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VOL. VIII NO. 108 REGD. NO. DA 781 INTERNET: <http://www.dailystarnews.com> BAISHAKH 30, 1405 BS DHAKA, WEDNESDAY MAY 13, 1998 MUHARRAM 16, 1419 HIJRI 12 PAGES: PRICE TAKA ০.00

Polls in 138 pourasavas in Sept

Chief Election Commissioner Abu Hena yesterday said barring a few untoward incidents, the last Union Parishad elections were held in a free, fair and peaceful atmosphere, reports BSS.

Addressing a day-long workshop on 'Evaluation of post-Union Parishad elections', Abu Hena said the main feature of that elections was the participation of nearly 84 per cent voters including a large number of women voters.

The CEC said that measures were being taken to hold elections in 138 pourasavas, including 55 new ones, in the first week of September as per the clause of the recently amended Pourasava Ordinance.

Besides, he said, the terms of the country's four city corporations will end by the end of next year and elections in the four cities will have to be completed within the stipulated time.

The workshop was held in the auditorium of Bangladesh Institute of Administration and Management in the city.

Abu Hena said all political parties, including the ruling and the opposition, had rendered all-out cooperation to the Election Commission to make the Union Parishad elections a success.

Abu Hena also said that measures have also been taken to hand over identity cards to voters by May next year and added that 33 per cent of such cards had already been prepared.

He asked the officials concerned to ensure the distribution of all cards timely.

Thanks-giving motion on President's speech adopted

Parliament yesterday adopted a motion giving thanks to President Shahabuddin Ahmed for his speech in the House on January 14, reports UNB.

The thanks-giving motion on the President's speech, moved by Chief Whip Abdul Hasnat Abdullah, was adopted by the House last night through voice vote.

Some 1635 amendments proposals of seven lawmakers, six from BNP and one from Jatiya Party, were placed on the President's address, but those were not placed in parliament as none of them were presented.

The MPs were Md Mashiur Rahman, Jafrul Islam Chowdhury, Sarwar Jamal Mizan, Gazi Mohammad Shahajahan, Ziaul Huq Zia and Goutam Chakravarty of BNP and Kazi Shah Mofazzal Hossain (Kaikobad) of Jatiya Party.

Jafrul Islam Chowdhury placed the highest 362 amendments.

Rowdiness in JS Speaker warns MPs, takes no action

By Staff Correspondent

Speaker Humayun Rashid Chowdhury yesterday gave a warning to the members of parliament who were involved in rowdiness in the Jatiya Sangsad on April 15 to 'refrain from unparliamentary activities that dishonour the House in future.'

In his ruling in the House, the Speaker said no punitive action was taken against the MPs concerned as 'parliamentary culture has not flourished in the country. The decision in this regard was taken at a meeting of the Business Advisory Committee on May 10, he said.

On April 15, some BNP lawmakers hurled paper missiles and abuses at the Speaker and damaged television cameras while protesting denial of the

Inside Today

Article

About a Letter, a Statement and a Commitment
Column: Crosscurrents
by CAF Dowlah

Focus

Fundamental rights of defence personnel
Page 5

Business

Exports grow but barely touch targets
DSE price index falls by 4 points
Pages 6 & 7

AL MPs head 34, JP one, BNP none 21 JS standing bodies formed, 14 recast

By Staff Correspondent

The Jatiya Sangsad yesterday formed 21 parliamentary standing committees and reconstituted 14 others with the main opposition party, BNP, remaining absent from the proceedings of the House.

The committees were proposed by Chief Whip Abdul Hasnat Abdullah as the session resumed yesterday morning after a five-day recess.

All these 35 parliamentary bodies are to deal with various ministries of the government.

Of these, 14 committees were formed earlier on November 16, 1997 keeping position vacant to accommodate BNP lawmakers. The committees were reconstituted as BNP did not give names of its lawmakers.

Each committee comprised 10 members including one chairman. This is for the first

time in the parliamentary history of Bangladesh that the chairman of parliamentary committees were chosen from non-minister MPs to ensure transparency and accountability in the functioning of the committees. Article 247 of the JS Rules of Procedure was

amended earlier to pave the way of making non-minister MPs chairman of the committees.

Earlier, ministers used to be ex-officio chairman of the JS committees. Chairman of 34 committees were made from Awami League, one from Jatiya Party and none from BNP.

Earlier on May 3, the day BNP walked out of the Jatiya Sangsad, a list of 113 names

was forwarded by Opposition Chief Whip Khandakar Delwar Hossain to Chief Whip Abdul Hasnat Abdullah. Of those, 110 were accommodated in the 35 committees. Mentionably, of 113 lawmakers belonging to BNP, one — Dr Ehteshamul Haq Nasim Biswas — died recently and two others — Dr Alaiddin and Hasibur Rahman Swapan — joined the 'government of consensus'.

