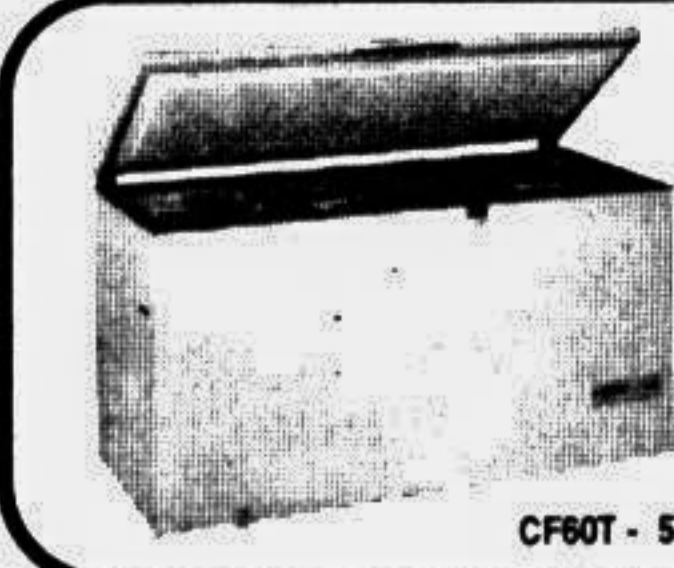


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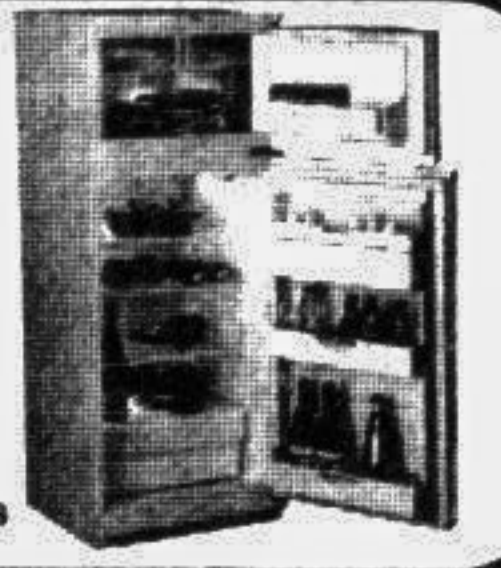
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SAARC chairman urges India, Pakistan to open informal talks

COLOMBO, June 1: The chairman of a seven-nation South Asian grouping today urged India and Pakistan to immediately open "informal" talks to reduce nuclear tensions, reports AFP.

Maldives President Maumoon Abdul Gayoom, chairman of the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC), said India and Pakistan as the two biggest members should exercise maximum restraint.

"I call upon the parties to begin the process of informal political consultations agreed at the ninth summit (in the Maldives last year) in order to create a climate of confidence and trust in the region," Gayoom said in a statement.

He noted that in May 1997 SAARC leaders agreed to thrash out thorny issues through informal talks although the group's charter did not allow bilateral matters to be taken up within summits.

"Therefore in view of the momentum and hope generated by that summit for the acceleration of the SAARC process, it is unfortunate that recent developments in the subcontinent have led to increased tensions in South Asia," Gayoom said.

His statement ended a long silence by SAARC over India's nuclear tests carried out on May 11 and 13 and the retaliatory tests by Pakistan.

SAARC leaders are due to hold their 10th summit in the Sri Lankan capital Colombo some time in July but officials here said they were still working on the schedule.

If it goes ahead it will be the first opportunity for the leaders of India and Pakistan to meet face-to-face since their nuclear tests.

Meanwhile, Pakistan Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif said that his country is ready to hold talks with India to ease tension following their tit-for-tat nuclear tests.

In an interview published in Tokyo today the Pakistan premier told the Japanese daily Asahi Shimbun in Lahore that he was disappointed with the Indian government which carried out the first detonations in mid-May.

But Islamabad had not abandoned hopes of improved bilateral relations with New Delhi, Sharif said in Sunday's interview.

Pakistan "is ready to sit down and resolve the differences with India," he said.

Brojen Das dead

From Page 1
1961 for his several world records in swimming.

