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PM leaves for London

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina left Dhaka last night for London on a four-day official visit to the United Kingdom at the invitation of British Prime Minister Tony Blair, reports BSS.

After conclusion of her official visit, the Prime Minister will stay back till July 14 to attend several functions to be organised by Bangladeshi expatriates living there.

Foreign Minister Abdus Samad Azad, LGRD and Cooperatives Minister Zillur Rahman, Finance Minister Shah A M S Kibria, Education Minister A S H K Sadique, Civil Aviation and Public Works Minister Mosharraf Hossain, Mayor of Dhaka Mohammad Hanif, State Minister for Shipping Mofazzel Hussain Chowdhury Maya were, among others, at the airport to see her off.

The Prime Minister is expected to return home on July 15.

Festival in UK: Bangladeshis express concern

By Staff Correspondent

Bangladeshi community in Britain has expressed concern over the inclusion of a Bangladeshi firm as a major patron of Bangladesh Festival beginning in London by keeping it at bay. BBC Radio said last night.

The festival is organised by Arts World Wide to promote Bangladeshi culture abroad.

Organisers said total budget for the festival was four lakh pound sterling, of which one lakh pound has been raised through sponsorship deal. A Bangladeshi business concern, Beximco, will alone pay 40,000 pounds while Cairn Energy and Shell will pay 12,500 pounds each. Bangladesh Biman will provide tickets to the tune of about 35,000 pounds to fly in some guests from Bangladesh. Besides, some local organisations have contributed to the festival coffers. BBC Radio in its Bengal Service said.

Quoting British media reports, it also said concern was

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by Praful Bidwai

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Prayer Timings

July 6

	Azan	Jamaat
Fajr	4-10	4-15
John	12-50	1-25
Asr	4-55	5-05
Maghrib	7-00	7-05
Esha	7-55	8-15

Source: Islamic Foundation

The Daily Star

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RANGS GROUP

Pakistan agrees to pull out forces

India to continue fighting: Militants reject Sharif-Clinton accord

ISLAMABAD, July 5: Militants fighting Indian rule in Kashmir and Pakistan's main Islamic opposition group today rejected Islamabad's agreement to restore peace on the Kashmir Line of Control as a betrayal.

The Pakistan People's Party (PPP), led by former prime minister Benazir Bhutto, and another opposition group called for a parliamentary debate on the agreement Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif made with US President Bill Clinton in Washington on Sunday in Washington.

"Nawaz Sharif has let down

the army, the mujahideen and has dashed the hopes of 140 million people of Pakistan. He will not escape from this," said Munawwar Hassan, acting head of the Jamaat-e-Islami party.

"This is total surrender," he said. "Starting from today, we are launching a campaign against Nawaz Sharif's betrayal and tomorrow we will observe a nation-wide black day or protest day."

He called on Pakistanis to observe a complete strike throughout the country and to join allies and public meetings which he said would continue

until Sharif was removed from power.

"We are also making arrangements for a suitable reception of the prime minister whenever and wherever he returns."

Hassan spoke hours after Sharif met Clinton and announced that the forces that had crossed the Line of Control would pull out of the strategic heights they occupied in northern Kashmir.

"They also agreed that it was vital for the peace of South Asia that the Line of Control in Kashmir be respected by both parties, in accordance with the 1972 Simla Accord," which ended India and Pakistan's last

war.

Senior US officials, who spoke on condition of anonymity, stopped short of saying Sharif had acknowledged his government was behind what it has called an infiltration of Muslim militants across the Line of Control into Indian territory.

But US officials have made plain that they regard Pakistan as having instigated this latest round of fighting over Kashmir, and they indicated after the talks Sunday that Washington now expects to see a Pakistani withdrawal.

"Our position has been that the forces that are across the Line of Control need to be returned to the Pakistani side," said one senior official. "Our understanding is that there will be a withdrawal of forces... we want to see positive steps taken at a very early time."

At one point during the meeting Sunday at Blair House, and official guest residence across the street from the White House, Clinton spoke also for 10 minutes by phone with Indian Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpeyi.

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BNP Chairperson Begum Khaleda Zia addressing a public meeting at Paltan Maidan in the city yesterday. — Star photo

Bills passed amid opposition walkout

Time for city corporn, upazila elections extended again

By Staff Correspondent

Jatiya Sangsad passed five bills yesterday extending once again the deadlines for holding City Corporation and Upazila Parishad elections, amid a couple of opposition walkouts.

The first walk-out was staged in protest of the Chair's refusal to an opposition demand for a division vote in the House, while they staged the second walkout protesting the Chair's refusal to allow the opposition members to speak on their proposed amendments on amendment bills.

Earlier, the opposition members demanded that the elections to the city corporations and the upazila parishads be held simultaneously with the parliamentary polls under a non-party caretaker government.

