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Thai military junta has packed a new national assembly with soldiers, raising fresh questions about its plans for the country.

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Another election for India



A general election will have to be held, barely 18 months after the last one. No party really wants another election so soon, mainly because no one is confident of victory.

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NEWS BRIEFS

Ramzan starts in Saudi Arabia

DHAHRAN, Mar 16: A cannon was fired in eastern Saudi Arabia this evening to signal the start of the holy month of Ramadan. Several muffled cannon booms, traditionally fired after sunset each day of Ramadan, indicated fasting would begin tomorrow, Information Ministry officials said, reports Reuter.

Baker in Ankara

ANKARA, Mar 16: US Secretary of State James Baker arrived in Ankara from Moscow today on the last stage of his 10-day tour to promote Middle East peace, Anatolian news agency said, reports Reuter.

Gorbachev meets political figures

MOSCOW, Mar 16: President Mikhail Gorbachev called a meeting of top economists and political figures to discuss growing crisis on the eve of a referendum on the future of the Union tomorrow, the official Tass news agency said, reports Reuter.

Kremlin proposes 6-point plan to dilute US influence in post-war Gulf

Big Five talk terms for a permanent ceasefire in Gulf

UNITED NATIONS, Mar 16: The five permanent members of the UN Security Council began negotiations late on Friday on a resolution setting out terms for a permanent ceasefire, including a token UN peacekeeping force on Iraq's border with Kuwait, reports Reuter.

Meanwhile, AP reports from Moscow the Kremlin moved Saturday to dilute US influence in the post-war Gulf, proposing a six-point plan that warns against forming 'isolated blocs' and calls for foreign military units to leave. The plan, presented to US Secretary of State James A. Baker III during three days of

talks with Soviet officials in Moscow, also calls for UN peacekeeping forces, possibly with units from Arab nations, to be stationed in the area. Soviet Foreign Ministry spokesman Vitaly Churkin, who released the plan to reporters, said Baker was generally positive about it but stressed that his reaction was only preliminary. The plan, aimed at allaying the concerns of Soviet military hard-liners about possible US dominance in the Middle East, warns against forming 'isolated blocs' which would be



US Secretary of State James Baker being received by Soviet President Mikhail Gorbachev at the Kremlin Friday. —AFP photo

MPs-elect oath taking begins today: JP still undecided

By Staff Correspondent

Newly elected members of Jatiya Sangsad (parliament) will take oath today. Chief Election Commissioner Justice Abdur Rouf will administer the oath at the Committee Room No 1 of the Sangsad Bhavan between 10 a.m. and 12.30 p.m. Justice Rouf has been designated by the outgoing Speaker Shamsul Huda Chowdhury to conduct the swearing-in ceremony as the major political parties refused to take oath from him. According to Parliament

Secretariat sources, five members of Baksal, one of Islami Oikya Jote, one of National Democratic Party and three independent members are expected to take oath today. The sources said the 139 MPs-elect of Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP) and 18 MPs-elect of Jamaat-e-Islami will take oath on March 18, while MPs-elect of Awami League, CPB, NAP, Workers Party and Ganotantri Party will take oath on March 19. The MPs-elect of Jatiya Party have not yet communi-

cated its decision to the Parliament secretariat. But if their party chairman former President Ershad takes oath under police escort or on parole the other MPs-elect will follow him. This was decided at the extended meeting of Jatiya Party which concluded on Friday at the Royal Auditorium at Gulshan. Meanwhile, a Jatiya Party source said of the meeting the decision has already been communicated to Ershad. See Page 10 Col 1

Stage set for formation of new Council of Ministers

Star Report

The administrative vacuum created following the dissolution of the Council of Advisers by the Acting President on Friday is likely to affect the functioning of the government. Informed sources told The Daily Star that the senior officials of different ministries are reluctant to take major decisions having political implications until a new council of ministers is formed. Acting President Justice Shahabuddin Ahmed, who hosted a tea party

at Bangabhaban in honour of the members of the dissolved Council of Advisers hinted that the new council of ministers is in the offing. Some of the former advisers said they had the impression that the Acting President will form the new council of ministers immediately after oath taking by the newly elected members of parliament. The oath taking begins today and will conclude on March 19. According to the speculations in the political

circles, the council of ministers may be formed next Friday. The new prime minister is likely to attend a children's rally at the National Stadium on the Independence Day as chief guest. Dhaka district authorities are learnt to have prepared an invitation card to this effect. The officials of the Cabinet Division were busy on Saturday preparing for the swearing-in ceremony. The officials were making the cars, escorts, and See Page 10 Col 2

