in the hospitals said

Twenty of them died at the

women.

(GSH).

"Since you are not looking at us, we will also not see you for a minute," Badruddoza Chowdhury, the Deputy Leader of the Opposition told the Chair. Then he turned around his revolving seat and sat showing the back to the Chair. All the BNP members followed him and shouted. "shame, shame."

Rahmat Ali, member of the panel of Chairmen, was then presiding over the House.

The BNP members also staged walkout twice, protesting the Chair's denial to raise supplementaries during he question hour. - Explaining the reason for re-

What Speaker Humayun

Rashid Chowdhury did in the

Sangsad on Wednesday was way

out of the norm. It was not a vi-

olation of the rules of procedure

in the legal sense of the term -

for the Speaker has a lot of dis-

cretionary power - but defi-

nitely a violation of parlia-

mentary practice. On issues

such as the one under discus-

sion last Wednesday, the cus-

tom is that the general mem-

bers, especially from the oppo-

sition, are first given a chance

to speak. The minister speaks

at the very end. Not only that,

the debate closes with his

speech. The Speaker can, and

usually does, deny any general

member from speaking once the

minister has spoken. An ex-

ample of it was the Speaker's

refusal, later on the same day,

to allow the Leader of the Oppo-

sition a chance to speak after

the Leader of the House had

take the stand on the hartal is-

sue at the very beginning, the

BNP law makers had all the

reason to think that the

Speaker was depriving the op-

position of their rightful

chance to speak. That sparked

off the trouble. Repeatedly and

vociferously the opposition

Seeing the Home Minister

fusal of the floor to the BNP

members, the Chairman (Rahmat Ali) said he only respected Wednesday's ruling of the Speaker. Those who demanded the floor were named by the Speaker for being responsible for the rowdyism and attacking the Chair on Wednesday, he added.

He said he had not violated the Rules of Procedure of Parliament nor the Constitution in conducting the House. "But I have to adopt certain strategy".

Accusing the penal Chairman of 'one-eyed' behaviour, Deputy Leader of the Opposition Baruddoza Chowdhury said the Chair has violated his oath.

"I would not say the Chair has violated the Constitution. but he has violated his oath". Chowdhury told newsmen after the walkout

See Page 12 Col 7

Commentary

BNP has insulted Parliament

By Mahfuz Anam

demanded a chance to speak

which was denied to them.

However the Speaker at one

stage did say to the deputy

leader of the opposition that he

would be given a chance to

speak after the home minister.

wrong, and in clear violation of

parliamentary norms and prac-

tices in allowing the home min-

ister to speak first. We would

also concede that the opposi-

tion had every right to feel ag-

grieved at the conduct of the

Speaker. However the question

is how DO YOU EXPRESS THAT

GRIEVANCE? To what extent

are you willing to go to register

your protest? What if the form

of your protest is a far greater

violation of norms and prac-

protesting?

tices than the one you are

has brought shame and dishon-

our upon the parliament, upon

the elected representatives of

the people, upon democracy, not

least of upon itself, by conduct-

ing themselves the way they

did. It was clear and simple

rowdyism and they had abso-

lutely no business indulging in

it. As we had said earlier, the

Speaker was wrong but his was

not a Himalayan mistake. A

somewhat corrective measure

We are of the view that BNP

We think the Speaker was

'Govt trying to establish one-party supremacy'

BNP Parliamentary Party meeting yesterday decided to continue its fight in and outside parliament for realising the democratic rights, reports UNB.

"As part of the movement in and outside parliament, we will put up our efforts to realise our demand to speak for the people in parliament," the Opposition Chief Whip Khandaker Delwar Hossain told the newsmen shortly after the parliamentary party meeting.

BNP chairperson and Leader of the Opposition in Parliament Begum Khaleda Zia presided over the meeting in Sangsad Bhaban that lasted more than an hour.

