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VOL. 1 NO. 51 REGD. NO. DA 781

FALGUN 23, 1397 BS,

DHAKA FRIDAY MARCH 8, 1991

SHABAN 20, 1411 HIJRI

12 PAGES: PRICE TAKA 3.00

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Security tightened

Security was tightened at the residence of Acting President Justice Shahabuddin Ahmed last night following a threat of gherao by political activists. Roads surrounding the Acting President's residence at Kakrail were blocked with barbed wire barricades and police guards were reinforced, reports UNB.

Habib Chhatti dies in Paris

TUNIS, Mar 7: Former Organisation of Islamic Conference (OIC) Secretary-General Habib Chhatti died in Paris on Wednesday following open heart surgery. Chhatti, 74, a former Tunisian Foreign Minister, ran the OIC from 1979 to 1984, reports Reuter.

Honecker's warrant upheld

BERLIN, Mar 7: A Berlin court has refused to throw out the arrest warrant against former Communist East German leader Erich Honecker. The Berlin Justice Department said it would again urge the Bonn government to ask the Soviets to hand over Honecker for trial for the deaths of would-be escapees.

Bush-Major meet March 16

LONDON, Mar 7: Prime Minister John Major and US President George Bush will meet in Bermuda on March 16, the Prime Minister's office announced Thursday.

I'll only abide by Constitution: Shahabuddin Parliament to decide form of government

Acting President Justice Shahabuddin Ahmed said he will not involve himself in any way in the controversy on the system of government, reports UNB.

"It was for parliament to decide whether the country should have presidential or parliamentary type of government", Justice Shahabuddin was quoted to have told a delegation of DUCSU which called on him at his office on Thursday.

Most of the political parties including Awami League have been demanding for return to the parliamentary form of government.

BNP which emerged as the single majority party in the February 27 polls is in favour of retaining the presidential system, switched over by Awami League government from the parliamentary form in early 1975.

Jatiya Party which emerged as the third largest in parliament after Awami League, stands for the presidential system.

The Acting President told the student leaders he will do everything in accordance with the Constitution in fulfilling the present mission.

He advised the students to always remain united on na-

tional causes if they genuinely wanted to keep up the traditions set during the recent elections.

The Acting President told them he would favourably consider their demand for a few transport vehicles if the proposal comes from the Dhaka University authorities.

The 14-member delegation led by DUCSU VP Amanullah Aman MP-elect during the meeting said interim government of Justice Shahabuddin Ahmed had created history by holding a free, fair and impartial elections in a very peaceful situation.

The student leaders said they would do everything possible to keep up the tradition.

The delegation included DUCSU General Secretary Khairul Kabir Khokan.

BSS adds: The Five-Party Alliance stressed the need for urgent specific actions by the major political parties to resolve the constitutional issues being faced by the country.

An eleven-member delegation of the alliance, led by Rashed Khan Menon, MP-elect, which called on Acting President Justice Shahabuddin Ahmed at President's Secretariat also recalled that the three political alliances had publicly committed themselves

during the mass movement to make parliament fully sovereign.

In this connection, the delegation told Acting President that they would extend all co-operation for materialising this objective.

The alliance leaders also exchanged views with Acting President on the post-election situation. They said the matters of preparing the budget for the next fiscal year and conducting aid negotiations with foreign donors should receive priority consideration by the major parties. They viewed that the overriding interest of the nation called for immediate attention of the major political parties to the economic situation facing the country.

The alliance leaders, who expressed their satisfaction at the free, fair and impartial holding of the recent election expressed the view that the mission of the Acting President would not end until the completion of the constitutional process for transfer of power.

Justice Shahabuddin said that he would abide only by the Constitution in accomplishing his mission and would not stay in his present position a moment longer than necessary for that purpose.

Stage set for ending Arab-Israeli feud: Bush

WASHINGTON, Mar 7: President George Bush said on Wednesday night that the end of the Gulf war has set the stage for Israel and its Arab neighbours to end their bitter feud peacefully and that the first US troops would leave the war zone within hours, reports agencies.

"Our commitment to peace in the Middle East does not end with the liberation of Kuwait," Bush said in hailing the Allied rout of Iraqi forces before a joint session of Congress that gave him a triumphant welcome.

He said the 24th Mechanised Infantry Division would return to Fort Stewart, Georgia, as the "beginning of a steady flow of American troops coming home".

