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Announcement

The Daily Star will publish the list of allottees of RAJUK plots in extended Uttara residential area, provisionally selected from among 1997 applicants, in a four-page special section tomorrow, Saturday.

High-level meet on border situation held

DIPLOMATIC CORRESPONDENT

A high level meeting was held yesterday to review the pending border problems with India and work out a plan for negotiations with Indian officials on the subject at any future conference.

The meeting decided to catalogue the unresolved border problems and examine the legal issues involved. It reviewed the situation on the ground and discussed ways to settle the issues through negotiations with Delhi in the light of the Mujib-Indira accord, sources said.

Foreign Minister Abdus Samad Azad presided over the meeting at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Law Minister Amir Khasru, State Minister for Land Rashed Musherar and senior officials from the Water Resources and Home Ministry attended the meeting.

The foreign ministry officials, however, refused to speculate on the date for a proposed official level meeting with India with a view to resolving the outstanding border

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DCCI president steps down

STAR BUSINESS REPORT

Dhaka Chamber of Commerce and Industry (DCCI) president Benajir Ahmed resigned yesterday after assuming office only early this year.

In his resignation, Benajir cited controversies arising out of recent media reports about some of his companies' accounts with Sonali Bank as reasons for his resignation.

He said that the accounts in question were strictly personal. "Unfortunately, the press reports had also mentioned the name of DCCI in connection with my presidency of the institution," said a DCCI press release quoting the contents of the resignation.

"The prestige and image of this premier chamber of the country is of paramount importance to me and under no circumstances would I like to see the image of this great institution tarnished due to any of my personal and or of my company's alleged irregularities," the release added.

"I shall never like to create any impression to any quarter that I had ever used my office of the president of DCCI to resolve my personal problems.

"These are precisely the reasons for which I feel obliged to step down from the office of the president of DCCI taking full moral responsibility" the press release said.

	Sun Rises	Sun Sets
May 4		6.29 pm
May 5	5-22 am	

Prayer Timings

May 4		
	Azan	Jamaat
Fazr	4-55	5-15
Juma	12-15	1-20
Asr	4-55	5-05
Maghrib	6-30	6-35
Esha	7-45	8-15

Source: Islamic Foundation

2 EPZs earn US\$875m in 10 months of this fiscal

Prime Minister informed at BEPZA meeting

UNB, Dhaka

The country's two Export Processing Zones (EPZs) have posted export earnings worth nearly 875 million US dollars in past 10 months of the current fiscal year and the volume is expected to reach up to one billion dollars by the end of the year.

This was disclosed yesterday in the 18th meeting of the Bangladesh Export Processing Zones Authority (BEPZA) governing body chaired by Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina at her office.

The meeting discussed the performance of the Export Processing Zones, facilities given to them and progress of the new EPZs that are being set up to attract foreign and local investment through "open door policy" and stimulate quick economic growth through industrialisation.

In the review meeting the government was apprised that investment amounting to about 40 million US dollars had been made during last 10 months raising the total to about USD 467 million. Some 13,500 new jobs were created during the period, raising the total number of jobs to 107,500 in the zones.

Hasina, who is the chairperson of BEPZA Board of Governors, expressed satisfaction at the performance so far in the EPZs and urged entrepreneurs to make investment for setting up agro-processing industries particularly in the northern region to tap the expanding

foreign markets.

The country is gaining access to increasing number of overseas markets with special facilities from its status as an LDC and the export-oriented industries can exploit those facilities by investing in the zones.

Prime Minister Hasina said Bangladesh would make a big stride in expanding its export basket and earn foreign exchange if entrepreneurs and investors put their money in the food-processing sector, which has great prospects in the international market.

She urged the authorities concerned to encourage food-processing industries in the EPZs and industrial parks to diversify the export items, tap foreign supermarkets and increase the export volume.

Country's export volume in terms of money was 5.75 billion dollars last financial year and the target this year is up at over 6 billion dollars.

Hasina told the meeting that a research in northern Panchagarh showed that Aroma tea is as good as the famous Darjeeling tea and it could be produced commercially while short-grain "basmati rice" could also be produced in Barendra area of greater Rajshahi. She assured that incentives would be given to farmers for tea gardening in Panchagarh and for "basmati" rice so that these food items could be exported.

Foreign Minister Abdus Samad Azad, Industries Minister Tofail Ahmed, State Minister for Planning Dr

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Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina presides over the 18th meeting of Board of Governors of BEPZA at the International Conference Centre yesterday.

PHOTO: PID

RAW comes under media fire

Indian govt blasted for not ratifying Mujib-Indira pact

SAKYASEN MITTRA, Kolkata

At the beginning of the Pyrdiwah episode, the Indian media was extremely critical of the actions of the Bangladesh government and the BDR. However, with each day, more and more newspapers have started blaming the Indian government and some of its agencies for the death of 16 BSF men. The media has blamed the Research and Analysis Wing (RAW), the country's intelligence wing, for its failure to correctly project development on the border. The vernacular dailies of West Bengal may have pushed the issue to their back pages because of the polls; however, as far as the English-language newspapers are concerned, the episode is still warm.