In 1961, he had set three world records in swimming by crossing the English Channel as the fastest man. He crossed the Channel six times, establishing two world records at a time in a day.

Brojen Das had also achieved tremendous success in three longest international swimming in 1959.

His success brought him a long list of awards from home and abroad.

He had received the National Award in 1976, "King of Channel", a special trophy of Swimming Association (UK), "Pride of Performance", and Dhaka University Blue award.

Brojen Das was also the lifetime member of Swimming Association (UK) and Royal Life Saving Society (UK). Vice-President of World Long Distance Swimming Association and General Secretary of Bangladesh Swimming Federation.

He was born in Kuchiamora village under Sirajdikhan thana of Munshiganj district on December 9, 1927.

He left behind his wife, a son and a daughter and a host of relatives, admirers and friends to mourn his death.

President Shahabuddin Ahmed and Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina expressed deep shock at the death of Brojen Das.

In a condolence message, the

Shazneen murder

From Page 1
CID's main focus of investigation at this stage is to verify the statement of security guard Humayun Kabir who first revealed that six persons including himself and the confessed killer Shahid were involved in the murder.

According to Humayun's statement the only female abettor in the killing was Parvin, a maid at the Gulshan residence of Shazneen's father Latifur Rahman, Chairman of Transcom Ltd.

This increase became effective from July 1997 and the teachers will get the allowance at increased rate from this month, she added.

Rajuk 'extracted' 31 plots

From Page 1
revised the plan so many times to extract plots that the landscape of the area has dramatically changed.

Almost all the open and green spaces in the Sector have been allocated to powerful individuals or organisations, the Samity members said. More than 1,000 families live in the Sector.

Moreover, a section of people have moved in to grab even the land designated for the primary school of the housing complex at Road 7A. Several shops have been built on the spot where a signboard reads, "Shops To-Let, please contact Abdul Halim."

An attendant said that each shop was being rented for Tk 50,000 in advance and Tk 2,000 as monthly rent.

Vice President of the Kalyan Samity Ali Azam said that they had notified Rajuk several times but no action was taken as yet. And at different spots of the Rajuk's housing project, real estate companies have taken over large chunks of land recently. At the end of Road-3, one company is building four eight-storied housing complexes filling up a low lying

land adjacent to Uttara Lake. The residents said they could not comprehend how such a project could be approved by Rajuk in an area where the maximum height for a building is six stories.

The company's housing complex is hardly 150 yards from Zia International Airport. As per International Civil Aviation Code, clearance must be sought from the Civil Aviation Authority of Bangladesh (CAAB) to build such a high structure there.

When contacted, CAAB officials said that it was the responsibility of Rajuk to ensure that no such high structure is built within the proximity of the airport.

"We have provided Rajuk with a map pinpointing the areas where high-rise buildings could not be allowed," said a CAAB official, adding that CAAB would look into the Uttara case.

Residents said that in several cases, "mysterious" plot owners moved into areas designated for open space and built houses. They extended the roads and put up signboards numbering the roads," said a resident.

President said that Brojen Das brightened the image of the country abroad through his extra-ordinary performance by crossing the Channel six times on different occasions.

"With his death the country has lost a worthy son of the land," he added.

In a condolence message, Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina said Brojen Das made due to the swimming popular in the country's sports arena. The loss due to the death of this unforgettable and talented sportsman is irreparable."

The Prime Minister conveyed her sympathy to the bereaved family members.

PM: Local govt

From Page 1
come of the Union Parishads, she said.

Hasina said the local body leaders will also have to play more important role in curbing repression on women and children and stopping terrorism.

On Upazila election, she said this election will be held very soon.

The Cabinet has already approved the proposal of Upazila election, the Prime Minister said and informed that in the next session of Parliament, a bill will be passed to pave the way for holding this important local body election.

Listing various programmes taken for the development of the rural people, she said the government has decided to develop the communication network from union to thana and from thana to district.

About the allowance of non-government primary school teachers, she said the government has allocated an additional Tk 31.47 crore for them.

She said the teachers who were getting Tk 525 will now get Tk 812 as allowance, those getting Tk 651 and Tk 745 will receive Tk 1007 and Tk 1153 respectively.