Lavishing praise on America's combat forces, Bush drew thunderous applause as he announced they would begin their journey home from Saudi Arabia within hours.

During a 31-minute address that at times turned emotional, Bush said the world must build on the unusual display of international harmony that led to the surprisingly swift Allied victory against Iraq.

"We must work to create new opportunities for peace and stability in the Middle East," Bush told members of the House of Representatives and Senate exactly a week after declaring a ceasefire with Iraq. See Page 12 Col. 2



US President George Bush smiles as Vice President Dan Quayle and House Speaker Thomas Foy join Congress in an standing ovation Wednesday. — AFP photo

BNP pledge-bound to fulfil its commitments: Khaleda

From Our Correspondent

JAMALPUR, Mar 7: BNP chairperson Begum Khaleda Zia said on Thursday the people gave their verdict in favour of her party only because of its consistent role against the autocratic regime during the last nine years.

She was addressing a big election rally at Benuarchar High School maidan in Islampur, which was presided over by Abu Sayed Chowdhury. Polling will be held in eight centres of Jamalpur-2 constituency on Saturday.

She said the people voted for her party as they want welfare and progress. She said the present age limit for government jobs would be extended. The BNP chief mentioned

that the people did not forget the nightmarish days of 1974 when hundreds of people died from famine and starvation.

UNB adds: Begum Zia said categorically that her party was going to form government within a few days.

"My party is also pledge-bound to fulfil its electoral commitments," she told the cheering crowds.

Voting in eight centres of Jamalpur-2 constituency was cancelled due to disturbances during the last week's election. Repolling will be held on March 9.

Awami League candidate Rashed Mosharraf is leading by about 10,000 votes against his party. See Page 12 Col. 4

61 election tribunals constituted

The Election Commission constituted 61 election tribunals Wednesday as per Article 53 of the Representation of People Order of 1972 for quick dispensation of election cases relating to parliamentary elections, report BSS.

The District and Session Judges of 61 districts except Khagrachari, Rangamati and Bandarban, will discharge the responsibility of election tribunal for their respective election constituency. How- See Page 12 Col. 1

Hasina calls for revoking 4th to 10th Amendments

By Staff Correspondent

Awami League chief Sheikh Hasina has said that her party would support a government that would revoke the 4th to 10th Amendments to the Constitution and also introduce a parliamentary form of government.

Addressing a big public meeting at 'Panthapath' in Dhaka Thursday afternoon Sheikh Hasina mentioned that 57 per cent of the voters had given their mandate in favour of a parliamentary system of government which would remain accountable to the people.

She said that the joint declaration of the three alliances last November clearly stated that the Acting President would transfer power to the

sovereign parliament. "It means that there should be a parliamentary form of government", she stressed.

Sheikh Hasina presided over the meeting held in observance of the historic March 7.

Party leaders Syeda Zohra Tajuddin, Abdus Samad Azad, Sajeda Chowdhury, Mohammod Nasim, Mollia Chowdhury, Aatur Rahman Khan Kaiser and Mujaffar Hossain Paltu also addressed the meeting.

Other central leaders including Zillur Rahman, Tofael Ahmed, Sheikh Abdul Aziz, Salauddin Yusuf, Quamruzzaman, Barrister Shawkat Ali and Rahmat Ali were also present. See Page 12 Col. 7

AL workers agitate in front of BTV Bhaban

By Staff Correspondent

Several thousands of workers of Awami League and its front organisations on Thursday demonstrated in front of Bangladesh Television (BTV) Bhaban demanding telecast of the historic March 7 speech by Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman.

The demonstration began at 6.30 pm and continued till 11 pm. The authorities concerned had talks with the Awami League. See Page 12 Col. 2

US troops begin first phase of pullout Civil strife in Iraq continues

UNDATED, Mar 7: As the first US troops started for home and talks began on repatriating Iraqi prisoners of war in the wake of the allies' success in ousting Iraqi forces from Kuwait, Kurdish rebels and a Shi'ite resistance group claimed continued success in operations against President Saddam Hussein, report Agencies.

A spokesman for the Teheran-based Supreme Assembly of the Islamic Revolution in Iraq (SAIRA) discounted US reports that the key southern Iraqi port of Basra had been recaptured by troops loyal to Saddam and said it was still held by insurgents.