All the 33 JP legislators except one — Shahadat Hossain — were accommodated in these parliamentary standing committees. Besides, the lone MP from Islami Oikya Jote (IOJ), Golam Sarwar Hiru, was also made member of one committee. The rest of the members of the 35 committees were from Awami League.

See Page 12 Col 7



Leader of the Opposition in the Jatiya Sangsad and BNP Chairperson Begum Khaleda Zia and her party MPs observed a day-long hunger strike at Paltan Maidan in the city yesterday. — Star photo

Long march towards CHT on June 10: Khaleda

By Staff Correspondent

BNP chief and Leader of the Opposition in parliament Begum Khaleda Zia along with 93 party MPs and some central leaders yesterday observed a day-long hunger strike at the city's Paltan Maidan demanding scrapping of the CHT accord and the bills passed for its implementation.

At the end of the hunger strike, lasting for more than ten hours from at 8:05 am, Begum Zia announced that her party would start a long-march from the capital towards the Chittagong Hill Tracts (CHT) on June 9 and organise token hunger strike at all the districts on May 20 to press their demand.

The BNP has 110 MPs in the Jatiya Sangsad. The non-MP central leaders who joined the hunger strike included Abdus Salam Talukdar, Matin Chowdhury, Tanvir Ahmed Siddiki, Khandakar Mahbubuddin and RA Ghani.

BNP lawmakers who did not participate in the hunger strike include M Saifur Rahman, Dr Khandakar Mosharraf Hossain and Salahuddin Kader Chowdhury.

During the hunger strike BNP lawmaker Ruhul Kuddus Talukdar Dulu tore and burnt a copy of the CHT agreement amid slogans by party workers

and supporters. The peaceful protest programme drew thousands of visitors throughout the day. Besides opposition politicians, members of different professional groups including university teachers, doctors, engineers, journalists, lawyers, performing artists and poets visited the hunger-striking MPs and expressed their solidarity with their demand.

In the afternoon, the gathering at the venue turned into a

2 more trains derail

LALMONIRHAT, May 12: Two more train accidents occurred in the country's western zone this morning, reports UNB.

A Dinajpur-bound passenger train (432 down) coming from Panchagarh ran off the track near Mongalpur Station in between Panchagarh and Parbatipur stations at dawn. No casualty was reported.

Three wagons of the train were severely damaged in the mishap.

Three hours before the accident, a goods train derailed near Parbatipur Rail Station while shunting on the line.

large public rally as BNP workers and supporters from different parts of the city thronged there.

Besides Khaleda Zia, 53 of the hunger striking lawmakers addressed the rally. As many as 50 others including leaders of BNP and its front organisations also spoke on the occasion.

In the middle of the marathon speeches, parody songs criticising the CHT accord and the government of Sheikh Hasina, patriotic songs and poems were also rendered to cheer up the crowd.

A U-shape huge pandal and a large stage under it were erected at the south end of the Paltan Maidan. The BNP MPs remained sitting on chairs on the stage with a long banner and portraits of late President Ziaur Rahman and Khaleda Zia hung behind them. At both sides of the stage, several hundred chairs were kept for the party-men to sit on. Banners and festoons inscribed with various demands including repeal of the CHT accord and the bills were hung in the pandal in front of the stage, a National Flag and several BNP flags were kept hoisted.

Soon after Khaleda Zia concluded her speech, Mother of Joyal, a BNP activist killed in a

See Page 12 Col 1

China, other major powers condemn Indian N-tests Clinton pledges tough sanctions

WASHINGTON, May 12: President Bill Clinton pledged today to 'implement fully' tough sanctions on India for its surprise underground nuclear test, which he described as a defiant threat to global security, report agencies.

China, Russia, Japan and the European Union joined the United States and other Western nations in condemning India and some recalled their ambassadors or threatened to freeze economic aid.

In a news conference, Clinton called on New Delhi to announce a freeze on further tests and to sign the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty, and he urged its neighbours not to follow suit with nuclear tests of their own.

"Our laws have very stringent provisions signed into law by me in 1994 in response to nuclear tests by non-nuclear states. I intend to implement them fully," he said.

"I want to make it very, very clear that I am deeply disturbed by the nuclear test India has

conducted," Clinton said. "The United States strongly opposes any new nuclear testing."

"This action by India not only threatens the stability of the region, it directly challenges the firm international consensus to stop the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction."

"I call on India to announce

More stories on page 8

it will conduct no further tests and sign the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty now and without conditions. I also call on India's neighbours not to follow suit, not follow down the path of a dangerous arms race," he said.

The US administration today recalled its ambassador to India for consultations in Washington.

