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JS goes into 6-day recess

By Staff Correspondent

The Jatiya Sangsad went into a six-day recess after a brief sitting yesterday to facilitate its members to attend the Asian Parliamentarians' Conference for Peace and Cooperation beginning in the city tomorrow.

The session will resume at 9:30 am on September 6 when the House is scheduled to discuss the controversial transshipment issue. The Opposition earlier announced not to attend the session unless the government cancelled its decision to examine the proposal to allow transshipment facility to India through Bangladesh's land.

Deputy Speaker Abdul Hamid adjourned the House at 11:30 am after a two-hour sitting, with the members of opposition BNP, Jatiya Party (Ershad) and Jamaat-e-Islami continuing their abstention. But the rival JP faction led by Communication Minister Anwar Hossain attended the sitting.

After the question hour, Law, Justice and Parliamentary Affairs Minister Abdul Matin Khoshru introduced a bill titled The Trusts (Amendment) Act, 1999. The bill was later sent to the JS Standing Committee on the Ministry of Law, Justice and

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Welfare trust for non-govt pry school teachers approved

The government will form a welfare trust for teachers of non-government registered primary school, reports UNB.

An official announcement said the Cabinet at its weekly meeting yesterday approved in principle the Registered Non-government Primary School Teachers Welfare Trust Act 1999.

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina presided over the meeting at her office.

Official sources said a Bill to form the trust would be placed before the Jatiya Sangsad.

After passage of the Bill, the teachers of non-government but registered primary schools will get retirement facility from the trust funds.

Besides, they will also be provided financial assistance if any of them become incapable to work during their service period," said the announcement.

Quoting the meeting resolution, it said the fund would also provide financial assistance to the families of those teachers who will die from accident while in service.

Shamsur Rahman not sacked or removed

The government yesterday said poet Shamsur Rahman was not sacked or removed as chairman of the Bangla Academy, reports UNB.

"As there is no provision for appointing a person as chairman of the academy for a third consecutive term, a new appointment was given after the expiry of Shamsur Rahman's second tenure on August 18," the Press Information Department of the government said yesterday.

The government hoped that all confusions regarding this would be over after this clarification.

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Supplement

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Prayer Timings

August 31		
Azhan	Jamaat	
Fajr	4-10	4-15
Zohr	12-45	1-30
Asr	4-45	5-00
Maghrib	6-40	6-45
Esha	8-00	8-30

Source: Islamic Foundation



Flood waters have submerged low-lying areas of Nandipara near the city.

— Star photo

Khaleda leads massive procession in city 'People now united to oust govt thru' mass upsurge'

By Staff Correspondent

BNP Chairperson and Leader of the Opposition in Parliament Begum Khaleda Zia yesterday led a massive procession in the city, organised by the party to protest the government's move to provide 'corridor facility to India in the name of transshipment'.

As per earlier announced programmes, three other components of the opposition alliance -- Jatiya Party, Jamaat-e-Islami and Islami Oikya Jote -- also brought out separate 'mass processions' from different spots in the city protesting the government move.

The power base of Awami

League government has been shaken. It has no scope to stay in power anymore as the people have become united to oust it through a mass upsurge," Begum Zia told the participants in the procession.

Thousands of BNP leaders, activists, supporters and people started gathering in front of the BRTC Bhawan at Rajuk Avenue since 3pm carrying banners, festoons, party flags and the National Flag.

The Rajuk Avenue, Dilkusha, Motijheel, Baitul

Mukarram, Fakirerpool and

Nayapaltan areas turned into a

human sea within one and a

half hours. BNP erected a stage on a truck and fixed microphones with roadside light posts.

Begum Zia reached there at 4:50pm and addressed the huge gathering for about 27 minutes, bitterly criticising the government for its 'policy of subservience to India'.

The procession started at 5:25pm and terminated at Sonargaon Link Road at 6:35pm after crossing Nayapaltan, Kakrail, Shantinagar, Malibagh, Moghbazar, New Eskaton and Bangla Motor.

Begum Zia stood in a jeep at the middle of the long procession and waved to cheering people along the roads.

When the front part of the procession reached Moghbazar crossing at 6:15pm, the rear part was at Kakrail crossing.

The procession was peaceful barring some incidents of violence in front of the passport office at Mogh Bazar at about 6:45pm in which two persons were bullet hit.

