

Minister defends 5.2 growth rate as 'conservative estimate'

Rejecting BNP's demand for an independent committee to verify the growth rate, State Minister for Planning Dr Mo... estimate of GDP '98-99 prepared by BBS...

PM inaugurates National Tree Plantation Drive

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina yesterday inaugurated the National Tree Plantation Drive with a call to every citizen to plant at least one tree...



Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina inaugurated the National Tree Plantation Campaign and Tree Fair '99 at the Dhanmondi Playground yesterday by planting a tree there. —PID photo

Kashmir war

KP Singh, president of the Associated Chambers of Commerce and Industry of India... Kashmir war From Page 1

Women in bunker

Indian combat troops who overran a strategic peak in Kashmir found bodies of armed women and almost a year's supplies for Islamic militiamen...

Senate polls

graduates' representatives to the DU senate started on June 9 at 35 centers throughout the country. A total of 31,424 voters...

Pakistan-NZ match today

Without as much as elaborating his game plan against 'obviously a very good side', Fleming said, 'We have a belief, Confidence comes from doing the small things right...'

Weather

No change in temperature

Light to moderate rain or thundershowers with temporary gusty wind is likely to occur at many places over Rajshahi, Sylhet, Chittagong and Barisal divisions with moderately heavy falls at places over Rajshahi division till 6 pm today, reports UNB...

Table with columns: City/Town, Temperature in Celsius (Max, Min), Humidity in percentage (Morning, Evening). Rows include Dhaka, Chittagong, Rajshahi, Khulna, Barisal, Sylhet, Cox's Bazar.

Doctors

The BMA President suggested improvement in the existing system of revenue collection by the department concerned. 'Improving the system will increase the revenue collection from doctors to a large extent...'



A Jatiyatabadi Chhatra Dal (JCD) procession in support of its 12-point demand in the city yesterday. —Star photo

Police camp to be set up at FDC soon

State Minister for Information Prof Abu Sayeed yesterday said a police camp would be set up soon on the premises of Film Development Corporation (FDC) to ensure more security for the artists and technicians of the film industry, reports BBS...

Jatiya Sangsad tidbits

From page 12 Yesterday was no different. AL lawmakers greeted Akhtar for opposing his party's hartal against the proposed budget while BNP MPs thanked Siddiqui for challenging the AL hierarchy...

Beyond the boundary

From Page 1 Now is as good a time to deliver the goods, considered long overdue. This is the time when performance must be made to count, to justify all the efforts, innovations and typical South African novelties that have been introduced into the game...

Sylhet hartal

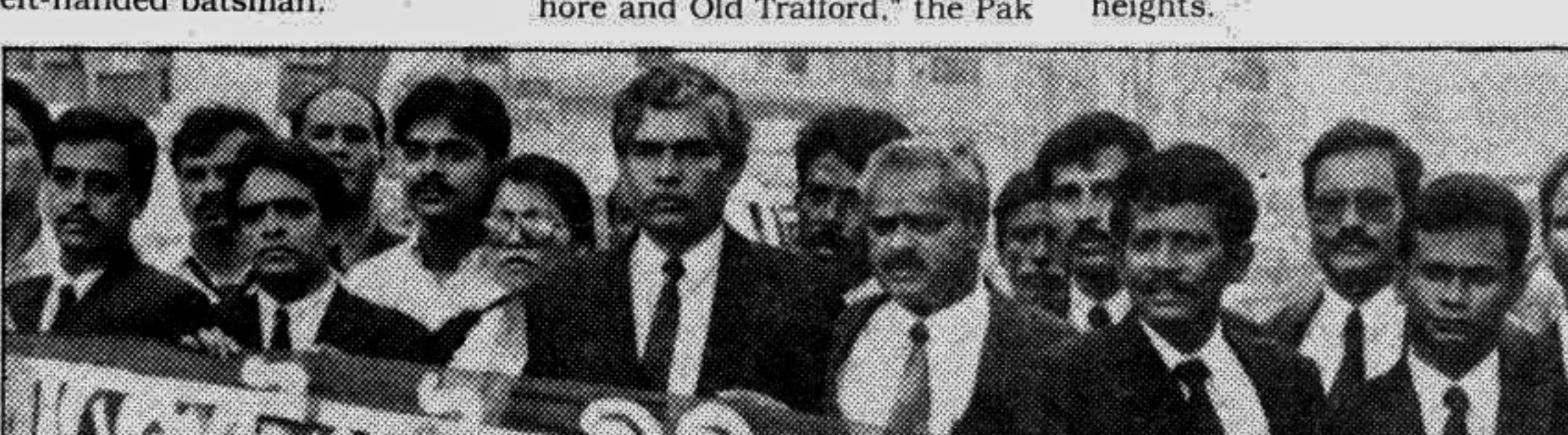
het-Tamabil Road on April 25. The agitated villagers imposed restriction on plying of trucks on the road. However, the trucks started after plying on the road after a fruitful meeting among the local leaders, government officials and truck owners...