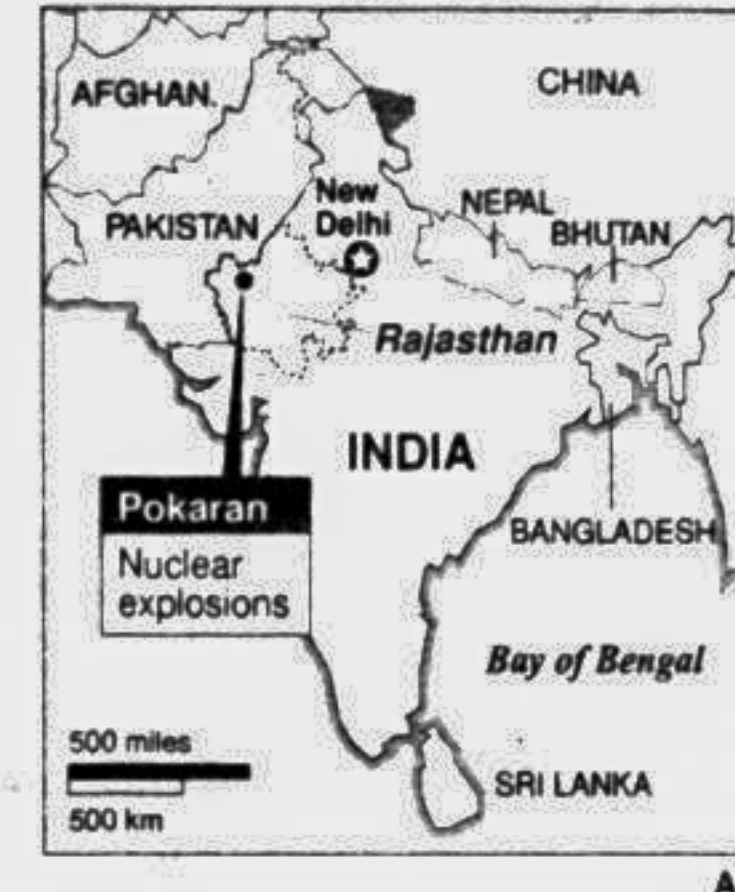
But Clinton won't cancel a planned visit to India later this year, a senior US official said.

"Our plans remain unchanged. I think it remains im-

portant that we continue our dialogue with Pakistan, with India," National Security Adviser Sandy Berger said, "we don't plan to change our plans."

China is "seriously concerned" about the tests, Foreign Ministry spokesman Zhu Bangzao said on the national state-run evening television

See Page 12 Col 4



Donors urge govt at review meeting

Speed up reforms, privatisation of SOEs and curb corruption

By Staff Correspondent

The donors urged the government to speed up administrative and financial sector reforms and privatisation of the state-owned enterprises (SOEs), in the day-long consultative meeting yesterday.

They also reiterated the need for urgency in policy-making so that faster progress could be achieved and for a stronger political commitment to the reform process.

The donors also asked the government to effectively curb the growing incidences of corruption without which all reforms will go in vain.

Infrastructure bottlenecks in the power sector, telecommunications and ports and business delays continue to adversely affect business confidence and productivity, they pointed out.

It was also suggested that the government should increase its capability to utilise more for-

eign aid so that it could draw down more funds from the bulging five billion US dollar project loan pipeline.

The donors also said that in the next 12 months until the April 1999 Aid Group meeting in Paris, the government should implement the bulk of things to be done to streamline the economic front.

The meeting, held at Sheraton Hotel was chaired by World Bank country director Pierre Landell-Mills. The Bangladesh delegation was led by Finance Minister SAMS Kibria.

Earlier, in a position paper jointly prepared by the WB and the Asian Development Bank (ADB), the donors said "the economic environment remains uncertain. The financial sector remains vulnerable and the government's position on privatisation remains unclear."

In a post-meeting press briefing, Finance Minister Kib-

ria said the donors have generally expressed support for the government's efforts for maintaining macro-economic stability. "IMF acknowledged the success (in macro-economic stability), but urged us for further action to strengthen the macro-economic stability. The government's efforts for reforms were also appreciated. But they wanted us to act faster in this regard."

He said there was an agreement that despite a reduction in the poverty situation, lot more needs to be done. "We discussed the various methods for the poverty reduction programme," he said.

WB country director Pierre Landell-Mills, also present at the briefing, said "there was a consensus in the meeting on things to be done. Bangladesh needs better implementation of projects and better use of aid so

See Page 12 Col 4

Dhaka won't comment now

By Staff Correspondent

Bangladesh chose not to comment on the nuclear tests conducted by India.

"We do not want to comment now. We are waiting to get the full facts of the matter" said a spokesman of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs yesterday when his attention was drawn to the three nuclear tests in the Indian state of Rajasthan on Monday.