Both *The Telegraph* and *The Times of India* have blamed the RAW and the Intelligence Bureau (IB) for the entire incident. *The Telegraph* writes, "The capture of Pyrdiwah in Meghalaya by the Bangladesh Rifles was no less an intelligence failure on the part of the Research and Analysis Wing (RAW)

and the IB than the blunder in Kargil. For four days from April 15 to April 18 neither the RAW nor the IB sent a report to the Central Government in Delhi. The only report of the incident reached Delhi and the Prime Minister's Office on April 18. By then the damage has been done.

"The RAW report regarding the capture of Pyrdiwah and Major General ALM Fazlur Rahman appears to have been tailor-made to 'suit' the line followed by the Foreign Ministry. Rahman has been made to appear anti-Hasina to buttress the belief in Delhi that the BDR committed local adventurism."

The *Times of India*, on the other hand, has categorically printed the denial by the BNP that the BDR chief is not their man. It has also published a statement of the BNP Secretary General Abdul Mannan Bhuiyan. Bhuiyan states that the BDR action at Pyrdiwah was "almost certainly" cleared by Sheikh Hasina. He also says that the BDR chief was not known to Khaleda Zia. "If anything he may be close to the Awami League as he is the son-in-law of

Abdul Rahim, a senior League leader in Dinajpur." The same newspaper, however, on Monday has quoted the Border Security Force Director General, Gurbachan Jagat, as saying that the attack was "unprovoked". It has also stated that there was an information failure across the border by both the RAW and the IB.

The *Outlook*, however, has stated quite candidly that local people may have been involved in the killing. "People on both the sides of the border may have been fed up with the atrocities of the BSF who allow rampant smuggling. So when they had a chance to get back at them, then, the villagers across the border did so."

The *Ananda Bazar Patrika* and the *Aajkaal* have both tried to tone down the incident as much as possible simply because they feel it could have led to further troubles. In fact, *Ananda Bazar Patrika's* reporter Souhadra Chattopadhyaya was

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News Analysis

Press freedom still vulnerable

NAZMUL ASHRAF

Press freedom in the country still appears susceptible although there has been no direct government interference since democracy was restored more than a decade ago.

The press indeed played a pro-active role in exposing violation of fundamental rights of disadvantaged people since control on press by the government apparently gone with the fall of autocratic regime in late 1990. Institutional and individual corruption, abuse of power, organised crimes, and influence of money and muscle in politics were also exposed by the press, often prompting attacks or threats of attack on the journalists.

In fact, increasing incidences of physical assault on journalists have now become the biggest impediment to press freedom that has gone leaps and bounds with the growth of democracy.

The International Press Freedom Day was observed in the country yesterday with the call for ensuring security of the journalists in the teeth of recent spate of assaults on, and harassment and even imprisonment of pressmen.

The country also witnessed rising incidents of political and criminal violence in recent times. In cases, police

detained and arrested journalists, and even sent them to jails on false charges. Their offices, residences and vehicles also came under attack by the political and professional criminals.

At least nine journalists were murdered and several hundred others attacked since 1992. Two journalists were killed in the last two years each for exposing organised criminal gangs and their godfathers. In the first four months of the current year, one journalist has been killed and 34 others have been injured, two of them still fighting for life.

They either died in the line of duty or were targeted for assassination because of their reporting or affiliation with a news organisation.

Police probe into deaths of and physical assaults on journalists in recent years was frustrating. Criminals responsible for pressmen's death or injury were not brought to book, thanks to the influential quarters that hush up such incidents.

The offenders either belonged to the ruling party or had its blessings or they were involved with crime syndicates. Opposition activists engaged in anti-government

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Efficient drainage, indeed... moderate to heavy rains for a few hours and the area near the Dhaka Education Board building at Bakshibazar in the city is clogged, waterlogged.

State attorneys may get certified copy of verdict next week

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

The state attorneys are expecting to get a certified copy of the judgement in the Bangabandhu Murder Case early next week, sources concerned said yesterday.

Earlier on Wednesday Deputy Attorney General Shamsuddin Choudhury Manik applied for the certified copies of the judgement delivered on Monday by Justice Fazlul Karim, the third judge in the Bangabandhu Murder Case.

The defence lawyers also applied for the certified copies.

When the certified copies are

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Bangabandhu murder case Execution of verdict stayed for 4 weeks

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

The Appellate Division of the Supreme Court yesterday stayed for four weeks the execution of a High Court verdict confirming the death sentences of 12 former army officers in the Bangabandhu murder case.

The Full Bench of the Appellate Division (APD) headed by Chief Justice Mahmudul Amin Choudhury gave the order after hearing the petitions for 30 days' stay order, filed by two of the accused.

The other judges of the APD were Justice Mainur Reza Choudhury and Justice Golam Rabbani.

Counsels for accused Maj(Rtd) Bazul Huda and Lt Col (Rtd) Sultan Shahriar Rashid Khan filed the petitions on April 30 and May 2 respectively. Justice Fazlul Karim, the third judge in the case, gave the verdict on Monday following a split verdict of a Death Reference Bench of the High Court on December 14 last year.

