

JS body slams Danish release on Akbar Says it's violation of Vienna Convention

STAFF CORRESPONDENT The parliamentary standing committee on foreign ministry yesterday accused the Danish embassy in Dhaka of violating the Vienna Convention by interfering in the internal affairs of Bangladesh. The committee strongly condemned the April 23 statement of the Danish embassy that said the Danish government will not grant any financial assistance to Bangladesh as long as Shipping Minister Akbar Hossain remains in charge of the ministry. Meeting sources said Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP) lawmaker M Naser Rahman raised the issue, terming the embassy press release a violation of the Vienna Convention

Politics rife with speculation

Two days left to AL deadline

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

With only two days left for the main opposition Awami League's April 30 deadline to unseat the BNP-led coalition government, speculations are mounting in the political arena as well as among people across the country. AL General Secretary Abdul Jalil's remarks on Monday have further fuelled speculations about his party's much-talked-about trump

card to be played to dislodge the government. "We will play the trump card in due time. So, we cannot reveal its contents before it is used," Jalil told journalists. Jalil also said his party will celebrate its victory on April 30. The AL enforces dawn-to-dusk hartal today and tomorrow in the run-up to the deadline. But neither Jalil nor any other AL leader would divulge the party's programmes for April 30. Speaking on condition of ano-

nymity, a senior AL leader said, "We firmly believe it is very much possible to press the government to agree to snap polls." Against this backdrop, political observers pondered over some possible options. The options include resignation of all AL legislators from parliament, AL persuading the other major opposition Jatiya Party (Ershad) lawmakers also to resign from the House, bringing a formal 'no-confidence' motion

HANGMEN IN WHITE

These three convicts-- (from L to R) Shahjahan, Haris and Hafiz-- from Dhaka Central Jail chosen to carry out Ershad Shikdar's execution on May 10 are on their way to Khulna jail where the notorious criminal awaits the hangman's noose.



JCD men run rampage at Ctg terminal for toll

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Ctg

A group of extortionists, allegedly Jatiyatada Chhatra Dal (JCD) cadres, went on the rampage at the port city's Bahaddarhat bus terminal yesterday as they failed to realise Tk 1 lakh in toll from the terminal staff. They damaged at least five vehicles and injured four persons including two bus drivers. Protesting the attack, City Bus Minitub Human Hauler Owners Association stopped its services on different routes for around five hours till police assured them of proper action. Association leaders alleged police refused to register a case as the attackers included 10 JCD cadres. "We wanted to file a case against the attackers under Speedy Trial Act but the officer-in-charge (OC) of Chandgaon Police Station advised us to lodge a General Diary (GD), dropping the names of JCD cadres," said AKM Jahangir Hossain, general secretary of the association.



Businesses near the Awami League's (AL) headquarters on Bangabandhu Avenue suffer most from the political flare-up as police sealed entrances to markets near the AL office, trapping market employees inside during an AL rally yesterday.

Full use of WTO clause to yield billions

Projects CPD study on manpower exports

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Bangladesh can earn around US\$ 11.57 billion a year by exporting 200,000 professionals alone, if it utilises, methodically and fully, the provisions of the WTO initiative 'Temporary Movement of Natural Persons' (TMNP), projects the Centre for Policy Dialogue (CPD). The CPD research paper released at a press conference yesterday made a set of policy recommendations for Bangladesh to implement as well as to pursue in World Trade Organisation forums, including the next month's meeting in Geneva, to achieve that end. The provision, by the fullest use of which Bangladesh can reap such a huge benefit, is enshrined in Article 9 of the Special Modalities of Negotiations on Services Trade Liberalisation for Least Developed Countries, which had been adopted

by the WTO on September 03, 2003. For that, the paper said Bangladesh needed to categorise the employment structure of its overseas workers as per the ISCO-88 (International Standard Classification of Occupation) code. It suggests Bangladesh to prepare a proposal to be placed in the WTO to add the ISCO-88 as a categorisation of service providers, like that of services. The paper titled 'Temporary Movement of Natural Persons: Identification of Opportunities for Bangladesh' also stressed developing a comprehensive plan with different time dimensions for promoting export of service providers through the TMNP. Elaborating the increasing demand for migrant manpower in the developed nations, the paper observed, over the next 50 years, the share of elderly people in all the

By-polls in Dhaka-10, Munshiganj June 6

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The Election Commission (EC) yesterday announced by-election at Dhaka-10 and Munshiganj-1 constituencies of the Jatiya Sangsad (JS) on June 6. The seats fell vacant after former BNP lawmakers Abdul Mannan and Mahi Chowdhury resigned on March 10. The main opposition Awami League (AL), now agitating for snap polls, plans to boycott the race while the former BNP legislatures are also unlikely to contest. Resigning from the JS, both Mannan and Mahi joined hands with former president Badruddoza Chowdhury and formed Bikalpa Dhara (Alternative Political Stream), as a prelude to formation of a new political party. Asked about running the polls, Mannan, now member secretary of the political party, averted a direct reply expressing skepticism about fairness of the election. The EC fixed May 12 as the last date for filing nomination papers while the same for withdrawing candidature is May 20.

