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Lankan army battles to keep supply routes open

LONDON, May 20: Sri Lankan rebels said today they were threatening key supply routes serving some 30,000 beleaguered troops on the Jaffna peninsula, but the government said its air base and sea port were still operating, reports Reuters.

The government's Special Media Information Centre said in a statement released in Colombo that the air force and navy were maintaining a regular supply of all essentials to Jaffna, and were repulsing Tamil Tiger attacks elsewhere on the peninsula.

Earlier, the rebels said the military had suspended opera tions at Jaffna's only sea port, Kankesanthurai, and had cancelled flights from its single airstrip at Palaly after both came under direct artillery fire.

Palaly is home to the military's main ammunition and fuel dump on the peninsula. Along with Kankesanthurai, it is the only supply point available to the military as there is no land access to Jaffna, some

400 km north of Colombo. Military sources who asked not to be identified told Reuters by phone that all ships had -been pulled out of Kankesanthurai. They said two flights

made it to Palaly on Friday, but

continued shelling may have made the air base inaccessible On Friday a pro-rebel website (www.Tamilnet.com) moni-

tored in London posted an LTTE

Earlier story on page 9

statement urging troops to surrender "to avoid the continuing bloodbath".

It said it troops laid down their arms they "will be treated with dignity and honour" and handed over to the custody of the International Committee of the Red Cross within 24 hours.

"The call for surrender is being announced by loudspeakers at different battlefronts in the Jaffna theatre of war and also by Voice of Tigers radio," the statement said.

"Explaining the precarious

nature of their predicament, the LTTE has been impressing upon the government soldiers that their vital supply lines are cut and their lives are in grave dan-

Today, Tamilnet quoted the clandestine Voice of Tigers radio as saying that guerrillas had captured army positions defending approaches to Chavakachcheri, the warscarred peninsula's secondlargest town.

"The latest advance ... threatens to cut off all supply lines to the Sri Lanka army troops in Jaffna's southern sector," it said, adding that the remaining viable supply route for soldiers in the area was in "imminent danger" of being cut

However, the government said troops had thwarted rebel attempts today to penetrate their defence at Thanankilappu village, which lies east of Jaffna city, the cultural capital of the homeland for which the LTTE has been fighting since

PCJSS chief Shantu Larma speaking at a rally at the Dhaka University yesterday and (right) Parbattya Bangali Chhatra Parishad protesting Larma's presence on the campus. - Star photo

Swedish Minister for Development Cooperation due tomorrow

By Diplomatic Correspondent Swedish Minister for Development Cooperation Maj-Inger Klingvali arrives in the city

tomorrow on a five-day visit to Bangladesh. During the trip, the minister will meet political leaders and visit Swedish companies and some Swedish aided projects. The Minister's visit is a sign

Bangladesh as a partner in development and trade, says Anders Johnson, Sweden's ambassador to Bangladesh. Sweden has supported

of the growing importance of

Bangladesh since indepen-See page 11 col 6

SAARC Secy-Gen due tomorrow

By Diplomatic Correspondent Nihal Rodrigo, the Secretary General of SAARC is due to arrive in Dhaka tomorrow on a three-day visit to Bangladesh.

The current Secretary General of the seven-member regional organisation is expected to pay courtesy call on Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina and Foreign Minister Abdus Samad

The SAARC Secretary General is likely to discuss with Bangladesh leaders the prospects for holding the 11th Summit which was due to be held in Nepal. The Summit was postponed because of the reported "unwillingness" of India to sit on the same table with Pakistan's military ruler Per-

See page 11 col 5 Extortion: Three policemen suspended

in Chittagong From Staff Correspondent CHITTAGONG, May 20: The three policemen caught red handed at the time of collecting toll in Jamal Khan area last night, were put under suspen-

sion, police sources said. The policemen - Altaf, Lebu Miah and Jahangir — belonged to Kotwali thana in the city.

Kotwali thana sources said that departmental investigation was on against the three. But no case under PSA was started against them as no complainant came forward for the same, Kotwali thana sources said

Local people caught the three policemen while they (policemen) were collecting toll from the vendors in Jamal Khan area at 8 pm yesterday.

