

## US AID

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ation with Bangladesh with the formation of the new democratically elected government.

The joint statement mentioned that regarding the debt relief, State, Treasury, Agriculture, OMB and AID have agreed in principle to write off Bangladesh's development assistance debt (about 292 million dollars), which has already been communicated to the interim government.

The joint statement said due to recent political developments in Bangladesh followed by voluntary evacuation of some USAID staff had complicated the administration of AID projects there but still the programmes had not been stopped. The statement praised the effort of the interim government for its responsive role to the security of the US nationals in Bangladesh.

The statement added that the debt relief would signal their strong support for Bangladesh's moves toward democracy and economic reforms and would encourage Bangladesh to continue the course of economic reforms as outlined in its IMF Enhanced Structural Adjustment Facility.

About the effectiveness of the USAID programmes in Bangladesh the joint statement pointed out restructuring of the fertilizer distribution system in Bangladesh and greater access to fertilizer that has been widely recognised as prerequisite for increasing food production by small farmers. The statement added, as a result of deregulating fertilizer prices and markets, distribution and sales of fertilizer to farmers through private dealers have increased supplies, dramatically and the sales had grown by 20 per cent since 1989, farm level prices decreased by 10 per cent in 1990 and the private market shares grown to 90 per cent for urea and 98 per cent for gypsum by 1990.

Crop production and most notably rice production grew by 18 per cent in 1990 over the previous year. In addition to the millions of small farm households which have benefited from this restructuring, some 50,000 private retailers of fertilizer and the agricultural inputs operate nationwide in a vibrant competitive fertilizer market, the statement added.

The joint statement made it clear that to achieve the strategic objectives of the USAID it focuses on three-pronged approach. These are: strengthening the private sector and the role of business in development, maximizing sustained GDP growth; supporting democratic pluralism and strengthening democratic institutions to maximize economic, social and political benefits for a broader range of citizen groups and targeting the role of the family as a development focus in project design and impact measurement.

The statement also said that the USAID was closely working with the American private sector to bring their essential capital to the developing countries in South Asia.

The fiscal-year-1992 request of 299 million dollars (DA, ESF and PL 480) for Bangladesh, India, Nepal and Sri Lanka represents a modest increase from 1991.

None of these countries has a 1992 request lower than its current 1991 level.

### Release of APSU leader demanded

The All-Party Students Unity (APSU) Friday brought out a procession on the Dhaka University campus demanding the release of APSU central leader and convener of Ganatantrik Chhatra Kendra, Harunur Rashid, and a central member of the organisation Ruhul Amin Farooq, reports BSS.

A brief rally was held at the DUCSU building premises following the procession. It was addressed by APSU central leaders Shafi Ahmed and Raju Ahmed.

Demanding release of APSU leaders, the speakers said the student community would not tolerate arrest of the APSU leaders with false cases and release of Shah Moazzem, one of the corrupt associates of General Ershad.

A protest rally and procession will be held today (Saturday) at 10 a. m. on Dhaka University campus.

## US

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elements of the 101st airborne and 1st cavalry armoured divisions had occupied their most advanced positions in the Euphrates river valley on orders from Gulf forces Commander General Norman Schwarzkopf.

But Powell and other Pentagon officials stressed that American troops were not violating a temporary ceasefire line agreed to with Baghdad.

US forces occupy about 15 to 20 per cent of Iraqi territory south of that line in the wake of the crushing allied defeat of Iraq in the Gulf war.

Saddam is under major pressure from dissident elements who have been reported fighting to overthrow his government in at least two dozen cities and towns in southern Iraq as well as Kurdish areas in northern Iraq.

### Bush-Mitterrand

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we're in agreement that Jordan must not, and should not, be written off... what we're trying to do is figure what will work.

Mitterrand, who said the Palestine Liberation Organisation (PLO) remained the legitimate representative for Palestinians, did not rule out useful contacts with other Palestinians such as those US Secretary of State James Baker had in talks in Jerusalem this week.

"The PLO still appears as the representative organisation. There are, doubtless, other forces too, and I think they should make themselves known about the situation as it is right now," he said.

Israel refuses to consider any contacts with the PLO. Bush said he felt the PLO destroyed its credibility by siding with Saddam in the Gulf war and anticipated other moves by Palestinians not necessarily beholden to the PLO. "We'll pursue that track for a while and just see how the healing process goes," he said.