Witnesses said when the rear part of the procession reached there, a group of armed terrorists burst forth from a lane opposite the Janakantha Bhawan, chased the marchers and fired 2-3 shots.

BNP activists chased them. A chase and counter-chase there lasted for about half an hour. Two employees of Daily Janakantha -- Motaleb (35), an electrical engineer and storekeeper Nazrul Islam (32) were bullet hit at that time.

Police rushed to the spot at about 7:15pm, resorted to lathi charge, hurled tear gas shells and fired rubber bullets.

During the chase and counter chase, seven vehicles parked in front of the Janakantha Bhawan were damaged and an autorickshaw of the daily torched. Some shops on the footpath were also ransacked.

City BNP Convenor Sadek Hossain Khoka MP declared the procession terminated at the Sonargaon Link Road Crossing at 6:35 pm in presence of Begum Zia and senior leaders including Prof AQM Badruddoza Chowdhury, Abdul Mannan Bhuiyan, Oli Ahmed, Abdul Matin Chowdhury, Dr Khan-daker Mosharraf Hossain, Tariqul Islam, Shahjahan Siraj and Salahuddin Qader Chowdhury.

Addressing the pre-proces-

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A view of the mass procession led by Khaleda Zia near the Dainik Bangla crossing.

— Star photo

Plan to explore gas, oil in Sundarbans worries NGOs

By Staff Correspondent

Different environmental groups and non-governmental organisations (NGOs) have expressed concern over the plans for exploration of oil and gas in the Sundarbans, which has been declared as a World Heritage Site by the UNESCO.

In a joint statement yesterday, they said: "We feel deeply concerned to see reports published in the leading dailies that the gas exploration activities being undertaken by two foreign companies would be extended to some parts of the Sundarbans mangrove forest and the coastal forest alongside the Sundarbans identified as Blocks 5, 7 and 10 covering areas falling within the districts of Satkhira, Bhola, Bagerhat and Patuakhali."

The statement was issued by

Dr. Qazi Faruque Ahmed, chairperson of ADAB, Khushi Kabir, chairperson of Coalition of Environmental NGOs, Quamrul Islam Chowdhury, president of Forum of Environmental Journalists, Sayeda Rizoana Hasan, director of Bangladesh Environmental Lawyers Association (BELA), and Dr. Atiq Rahman, director of Bangladesh Centre for Advanced Studies (BCAS).

Exploration of gas and oil, if allowed in the blocks within and around the area of the reserve forest of the Sundarbans, would expose the fine-tuned, fragile and invaluable eco-system to great danger of extinction and "all the commitments of the government of Bangladesh would lose significance, putting the country and its

citizens into a shameful situation of undermining the trust of the world community," they feared.

The professionals urged the government to consider the concern of the civil society and immediately abandon all plans to explore gas and oil from fields falling within and adjacent to the Sundarbans reserve forest area.

They demanded that it take all steps to ensure that all such exploration and operation are undertaken only in compliance with the relevant law of the land.

The leaders said the Sundarbans has been declared a reserve forest under the Forest Act, 1927, barring all activities other than the ones concerned

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Ershad says Beginning of oust-govt movement

By Staff Correspondent

Jatiya Party chairman HM Ershad led a mass procession in the city yesterday in protest against the government move to provide transshipment facility to India.

The procession, started from Paltan Maidan and paraded different streets before dispersing at Maghbazar peacefully. It was part of the four-party opposition alliance's mass procession programme.

Addressing the participants in the procession both at Paltan and Maghbazar, Ershad said this was the beginning of an oust-government movement.

"This government is 'subservient' to India and is signing anti-people accords with that country one after another, he said.

Citing the reported intrusion of police force from one of the Indian states into Rajshahi, Ershad said, "A government which can afford to remain ignorant about such an incident is not a government at all. What is the use of having such a government in the country?"

The JP chief expressed the fear that if transshipment facility is given to India, the country would be 'flooded with arms and pshensid'.

Ershad noted with satisfaction that a ruling party lawmaker has resigned and alleged that the party has resorted to 'horse-trading' to break Jatiya

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Major rivers swell: 18 dists hit More low-lying areas in Dhaka, N'ganj flooded

By Staff Correspondent

Flood waters inundated more low-lying areas in Dhaka and Narayanganj districts yesterday.