Deputy Speaker Abdul

Hamid chaired the sitting of the House that witnessed passages of five bills in less than two hours.

However, the original deadline for holding elections to the country's four city corporations was April 4 this year. The government got the laws concerned amended to extend the deadline in March 15 last. According to those amendments, election to the Dhaka City Corporation was due by October 29, Chittagong City Corporation by October 6, Rajshahi by October 1 and Khulna by September 29.

The fresh extension of the deadlines yesterday provided another 90 day for holding the mayoral polls. As a result, the city corporation polls will now be held between December and January next.

The Upazila polls were due by July 30. The amendments of the law yesterday extended the deadline by another 150 day.

Arguing for extending the deadline for city corporation elections, Local Government and Rural Development Minister Zillur Rahman said fresh demarcation of the wards of the corporation was necessary to implement the new provision

for direct election of the female commissioners in the reserved seats. "Besides, the voters' lists have to be updated."

For the Upazila polls, the minister argued that July is not a suitable time for holding polls as far as climatic conditions are concerned. "If the deadline is extended for another 150 days, it would be easier to hold the elections in the dry season."

Forty-one opposition members belonging to BNP and Jatiya Party moved separate motions to elicit public opinion on the bills before their passage.

Two ruling party MPs — Abdul Latif Mirza from a Sirajganj constituency and Shahjahan Khan from a Madaripur constituency — also joined the opposition in the demand for eliciting public opinion. Of them, Latif Mirza took floor to withdraw his motion, while Shahjahan Khan left the House at the direction of his party whips.

While arguing for sending the bills for eliciting public opinion, the opposition MPs said it was essential specially when a couple of Treasury

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Truck owners in Chittagong call 48-hr strike from July 13

From Staff Correspondent

CHITTAGONG, July 5: All kinds of vehicles except rickshaws and private cars were off the roads and highways here due to a 24-hour strike enforced by the truck owners from 6 am today.

Road communication in greater Chittagong remained snarled and transportation of goods was hampered due to the strike.

Truck owners of greater Chittagong called the strike demanding withdrawal of enhanced income tax, 25 per cent additional tax on vehicles and VAT imposed on spare parts.

Port sources said delivery of goods to and from Chittagong port was suspended today due to truck strike.

Consequently, huge cargo waiting for delivery from the port sheds remained stockpiled causing space congestion, the sources added.

UNB adds: Leaders of the Truck Owners' Association at a press conference at the local press club in the evening called for another 48-hour strike from July 13.

They also threatened an indefinite strike from July 15 if their demands were not met within the period.

Bangladesh energy sector

Institutional malaise main problem: WB

World Bank Vice President for South Asia, Mieko Nishimizu, said that institutional and governance problems are at the core of the chronic deficiencies in Bangladesh's energy sector, said a World Bank press release yesterday.

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bills. Only about 65 per cent of the public sector's generation capacity is in service, and only 60 per cent of the electricity generated is actually paid for, the press release pointed out.