The meeting was held after the day's second walkout of Parliament protesting the Chair's degial of the floor to the BNP

Delwar alleged that Advo-Members of the Treasury - cate Rahmat Ali (AL) who See Page 12 Col 1

for that wrong was already an-

nounced - that the opposition

would be given a chance to

speak after the minister. While

not exonerating the Speaker

for his mistake, we would like

to clearly state that what the

BNP did was a far greater mis-

take than anything done by the

Speaker. It was a mindless act

that comes from unthinking

minds bent on making their

own points without any regard

to direct and indirect impacts of

their actions on institutions,

traditions, values and on indi-

vidual and collective reputa-

Speaker, throwing paper mis-

siles at him and hurling abuses

were dishonourable acts that

brought our parliamentary

tradition several notches down.

makers were quite aware that

what they were doing was

wrong, and as such they wanted

to prevent the nation from see-

ing them do it. So they attacked

the TV camera team, hurting

one of the functionaries and

damaging some equipment in

the process. Senior staff of the

parliament secretariat who sit

in front of the Speakers dais

were also not spared. Where was

See Page 12 Col 4

It appears that BNP law

Rushing towards the



Home Minister Rafiqul Islam with the children who were rescued in Delhi and brought back to the city yesterday. -Star photo

They forgot their parents, mother tongue

By Shehab Ahmed

He is hardly five-year-old. His sun-baked face already wizened, bearing testimony to long ordeals in the hand of his abductors. They were about to send him to the Gulf to work as a camel jockey when Indian police rescued him in New Delhi. Little Abul Hossain could

name of his village. Arshipur, somewhere in Bangladesh. But he failed to provide further details in his pidgin Hindi

only give his name and the

which he mustered in the custody of Indian police and during long stays in different childrens' homes in India before he arrived in Dhaka yesterday. He was among a dozen boys

and girls, who returned to Bangladesh, British Airways brought them back under the aegis of Bangladesh Society for **Enforcement of Human Rights** (BSEHR), the Home Ministry, the Indian authorities and the Indian National Council for Women.

"It's a human tragedy. Most children you have seen can no longer speak their mother tongue (Bangla) and cannot remember their parents or addresses", Home Minister Rafiqul Islam, BU told re-See Page 12 Col 5

Lawyers tell Kibria

Big defaulters go unpunished, govt after small fries

By Inam Ahmed and do not repay their loans.

The finance minister was shocked vesterday when he was told that loan defaulters were getting stay orders from courts unopposed against repayment of loans because in most cases the government lawyers were reluctant to appear before courts to contest the cases.

Finance Minister S A M S Kibria came to know this at a meeting with lawyers to discuss how to deal with loan defaulters who take stay orders from courts, sometimes for years,

City AL public meeting today Dhaka City Awami League

will hold a public meeting at Paltan maidan today in protest against the pandemonium created by the BNP MPs in the Jatiya Sangsad on Wednesday, reports BSS.

National and City Awami League leaders will address the rally, beginning at 4 pm.

Obtaining stay orders against Bangladesh Bank's notices for repayment of loans has now become a contentious issue for the government as its drive to remove defaulting bank directors has trailed off. The lawyers suggested that

the government should enact a law declaring it a crime to default on a rescheduled loan and also that a defaulter's status should remain the same even after he gets his loan resched-

They also suggested that the banks should include arbitration clause in the loan documentation before sanctioning loans. They also said before taking any action against defaulters, the government should consult lawyers to avoid any legal complication.

The court procedures have taken such a lengthy detour that in some cases the Bangladesh Bank's penalty under Section 46 of the Bank See Page 12 Col 1

Police arrested seven ac-

Pol Pot dead

BANGKOK, Apr 16: Khmer Rouge leader Pol Pot, who turned Cambodia into a vast killing field and slave labour camp, has died, his jailer said today, reports AP.