JCD ATTACK AT SUST Students stage sit-in, issue ultimatum

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Sylhet

Some 2,000 students of the Shahjalal University of Science & Technology (SUST) staged a sit-in in front of the administrative building yesterday protesting Monday's armed attack on the general students by the adherents of ruling BNP's student front Jatiyatada Chhatra Dal (JCD). Speakers addressing the demonstrators during the one-hour sit-in programme gave authorities till Sunday to accept their nine-point

Congress catches up in Indian polls race

PALLAB BHATTACHARYA, New Delhi

Alliance suffering major reverses in most places and the main opposition Congress making significant gains. The exit polls said the BJP-led alliance remains frontrunner but could fall short of the halfway mark of 273 seats needed to form a government in the 545-member lower house of parliament. Buoyed by the exit poll results, Congress claimed it would be able to form government without requiring the support of regional parties like

Samajwadi Party or Bahujan Samaj Party. Public posturing by Congress is seen to boost the morale of party rank and file and influence undecided voters ahead of the next two phases of polling on May 5 and 10. The BJP brushed aside the exit polls showing the opposition fast catching up in an election race, saying yesterday it would make strong gains in the final rounds of

the support of regional parties like

Surviving twin out of danger

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Halima, one of the Siamese twins separated from her sister last Sunday, continues to do well. Physicians at Islamic Bank Hospital in the city yesterday stated her condition 'stable'. She has no sign of any risk other than accidental infection for which doctors have kept her in an isolated ward on fourth floor of the hospital. "The 13-day-old baby is clinically well and is improving every day," said Dr Ruhul Amin, the surgeon who performed the operation. "We are hoping to put Halima on breast feeding from tonight, which

Unite to unseat 'failed govt'

Urges group of professionals

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Professionals including lawyers, physicians, engineers, teachers and journalists yesterday called for a united movement to oust the 'failed government'. They accused the BNP-led coalition government of violating constitutional and human rights of citizens through mass arrests and attacks on demonstrations of oppo-

sition political parties. They took part in an exchange of views on the prevailing law and order situation and role of the professional groups, organised by the Supreme Court Bar Association. Speaking on the occasion, former law minister Abdul Matin Kharsu said the government has failed to ensure security of citizens and is violating constitutional rights

Students block highway, ask RU to cancel appointments

RU CORRESPONDENT

Students of Rajshahi University (RU) yesterday formed a human chain on Dhaka-Rajshahi highway demanding immediate cancellation of recruitment of 544 third and fourth class employees at the university. They also held a sit-in programme before the administrative building and submitted a memorandum to Vice-chancellor Prof Faisal Islam Faruki and Student

POURASHABHA POLLS EC to ask govt to deploy army

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The Election Commission (EC) yesterday decided to ask the government to deploy army during municipal corporation polls to arrest law and order downside in the constituencies. The EC at a meeting yesterday decided to ask for the army deployment to ensure free and fair elections to 117 Pourashabhas (municipal corporation) across the country scheduled to be held between May 5 and 10. "We have made the decision to ask the government to deploy army personnel at today's meeting and asked the secretary of the Election Commission to send a letter in this regard to the Armed Forces Division," Election Commissioner Safiur Rahman told The Daily Star yesterday. "The EC also discussed the issue of army deployment at Monday's meeting. But no decision could be

reached on that day," he added. The EC move follows appeals by scores of candidates to the EC for deployment of army personnel to make sure that the elections are held in a free and fair manner, EC sources said. At a law and order review meeting on April 24, the Directorate General of the Forces Intelligence (DGFI) said the DGFI has identified 43 municipal corporations as vulnerable. The high government officials including the home secretary, inspector general of police, divisional and deputy commissioners (DC) and superintendents of police however did not report at that meeting on the delicate law and order situation in these municipalities, which annoyed Chief Election Commissioner MA Syed. Officials at the EC Secretariat said the EC was undecided about whether to ask the government for

Hoodlums rough up police SI

OUR CORRESPONDENT, N'ganj

Three days after gunning down a staff of a lawmaker, the same gang of hoodlums severely assaulted a sub-inspector (SI) of the Criminal Investigation Department (CID) of police yesterday and took away his motorcycle at Shibuj market on Dhaka-Narayanganj link road. SI Sirajul Islam, however, managed to get away by jumping on a speeding bus. The SI was on his way to Joydevpur to investigate a case and as soon as he reached Shibuj market at about 6:00am, the gangsters blocked his way with a car. Four men came out of the car and took away

Look at the sky for a celestial fiesta

AFP, Paris

People who are superstitious won't find it easy for the next month or so. If they look into the sky one night next week, they may see... a red Moon. Blazing across the heavens will be two fiery stars - the first comets of the Millennium that are expected to be visible by the naked eye. Then, in June, Earth, Venus and the Sun will all be directly aligned, staging a cosmic eclipse that no human alive today has seen. Not for nothing have keen astronomers around the world pencilled this as the time to take their annual vacation and place nightly orders of pizza in order to devote their fullest gaze to the skies. The show kicks off on Tuesday May 4 with a total lunar eclipse, which occurs when the Moon, the Sun and Earth are all in alignment. The Moon will slide into the cone of shadow of the Earth cast by the Sun but it will not become invisible, for it will be tinged by residual sunlight that is deflected by Earth's atmosphere.

Table with Prayer Timings for April 28, including Azan and Jamaat times for Fajr, Zohr, Asr, Maghrib, and Esha.



Cops at Keraniganj Police Station show arms and weapons recovered from robber leader Ansar and his gang after a gunbattle with them in the upazila yesterday.

1 killed, 2 hurt as robbers trade fires with jt force

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

An alleged robber was killed and two others were injured in a gunfight with a joint force of police, ansar and paramilitary Bangladesh Rifles at village Ikuria in Keraniganj upazila yesterday. Police said gang leader Ansar, 35, along with his four accomplices went to the house of local trader Mohammad Hossain at about 9:00am. Hearing the news, locals encircled the house and informed police. As the joint team asked the robbers to surrender, they opened fire. The members of the joint team returned fire, leading to an hour-long gunfight between the two sides. Ansar died on the spot. Two of his accomplices, Jihad, 28, and Shafiu, 27, received bullets in the hands and legs and the rest two managed to flee. Ansar's body was sent to Dhaka Medical College Hospital for autopsy while Jihad and Shafiu were admitted to Orthopaedic Hospital.