

No-confidence motion against Vajpayee govt

PALLAB BHATTACHARYA, New Delhi

The lower house of Indian parliament yesterday began debating a no-confidence motion against the government of Prime Minister Atal Behari Vajpayee moved by Leader of the Opposition Sonia Gandhi who accused it of failure on all fronts.

Moving the motion and initiating a debate in Lok Sabha, Sonia listed a nine-point "charge-sheet" against the Vajpayee government charging it with jeopardising the defence, weakening national security, wrecking social harmony and subverting the secular character of Indian education system.

Sonia moved her maiden no-

trust motion in parliament since becoming leader of the opposition, and for the first time Vajpayee faces no-confidence motion since assuming power in October 1999.

But the no-trust motion poses no threat to the Vajpayee government enjoying a comfortable majority with the support of 323 members in the 543-member Lok Sabha.

In a strongly worded speech lasting more than an hour, Sonia also accused the government of destroying probity in public life and administration, denigrating institutions of parliamentary democracy and undermining an independent foreign policy.

She charged the government

with arrogantly ruling the country, steamrolling the opposition and forcing its way into parliament.

The leader of the opposition said the government failed to spend allotted money for modernisation of the defence and the "inexcusable lapse" constituted 30 per cent of the defence budget.

Referring to the comptroller and auditor general uncovering irregularities in defence purchases, she said, "It seems to me there is something very wrong with the defence ministry."

Sonia said a committee set up by the Vajpayee government had acknowledged that intrusion of

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This house on Kotwali Road is one of the numerous rundown buildings, home and workplaces to thousands in the old quarter of the capital. With power lines hanging dangerously low, the fragile structures pose a grim threat to life in case of a severe earthquake.

PHOTO: SK ENAMUL HAQ

Janmastami today

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Janmastami, the birthday of Lord Krishna, will be celebrated amid religious festivity and devotion today.

As per Hindu mythology, He is regarded as the epitome of transcendental qualities which made him the most loved one.

Krishna spent his adolescence at Brindavan where he won the hearts of the gopikas, the women who milked cows. He invoked feelings of love in them and they were steeped in his devotion. For them, he was the embodiment of love and manhood and every woman wanted a husband like Krishna.

Different socio-political and religious organisations have drawn up programmes to celebrate the day, a national holiday.

Sri Sri Geeta Sangha has taken up elaborate programmes like 'Mangalacharan', recitation from the Geeta and Bhagabat Sri Krishna Kanthamala, prayers, 'Bhogarati kirtan', 'prasad distribution', Janmastami procession, cultural functions and Sri Krishna 'lila kirtan' for the day at Bholananda Giri Asram.

The Mahanagar Sarbajane

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Dhaka lobs a weak LDC leaders' team to Cancun

Dr Debapriya dropped by PMO, Hyder and Manzur will not go

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Bangladesh, the leader of the least developed countries (LDCs), is set to attend the crucial Cancun meet of the World Trade Organisation (WTO) next month with a weak team as three experts chosen by the commerce ministry will not attend the event, sources said.

Their absence might seriously hamper Bangladesh's negotiations

on crucial issues, the sources fear.

The Prime Minister's Office dropped Dr Debapriya Bhattacharya from the 17-member official delegation proposed by the commerce ministry, sources said.

Debapriya, executive director of the independent think-tank, the Centre for Policy Dialogue (CPD), has been assisting the government in different forums on crucial WTO issues for long.

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He is also a member of the WTO Advisory Committee of the commerce ministry and represented Bangladesh at the Doha Ministerial Meeting of the WTO and the LDC Ministerial in Dhaka.

CK Hyder, secretary general of the Metropolitan Chamber of Commerce and Industry (MCCI), and Manzur Ahmad, former director of the Dhaka Chamber of

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sources said.

With the regulatory body not in place, the over-populated Bangladesh with its ever-shrinking farmlands will not be able to release genetically engineered crops for commercial cultivation. The NCBB is also supposed to oversee compliance with biosafety policies and guidelines.

Though the composition of the NCBB has already been laid out in the biosafety guidelines, a tug of war continued between the Ministry of Science and Information and

Communication Technology (ICT) and the Ministry of Environment and Forestry over its composition. They also failed to settle the question of leadership of the committee.

Officials at the two ministries informed The Daily Star recently that with the mediation of the Prime Minister's Principal Secretary Dr Kamal Uddin Siddiqui, the ministries had a series of meetings since March this year to resolve the problem.

They said a primary consensus

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SHAZNEEN CASE

Defence begins arguments

COURT CORRESPONDENT

The defence lawyers yesterday began their arguments in the Shazneen case in the Second Special Tribunal for Prevention of Women and Children Repression, Dhaka.

The lawyers of Shahidul Islam alias Shahid, the prime accused in the case, completed their arguments and the process took about an hour.

Judge Kazi Rahamat Ullah adjourned the hearing till August 23. The lawyers for five other accused will begin their arguments on the day.

Shahid's lawyer MA Kamrul Hasan Khan Aslam argued that the

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Appellate Division paves way for speaker's house at JS

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The Appellate Division of the Supreme Court yesterday stayed the High Court's order, thus removing the barrier to construction of residence for the Speaker on the Sangsabha premises.

Chamber Judge of the Appellate Division Justice Sayed JR Modassir Hossain stayed the High Court order for three months.

Bangladesh Paribesh Andolok (BAPA) had filed a writ petition with the High Court Division challenging the construction of residence for the Speaker on the Sangsabha premises.