In a telephone call from the Cambodian capital, Phnom Penh. Non Nou said Pol Pot's heart stopped at 11:15 pm (1615 GMT) yesterday in an area of northern Cambodia about two kilometres (1.2 miles) from the Thai frontier. "At 12 midnight Pol Pot's

wife came to us. She learned that her husband was dead when she was tying the (mosquito) net for him," Non Nou said. "He died in a hut built for him after he lost his power." Non Nou had been assigned to guard the 73-year-old Pol Pot

after he lost power in a bloody internal struggle last year and was placed under loose house arrest by the victorious faction. Pol Pot orchestrated one of

the most violent revolutions of the 20th century, turning Cambodia into a charnel house during the 1970s. As many as 2 million people perished through executions, disease and starvation before he was toppled by a Vietnamese invasion



Sihanouk, whom the Khmer Rouge deposed, recently described Pol Pot as "one of the most powerful monsters ever created by humanity." "A Khmer traditional cere-

mony will be held for his funeral, but as we are in the jungle we face some shortages," Non Nou said. Pol Pot's death came as a

dwindling number of the once powerful Khmer Rouge were holding out against Cambodian See Page 12 Col 8

Wife beaten to death in city

By Staff Correspondent A pregnant housewife was beaten to death allegedly by her husband at Kuril under Gulshan thana in the city Wednesday. Police identified the dead as Dalia, 18, wife of Abdur Razzak a resident of a slum beside the Biswa Road at Kuril.

Quoting the FIR filed by the mother of the victim, police said Dalia was three-month See Page 12 Col 4

50 shops gutted in city By Staff Correspondent

At least 50 cloth shops were gutted and about 10 others damaged in a fire at Mayakatra under Kotwali thana in the old city yesterday. Police and fire brigade sources said the fire originated

from sparks in an electric switch board inside a shop at Chittyaranjan Avenue in Jamburapatti area at Mayakatra at about 10 am. Nine fire fighting units from six stations extinguished the

The extent of damage could

not be ascertained immediately.

fire brigade sources added.

of newly-wed couple From Our Correspondent

Mysterious death

NARAYANGANJ, Apr 16: A newly married couple died in separate incidents within a span of 10 minutes here in the early hours of today.

Pronatosh, 36, was run over by a Chittagong-bound bus near the New Metro cinema hall along the Dhaka-Chittagong highway at around 12:30 am soon after the dead body of his wife. Shoma, 22, was recovered from their house at College Road under Sadar Thana. They had married some eight months

Police recovered the body of Shoma from their residence at around 12:20 am following an information by some local people who found her dead inside the house. The body was marked with burn injury in the upper portion. They had been residing in the area for a couple of months, the local people said. Both the bodies were sent to

Narayanganj General Hospital morgue for autopsy.

Police are yet to lodge any case as they did not find any relative of the deceased persons.

Second Round Block Bidding

We don't want cases like KAFCO: PM

report on BAPEX - which has

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina yesterday said that the government was placing national interest above everything in finalising the results of the Second Round Block Bidding for oil and gas exploration. "We are taking some time to

complete the bidding process as we are being cautious. We do not want cases like KAFCO", Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina told a press conference at the Prime Minister's office yesterday. "We want to accommodate

all major oil companies so none is left out of the bidding," she said. Meanwhile, the government

decision to invite four foreign joint venture oil and gas companies to finalise negotiations for five blocks is being delayed as the Prime Minister is reviewing various aspects of the bidding process.

Sources said that the Prime Minister, who is currently looking after the Energy Ministry herself, had asked for a

for Investment to review the bids and model Production Sharing Contract before finalising the bids. As per earlier decision, the

been ignored in the second

round bidding - and instructed

the high-powered Committee

government was planning to issue invitation letters to the selected bidders after holding a meeting Wednesday. After the Prime Minister

asked for a report on BAPEX a few days ago, Petrobangla sent a report on the state-owned exploration unit. However, Petrobangla insiders said that the report portrayed BAPEX negatively with a conclusion that it was a 'dying organisa-

"Although BAPEX is a subsidiary of Petrobangla, Petrobangla itself had been hostile towards its growth, said a source. "When the Second Round Block Bidding was about

See Page 12 Col 2

CHT bills PCJSS seeks meeting 'to remove incongruities'

From Our Correspondent

KHAGRACHHARI, Apr 16: The Parbattya Chattagram Jana Sanghati Samity (PCJSS) has sent an urgent letter to the Prime Minister, seeking a meeting in Dhaka or Khagrachhari tomorrow to remove, what it said, incongruities in the bills for implementing the CHT

peace agreement. PCJSS said there are "many inconsistencies and deviations' in the four bills from what had been laid down in the agreement signed on December 2.