This increase became effective from July 1997 and the teachers will get the allowance at increased rate from this month, she added.



Teachers of non-government primary schools began a fast unto death at Osmany Uddyan in the city yesterday.

Pry teachers

From Page 1
Talks between leaders of the teachers and the officials broke down earlier on Sunday evening as the teachers remained firm on their five-point demand, which includes payment of arrears salary and allowances from June 1996.

Plain clothes police yesterday picked up Shamsul Alam and Akkas Ali Sheikh, President and Secretary General of the Non-government Primary Teachers' Association.

They were detained from 1-20 pm to 3 pm and were questioned on their association, when it was formed and whether it had legal basis, teachers said.

The two leaders later returned to Osmany Uddyan and joined their colleagues on hunger strike.

BNP Secretary General Abdul Mannan Bhuiya, among others, visited the fasting teachers and expressed solidarity with their demand.

Rubi murder

From Page 1
yesterday afternoon. Her husband, Mainuddin, arrived Dhaka from the United States yesterday morning, family sources said, adding that Mainuddin did not know about the brutal killing of his wife before he arrived here.

His relatives informed him about a serious accident and asked him to come to Dhaka as early as possible. Since Friday, Rubi's body had been preserved at the BIRDEM Hospital.

The burkhwani of Rubi will be held at 144/3 in Shantinagar after Asr prayers today, family sources said.

Write on CHT

From Page 1
show cause as to why the Chittagong Regional Council Act, 1998 and Bandarban, Khagrachhari and Rangamati Hill District Local Government Amendment Acts, 1998 should not be declared to have been passed by the Parliament without lawful authority, unconstitutional and having no legal effect.

The petition further prayed for stay of operation of the Acts till disposal of the rule.

Female Union Parishad members

From Page 1
vice-chairman. If it so happens, I am sure, the male members of my Union Parishad will even go to the extent of resigning from their posts." A male member of the Union Parishad, who was standing beside him was seen nodding in approval.

But the condition of female chairpersons do not seem to be similar to that of the female members.

Begum Shahida Rahman, Chairperson of Boalia Union Parishad in Pangsha Thana under Rajbari district, has not yet been exposed to any male chauvinistic problem, either from her male members or from the local administration, dominated by male officers and employees.

Shahida became chairperson in a by-election only a few months back following the death of her husband Lutfar Rahman who was elected to the post for three consecutive terms. "So far, the local administration and the male members of the Parishad are very cooperative. Perhaps, my late husband's popularity and goodwill are still working in my favour."

Meer Enaet Hossain Montu, former president of UP Chairmen Samity, gave a "practical" suggestion. He said that the government should allow the UPs to implement development projects worth Tk one lakh each, instead of Tk ten thousand now. "It will help the UPs to really contribute to the development of rural areas and provide the female members with specific duties and thus remove conflicts between the male and female members."

In this connection, Montu, a supporter of the ruling Awami League, recalled that during BNP rule, UPs enjoyed the right to implement development project worth Tk fifty thousand.

But she said that has noticed "subtle conflicts" between the male and female members of her Parishad. The male members sometimes seem to be reluctant to recognise their female counterparts properly, forgetting that the female members were voted by much larger electorate."

Supporting the female members' view, she also said that there should be specific programmes to be implemented by the female members.

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May 6 attacks on halls Three Shibir leaders arrested at CU

From Staff Correspondent
CHITTAGONG, June 1: At least five persons were injured at Muradpur this afternoon when police resorted to lathicharge to disperse Islamic Chhatra Shibir activists who were trying to hold a rally blocking a busy road. Shibir was protesting the arrest of their leaders from the Chittagong University campus, witnesses said.

Police arrested 8 persons from the scene. The Shibir activists also put up a barricade in front of the Chittagong Government College halting the traffic movement, witnesses said.

Meanwhile, the residential halls at CU reopened today and resident students were allowed to enter after checking their identity cards and valid documents, university officials said.

The authorities imposed a restriction on hall to hall movement by any student after 10 pm and ordered for keeping the shops closed after 10 pm at the campus in a bid to maintain security. The restriction was announced through miking.