"There's got to be discussion with Palestinians or you're not going to get this problem solved".

Bush declined to comment on whether Baker's talks with the leaders of Saudi Arabia and Kuwait might achieve a concession toward Israel.

"I am not about to say that the Saudis and the Kuwaitis were not forthcoming and if you're ever going to accomplish something, regrettably what's discussed with them must be kept confidential", he said.

Bush left Martinique for Bermuda where he was to hold similar talks tomorrow with British Prime Minister John Major.

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A participant in Ikebana contest in the city Friday. —Star photo

## Maintain unity : Khaleda

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Mia and other party leaders including Gen (ret'd) Mir Shaukat Ali, Mirza Abbas, Salahuddin, Abdullah Al-Noman, Sheikh Razzak Ali and Mrs Farida Rahman.

Several dozen district level leaders who also spoke at the meeting called for dissolution of upazilas and holding of fresh elections to union parishads. They also suggested that the ministers of the would-be BNP government and MPs should work in also cooperation with the local party workers in implementing development programmes.

BNP workers demanded steps to expedite the trial of former President IIM Ershad; and politically face attempts to rehabilitate him.

Some of them urged the party leadership to stop filing of new certificate cases against farmers by banks and fulfil the election pledge by waiving agricultural loan upto Taka 5000.

"You must remember that if we fulfil the aspirations of the people through our dedication and selfless endeavour, the people will again elect us. I fail to carry out our responsibilities properly, the people will discard us and our party will be destroyed, Begum Zia said adding that destruction of BNP would threaten the country's independence and sovereignty.

In her speech Begum Zia said the people of the country had given their mandate to BNP not for self or party interests but for rebuilding the country's economy, education, agriculture, industry and other related institutions which suffered extensive damage by the autocratic rule of Ershad.

Begum Zia took serious note of the defeat of her party in many seats during the polls and said BNP had incurred such failure due to the violation of party rules and discipline by the leaders and workers.

She asked all to strictly follow the party discipline and work with renewed pledge to strengthen the BNP's organisational basis.

"This is not the time to sit idle but work harder to put the party on a solid footing, Begum Zia told the packed audience calling upon them to go to their respective areas and collect new members making the party a well-organised and ideal one.

"The autocrat snatched away power in the darkness of night but the people elected us in the broad daylight, she said reminding the party leaders and workers that they have to work unitedly as members of a single family in the interest of the country's development.

"This is not the time to rejoice the election victory but to prepare ourselves to face the tough time ahead," Begum Zia told her partymen reminding that the enemies of BNP would have no stone unturned to tarnish the image of this popular party.

"As BNP is going to form the government, its enemies are out to disturb it through various unscrupulous means," she said and pointed out that

### Minibus workers block city road

By Staff Correspondent

Minibus workers put up a three-hour barricade on the main road in front of Sayedabad bus terminal causing traffic jam in this busy area of the city on Friday.

The workers blocked the road by leaving a number of buses there in protest against stoning of some minibuses by a group of people from Uttar Jatraabari at around 11 am.

Police said the mob broke windows of four minibuses to avenge the alleged assault on some North Jatraabari residents by bus workers on Thursday night.

When the workers were blocking the roads, a minibus rammed the car of Salahuddin Ahmed, MP-elect from Demra, who was going to attend the executive committee meeting of BNP. His car was slightly dented.

Later Demra police reached the spot and after talks with the workers and assuring them of taking action for the attack on buses, the workers removed the barricade.

## Gandhi mausoleum stormed

NEW DELHI, Mar 15 : Workers from a political party stormed the mausoleum of Indian independence leader Mohandas "Mahatma" Gandhi and blocked streets and forced their way into office as they rallied here today, reports AFP.

Dozens of members of the Bahujan Samaj (Equality) Party (BSP) doused the eternal flame at the Rajghat memorial during a brawl with police and smashed parts of the mausoleum ahead of the rally officers said.

The memorial, one of New Delhi's landmarks, was closed to the public following the damage.

BSP workers also smashed a box meant for cash donations and tore up concrete slabs from the heavily-guarded mausoleum after curators at the complex ordered them to enter without their footwear, a Hindu sign of respect to the dead.

Eleven rallyists were arrested after officers beat back most of them following a 30-minute scuffle, police said. Several constables were hurt as the rallyists pelted them with missiles uprooted from the mausoleum.