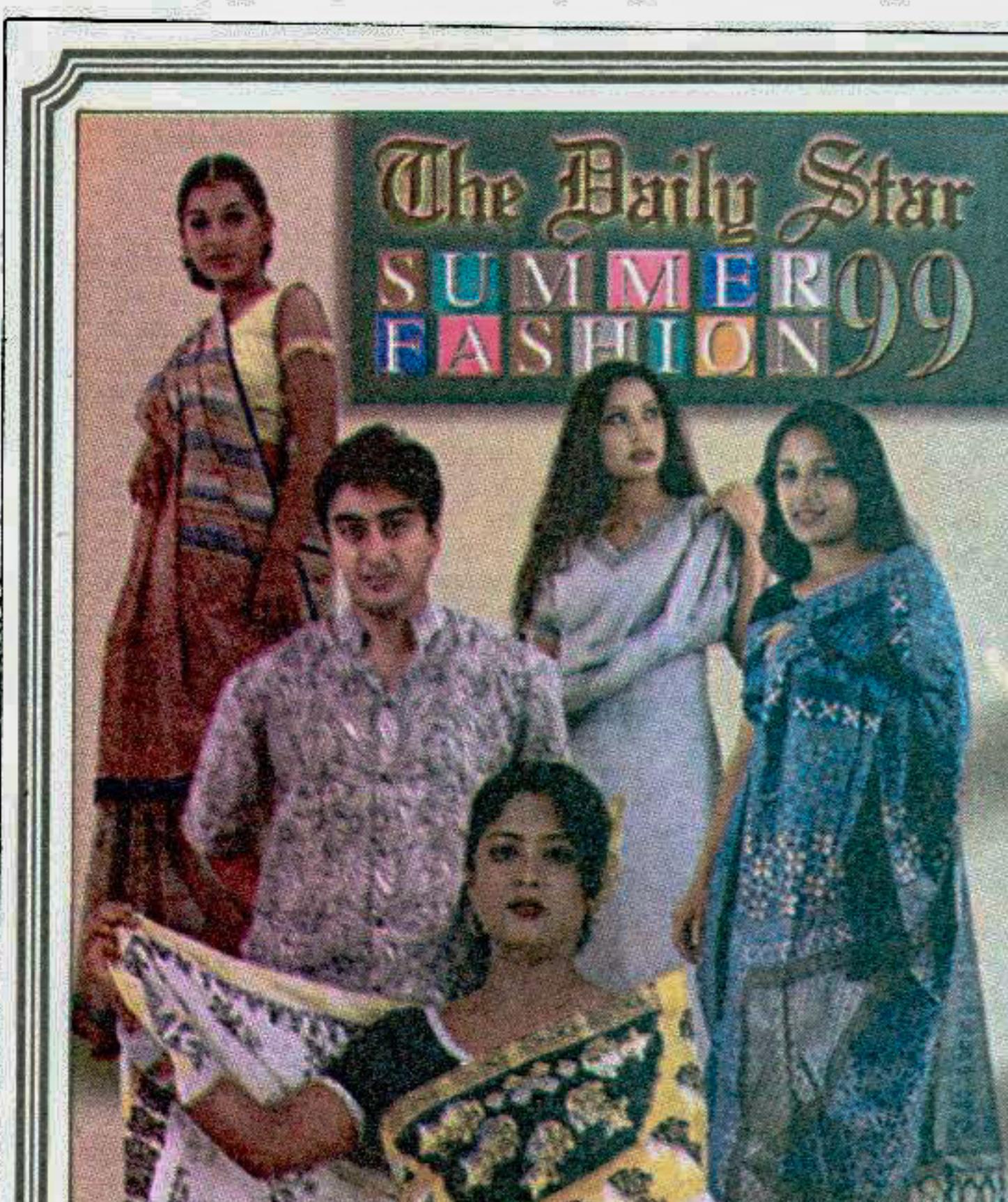
Nishimizu

discussed the energy sector with Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina, State Minister for Energy Rafiqul Islam, Leader of the Opposition Begum Khaleda Zia, senior government officials and trade union leaders during her recent visit to Bangladesh. She was accompanied by Fred Temple, World Bank Country Director for Bangladesh, and Alastair McEwin, the World Bank's energy sector director for South Asia during her meetings.

The World Bank

expressed concern about the implications of the weak financial performance of BPDB and DESA, which could double these organisations' drain on the government budget. While only 15 per cent of households in Bangladesh have public electricity supply, the government currently spends as much keeping the power sector afloat as it spends on health and family planning. Financial losses are in large part due to theft and non-payment of electricity

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Don't Miss It!

Dhaka's call
Stop fighting,
resolve Kashmir
issue through
dialogue

Bangladesh yesterday once again asserted that India and Pakistan stop fighting each other and sit together to settle the problem centring Kashmir, repeats BSS.

"We have told them earlier, and telling it again that problem could be resolved only through negotiations and not by fighting," Foreign Minister Abdus Samad Azad told newsmen at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

He said "we are against this type of fighting that is being waged by the two neighbours."

"Let the two countries be persuaded by any means to sit and solve the problem," he observed.

The Foreign Minister was talking with journalists after he inaugurated the Internet Web Site at his office.

Azad said it is not Bangladesh alone, but also the See Page 12 Col 1

Jesmin buried
Man who performed
last rites fears
people's wrath

From Our Correspondent
NARAYANGANJ, July 5: An unidentified person at a Masdai graveyard in the town at around 8 this morning.

Only five or six people who worked at the graveyard performed the last rites before the burial of the 22-year old girl. Non-governmental organisation Tanzim Association arranged the burial after receiving request from police and the hospital authorities, sources said.

Unidentified assailants killed Jesmin who was a sex worker in the early hours of

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Bullet-hit Feni JCD activist succumbs

From Our Correspondent
FENI, July 5: A JCD activist, who was shot by opponents in Daganbuiyan thana on Sunday, died at Noakhali Sadar Hospital today.

The victim was identified as Sheikh Ahmed, 18, son of Abdul Haq of village Sekandpur under Daganbuiyan thana.

Police and witnesses said, a gang of armed youths attacked

Sheikh Ahmed at a tea stall at Tulatoli Bazar Sunday afternoon.

He was rushed to Noakhali General Hospital where he succumbed to bullet injuries at around 4 am today.

However, UNB quoting local sources said Sheikh Ahmed was shot when he went to the bazaar to attend a meeting convened by the local elite to form a terrorism resistance committee in the wake of terrorist activities of two local factions of Chhatria League.

District unit of JCD blamed

ruling party backed Chhatria League for the killing.

Free flow of information a must