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VOL. VIII NO. 107 REGD. NO. DA 781 INTERNET: http://www.dailystarnews.com BAISHAKH 29, 1405 BS DHAKA TUESDAY MAY 12, 1998 MUHARRAM 15, 1419 HIJRI 12 PAGES: PRICE TAKA 6.00

BNP unlikely to join JS session today

After a four-day recess, the Jatiya Sangsad resumes its session at 10 this morning, reports UNB.

The House may constitute the remaining 21 parliamentary standing committees on different ministries. Earlier, 14 standing committees were formed.

Besides, today's business will include the Prime Minister's Question Time and the thanks-giving motion on the President's address.

The long-drawn session, which began on January 14, may be prorogued tomorrow, if not today.

Opposition BNP, which walked out of the House on May 3, will not join the today's session.

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Another train derails

COMILLA, May 11: Another train accident on Dhaka-Chittagong route this evening led to the disruption of rail communication between the two cities, reports UNB.

The accident occurred at Imambarti station in Akhaura at about 6 pm, just 38 hours after the fatal accident near Nauti station in Laksham thana on Sunday which left at least 18 persons killed.

The mishap occurred as the engine of Chittagong-bound Karnaphuli Express from Dhaka derailed soon after leaving the Imambarti station.

However, there is no report of casualty.

When contacted, Railway officials in Dhaka said a relief train from Akhaura has started rescue work.

Makeshift arrangement has been made to ferry the passengers between the two sides of the spot, said the officials.

Laksam train accident death toll rises to 18

By Staff Correspondent

The death toll from Sunday's train accident in Laksam rose to 18 as another injured person died later in the night, official sources said yesterday.

Abul Taher, 40, son of Abul Wahab, a resident of Shashanpur under Laksham thana died while being brought to the Chest Diseases Hospital in the city. Taher died when the vehicle carrying him reached near the Kanchpur bridge.

Taher's father also died in the same train accident, officials added.

Seventeen people died when the Chittagong Mail from Dhaka rammed some detached wagons of a goods train at 4:52 am on Sunday at a place between Nauti and Nangolkot railway stations.

2 die after taking poisonous liquor

SYLHET, May 11: Two sweepers of the Osmany Medical College Hospital died allegedly after taking poisonous home-made liquor on Thursday, reports UNB.

The dead were identified as Pradip, 32, and Murai, 45.

Police and hospital sources said the two sweepers fell sick after taking liquor during their duty hours.

They were declared dead by the attending physicians within a short time of their admission to the hospital.

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Pakistan to make its defences 'impregnable': US may impose sanctions

India conducts 3 N-tests

NEW DELHI, May 11: India shook the world today with a sudden announcement that it had conducted three underground nuclear tests, its first in 24 years, report agencies.

The government said its blasts, carried out close to the Pakistan border in the desert state of Rajasthan, established that it had 'proven capability' for a weapons programme.

Islamabad assailed its arch-foe over the unexpected experiments, and officials in Washington said the move could perhaps trigger US sanctions on India. China, India's nuclear-armed neighbour to the north, was silent.

Foreign experts said the explosions could spark testing by China or Pakistan.

Also today, the Indian army successfully test-fired a home-made short-range missile.

The 'Trishul' (trident) missile was tested at the Chandip firing range in the eastern state of Orissa.

"The trial was carried out by the army to test its surface-to-surface capabilities."

The Trishul, which has a range of 50 kms is being developed by the defence research and development organisation as a surface-to-surface and surface-to-air weapon.

Indian Prime Minister Atal Behari Vajpayee told a hurriedly summoned news conference that the controlled nuclear tests were carried out at 3:45 pm with a fission device, a low-yield device and a thermonuclear device.

"The measured yields are in line with expected values," he said in a statement from the lawn of his residence, a national flag standing beside him. "Measurements have also confirmed that there was no release of radioactivity into the atmosphere."

The British Geological Survey said its equipment had picked up tremors from the tests measuring 4.7 on the Richter Scale — the equivalent of a light earthquake.

The blasts were conducted in Pokhran, an uninhabited area east of the city of Jaipur and about 100 km south of the border with Pakistan. Pokhran was also the site of India's only previous test on May 18, 1974. The Press Trust of India said today's test devices were exploded 100 metres below the ground.