Defence counsels Abdus Sobhan and Abdur Razzak Khan told the court

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Changes in EC must for free, fair polls

Khaleda tells US envoy, UNDP resident chief

BSS, Dhaka

Leader of the Opposition in Parliament Khaleda Zia yesterday said, "withdrawal of controversial persons from the Election Commission and administration and recovery of illegal arms from the ruling party cadres" are preconditions for holding a free, fair and peaceful national elections, a briefing of the party said last night.

BNP Chairperson's advisor MM Rezaul Karim told newsmen that Khaleda made the observations when US Ambassador Mary Ann

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Artillery fire case Charge sheet against 18

BSS, Dhaka

Eighteen people have been charge-sheeted for killing 13 people with artillery shells, fired during a military putsch on August 15, 1975, in which Bangabandhu along with most of his family members was brutally murdered.

The artillery shells landed in the city's Mohammadpur area as those were fired at Dhanmondi residence of the assassinated leader.

Senior Assistant Superintendent of Police (ASP) of CID Munshi Atiqur Rahman yesterday submitted the charge-sheet to the Chief Metropolitan Magistrate's Court after investigating the case for nearly four and a half years.

The charge-sheeted accused are former lieutenant colonels Syed Farook Rahman, Sultan Shahriar Rashid Khan, Khondkar Abdur Rashid, Shariful Haque Dalim, Mohiuddin Ahmed (Artillery), A M Rashed Chowdhury, AKM Muhiuddin (Lancer), SHBM Noor

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EC to ask major parties to stop 'premature' electioneering

Meeting on law and order on May 9

ZAYADUL AHSAN

The Election Commission (EC) would soon urge political parties not to canvass ahead of the announcement of the parliamentary polls schedule.

According to sources, some political parties have begun electioneering prior to the announcement of polls schedules, which is a clear violation of electoral rules.

A good number of aspirants belonging to both ruling Awami League and main opposition BNP have already embarked on canvassing through graffiti and posters. Some government and opposition stalwarts are also publicly seeking votes in favour of their respective parties.

Article 44 B (3) of the Representation of Peoples' Order (RPO), 1972 forbids candidates from resorting to any form of can-

vassing before three weeks of the polling date.

Articles 73 and 74 of the same provide for two to seven years imprisonment to any candidate violating the aforesaid rule.

An EC official said although the rule is flouted more often than not actions are seldom taken due to lack of proof.

Sometimes, it becomes difficult to nail down persons responsible for such canvassing as candidates say that voters of certain locality themselves had published posters or written graffiti, the official explained.

Taking this fact into consideration, the EC has decided to go for public announcement calling upon the parties and individuals concerned to refrain from canvassing in advance. The EC has already given instruction to its relevant cell to prepare a draft of the notice.

The BNP has already accused

ruling Awami League of availing itself of official facilities in canvassing.

Meanwhile, the EC is also contemplating to have a meeting on May 9 with all concerned to take stock of the latest law and order situation in the country.

A decision was made in this regard at an EC meeting held at the EC Secretariat with the Chief Election Commissioner (CEC) MA Syed in the chair.

The meeting observed that currently the EC was being informed about the law and order situation through reports published in the media.

The EC officials feel that the home secretary and chiefs of different law enforcement and security agencies of the government should attend the meeting, as well.

A thorn in Indo-Bangla border talks

Small piece of land in Feni's Muhurirchar has added implication in national politics

STAR REPORT

A small piece of land in Feni will be a thorn in the flesh for Bangladesh and India in the upcoming bilateral talks to resolve land disputes in the border, according to foreign ministry officials.

The piece of land is in Muhurirchar, claimed by both Bangladesh and India.

In Bangladesh, the land has an added political implication for the Awami League government because the area is part of BNP Chairperson Khaleda Zia's constituency from where she was elected twice.

India has been proposing to Bangladesh to divide the disputed 6.5 kilometre border area in

Bangladesh territory now. The river changed its course due to 'force of nature' and construction of dams and spurs on the Indian side, the officials said.

Bangladesh and India have completed demarcation of the entire 4,000 km border except the 6.5 kilometre area in Muhurirchar.

Bangladesh has in its possession over 111 such disputed lands covering around 7000 acres, which may go under Indian possession if the 1974 Mujib-Indira treaty is implemented. Similarly, India has 51 such lands, covering 10,000 acres, which may come under Bangladesh's possession.

There are three types of disputed lands enclaves, lands under adverse possession and un-

demarcated lands. Bangladesh ratified the treaty in 1974 and handed over more than 29 kilometres of land in southern Berubari, but India is yet to ratify it.

Political analysts here say the position of the government will become vulnerable if it agrees to the Indian proposal and hands over the Muhurirchar land ahead of the upcoming general election. The Indian newspaper also gives similar views.

They say, as a good gesture, Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman handed over southern Berubari to India. So the question to hand over of any more land to India does not arise at all till India returns Bangladesh's land.