The Indian nuclear tests have evoked sharp reaction from several countries including Pakistan, China and the United States.

Indian N-tests to encourage arms race in S Asia: Khaleda

BNP Chairperson Begum Khaleda Zia has expressed concern over underground nuclear tests conducted by India and condemned such activities, reports UNB.

In a statement yesterday she said the tests had created an environment which would encourage arms race in South Asia and intensify tension.

"Bangladesh has always played an active role in support of the policy of permanent peace and coexistence in the region and is in favour of announcing South Asia and the Indian Ocean as nuclear-free zone," she said.

Khaleda said SAARC is the

See Page 12 Col 1

Iqbal Mahmud resumes duties as BUET VC

By Staff Correspondent

Prof Iqbal Mahmud resumed his duties as Vice-Chancellor of BUET yesterday.

"I am doing my routine work till my resignation is accepted," Prof Mahmud told The Daily Star last night.

He also said that he was trying to resolve the stalemate at the BUET 'internally' but did not elaborate.

The VC decided to resume his duties following his meeting with the members of the Executive Committee of the BUET Teachers' Association, held yesterday, sources said.

Prof Mahmud had resigned on May 4 last protesting interference from higher authorities in the affairs of BUET.

His resignation was followed by resignation of 71 teachers from their administrative posts the same day and a call for an indefinite teachers' strike by the BUETTA from the next day

See Page 12 Col 2

Shazneen murder case Shahid's confessional statement likely to be recorded today

By Staff Correspondent

Shahid, the prime accused in Shazneen murder in Gulshan, will be produced before the Chief Metropolitan Magistrate's court today.

CID officials said Shahid may record a statement before the magistrate confessing his involvement in the killing of the 15-year-old girl on the night of April 23.

The CID yesterday took two maids — Parvin and Minu — and four other carpenters to its headquarters and interrogated them about their alleged role in connection with the murder of Shazneen.

The maids at the Gulshan residence of Shazneen's father, Latifur Rahman, had recorded statements as witnesses following the murder. The carpenters have been taken by the CID for

the first time. The CID interrogation last week was principally focused on Shahid along with contractor Hasan and two of his associates. Others persons connected in the murder incident were not sufficiently questioned.

The interrogation of Parvin and Minu yesterday may help the investigators to identify others who may have been involved in the killing.

According to sources concerned, Shahid, during interrogation yesterday, again mentioned the name of contractor Hasan as an abettor. However, he later retracted his statement again.

It may be mentioned here that this is for the third time that Shahid has mentioned

Hasan's name as an abettor and later retracted.

A CID team took Shahid to Gulshan and some other adjacent areas yesterday afternoon to retrace the paths through which Shahid walked to the Cantonment railway station after scaling an eight-foot boundary wall of Rahman's residence, said a CID source.

They took Shahid to the plot adjacent to Rahman's residence to identify the path through which he claimed to have escaped from the scene of the crime.

The CID team had also verified Shahid's statement about the train on which he left Dhaka for Tongi after killing Shazneen.

Investigators were earlier

See Page 12 Col 7

Ctg chamber's programmes to protest terrorism today

From Staff Correspondent

CHITTAGONG, May 12: Chittagong Chamber of Commerce and Industry (CCC&I) has called upon the businessmen and industrialists to observe tomorrow's programmes to protest terrorism and other crimes in the port city.

According to the press release issued by the chamber, the programmes include keeping the shops, business houses and industries shut from morning to noon, wearing of black bagged clothing at New Market Crossing at 11 am and submission of a memorandum to the divisional commissioner.

The chamber at a meeting today urged the businessmen to make tomorrow's programmes a success.

বিজ্ঞপ্তি

ঢাকা ইউনিভার্সিটি এলামাইন এসোসিয়েশনের উদ্যোগে আগামী ৬ই জুন, ১৯৯৮ইং, যে এলামাইন কনভেনশন অনুষ্ঠিত হবে, ঢাকা বিশ্ববিদ্যালয়ের প্রাক্তন সকল ছাত্র-ছাত্রীদের এই কনভেনশনে যোগদানের আমন্ত্রণ জানানো যাচ্ছে। কনভেনশনের রেজিস্ট্রেশন ফরম ঢাকা শহরে সোনালী ব্যাংকের নিম্নলিখিত শাখাগুলোতে পাওয়া যাবে।

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| ১। সদরঘাট কর্পোরেট শাখা | ৭। মগবাজার শাখা | ১২। মিরপুর সেকশন-১ শাখা |
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| ৩। গুলশান শাখা | ৯। ঢাকা বিশ্ববিদ্যালয় শাখা | ১৪। বি এস টি বি শাখা |
| ৪। উত্তরা শাখা | ১০। রমনা কর্পোরেট শাখা | ১৫। লালমাটিয়া শাখা |
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