Officials at the Flood Forecasting and Warning Centre (FFWC) forecast flooding of fresh areas in northern and central districts.

The districts are Bogra, Pabna, Gaibandha, Rangpur, Naogaon, Shariatpur, Natore, Chapainawabganj, Sirajganj, Tangail, Jamalpur, Rajbari, Madaripur, Chandpur, Manikganj and Munshiganj.

Fresh areas around the capital went under water with the rise of rivers around Dhaka and Narayanganj.

In Narayanganj, 35 unions in Fatullah, Siddhirganj, Sonargaon, Atrahaz and Rupganj thanas have so far been flooded.

The FFWC said at least seven major rivers across the country are flowing above their danger levels at 11 points.

It said more areas in the

Ganges and Brahmaputra basins will be hit by flood and water levels in the Ganges-Padma system will continue to rise in the next 24 hours ending at 9 am today.

Rivers in the Brahmaputra-Jamuna system, however, registered slight fall at different points except at Bahadurabad and Aricha.

In the Brahmaputra basin, the Jamuna was flowing by 28 cm above the danger level at Bahadurabad, 33 cm at Sirajganj, and 64 cm at Aricha, while the Lakhya was flowing 30 cm above the danger level at Narayanganj.

The Dharla in the same basin is now flowing 11 cm above the danger level at Kurigram, the Turag 7 cm at Tongi and the Kaliganga 31 cm at Taraghat.

In the Ganges basin, the Padma is flowing 47 cm above the danger mark at Pankha, 67 cm at Goalunda and 63 cm at

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Flow of waters obstructed at Chandpur

By Special Correspondent

Normal flow of flood waters to the Bay down the Meghna channel is getting obstructed at Chandpur like last year.

This may be due to high tide in the sea because of the approaching full moon or deposit of silt in the Meghna channel, Akhter Hossain, an official at the Flood Forecasting and Warning Centre (FFWC) here told The Daily Star yesterday.

Flood waters of the Ganges-Brahmaputra river system flow into the Bay of Bengal through the Meghna channel and the obstruction there is contributing to the swelling of the rivers, he said.

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Probe UCBL incident, HC orders BB Stay extended by two weeks

By Staff Correspondent

The High Court yesterday ordered the central bank to investigate into the UCBL incident and submit a report to the court "as soon as it is ready".

It also extended by two weeks the stay on the central bank order which had suspended all activities of the United Commercial Bank Ltd (UCBL) board.

The court directives came after a writ petition by Zafar Ahmed Chowdhury and 10 other directors against central bank, UCBL and three Bangladesh Bank officials including the Governor on Sunday.

On Thursday, some 50 armed men allegedly backed by policemen stormed the boardroom of United Commercial Bank Ltd (UCBL) during a meeting and forced five of the bank directors to resign at gunpoint.

Chairman Zafar Chowdhury and fellow directors later alleged that Akhteruzzaman Chowdhury Babu, a former UCBL chairman, led a gang of hoodlums into the meeting and declared himself as the chairman of the bank.

The day after the incident the central bank served a show-cause notice upon Zafar Chowdhury and Babu addressing both of them as chairman of UCBL, asking them to explain why the board of the bank will not be dissolved. They were asked to respond by 3:00pm Sunday.

The Zafar-led directors filed the writ and obtained an interim stay on the operation of the central bank order till yesterday. The court also allowed the central bank officials to decide on a plea from the petitioners about reconsidering its show-cause notice and suspension order.

BB lawyer

Dr M Zahir, appearing for the central bank, pleaded that the situation deteriorated or there is a run on the bank then the central bank will feel helpless in view of the stay order. The court replied that the BB should immediately come with an application which the court will welcome.

Earlier, Zahir began his arguments by pointing out that the petitioners sought seven days' time to respond. He urged the court to allow the petitioners to respond and then allow BB to decide.

Zahir also denied allegations against the central bank that the regulators had failed to play neutral.

Filing an affidavit Zahir also said that soon after the incident the central bank standing committee met and referred the matter to the Governor "who caused the issuance of the impugned notice".