Sundarban's 'Mujib Bahini' chief arrested

BAGERHAT, May 20: Police arrested Sundarban's notorious 'Mujib Bahini' chief from Demar Kalia in the town along with arms and ammunition yesterday afternoon, reports

Police arrested Mujibur Rahman, 30, from his house and recovered a foreign-made gun and 14 bullets.

His terrorist group was involved in kidnapping fishermen from the Sundarbans, extorting ransom and committing robbery. He was wanted in a number of cases, including murder and extortion.

of Basu becoming the Prime Minister, has started talking about participating in a similar dispensation if it helps

NEW DELHI, May 20: What

The party, which refused to

Jyoti Basu had thought four

years ago, his party CPI (M) ap-

join a coalition to rule India in

1995, thereby scuttling chances

pears to be thinking now.

strengthen the CPI (M).

This is the only perceptible change that emerged from the remarks of CPI (M) General Secretary Harkishan Singh Surject when he released the "updated" version of the party's programme, adopted at the time of its birth in 1964 at a news conference here yesterday. What is noteworthy is that

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Misappropriation of wheat-

Khetmojur Samity to lay siege to LGED office

By Reaz Ahmad

Samity, a farm labourers' organisation, will lay a siege to the LGED office in the city today protesting what its leaders say massive misappropriation of wheat meant for infrastructure development.

Newspaper reports earlier said that some ministers and ruling party leaders had got allotments of wheat 'in papers' while consignments were yet to. reach the Local Government Engineering Department

A meeting at the LGRD and Cooperatives Ministry on April 17 also expressed surprise at such allotment of wheat 'in papers' before development projects were approved. When contacted, LGED Chief

Engineer Monowar Hossain Chowdhury said no wheat was allotted against the name of any minister. "The system does not permit such practices as we allot wheat against schemes. He however admitted, "Sometimes ministers recommend allotment for development work".

Talking to The Daily Star yesterday, an official of a food

Bangladesh Khetmojur aid donor said development partners are looking into wheat allotments very carefully. But he declined to elaborate.

Talking to this correspondent Khetmojur Samity President Mujahidul Islam Selim said, "As the election year is approaching, politicians are trying to manage their men in their constituencies. They have to satisfy their men with bulk quantities of wheat. It does not matter anything to them if the poor are deprived or development projects are not imple-

Sources at the World Food Programme office and the Min-Istry of Food confirmed that food aid to Bangladesh was declining. "It is a global phenomenon now as more food aid is being directed to meet emergencies in war-torn regions of the world", explained one WFP

But experts apprehend that poor performance in project implementation and misappropriation of wheat meant for development projects would further downsize Bangladesh's share of global food aid.

Rajuk demolished some illegal shops in the city's Dhanmondi area yesterday.

News Analysis

Jyoti thought it 4 yrs ago

From Pallab Bhattacharya

in sharp contrast to its earlier

stand of not entertaining the

idea of power-sharing at the

centre, the CPI (M) is now keep-

pating in a non-left govern-

ing open the option of partici-

version of the party's pro-

gramme "has been prepared in

such a manner that it allows

adding when the programme

was first adopted 36 years ago it

did not think of joining a coali-

changed over the past few years.

was put forward to CPI (M) for

joining the United Front Coali-

tion after the general elections,

the party rejected in outright,

brushing aside the views of Jy-

oti Basu who at that time had

been widely tipped to head the

hardliners had prevailed then.

that Basu, in a newspaper in-

CPI (M) sources said:

The views of the Marxist

It was nearly two years later

The situation has, of course,

In 1996, when a proposal

tion at the centre.

he pointed out.

coalition.

both the options," said Surject

The draft of the "updated"

Blair blessed with a son

LONDON, May 20: The wife of British Prime Minister Tony Blair, Cherie, gave birth early today to a boy, the couple's fourth child and the first baby born to a serving British premier in 152 years, reports AFP.