Shantibahini kills six

From Our Staff Correspondent

CHITTAGONG, Mar 16: At least six people were killed and two others injured when the members of outlawed Shantibahini stormed a village of Rangamati district and indiscriminately fired on the villagers in the early hours on Saturday. Official sources said the Shantibahini armed men numbering 20 to 30 also set ablaze 11 houses of the settlers of the village Bhushanchhari during their attack at about 2.30 am.

Of the dead, three were women and two children. Two children were burnt alive while the three women were shot dead and another woman succumbed to bullet injuries at the Chittagong Military Hospital (CMH). The attackers managed to flee into the deep forest before army contingents rushed. Chittagong area commander of the army visited the area and assured the villagers of adequate assistance for rehabilitation. This is the biggest atrocity by the so-called Shantibahini this year. Shantibahini killed two tribals in the same area in late February this year.



Anniversary of Bangabandhu's birth today

By Staff Correspondent

The 71st anniversary of birth of Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman will be observed today. Different political and socio-cultural organisations have drawn elaborate programmes to celebrate the day. The day's programmes include hoisting of party flag, garlanding the portrait of Bangabandhu, feeding the poor and holding discussions on the late leader. Awami League central body will hold a discussion meeting at Bangabandhu Bhavan at 32, Dhanmondi at 4 pm. AL chief Sheikh Hasina will chair the discussion while party central See Page 10 Col 7

Ramzan begins Monday

By Staff Correspondent

The holy month of Ramzan begins tomorrow (Monday). Muslims all over the country will begin observing the month of fasting with the first Sehri in the early hours of Monday.

Restaurants and other eating places will stay closed during fasting hours every day during the month. The government on Thursday announced new office timings for the holy month of Ramzan.

Offices at the secretariat (ministry/divisions) and offices affiliated with the secretariat, directorates and others including autonomous bodies and corporations will function between 9 AM and 3 PM with a 15 minute break for Johar prayer at 1.15 PM. The divisional offices, upazila and mufassil offices and Courts outside Dhaka will See Page 10 Col 1

Speaker of West Bengal calls on Hasina

Speaker of West Bengal Assembly Hashim Abdul Halim paid a courtesy call on chief of Awami League Sheikh Hasina at the Bangabandhu Bhavan Saturday, reports BSS. Matters of common interest, relations and problems between the two countries figured in their discussion. Publicity Secretary of Awami League and MP-elect Mohammed Nasim, Agricultural Secretary and MP-elect Begum Motia Chowdhury were present.

Hasten transfer of power: BNP

By Staff Correspondent

Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP) had urged the Acting President Justice Shahabuddin Ahmed to speed up the process for the transfer of power to the party. The BNP said this should be done as it is the majority party in parliament. An extended meeting of the party held at Engineers Institute on Friday expressed deep concern at the increase in prices of essentials including rice, deterioration of the law and order situation and demanded prompt action against those responsible. See Page 10 Col 5

Row in JP meeting

Star Reporter

The Jatiya Party has failed to agree on a movement to get its chairman H M Ershad released before party Mps-elect take oath. A two-day extended meeting of the party at an auditorium in Gulshan failed to hammer out a course of action for Ershad's release before the oath-taking but agreed to meet again after Eid-ul-Fitr to discuss further moves. The Jatiya Party had given the government an ultimatum at a public meeting setting March 12 as the deadline for Ershad's release. The JP extended meeting presided over by Mizanur Rahman Chowdhury was attended by former ministers Major General (ret'd) Shamsul Haque, Sirajul Hossain Khan,