The tests come seven weeks after the coalition led by Vajpayee's Hindu nationalist Bharatiya Janata Party took power.

The BJP made the option to introduce nuclear weapons a key plank of its platform in spring elections, but the government said last month that it would decide whether to build nuclear weapons only after a strategic defence review.

The first country to propose a ban on nuclear testing, India has refused to sign the Nuclear Non-proliferation Treaty (NPT) and the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty (CTBT).

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Khaleda leads today's hunger strike by BNP MPs

By Staff Correspondent

BNP lawmakers led by party chief and leader of the Opposition Begum Khaleda Zia are due to stage a hunger strike today at the city's Paltan maidan demanding scrapping of the CHT accord and the bills passed for its implementation.

The hunger strike is scheduled to begin at 8 am and continue for the whole day.

The BNP lawmakers are to go on hunger strike also to protest what the party said deterioration of law and order, price-hike of essentials, shortage in the supply of gas and drinking water, crimes against women and children and government's failure in all sectors.

The party has completed all preparations to make the hunger strike a success. It has sought support of other opposition parties.

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Bank under pressure to issue fresh loans to a top defaulting company

By Inam Ahmed and M Shamsur Rahman

Political pressure has mounted on Agrani Bank to provide fresh loans to a top defaulting business concern. Orion Infusion, which has Tk 26.84 crore defaulted loans as of March 30, 1998, with the bank. This company has not repaid a single taka since December 1995.

The finance ministry recently sent a letter to the bank asking it to "review and take decisions based on reality" about Orion's proposal to provide it Tk seven crore fresh loans with different limits and reschedule its earlier loans. Orion is not ready to make 10 per cent down payment to reschedule its loans as required by law.

It is learnt from a highly placed source in the banking circle that a top official in the highest office of the government has also taken interest in Orion's case and is pursuing the matter over telephone.

The moves go against what the finance minister said on Saturday. The minister had categorically said at a FBCCI function that the borrowers who did not repay their earlier loans would not get fresh loans from banks.

Orion Infusion, a publicly traded company, is a sister concern of Orion Group. Another company of the group — Orion Laboratories Limited — owes Tk 30.09 crore in defaulted loans to Agrani Bank alone as of March 30, 1998. Together, Orion Infusion and Orion Laboratories owe Tk 56.93 crore to Agrani Bank. In addition, Orion Infusion has another Tk 5.69 crore defaulted loan with Janata Bank.

In violation of the Banking Company Act (BCA), 1991, Orion Infusion now wants fresh loans without making the required 10 per cent down payment to reschedule its bad debts. It is learnt that a member of the bank's board is also trying to persuade the bank to provide loans to this company in violation of law.

Agrani Bank has reviewed the proposal of Orion and proposed Tk 1.5 crore loan. The proposal has been forwarded to Bangladesh Bank (BB), which has instituted an investigation into the matter.

Agrani Bank had given Orion Laboratories a special treatment in 1997. After its loan limits expired on December 31, 1995, it was supposed to provide Tk 6.10 crore additional mortgage of property. Orion agreed to the proposal, but later it gave mortgage of the same property to Janata Bank and took further loans.

Managing Director of Orion Obaidul Karim has come forward with a rather funny explanation. He said when he promised to mortgage the Orion corporate building to Agrani Bank as additional security, he

did not know that the building was already mortgaged to Janata Bank. His explanation shows either how callous an MD of a publicly traded company can be, or how far one can go to misrepresent facts to the bank.

Agrani Bank, in a recent investigation, also detected huge shortfall in stocks of both Orion Laboratory and Orion Infusion. Orion Laboratories could not give proper accounts of Tk 8.21 crore shares which the company had shown as purchase in its balance sheet. But, Orion's MD Obaidul Karim claimed that there was not even a Tk 10 shortfall in stocks against the company's CC pledge. The shortfall has been created because of interest accrued over the last two years, he said.

"We became a defaulter because the company was closed for a year as the bank took time to see Page 12 Col 1

Mid-term review meet today

The poorest continue to remain neglected, observe donors

Star Report

The poorest people of the country are consistently neglected for a variety of complex reasons, according to an issue paper on poverty prepared by the donors.