He pleaded for withdrawal of

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BB forms probe body

Star Report

Bangladesh Bank yesterday formed an inquiry committee to investigate the Thursday's incident at the United Commercial Bank Ltd (UCBL) in which its Chairman Zafar Ahmed Chowdhury and other directors were allegedly forced out of the bank by Akhteruzzaman Chowdhury Babu and his men.

The three-member committee, headed by BB Executive Director Murshid Kuli Khan, will submit its report by Thursday.

Meanwhile, the UCBL situation became normal to some extent yesterday as the panic among the depositors slightly died down.

But there were still some panic withdrawal, but the BB did not have to intervene.

"The bank has about Tk 200 crore in excess liquidity which is enough to meet emergencies," said a BB source.

Meanwhile, the BB in its board meeting Sunday felt that the regulator was forced to take the decision to issue the show cause notice to safeguard the rights of the depositors.

It decided that the Bank's measures should be taken in line with the decisions taken at the court.

Bank CEOs slam BB's two-notice approach

By Staff Correspondent

The Bankers Club, an association of bank CEOs, has expressed grave concern at the violent incident at UCBL boardroom and said that the incident reveals the security of the bank employees are also at stake, sources said.

The meeting held yesterday hailed the central bank's prompt decision of appointing an administrator but criticised its serving notices on two persons addressing both as chairman, the sources said.

They also criticised sealing

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Babu goes to court claiming UCBL chair

By Staff Correspondent

Akhteruzzaman Chowdhury Babu yesterday filed a writ petition seeking to establish his claim as chairman of the United Commercial Bank Ltd (UCBL).

The High Court bench, which is also hearing the petition by rivals Zafar Chowdhury and 10 other directors, refused to hear his case yesterday citing time constraints.

Soon after hearing on the other writ petition, Babu's lawyer insisted that the judges now hear his case.

In the petition, Babu said the board members duly resigned and that he was elected chairman of the bank.

Former Supreme Court Bar president Habibul Islam Bhuiyan and Barrister Abdur Razzaq appeared for Babu.

BOC rejoinder

By Staff Correspondent

The following rejoinder was received from BOC Bangladesh yesterday.

"Our attention has been drawn to the news item captioned 'Deadline expired 18 days ago, no probe report yet' published in the Daily Star on 30 August 1999. We have fully cooperated with the Enquiry Committee at all stages by providing promptly all the information sought from us from time to time. Besides, the concerned executive of BOC

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One gunned down at Monipuripara

By Staff Correspondent

Unidentified assailants gunned down one person at Monipuripara near the Sangsad Bhawan in the city yesterday afternoon.

Police and hospital sources identified the dead as ASM Manjurul Islam, 45, president of 'Pat Chashi Samity' (Jute growers' association). He was a resident of Mirpur.

The motive behind the murder could not be known immediately. Police recovered a licensed revolver that they said belonged to Manjurul.

Hospital sources said the incident took place at about 3:30 pm when Manjurul was walking towards the Monipuripara office of the organisation after attending a meeting at the Farmgate Khamarbari. The killers suddenly attacked him on the pavement and shot him point blank.

Manjurul was rushed to Dhaka Medical College Hospital.

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BNP-Jubo League clash Janakantha staff shot, vehicle set on fire

By Staff Correspondent

Gunshots were allegedly fired at the Janakantha building when BNP activists and another group reportedly backed by a former Jubo League leader fought a running battle on the street in city's New Eskaton area yesterday evening.

An employee of Janakantha sustained bullet injuries during the firing, according to the FIR filed with Ramna thana by the newspaper management which accused BNP leader Anwar Zahid of leading the attack on the offices of the vernacular.

An autorickshaw van of the newspaper was set on fire and at least 20 vehicles, including some belonging to the daily, were damaged.

At about 11pm, police arrested Zahid, on charges of

leading the attack.

Janakantha owner-editor Atiqullah Masud told BBC radio that gunmen from the BNP procession fired some 30 to 40 gunshots at the Janakantha building.

Witnesses including journalists covering the BNP procession said they heard 2-3 rounds of gunshots. "I don't think there were more than three gunshots there," said Shabuj, a Dhaka Medical College student, who was trapped during the street battle.

Police said they saw marks of gun shots on the walls of the building.

"Our investigation team found marks of five to six bullets on the walls of the building.

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Struck with bullet, a Janakantha employee screams in pain (right), and a damaged autorickshaw van belonging to the newspaper.

— Star photos