"Mrs. Blair gave birth to a baby boy earlier this morning. The prime minister and Mrs. Blair are delighted and all three have now returned home to Downing Street," a statement from the prime minister's office

The Blairs and their new baby left the Chelsea and Westminster Hospital at 2:50 a.m. (7:50 BST), in a car whose windows were covered to stop photographers getting the first picture of the infant. A few minutes later a light

went on in a room on the first floor as baby Blair made his first post-natal visit to his first home -- 10, Downing Street. Journalists who had waited

long hours at the hospital for the first slivers of information had little to report -- the boy's name has not been announced and no update on the health of the mother and child given. "It's almost a royal birth," one of them told the BBC

Some observers noted that 45 year-old Cherie Blair's swift return to Downing Street suggested that she had given birth naturally and not by Caesarian section as some unconfirmed reports had predicted.

The Blairs have expressed See page 11 col 7

- Star photo

terview, termed as a "historic

blunder" the party's decision

not to join the 1996 coalition to

participation in a coalition at

the centre, does it mean that

hardliners in CPI (M) are on the

in emphatic terms because the

new stand is yet to be debated at

various levels of the party be-

fore it comes up for possible ap-

proval at a specially-convened

conference in October this year.

comes close on the heels of Jy-

oti Basu's efforts to revive a

third political front away from

BJP and Congress which were

reflected in his two rounds of

talks with four former Prime

Ministers of India: Inder Kumar

Gujaral, V P Singh, Chan-

drashekhar and H D Deve

tartars since BJP's rise to power

in 1998 with its constituents ei-

ther joining the BJP-led com-

other amidst bitter wranglings.

bine or drifting away from each

The third front has been in

Gowda in the last two weeks.

Significantly, the new stand

With the new formulation on

"It is too early to answer that

rule India.

backfoot?

'Tk 1000cr can be earned by exporting fruits, vegetables'

Proper incentives & policy support needed By Staff Correspondent

The country can earn more than Tk 1,000 crore annually by exporting fruits and vegetables if proper incentives and policy support are given by the government, Fakhrul Islam Munshi President of Agribusiness Development Organization of Bangladesh (ADOB) has said.

"It is not very hard for us to increase annual export earnings to Tk 1,000 crore from about 2,00 crore now from this sector," he told a press conference in the city yesterday.

The only thing needed is to expand the market and develop processing systems for agriproducts, which need government support, he said.

Besides increasing earnings, this will add value to agri-products and ensure better prices to farmers, he said noting that fruits and vegetables worth over Tk 200 crore get rotten every year due to lack of processing facilities. Munshi said the main prob-

lems in the sector are lack of last year highlighted various

BCL supporters

assault 2 DU

national dailies while they

were performing professional

duties on the campus yesterday.

The victims are Mahbub

Zaman Nahid of The Daily Star

Bangladesh Observer. Both are

students of Mass Communica-

tion and Journalism Depart-

led by Mazharul Islam Kajal,

General Secretary of Jahurul

Haq Hall BCL unit, beat the

journalists as they allegedly did

not make way for them amid a

huge crowd at the entrance of

Arts Faculty building where

PCJSS leader Santu Larma was

watching a procession of Pahari

Kajal was accompanied by, among others, Zahid of Mohsin

Hall and Miron of Zahurul Haq

even after they disclosed their

identities. They also hurled

abuses at them and the journal-

ist community. Kajal said, "Do

not know, who am I on the

first beat them up at the corri-

dor of Arts Building. They again

swooped on them and tried to

some students rescued him near

Bat-Tala in front of the Arts

Kajal and his accomplices

The journalists were beaten

Witnesses said the ruffians

ment of the university.

Chhatra Parishad.

campus?.

preservation facilities at the grassroots level and modern processing facilities, poor quality of products, failure in timely supply and high rate of duty and air freight. He demanded export incen-

garments and jute, reduction of duties and air freight and tax holiday till 2020 to boost the sector and make the products competitive in the world mar-ADOB, formed last year, now

tives for agri-products like

represents about 20 companies processing agri-products.