BNP will uproot terrorism: Khaleda

FENI, Mar 16: BNP chairperson Begum Khaleda Zia today alerted the people about conspiracies against country's independence and sovereignty and said her party would not tolerate any such plot, reports UNB. BNP is pledge-bound to safeguard national sovereignty for which the people voted it to victory in last month's parliamentary polls, Begum Zia said speaking at a reception accorded to her by her party supporters at Fulgazi High School maidan this evening. The BNP leader thanked her electorate of Feni-1 constituency for electing her MP. The BNP leader won all the five seats she contested in the February polls, with her party bagging a total of 139 seats out

of 299. Thousands of supporters in over 100 vehicles gave a rousing reception to the leader as she entered the district. The function was presided over by local BNP leader Jamshed Hossain Majumder and also addressed, among others, by Shamim Hossain. If BNP forms government, Begum Zia said, it will ensure people's basic needs of food, clothing, shelter, health and education the responsibilities the people had vested upon the party through ballot. She said the BNP government would uproot terrorism from the society and called upon the people to work unitedly against it. Her government will im-

Tk 612 crore loss by 4 corporations

Star Economic Report

Public sector industrial enterprises are in financial chaos. Disinvestment or denationalisation moves in the eighties have not succeeded in wiping out their aggregate loss. Four public sector corporations, Bangladesh Chemical Industries Corporation (BCIC), Bangladesh Sugar and Food Industries Corporation (BSFIC), Bangladesh Steel and Engineering Corporation (BSEC) and Bangladesh Textile Mills Corporation (BTMC), incurred a total loss of about Tk. 612 crore in 1989-90. The 10-member Task Force on efficiency improvement for public sector enterprises had painted a very gloomy picture of most industrial concerns under the sector corporations. It has suggested bold ac-

tions to improve the operational activities of industrial units in the public sector. The Task Force, with Dr. Rafiquddin Ahmed, former Director, ICTVTR, as its convener, was one of 29 working groups, set up by the interim government to review the socio-economic situation in various sectors and suggest policy alternatives to overcome the problems. The Task Force on public sector industrial enterprises, in its executive summary of the report, has given the breakdown of losses by the four sector corporations with a 1,19,670 member workforce. The respective loss figures in 1989-90 were as follows: BTMC - Tk 255.58 crores, See Page 10 Col 2

Rebellion by Shi'ite Muslims defeated: Saddam

BAGHDAD, Mar 16: Iraqi President Saddam Hussein said Saturday that his government succeeded in defeating a rebellion by Shi'ite Muslims in the country's south and was near to putting down a Kurdish revolt in the north, reports AP. Saddam, speaking in his first nationally broadcast speech since the cease-fire in the Gulf War, referred to the rebels as 'stooges and agents of foreign enemies.'

Saddam said that his government was forced to 'deal harshly' with the opposition, but he gave few details of the actual fighting. The Iraqi President said that the southern cities of Basra, Al-Amara, Nassiriya, Karbala, Najaf and Hilla faced rebel assaults. He said mobs attacked and set afire army camps and offices of the government and of his ruling Baath Party.

He accused the rebels of burglary, rape and attacking Iraqi troops who were retreating from US-led forces in the Gulf War. Saddam said the country was faced with rebellion while it was still 'bleeding from the consequences of the vicious aggression committed by 30 countries.' Earlier report says: Saddam Hussein will revamp his cabinet and introduce more politi-

cal freedoms, Arab diplomats in Baghdad said Saturday, in an apparent attempt to quell rebellions rocking Iraq. The moves, which Saddam was expected to announce in a speech later Saturday, are part of a programme to broaden Iraq's political system. An Iraqi official said Saddam would announce more press and political freedoms. Saddam was also expected to reiterate pledges of a new

constitution and parliamentary elections, the official said. The official, who was familiar with the speech, said Saddam was not ruling out participation of other political parties in the election. Iraq is currently a one-party state, with the ruling Baath Arab Socialist Party effectively controlled by the President. The Arab diplomats said his new cabinet would include

technocrats and others not associated with the Baath Party. Saddam made similar pledges last year before his Aug. 2 invasion of Kuwait, but the reforms were not carried out. The diplomats, who like the official spoke in exchange for anonymity, did not indicate whether there would be any holdovers in the new cabinet, largely made up of Saddam's intimates.