Passengers stranded as Air France strike begins

PARIS, June 1: Thousands of frustrated passengers were stranded at airports across the country today, after Air France pilots began a strike that threatened to disrupt travel plans during the World Cup, reports AP.

Monitors at Paris' main airports offered a bleak sight for passengers: departure screens read "cancelled" in bright red letters next to nearly all Air France flights nine days before the soccer championship begins.

The jets of the official airline for the World Cup, many decorated with players representing the 32 teams, sat idle at terminals. Their 3,200 pilots sought to block wage cuts aimed at keeping the newly profitable state-owned airline out of the red.

The walkout, Air France's biggest in 27 years, was a serious embarrassment to the leftist government of Prime Minister Lionel Jospin, and train workers were also threatening to strike later in the week.

Responding to questions regarding frequent incidents of repression on women and children, the Home Minister said, "It's a reality that policemen can't safeguard every child at home but we are trying to ensure that the accused persons are arrested."

Rafiqul Islam claimed that all notorious criminals were arrested. He however expressed concern that "hardcore criminals" were getting bail. "I'll not comment on courts because it is their discretion to grant bail. I had talks with the Law Minister and the Attorney General on this issue and a committee is working on it."

Tuition fees

From Page 1
students in terms of number amount of money," another source said.

Now, during admission, a student has to pay fees of Tk 2020 for one year, which will be increased to Tk 2600 if the fees are enhanced, the sources added.

Every year a total of about 4000 students get enrolled in Honours courses in the university. The university has a strength of about 25,000 students in Honours and Masters courses.

BNP standing body discusses details of 'long march'

By Staff Correspondent
The standing committee of BNP continued its discussion till late last night on the party's planned June 9 long march towards the Chittagong Hill Tracts.

Chaired by BNP Chairperson and Leader of the Opposition in Jatiya Sangsad Begum Khaleda Zia, the meeting discussed details of the long march programme, in demand for scrapping of the CHT accord and the laws for its implementation.

Beginning at about 8 pm, the meeting discussed preparations, route and destination of the long march. Starting from the capital, the long march might reach the CHT district of Khagrachhari through Mirsharwar area of Chittagong district, according to one proposal discussed in the meeting, sources said.

The committee also discussed another proposal of reaching Bandarban district via Chittagong city.

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The committee also discussed another proposal of reaching Bandarban district via Chittagong city.

Begum Zia is likely to join the long march in a car and address public rallies at different points on way to the CHT, the sources added.

The standing committee also decided to hold a joint meeting of the party committees this noon for further discussion on the long march programme.

Rape in clinic

Govt gets leave for appeal against bail of accused
By SC Correspondent
The Appellate Division of the Supreme Court yesterday granted leave to the government for appeal against the ad-interim anticipatory bail of Dr Mominur Rahman alias Jinnah and Jostna, an eye of a medical clinic, in a rape case.

Earlier the High Court granted ad-interim anticipatory bail to both of them on March 18, 1998.

The government filed the leave petition against the order of ad-interim anticipatory bail. It was alleged in the case that while Roni Akhtar was attending her father in Niramoy Clinic at Mymensingh in the night of January 4, 1998 at about 12 am Dr Jinnah violated her against her will.

Subsequently police submitted chargesheet in the case. But the accused persons instead of surrendering before the Special Court on Women and Child Repression, appeared before the HC and obtained ad-interim anticipatory bail.

Acting Attorney General AW Bhuiyan moved the leave petition.

Long march

From Page 1
had migrated to India, the Home Minister ruled out any possibility of a 'push-in' move by the neighbouring country.

Rafiqul Islam earlier gave a brief resume of activities of the nine departments under his ministry and said reform measures were underway in different departments including the police force, prisons, fire brigade and narcotics and drug control.

The minister claimed that law and order had not deteriorated in the country. "In the past people were less interested in recording cases with police. But now people are lodging cases. OCs are bound to take case or have to face serious problems."

A newswoman brought to the minister's notice that a city police station refused to take a case against a ruling party lawmaker on Monday, he said that he was not aware of it. He however said, "Definitely I'll look into the matter."