Maj. Gen. (Retd) Amiad Hossen Khan of Bangladesh Agro-Processors Association, Rouf Chowdhury of Bangladesh Vegetable Oil Refiners and Banashpati Manufacturers Association, Kafiludding Ahmed of Bangladesh Fertilizer Association also spoke on the occasion

ADOB leaders at their first press conference in September

problems and put forward some suggestions to the government for development of food processing and agri- business in the country, but to no effect, Munshi said. He also said there is tremen-

dous prospects for export of flower and proposed setting up of a 'flower village' covering at least 100 acres of land near Dhaka city to increase earnings from it. The proposed 'flower village' should be set up near the Zia International Airport so that no time is lost in export and quality can be maintained.

Amjad Hossain demanded reduction of prices of packing materials and sugar, one of the main raw materials used in food processing. Bangladesh's products are losing competitiveness in the world market due to high price of sugar, he said. The price of locally produced sugar is higher than that of imported sugar, he men-

In another mishap, a man

identified as Habib Master was

run over by a Dhaka-bound bus

at a place adjacent to Soychuti

in Kuliarchar upazila yesterday

Two cases were filed in this

9 killed, 29 injured in road accidents

correspondents At least nine people were By DU Correspondent killed and 29 injured in sepa-Ruffians backed by a leader rate road accidents in four disof Bangladesh Chhatra League tricts yesterday, report agen-(BCL) assaulted two Dhaka University correspondents of two

Three people were killed and 27 injured in a road accident yesterday morning on Bangabandhu Jamuna Bridge Eastern Side Approach Road near Gobindashi, ten miles from Tangail and Tanveer Mahmud of The Of the dead Gour, 32, and

Chandi, 30, were identified as rice dealers of Tangail town. All the injured were taken to the Tangail hospital in critical conditions. The accident occurred when

a passenger bus skidded off the

Three people were killed and one was injured in two road accidents on Kishoreganj-

Bhairab road in Kishoreganj yesterday. Police said two unidentified passengers of a Kishoreganjbound bus coming from Dhaka were crushed under wheels as they fell from rooftop of the bus

at Vitadia in Katiadi upazila at

Jahangir, helper of the vehicle, was injured and admitted to Sadar hospital in critical condition.

The driver of the bus, which was carrying excess passengers, managed to flee with his vehicle after the incident.

Two people were killed in a collision between a truck and a private car on Dhaka-Chittagong highway yesterday. Police said the Chittagongbound truck hit the car, coming from opposite direction, a

afternoon.

connection.

gers killed on the spot. Driver of the truck, however, managed to flee the scene with his vehicle. A case was filed with police.

Jorkanan in Sadar thana at 3

am, leaving the two car passen-

A woman was killed and her husband injured when a truck rammed their motorbike at Shatrujitpur in the Magura town yesterday.

The deceased was identified as Shilpi Rani Baidya, 30, wife of Mukul Baidya. Police said the motorbike on

which Mukul and his wife were travelling through the area was hit by the seeding truck coming from opposite direction, killing Shilpi on the spot and injuring Mukul.

Mukul was admitted to Magura hospital in a critical condition.

drag Nahid to Zahurul Haq Hall and threatened to kill him. Re-Cong needs to woo porters of other dailies and Hindus: Gadgil NEW DELHI, May 20: A se-

nior leader of the main opposition Congress party has said the political fortunes of the party cannot be revived if it ignores India's majority Hindu community, domestic news agencies reported yesterday, says AP. "The Hindus do feel that the

Congress is not protecting their interests. The Congress needs the substantial 82 per cent of the Hindu votes. You cannot ignore the interests of the Hindus in this Hindu majority country," VN Gadgil told the private Jain Television, which faxed transcripts of the interview to Indian news agencies.

Gadgil's comments were a clear departure from the century-old ideology of the Congress party of representing the interests of Indians irre-

spective of their religion. In the past, the party had the backing of religious and social minorities and governed India for nearly 40 years after independence from British rule in

1947. But over the last decade, the Congress has gradually lost the support of the minorities to

Gadgil, former general secretary of the Congress party, said the assumption in the party had been that if Muslims, the largest religious minority, came back, it would return to

regional parties.