They say the unidimensional concentration on poverty and micro-credit alone may not always encompass the survival needs of the poorest.

"The poorest are excluded both through social discrimination and self-exclusion," noted the issue paper prepared by the donors ahead of today's meeting with the government. "Structural predispositions and unforeseen risks may not always be recognised."

Representatives of the donor agencies and countries will meet in the city for a mid-term review of the Bangladesh progress in reform programmes and the current economic situation.

There would be no fresh aid commitment in the day-long meeting as it is being held only to review Bangladesh current economic situation as decided at the last year's regular annual meeting of the Bangladesh Aid Club.

Last year's meeting was held in Dhaka instead of Paris.

In the issue paper, the donors said the key to reaching the poorest of the poor is to combine resources with decentralisation of governance, social mobilisation and creating

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JCD leader held from DU campus

Police arrested a Jatiyatabadi Chhatra Dal (JCD) leader from Dhaka University campus yesterday, reports UNB.

The arrested was identified as Mostafizul Islam Mamun, general secretary of JCD, Suryasen Hall unit. He is accused in Partho killing case.

Detective Branch of police picked up Mamun from in front of the Madhu's canteen at around 1 pm.

Meanwhile, JCD has threatened to stage a greater movement if the Dhaka University authorities failed to implement the written agreement between the Syndicate and JCD by tomorrow.

"If they (DU authorities) fail to implement the agreement we will be compelled to launch a tougher action programme," JCD general secretary Habbu-Nabi Solah told newsmen at a press conference yesterday.

He also accused the university authorities of reneging on their commitment to allow doubling and give "guest permission" enabling the JCD activists to stay in Suryasen, Jasimuddin, Ziaur Rahman and Bangabandhu halls as they cannot stay in the BCL-dominated dormitories.

The JCD general secretary read out a written statement at the press conference held at Madhu's Canteen.

He also condemned the police for arresting Mostafizul Islam Mamun.

Condition of Dhaka district judge improving

By Staff Correspondent

District and Sessions Judge, Dhaka, Kazi Golam Rasul, who was hearing the Bangabandhu murder case, is recovering from jaundice at the Combined Military Hospital here, according to official sources.

Golam Rasul was shifted to the intensive care unit of the CMH four days back when his bilirubin level shot up to 26.

"Government is seriously looking into his health condition," Anisul Huq, one of the special public prosecutors of the case told The Daily Star yesterday. Rasul's bilirubin level was 10 yesterday, he said.

Proceeding of the Bangabandhu murder case remained suspended for about three weeks following his illness.

Prior to his admission to the CMH, Golam Rasul was recording the cross-examination of Kahar Akand, investigation officer of the Bangabandhu murder case. Arguments in the case were to begin soon after recording the statement of the investigation officer, lawyers involved in the case said.

Arrest of Chetia

Final hearing of habeas corpus petition today

The final hearing of the habeas corpus petition against detention of ULFA leader Anup Chetia and two of his associates will be held in the High Court Division of Supreme Court today, reports UNB.

The petition filed by Saiful Islam Dildar on behalf of the Bangladesh Human Rights Commission was being heard by a division bench comprising Justice M. Mozammel Haq and Justice ABM Khairul Haq.

Outlawed United Liberation Front of Assam (ULFA) general secretary Anup Chetia alias Gopal Barua and his associates Laxmi Prasad Goswami and Babul Sharma were arrested on December 21 and detained in the Central Jail.

The Human Rights Commission has been giving legal support to the ULFA leaders following an appeal by ULFA chairman Arvind Raj Khosla.

Another writ petition against the government move to hand over Anup Chetia to Indian authorities is lying pending in the Appellate Division of the Supreme Court.

Housewife fighting for life in Gulshan Extortionists attack house, stab 4 for refusing to pay toll

By Staff Correspondent

Extortionists have stabbed four members of a family including a housewife as they refused to pay a toll of Tk one lakh at Noorachala in the city's Gulshan area.

The housewife, Jotsna Begum, 35, is now fighting for life at a local clinic with a two and a half inches deep cut in her head. She cannot speak properly and her vision has become hazy, her husband Mohammad Ali said quoting doctors at the clinic.

The extortionists had demanded the money as the family moved to their newly purchased house near Noorachala bazaar.

