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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 Bhaban.
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-

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 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

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 remand.
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 hours.
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 praying—

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Liquor shops at Gaibandha attacked: OC suspended

Death toll rises to 50

By Staff Correspondent
suspended for negligence in discharging 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 Munshipara, Purbapara, David Company Para, Sarkerpara and Pashchimpara areas.
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 vanishing raw materials including methanol.
The DNC has already started investigation into the Gaibandha incident, the official said.
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.
Twenty of the injured persons 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 accident on the Rangpur-Bogra Highway at about 9 am.
The bodies have been kept at Gobindaganj thana for handover to their relatives. Most of the 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), Javed Ali (25) and Dhaliu (35).
Condition of 23 persons are stated to be critical at the Rangpur Medical College Hospital. They are: Momin, Alauddin, Raja Mia, Rakhu, Sobhan,
See Page 12 Col 8

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 remove the inconsistencies.
See Page 12 Col 8

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.
"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 a walkout twice, protesting the Chair's denial to raise supplementary questions during the question hour.
Explaining the reason for refusal of the floor to the BNP

'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 denial of the floor to the BNP members.
Delwar alleged that Advocate Rahmat Ali (AL) who



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

BNP has insulted Parliament

By Mahfuz Anam
What Speaker Humayun Rashid Chowdhury did in the Sangsad on Wednesday was way out of the norm. It was not a violation of the rules of procedure in the legal sense of the term — for the Speaker has a lot of discretionary power — but definitely a violation of parliamentary practice. On issues such as the one under discussion last Wednesday, the custom is that the general members, especially from the opposition, 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 example of it was the Speaker's refusal, later on the same day, to allow the Leader of the Opposition a chance to speak after the Leader of the House had spoken.
Seeing the Home Minister take the stand on the hartal issue at the very beginning, the BNP law makers had all the reason to think that the Speaker was depriving the opposition of their rightful chance to speak. That sparked off the trouble. Repeatedly and vociferously the opposition

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 only give his name and the name of his village, Arshipur, somewhere in Bangladesh.
But he failed to provide further details in his pidgin Hindi, which he mustered in the custody of Indian police and during long stays in different children's 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 reporters yesterday.
See Page 12 Col 5

Lawyers tell Kibria Big defaulters go unpunished, govt after small fries

By Inam Ahmed
The finance minister was and do not repay their loans.
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 rescheduled.
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

Mujibnagar Day today

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 Bhabarpara Baidyanathata 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 President 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

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, Dhaka.
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 *hajal* from the Dhaka Central Jail yesterday but lawyers were not allowed to meet him.

7 JCD activists arrested from DU hall

By DU Correspondent
Police arrested seven activists of the Jatiyatabadi 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 officials for reviewing the bilateral 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 press release.

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 in 1979.



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 slum beside the Biswa Road at Kuril.
Quoting the FIR filed by the mother of the victim, police said Dalia was three-month pregnant.
See Page 12 Col 4

Mysterious death of newly-wed couple

From Our Correspondent
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 death body of his wife, Shoma, 22, was recovered from their house at College Road under Sadar Thana. They had married some eight months back.
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

Star Report
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 report on BAPEX — which has been ignored in the second round bidding — and instructed the high-powered Committee for Investment to review the bids and model Production Sharing Contract before finalising the bids.
As per earlier decision, the 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 organisation'.
"Although BAPEX is a subsidiary of Petrobangla, Petrobangla itself has been hostile towards its growth," said a source. "When the Second Round Block Bidding was about

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