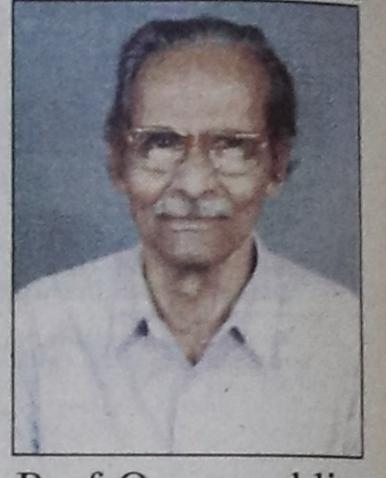
"That is factually incorrect," he said.

Gadgil also criticised his party colleagues for expecting Congress president Sonia Gandhi to resurrect the party against all odds, PTI said. "We expected her not only to

be a crowd puller but also a vote

catcher," Gadgil said. "To expect a person to perform beyond his capacity was unfair to that person and he

was bound to fail," he said. Gadgil also said Congress leaders chose Gandhi as their leader because there was no alternative, PTI said.



Prof Quamruddin Hossain passes away

Language Movement veteran Prof Syed Quamruddin Hossain died late Friday night at his Fuller Road residence on the Dhaka University campus, family sources said. He was 75, reports BSS.

Hossain, former Chairman of DU Philosophy Department, was suffering from broncopneumonia.

He is survived by his wife Dr Sultana Begum, a professor of Psychology Department of the DU, two sons and a host of relatives and well-wishers to mourn his death. After namaz-e-janaza at DU

Central Mosque after Zohr prayers, he was buried at the Martyred Intellectuals' Graveyard at Mirpur. A large number of teachers and students of the DU, includ-

ing Vice-Chancellor Prof A K Azad Chowdhury, joined the Earlier, President Shahabuddin Ahmed visited the

residence of Prof Hossain to pay respect to the deceased. After his retirement from the department, he used to take classes for at least seven years

Ctg businessmen form MCCI to get rid of deadlock

without any remuneration.

in CCCI CHITTAGONG, May 20: In an alternate move, the leading businessmen and industrialists of the port city, at a meeting here today, decided to form another trade body styled as "Metropolitan Chamber of Commerce and Industries" to get rid of the deadlock in CCCI. reports UNB.

M A Tayeb, Abdul Gaffar Chowdhury, Ameer Humayun Mahmud Chowdhury and M Mirza Babar among others were present at the meeting. The newly-appointed ad-

ministrator of Chittagong Chamber of Commerce and Industries (CCCI), Firoz Kibria, will take office tomorrow for an interim period. The Commerce Ministry ap-

pointed the Director of Trade Organisation (DTO) as its administrator dissolving the board of directors of CCCI on Thursday. The administrator will

complete formalities of holding the due annual general meeting of 1998-99 period and formulating a legal voters' list.

A director of CCCI, on condition of anonymity, told UNB that the committee, headed by Saifuzzaman Chowdhury Javed, would file a writ petition with the High Court challenging the order of the Commerce Min-

> See page 11 col 6 England all

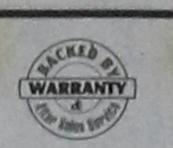
out for 415 LONDON, May 20: England were bowled out for 415 in their first innings of the first Test of

two against Zimbabwe here at

Lord's on Saturday, reports AFP. This gave Nasser Hussain's side a first-innings lead of 332. Fast bowler Heath Streak's figures of 6 for 87 were the best by

a Zimbabwean in Test cricket. Alec Stewart was 124 not out, his third and highest Test century at Lord's.

GULSHAN



The aircraft, one of the two donesian operator.

Building. The victims filed a written complaint with Vice Chancellor Prof AK Azad Chowdhury. The university authorities formed a one-member probe body comprising Proctor AKM Nurun Nabi to investigate the incident,

The committee yesterday served a show cause notice on Kajal asking him to explain See page 11 col 8 Biman's F-28

returns

said a DU press release.

By Special Correspondent Bangladesh Biman's F-28 aircraft which was stuck up at Calcutta airport due to fault in its hydraulic system since May 16 returned to Dhaka yesterday. It was sent to Engineering hangar immediately for repair, Biman sources said.

F-28 of 1978 and 1979 vintage had often developed trouble since they were added to Biman fleet after purchase from an In-