Share scam cases

From Page 1 Sessions Judge. The cases were transferred to the Metropolitan Court which sent those to the Court of Third Additional Metropolitan Sessions Judge. The three companies then sought transfer of the cases to the court of the Second Additional Metropolitan Sessions Judge. But the Metropolitan Sessions Court rejected the prayer...

City's analogue phones to become digital by '99

Telecommunications and Home Minister Mohammad Nasim yesterday said that all analogue telephones of the city would be converted into digital ones within this year, reports UNB. While briefing the press, he said new 138,500 telephone lines are being added under the Greater Dhaka Telephone Project by June 2000 to be implemented by public and private sectors...



Dhaka Metropolitan Bar Association brought out a procession in the city yesterday demanding withdrawal of proposed VAT on lawyers. —Star photo

Obituary

Chowdhury Mohiuddin Ahmed (Tara Mia) died on Monday in the city. He was buried at his family graveyard at Dattapara, says a press release. His qukhwani will be held at Dattapara today. He is survived by his wife, six daughters, three sons and innumerable relative and friends.

Scope of dissent

From Page 1 The issue of inner party democracy has once again come to the forefront because of the way two dissenting voices are being treated by the two big parties at the moment, both are prominent members of the parliament - Maj (ret'd) Akhtaruzzaman of BNP and Kader Siddiqui (Bangla Bir) of AL. According to reports disciplinary actions are in the offing against Akhtaruzzaman in face of suggestions that he should be expelled. Now the question is what has he done? He has publicly opposed a hartal called in the name of his party, without the party's decision making body having decided on it. The Liaison Committee, which does not have the mandate for independent action but only to co-ordinate activities between its members, did not and does not have the power to call hartals. Take the case of Kader Siddiqui. He is unhappy about the way things are being run by his party government. So what can he do? Is there any scope for him or people like him to speak critically about the performance of their own party - a party for which their sacrifice and devotion is no less than that of others - without being termed as anti-party or anti-leader. Usually there are more dissenting voices within a ruling party than the opposition, the latter being united by a sense of grievance. There are many MPs, leaders and workers who are extremely critical about the way AL is ruling the country. How are these people to vent their views and inform the leadership of what they are thinking. There exists no official channel to express dissenting views. It is not our intention to defend Akhtaruzzaman or Kader Siddiqui but to point out that today there is no scope for a dissenting voice with our political parties. Almost like the communist parties of the old days, members will have to submit to the party 'will' even if that 'will' be of only one person, and exercised most arbitrarily. The truth of the matter is that there exists a fascist environment within each of our leading parties and the basic culture of such an environment is blind obedience and habitual genuflecting. Showering praise upon the leader is the norm and taking a critical view of his decisions is a sacrilege, punishable by expulsion from the party if not downright manhandling or public humiliation. (Remember the plight of Dr. Kamal Hossain when he demanded a post-election assessment of why AL lost in '91 elections and that Barrister Nazmul Huda for suggesting the acceptance of a caretaker government formula which BNP eventually did). From what we know of our inner party discussions - in bodies such as the presidium, central committee, standing committee, executive committee, parliamentary party or what have you - one gets the impression that both Sheikh Hasina or Khaleda Zia are super beings and that they have never, and can never, make mistakes. Their decisions are not to be questioned but only obeyed. One obvious reason for such a turn of events is the family nature of the leadership. For both Sheikh Hasina and Khaleda Zia the leadership positions are their inheritance rather than rewards for their