Police cordoned off the BSP marchers who arrived in the national capital to celebrate the birth anniversary of the late B. R. Ambedkar, who espoused the cause of the poor whom the party claims to represent.

But they later blocked central New Delhi roads triggering traffic jams, police and witnesses said.

They would not even allow critical people to cross roads and go to hospitals, said the city's traffic police chief Maxwell Parreira adding the marchers also stopped government motorcades and schoolbuses to protest the incident at the Gandhi mausoleum.

The Congress (I) party of former Premier Rajiv Gandhi criticised the storming of the Gandhi mausoleum as "an act of sacrilege, and said people should condemn such attacks."

We call upon the people to condemn those who are responsible for the act... It is a matter of great shame that these workers threw stones at the samadhi mausoleum, party spokesman Vithal Gadgil said.

## Kamal Hossain

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such conflicts.

were Major General (Rtd) Khalilur Rahman, Begum Zohra Tajuddin, Fazlur Rahman Khan (Netrakona), Nurul Islam B.Sc (Boalkhali, Chittagong), Zafar Ahmed Choudhury (Chandish) and many others.

Dr. Kamal said Awami League has a very fascinating past and leaders like Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujib, Shaheed Suhrawardy, Moulana Bhashani showed how to run the party. But the voters of 18 to 30 age group, are in dark about this history.

He said the party had

turned the regimes of Ershad and Zia as autocratic and made virulent attacks on the activities of these regimes. But the leaders never criticized the inner conflict, their own misdeeds and failures for a moment. The party chief could have taken this opportunity to do some self-criticism. People of this country forgive any failure or misdeeds with open minds, he said.

After the death of Sheikh Mujib, the governments in power painted Awami League as agent of India and as a foe to religion, he said and added, "we did not take any concerted effort to counter this propaganda, the rightist forces and the parties in power guided people's sentiment by unleashing volleys of propaganda against Awami League, he added.

The opposition groups have given statements against Indo-Bangladesh Friendship Treaty. AL chief did not mention this in her speech to the nation. The government after Awami League kept the treaty in force and supported it. By keeping the Special Powers Act, the subsequent governments detained thousands of people and repressed them.

Dr. Kamal said the rightist forces formed a solid alliance against Awami League. BNP and Jamaat formed electoral alliance in 150 seats. He said though 36 seats were given to the components of the alliances in a dramatic last minute decision, many alliance candidates decided to fight with their election symbols. As such, Awami League faced an impending losses.

We are pledge-bound to elect a representative government but we are afraid of establishing truly representative organisational leadership. We want democracy, but do not practise it, he lamented.

He said it was very unfortunate that he and Begum Tajuddin were humiliated during the recent elections.

"During the last 15 years, no autocratic regime could inflict so much insult", he added.

Dr. Hossain's statement was supported by party leaders like Begum Zohra Tajuddin, Abdul Mannan, Tofael Ahmed and Mohammad Nasim.

A discussion is expected to be held on March 19 in the adjourned meeting of the Awami League Executive Committee.

Resolutions

The extended meeting of the BNP has resolved that the trial of deposed president Ershad and his associates would be done as early as possible to establish the rule of law in the country.

The meeting which concluded late last night also took a decision giving power to the party chairperson to take any decision in case of emergency situation.

The meeting in its resolution also demanded immediate handing over of power to the BNP which emerged as victorious in the last parliament election.

The meeting also expressed its resentment over indiscriminate promotion and posting of some government officials.

The meeting also demanded a white paper from the interim govt on law and order situation and corruption during the Ershad regime.

The meeting also expressed its concern on the increase of prices of essential commodities.

## The Midnight File

### Hong Kong lifts ban on Kuwaiti assets

HONG KONG, Mar 15: Hong Kong has lifted all restrictions imposed on Kuwaiti assets effective immediately, a government spokesman said today. The freeze on Iraqi assets remains in place. The British colony, through an order from London, imposed the restrictions on August 7, five days after Iraqi tanks rolled into Kuwait, reports Reuter.

### Israel bombs Palestinian base

CHITOURA, Mar 15: Israeli warplanes blasted a Palestinian guerrilla base in Syrian-controlled east Lebanon on Friday, and police said seven guerrillas were wounded. A police spokesman, who cannot be named in line with regulations, said the planes targeted a base manned by Libyan-backed guerrillas of Samir Ghoshe's Palestine Popular Struggle Front in the Bekaa Valley, reports AP.