Being refused, the extortionists, numbering about 25, swooped on the house with machetes and hockey sticks and indiscriminately stabbed Ali, his wife Jotsna, his younger brother Nobiar Hossain, and brother-in-law Atik Miah Sunday afternoon. The victims, all in their 30s, sustained multiple stab injuries.

They were first treated at the Dhaka Medical College Hospital and then shifted to a clinic in Gulshan early yesterday.

Gulshan police said Ali lodged a case naming eleven people including Aynal, Rafiq and Saiful. In the FIR, Ali also mentioned that about ten others were involved in the attack.

Local people claimed that Ali, Nobiar and Atik were local leaders of BNP and that the attackers were known as Awami League's 'musclemen' in the area.

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The housewife, stabbed by toll collectors in Gulshan, is fighting for life at a local clinic. The three other injured persons of the family are also seen in the picture.

— Star photo

2 teenage girls gangraped in Mirpur

By Staff Correspondent

Two teenage girls including a maid were gangraped in separate incidents in the city's Mirpur area.

Police said both the victims lodged separate cases with Mirpur thana on Sunday in connection with the incidents.

A 13-year-old maid was gangraped by three men for three days at a house in Mirpur Section-2.

Police quoting the victim said that a person known to her brought her from a village under Araihaazara thana in Narayanganj to Dhaka and she was appointed as a maid in a house in Mirpur area about 15 days ago.

On Thursday, the girl left the house and later met a woman.

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Businessman held on charge of trying to rape secretary

By Staff Correspondent

An owner of a garments factory was arrested yesterday on charge of attempting to rape his private secretary at his office in the city's Mohakhali area on Saturday.

The arrested person, M. Mozammel Hossain, reportedly a retired army captain was produced before the CMM's court yesterday, police said.

Police, quoting the FIR filed by the woman on Sunday, said Mozammel tried to violate her inside a room attached to his office at Arjotpara in Mohakhali at about 4 pm Saturday.

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Shazneen murder Shahid's interrogation on, Hasan remanded

By Staff Correspondent

Contractor Hasan and two others were again placed on a two-day remand yesterday in connection with the Shazneen murder at Gulshan in the city on April 23.

CID produced Hasan, Badal and Shoni Ram before the Chief Metropolitan Magistrate's court yesterday on expiry of a two-day remand.

Meanwhile, Shahid, the prime accused in the brutal killing, has not yet given any new information as regards involvement of any abettor in the murder.

But CID officials said they continued interrogating Shahid and the others in this regard. Shahid passed the fourth day of

Baby murdered at city slum

By Staff Correspondent

An eighteen-month-old baby was killed allegedly by family members of the owner of their rented house at a slum in JN Saha Road area under Lalbagh thana in the city on Sunday.

Police identified the dead as Shahin, son of Akkel Ali, who lived in a bamboo structure on a Jhil near JN Saha Road.

The victim's mother, Jahannara, lodged a case with Lalbagh police. She alleged in the FIR that she had left the baby with her elder daughter Ruma before leaving the house Sunday morning for the garments factory where she works.

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Non-bailable warrant for arrest of Benazir

KARACHI, May 11: A Pakistani High Court issued an arrest warrant for former premier Benazir Bhutto today after her failure to appear at a case of alleged administrative corruption, court officials said, reports AFP.

Justice Ghaous Mohammad of the Sindh High Court issued the non-bailable warrant after Benazir, Pakistan's main opposition leader, failed to show up when he resumed the hearing, they said.

Benazir is currently on a private trip to Canada, the United States and Britain and expected to return here this week, party sources said.

The judge dismissed the application of her counsel, Reza Rabbani that Benazir was abroad and he could not tell her the date of the case.

The judge adjourned the hearing until May 19.

In a similar situation last month, the same judge issued bailable warrants against Benazir. However, when she appeared in person he accepted her plea to adjourn the case until her return in early May.

Benazir's three-year-old government was sacked in November 1996 on charges of corruption and misuse.

An accountability bureau, set up by Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif's government, has filed a case in the High Court accusing Benazir supporters of finding jobs at Pakistan International Airlines (PIA) for party members, in violation of the rules.

She denies the charge which she calls an act of political victimisation.

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Benazir Bhutto