In a press release issued by Rupayan Dewan, the PCJSS said they would not accept passage of the Regional Council (RC) and three district council bills by parliament without removing the inconsistencies. It sought the meeting to re-

move the inconsistencies See Page 12 Col 8

By Staff Correspondent The nation will observe the historic Mujibnagar Day today with due solemnity.

This day in 1971, the first government of Bangladesh was sworn in at a mango-grove of village Bhaberpara Baidyanathtala in Meherpur with the primary objective of conducting the Liberation War and earning world support in favour of the fight for self-determination. The government thus formed

came to be known as the Mujibnagar Government and the place was named Mujibnagar. On the eve of the day, President Shahabuddin Ahmed and Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina issued separate messages. In his message, the Presi-

dent said the Mujibnagar Government had created hopes among the frustrated and oppressed people by uniting them for the country's independence.

The Prime Minister, in her message, called upon all to work together for the welfare of the people with the spirit of the See Page 12 Col 5

Cases against 4 **ULFA** activists transferred

By Court Correspondent The Chief Metropolitan Magistrate yesterday transferred the four cases against Anup Chetia, the Secretary General of ULFA, and his three accomplices to the courts concerned for trial.

Chargesheets against the four accused ULFA activists were submitted last month under different sections of the law. The cases under Section 14

of the Foreigners Act and Section 11B of the Passport Act read with Section 406/420 of the Penal Code have been sent to the court of Additional Chief Metropolitan Magistrate, The two other cases, lodged

under sections 25 and 25B of the Special Powers Act, for illegal possession of foreign currency, have been sent to the District and Sessions Judges Court. The cases would then be transferred to the Special Tribunal.

Anup Chetia was brought to the Court hajat from the Dhaka Central Jail yesterday but lawyers were not allowed to meet him.

7 JCD activists arrested from DU hall

By DU Correspondent

tivists of the Jativatabadi Chhatra Dal (JCD) from the Dhaka University campus yesterday morning. They were arrested during a raid by the Detective Branch at

the Muktijoddha Ziaur Rahman Hall of the university at around 6:30 am. The arrested persons have been identified as : Asaduzzaman Asad, Mizanur Rahman,

Golam Mustafa, Abdul Kader, Mazharul Islam, Rezaul Karim and Ahsan. Among them, Asaduzzaman

is a student of DU while the rest are outsiders. US Army Chief

due today The Chief of Staff of the US Army General Dennis J Reimer will arrive in Dhaka today on a two-day visit, reports UNB.

General Reimer is the first ever US Army Chief of Staff to visit Bangladesh. During the visit, the US General is expected to meet with President Shahabuddin Ahmed, Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina and senior military of-

eral military ties between the two countries. General Reimer, a four-star General, became US Chief of Staff in June 1995. He served the US Army in various capacity at home and abroad, said a

ficials for reviewing the bilat-

press release.

WE HAVE HUGE READY STOCK OF ITALIAN CARRARA, PERLATO SICILIA, BOTTICINO, INDIAN KESSWARI GREEN, MALAYSIAN AND PAKISTANI MARBLE OF DIFFERENT TYPES. NIRMAN INTERNATIONAL LTD.

Twenty of the injured per-

Highway at about 9 am.

The bodies have been kept at Gobindaganj thana for handover to their relatives. Most of

cident on the Rangpur-Bogra

See Page 12 Col 8

Mujibnagar Day today