Additional Attorney General Abdur Razak Khan moved the petition.

JCD men beat up 6 left party activists at JU

JU CORRESPONDENT

Activists of the Jatiyatabadi Chhatra Dal (JCD) unit beat up six Samajtantrik Chhatra Front (SCF) activists Sunday as they took part in a procession that demanded naming of the university auditorium after noted film maker Zahir Raihan.

Shahenshah, Tanjil, Imrul, Sharif and Noor of the JCD confined the left-leaning activists in room No 116 of Moulana Bhasani (MB) hall and beat them with rod and lethal weapons at around 11:00pm.

The SCF's Salauddin Shuvro, general secretary, Moyeen Uddin Bin Zahir Jewel, organising secretary of SCF, JU unit, Mesbah-ul-Alam Ripon, publicity and publication secretary, Abdul Ati Shaib, library secretary of JU unit, Masum and Mohammad Delwar Hossain were r

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Biosafety body sees no light in 4 yrs

REAZ AHMAD

Formation of a national biosafety committee has been stalled for four years now, due largely to a tussle between two ministries over the composition and leadership of the committee.

The failure to form the National Committee on Biosafety of Bangladesh (NCBB) four years after the formulation of 'Biosafety Guidelines' is now obstructing application of biotechnology to augment farm output, official

sources said.

With the regulatory body not in place, the over-populated Bangladesh with its ever-shrinking farmlands will not be able to release genetically engineered crops for commercial cultivation. The NCBB is also supposed to oversee compliance with biosafety policies and guidelines.

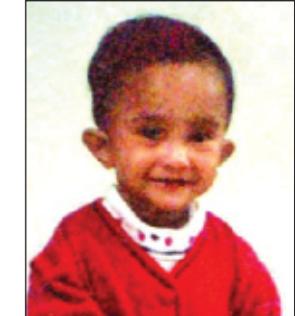
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Birthday that would never come

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The third birth anniversary of Marian Islam Naushin, who died cradled in her father's arms on May 9 last year, today brings no joy to her parents.

A stray bullet, fired by a gang of muggers, hit 20-month-old Naushin, cradled in her father's arms at Uttar Badda in the capital.

Naushin's parents -- Nazrul Islam and Achhia Islam and other relatives are mentally not in a position to arrange any merriment on the occasion.

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Full benefit for better performing non-govt schools, colleges

Education ministry working on the policy

MUSTAK HOSSAIN

The government will provide 100 per cent MPO (Monthly Pay Order) benefit to better performing non-governmental educational institutions.

"The ministry is preparing a policy to provide the incentive to educational institutions with excellent results in public examinations and the proposal is at the final stage," Mohammad Shahidul Alam,

education secretary told The Daily Star recently.

The MPOs of the worst performing educational institutions will be reduced proportionately, he said.

"This measure will bring about competition among educational institutions to improve their standard," he said.

Referring to a survey, the education secretary said the ministry is finalising a graph of educational institutions based on result.

"After the survey is complete, we will have broader perspective of educational standard of different schools, colleges and madrassah," he added.

Referring to an earlier study, the secretary said, almost one third of the educational institutions belonged to worst performance category.

If institutions fail to improve standard within stipulated time,

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One held for link to Jamal abduction

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Ctg

Police arrested one in connection with Chittagong business magnate and BNP leader Jamal Uddin Chowdhury abduction from Fatikchhari on Sunday night.

The arrestee, Sultan Ahmad, 30, son of Shah Alam, was a bodyguard of Abdul Kashem Chowdhury, chairman of Kanchan Nagar union parishad of Fatikchhari. Kashem is the prime suspect of Jamal Uddin abduction.

A special team comprising Chittagong Metropolitan Police and Fatikchhari thana raided Kanchan Nagar and held Sultan.

Police continued search in different areas of Fatikchhari and adjoining areas for Jamal Uddin Chowdhury, who was abducted on July 24.

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Extinct Tasmanian tigers sighted in Australia



AFP, Melbourne

Supposedly long-extinct Tasmanian tigers have been spotted in parkland 25 km from the heart of Melbourne, according to at least 20 sightings reported to the Victorian state government since the early 1990s.

Freedom of Information (FOI) requests reveal 63 possible sightings of Tasmanian tigers and big cats in Victoria, including a Parks Victoria report into multiple tiger sightings in the Warrandyte State Park, to the north of Melbourne.

Other repeat sightings of Tasmanian tigers in the same period centred around Wilsons Promontory National Park, in the south-east, and the Grampians range, in the west.

The last known Tasmanian tiger, or

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	Sun Rises	Sun Sets
Aug 19		6-29 pm
Aug 20	5-35 am	

Prayer Timings		
August 19		
	Azan	Jamaat
Fajr	4-30	5-05
Zohr	12-45	1-15
Asr	5-00	5-15
Maghrib	6-37	6-42
Esha	8-15	8-45

Source: Islamic Foundation

Riyadh, Male extend support to Dhaka's candidature for OIC secy gen

UNB, Dhaka

Saudi Arabia has thrown its weight behind Bangladesh candidate Salauddin Quader Chowdhury for the post of secretary general of the Organisation of the Islamic Conference (OIC).

The decision was officially conveyed in a letter handed over by the charge d'affaires of the Saudi Embassy in Dhaka when he called on Foreign Secretary Shamsheer Mobin Chowdhury at the latter's office on Sunday, said a press release.