### 18 injured in S. Africa

JOHANNESBURG, Mar 15 : At least 18 people were stabbed and beaten after a gang armed with knives and clubs attacked passengers on a moving commuter train. The train Thursday headed to the black township of Soweto outside Johannesburg. Press reports said scores of terrified people jumped from the train when it stopped at a station. The attackers escaped and police said they had no information on the men or the motive for the attack, but it appeared linked to black faction fighting, reports AP.

### IOC summit in Madagascar

ANTANANARIVO, Mar 15 : Heads of states and governments from Indian Ocean countries gathered in Madagascar today for a weekend summit on boosting regional cooperation. Officials said issues on the agenda included a plan for free exchange of information among the five members of the Indian Ocean Commission (IOC) — Madagascar, Mauritius, the Seychelles, the Comoro Islands and the French overseas territory of reunion, reports Reuter.

### UN to help Albania to hold polls

VIENNA, Mar 15: The United Nations has offered to help Albania organise multi-party elections later this month and control a mass exodus of refugees, the official ATA news agency said today. A visiting UN delegation had agreed to a request from the communist authorities to send technical advisers for the elections of March 31, reports Reuter.

### Arafat to remain PLO chief

NEW YORK, Mar 15: Yasser Arafat has vowed to remain Chairman of the Palestine Liberation Organisation and said he and PLO are "more popular than ever" despite their support for Iraqi leader Saddam Hussein during the Gulf war, reports Reuter.

## Neutrality : Hasina

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Under the existing presidential system, the Acting President remains head of the government as well as the Council of Ministers. Sheikh Hasina pointed out. She viewed that following dissolution of the Council of Advisers, the Acting President appears to have paved the way for forming his Council of Ministers with the MPs-elect of a certain party.

"If it is done, the questions arise before the nation: will the Acting President sacrifice his neutrality by joining a certain party to form the Council of Ministers, or will those MPs-elect quit their party and join the non-partisan government?" —Sheikh Hasina said.

The AL chief reiterated that the move to form the Council of Ministers with the MPs of a single party and hold the presidential polls would give the deposed President Ershad a chance to stage a comeback. This will also ruin the victory of the masses against the autocratic regime of Ershad, she added.

Referring to the controversy over AL leadership, Sheikh Hasina clearly said, "We have become leaders as we have been working with AL, which has a glorious past of 42 years and led the nation in the War of Independence. If any of us is isolated from the party, he will lose all his importance".

Chaired by Abul Hashem Bhuiyan, the day-long meeting was addressed by city AL president Mozaffar Hossain Paltu and general secretary Fahu Sarkar, Jubo League chief Mostafa Mohsin Montu and all the presidents and secretaries of the party's city ward branches.

Sheikh Hasina strongly criticised the political parties which are waging propaganda against her party's relations with India.

"The countrymen irrespective of party affiliations fought the Liberation War under the Mujibnagar Government consisting people's representatives. All the sector commanders in the war were paid servants of the Mujibnagar government. Even after independence, the whole nation unitedly started rebuilding the war-torn country. So AL cannot do anything detrimental to the independence and sovereignty of the country", she remarked.

The AL chief alleged that it was the BNP government which did its best to prove its loyalty to India. This party, while in power, gave up the due share of the Ganges water. The BNP government removed all the signboards containing verses from the Holy Quran in the capital during a visit by the then Indian Premier Murarjee Deshai to Dhaka only to prove its loyalty to him, she added.

### Plea for consumers' rights policy

By Staff Correspondent

Consumers Association of Bangladesh on Friday demanded the formulation of a national policy to conserve the rights of the consumers.

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and delay in taking decision about the controversial constitutional issues including the form of government will lend the country in a fresh political crisis.

He said the three alliances were united to establish a permanent democratic system and uphold the spirit of the Liberation War by ending the autocratic rule. He said disunity among the three alliances gave Jatiya Party a chance to be rehabilitated. The anti-liberation free Jamaat-Islami is conspiring to share power with BNP taking advantage of disunity among the three alliances, he alleged.

The Workers Party leader said the components of three alliances should cooperate with BNP in forming government as it has emerged as the single largest party in the parliament polls. He said if BNP betrays the commitment of three alliances to the people it would have to bear the responsibility. Menon said the Five-party Alliance will continue to work for establishing and preserving democracy.



The Road blockade in front of Sayedabad Bus Terminal in the capital Friday. —Star photo