Another Shi'ite group said meanwhile, that unrest had extended to Baghdad, "where fighting has taken place with

the forces of the Iraqi regime."

A Kurdish rebel leader said in Damascus that Kurdish rebels in northern Iraq had captured "43 Iraqi officers from the 24th division, including its commander, general Abdel Meguid Abbas Wahib."

Meanwhile US soldiers, some still caked with desert sand, began leaving Saudi Arabia Thursday in the first large-scale troop departures from the Gulf. They left behind an Iraq where Saddam Hussein's troops were said to be executing dissidents and scattering the corpses in the streets as a warning.

Jubilant American soldiers made V-for-victory signs as they boarded military transport planes in the Saudi desert where they had spent nearly seven months training, waiting

— and finally fighting a lightning war.

"We've done what the world wanted us to do," said 2nd Lt. Alfred Sullivan. "Now it's time to go home."

In the Saudi capital of Riyadh, Allied and Iraqi commanders were meeting Thursday to discuss some of war's unfinished business: repatriation of remains, return of Iraqi prisoners, and missing people.

The missing include about three dozen foreign journalists who vanished while trying to cover the anti-Saddam rebellion that flared in southern Iraq after the allies routed Iraq's troops last week, ending the war.

Amid the unrest, the Iraqi government has told foreign news reporters to leave. Some See Page 12 Col. 8

Constitution can't be changed merely by demand: Speaker

Speaker Shamsul Huda Chowdhury had a meeting Thursday with Acting President Shahabuddin Ahmed and discussed formalities of oath-taking by newly elected members of the 5th parliament.

Chowdhury told UNB by phone that he would hold meeting with the officials of parliament secretariat Saturday and take necessary measures for oath to the new MPs.

When his attention was drawn to reports that many MPs-elect do not like to take oath from him, the Speaker said "I'm the constitutional Speaker and the Constitution can't be amended merely by demands".

Citing the procedures of transfer of power to Acting President Justice Shahabuddin Ahmed on December 6, he said former President Ershad handed over power to Justice Ahmed by fulfilling all constitutional obligations to maintain constitutional continuity.

"I want to help in smooth transition to democracy," the 70-year-old Speaker of the dissolved 4th parliament said.

According to the Constitution and the rules of procedures, each person elected to parliament... subscribes an oath (or affirmation) in the form set out in the Third Schedule to the Constitution before the outgoing Speaker, and in his absence, before the outgoing Deputy Speaker and in the absence of both of them, before a person designated by the outgoing Speaker. See Page 12 Col. 4

Fifth Amendment Four partners of 8-party alliance reject AL proposal

By Moinuddin Naser

Smaller partners of the Eight-Party alliance are learnt to have turned down an Awami League proposal to include scrapping of Fifth Amendment to the Constitution in the demand for constitutional changes to restore parliamentary form of government.

The 5th amendment dropped secularism as a state principle and inserted 'faith in Almighty Allah' instead. Besides, the amendment blocked the trial of the killers of Sheikh Mujibur Rahman.

Awami League earlier sought a meeting with other components of the alliance to discuss this issue but they refused. See Page 12 Col. 6

5-party warns against blocking transfer of power

By Staff Correspondent

The Five-party Alliance in a meeting on Thursday resolved that the unnecessary debate on constitutional issues centering the transfer of power to an elected government would open a door to conspiratorial and sinister move.

The meeting, chaired by the convener of the alliance Khalequzzaman Bhuiyan, urged the other two alliances to hold a joint meeting keeping in view the people's demand. If the transition to democracy is impeded by any political party the nation would not forgive them, the meeting said.

The meeting further said the February 27 election was quite free and fair, and raising question about its fairness of See Page 12 Col. 5

Presidential poll only way out, says Mizan

By Staff Correspondent

Acting Chairman of the Jatiya Party Thursday said power could not be transferred to any parliamentary group before amending the Constitution to switch over to parliamentary system.

Mizan Chowdhury said this while addressing a reception to the newly elected JP MPs in the capital.

The JP Acting Chairman who saw no alternative to holding presidential election to transfer power keeping the present constitution intact said "if the presidential poll is announced we will put up Ershad - our formidable candidate".

JP Acting Chairman hoped that the Acting President would abide by the See Page 12 Col. 5