achievements. And because it is inheritance there is never any scope (or even a thought) that AL or the BNP will be led by anybody other than the incumbents. Here South Asia can be sighted as the region of dynastic parties. The biggest culprit is the Congress Party of India. Whatever good that the Nehru Dynasty did to India, it totally destroyed the possibility of generating new Congress leadership by the continuous rule by a single family. Then we have the Bhuttos in Pakistan and the Bandarnayeks in Sri Lanka. The negative aspects of such a dynastic rule and permanent party chief may have been somewhat mitigated if the election in the rest of the party held high positions in the party regularly. Throughout the decade of the nineties the ruling Awami League held elections of its top leaders only twice, once in 1992, and then after five years in 1997. BNP's record is far worse. In its twenty year history it has held only four elections since its founding in 1978 - in '80, '81, '89 and '93. Without regular elections and infusion of fresh and young blood into the party leadership - coming not as a favour from the top but as achievements for service to the people - our political parties will fail to face the challenges of the 21st Century. We conclude by saying that a party that does not follow democratic norms within its own fold cannot give the country a truly democratic culture. The proof of it we see everyday in the way AL and BNP treat each other. As we have pointed out repeatedly that both of these parties enjoy enormous public support (AL got 30-plus% votes and 37% votes in '91 and '96 respectively and BNP got 30% and 34% votes in the same elections), and yet they behave as if only one has the people's mandate. The lack of mutual tolerance comes from an inner party culture that does not tolerate differing views. A dissident is not a dissident person. He or she is dissident because he or she is desperately trying to speak out within the party structure, but having found no space speaks out publicly. Democratic parties must provide space for differing and critical views. Otherwise what is the difference between them and the communist parties. To provide leadership to the country in an ever changing world our political parties must become modern both in its outlook and inner party culture. For this to come about we must start by handling our dissidents differently.

Clinton

From Page 1 The troop movements were precautionary. There is a certain amount of movement being carried on by the enemy all along the LOC and we have undertaken some precautionary measures. Pakistan evacuated thousands of villagers living close to the border with India in Punjab province as fighting in disputed Kashmir kept up today. Authorities have evacuated between 2,500 and 4,000 villagers living close to the border with India, according to security sources in the border city of Lahore, capital of Punjab province. AFP says, the Indian army is bracing for a long campaign in the rugged peaks of the disputed land. Experts today said the fighting, involving 30,000 troops, batteries of artillery, and fighter jets, could drag for another three months, draining India's military resources and manpower in the desolate icy heights. Tomorrow, South Africa and Australia look to have a duel for the classic duel they fought the other day. A fatal dropped catch has now placed South Africa in a predicament, where they not only have to hold their nerve, but also beat the Australians at their own game. Anything otherwise, is a fate worse than death. More than any other team in this competition, South Africa had been under the most pressure. They have promised much over the years but still have not been able to catch the biggest catch. The team has been considered the ultimate one-day machine, and their management and the selectors at home have dropped enough thinly veiled hints to Hansie Cronje to suggest that perhaps

Train service

From Page 1 She said that later it was discussed at the official level and the two countries decided to form a committee to study the feasibility of importing electricity. The matter still remains at this stage. In reply to another question, the Prime Minister informed the House that steps have so far been taken to produce 2594 MW of electricity since 1996.