Responding to questions regarding frequent incidents of repression on women and children, the Home Minister said, "It's a reality that policemen can't safeguard every child at home but we are trying to ensure that the accused persons are arrested."

Rafiqul Islam claimed that all notorious criminals were arrested. He however expressed concern that "hardcore criminals" were getting bail. "I'll not comment on courts because it is their discretion to grant bail. I had talks with the Law Minister and the Attorney General on this issue and a committee is working on it."

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Minor girl raped in city: 1 held

By Staff Correspondent
An eight-year-old girl was raped allegedly by a neighbour in city's North Kafrul yesterday morning.

Police later arrested the alleged rapist, Rafiqul Islam, 22, an employee of a garments factory. The victim was admitted to the Dhaka Medical College Hospital.

The mother of the victim worked as a maid in a mess in the locality. When the mother left for work yesterday morning, Rafiqul called the girl inside his room, locked the door and raped her.

The mother of the victim filed a case with Cantonment thana under Children and Women Repression Prevention Act.

35 fall sick during UP chairmen's convention

By Staff Correspondent
At least 35 people fainted and 128 others were treated for dehydration during the convention of Dhaka Division Union Parishad Chairmen and Members at Sher-e-Bangla Nagar in the city yesterday.

At least 10 thousand Union Parishad chairmen and members attended the convention.

"We sent 35 patients to hospitals who fainted due to the unbearable heat," said the leader of the 17-member medical team deployed for the convention. The team comprised six doctors, six nurses, a liaison officer and three pharmacists.

Trader shot dead

From Page 1
till last night in connection with the murder. The body was sent to DMCH morgue for autopsies.

Rezaur Rahman, brother of the victim, filed a murder case accusing three unidentified persons with Tejjana thana in this regard yesterday.

Political cases

From Page 1
Monday that the government was yet to dispose of "political cases" against leaders and workers of BNP even two months after expiry of the deadline agreed upon between the two sides.

Asked whether BNP has been informed of the delay in the scrutiny process, the Home Minister said it was the responsibility of Post and Telecommunications Minister Mohammad Nasim to convey any development in this respect. He, however, added that he would have talks on this issue with Nasim, who had played key role in reaching the March 2 AL-BNP accord.

While admitting that every country will decide its own security perceptions and take measures accordingly, the Prime Minister expressed her view that "nuclear weapons did not enhance a country's security in the post-Cold War and, indeed, could diminish it."

There was a great realisation the world over of the need for nuclear disarmament, she added.

Sheikh Hasina also expressed the confidence that all differences and problems could be resolved through dialogue and discussion.

Relief operation at Afghan quake site begins

KABUL, June 1: Scrambling against time and hostile terrain, relief agencies launched a major emergency operation today for survivors of a devastating earthquake in Afghanistan that killed thousands, reports Reuters.

Aid agencies said there was an urgent need for medicine, blankets and shelter for thousands made homeless by the second massive quake since February.

"The key this time, as it was last time, is getting shelter for these people," said United Nations spokeswoman Sarah Russell in Islamabad, capital of neighbouring Pakistan.

Aid agencies fear that the earthquake, which measured 7.1 on the Richter scale, may have caused more devastation than the February disaster which killed at least 4,000.

Aid workers said up to 3,000 people were killed by the latest earthquake, while an anti-Taliban alliance in the region and the Taliban, which control most of Afghanistan, said 5,000 died.

Hasina: Letters

From Page 1
Sheikh Hasina wrote the letters in reply to the letters she received from the Prime Ministers of India and Pakistan in which they explained their respective positions with regard to nuclear tests, sources at the Foreign Office said.

Vajpayee's letter was received on May 16, while the letter of Sharif was delivered on May 20.

Sheikh Hasina in her "more or less identical replies" stressed that the imperative and priority for the countries of the region were development and cooperation among themselves so as to ensure a better quality of life and standard of living for the peoples of South Asia, sources said.

She pointed out that an arms race involving nuclear weapons and missile technology would be detrimental to these objectives (better quality of life of the people) and it would also affect the atmosphere of cooperation and friendship. "Our main concern nationally, at this point of time, is to combat the pervasive problems of grinding poverty, under development, disease, hunger and environmental degradation," she added.

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