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NEWS BRIEFS

UGC chairman

Prof. Shamsul Huq, acting chairman of the University Grants Commission (UGC), has been appointed chairman of the commission for four years, an official handout said in Dhaka Tuesday evening.

AL executive body meet

The adjourned meeting of the executive committee of Bangladesh Awami League began in Dhaka Tuesday with party chief Sheikh Hasina in the chair. The meeting discussed post-election political situation in the country. It was adjourned till 10 am today, reports BSS.

Bush-Mandela: No acrimony

WASHINGTON, Mar 19: The White House said on Monday that President George Bush and South Africa's Nelson Mandela spoke by telephone recently about the Gulf war and US sanctions on Pretoria but it denied reports that the conversation was acrimonious, reports Reuter.

Israeli raid on Lebanon

SIDON (Lebanon), Mar 19: Israeli warplanes raided a base of a radical Palestinian guerrilla faction near a refugee camp in south Lebanon on Tuesday, security sources reported, reports Reuter.

Mujahideen down two Soviet choppers

ISLAMABAD, Mar 19: Guerrillas fighting the Soviet-backed Afghan government said today they had shot down two military helicopters near the besieged eastern garrison town of Khost, reports Reuter.

Iftar and Sehri timings

Day	Last time for Sehri	Iftar
Wednesday	4.43 am	6.16 pm
Thursday	4.42 am	6.17 pm

Acting President Justice Shahabuddin forms 31-member Council of Ministers

Khaleeda Zia Prime Minister

By Staff Correspondent



Begum Khaleeda Zia: First woman Prime Minister of Bangladesh.

— Star photo

Begum Khaleeda Zia, Chairperson of Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP) and leader of the majority party in the Parliament, was appointed Prime Minister Tuesday. Acting President Justice Shahabuddin Ahmed also formed a Council of Ministers with 10 cabinet and 21 state ministers.

The Prime Minister, cabinet ministers and state ministers will take oath at 3 pm today at Bangabhaban.

The cabinet ministers are: Mirza Gohar Hafiz, Dr. Badrudduza Chowdhury, Major General (Retd) Majedul Huq, A. S. M. Mustafizur Rahman, Saifur Rahman, Abdus Salam Talukder, Col (Retd) Oli Ahmed, Keramat Ali, M. K. Anwar and Shamsul Islam Khan.

The state ministers are: Sheikh Razzak Ali, Tarequl Islam, Abdul Matin, Dr. Musharraf Hussain, Barrister Rafiqul Islam, Shamsul Islam, Abdul Mannan Bhuyan, Barrister Zamiruddin Sircar, Barrister Nazmul Huda, Maj (Retd) A. Mannan, Abdullah Al Noman, Mirza Abbas, Abdul Mannan, Kabir Hossain, Mujibur Rahman, Principal Yunus Khan, Mohammad Nurul Huda, Mohammad Ansar Ali, Osman Gani Khan, Lutful Rahman and Prof. A. Mannan.

Acting President will announce the portfolios of the ministers and state ministers today.

The appointment of Prime Minister and formation of the Council of Ministers ended the debate over Acting President's power to induct partymen in the cabinet. The Acting President formed the cabinet under Article 58(3) and 58(1) which empower the President

to appoint a member of Parliament who enjoys majority support as prime minister and form a council of ministers to advise him in running the government.

Awami League chief Sheikh Hasina earlier opposed the formation of cabinet comprising members from only one party. She stated that in such an event Acting President would lose his neutrality. Justice Shahabuddin Ahmed dismissed this contention saying he was constitutionally obliged to form the council of ministers after the MPs took oath. All other parties except Awami League earlier urged the Acting President to form cabinet with BNP members.

Khaleeda Zia is the first woman Prime Minister of Bangladesh. She and her party BNP returned to power after nine years. Ousted President H. M. Ershad seized power from BNP government on March 24, 1982 in a military coup. Khaleeda Zia, who was a housewife joined politics at a very crucial time in 1982. She spearheaded anti-Ershad movement on November 28, 1983. After that she fought Ershad and his cronies relentlessly. She refused to take part in any election under Ershad and forced played a pivotal role in last December's mass upsurge which led to the downfall of Ershad. Her party emerged as the single largest party winning 139 seats out of 299 in the parliament elections. Awami League got 88 seats.

With the formation of the Council of Ministers Bangladesh has returned to a democratic order after nine years. See Page 10 Col 2



Deposited President H. M. Ershad being whisked into a car on Tuesday. While the ex-President is facing an arms case in a Special Tribunal, his arch adversary Begum Zia is appointed Prime Minister. — Star photo

A twist of fate for Ershad

By Staff Correspondent

Ousted President Ershad was put in the dock of a special tribunal on Tuesday to be tried for illegally possessing arms.

It was an irony of fate that on the same day the Acting President Justice Shahabuddin Ahmed announced a council of ministers with Khaleeda Zia, Ershad's arch rival, as Prime Minister.

Ershad had undermined the judiciary of the country just after his taking over of power in 1982, but on Tuesday he sought fair-justice from the Tribunal.

Another twist of fate was that the Judge who had presided over the trial of BNP ministers during Ershad's Martial Law period, is now presiding over the Special Tribunal set up for his (Ershad's) trial.

Meanwhile half a dozen cases including sedition, murder and defalcation of funds have been lodged against Ershad in different courts.

The enquiry commission set up by the caretaker government has so far received about 1600 allegations against Ershad of which about 60 allegations are learnt to be tenable to the Court.

Today (Wednesday) another case related to recovery of a huge amount of money from his residence will begin at the Special Judge Court to be housed in the same compound and chaired by the same Judge.

The gallery of the Tribunal was filled with local and foreign journalists and eminent persons. See Page 10 Col 7

I am innocent, pleads Ershad

By Staff Correspondent

Ousted President H.M. Ershad has been formally charged for illegally possessing arms.

Ershad was produced before the Special Tribunal on Tuesday morning to face the charges against him.

He was brought from the Gulshan sub-jail at 10:50 am. On hearing the charges against him, Ershad pleaded not guilty and sought justice from the Tribunal.

District and Sessions Judge Mohammad Habibullah, who chaired the one-Judge Special Tribunal adjourned the hearing for seven days till March 27.

Ershad, wearing an off-white full-sleeved safari suit entered the Tribunal smiling but his mood changed as his proceedings started and his smile vanished. He seemed rather broken down.

The former President who was given a chair in the dock of the Tribunal set up at a house in Gulshan, rose to his feet as the Judge entered the room.

Security around the Tribunal area was tight with over 1000 members of the BDR and armed police on the alert. Before the trial began Ershad's Defence Counsel Shahadat Hossain talked to him for a while.

As the proceedings started Shahadat Hossain raised objection to the arms case saying that it was not tenable as the arms were found in the house after Ershad had been removed from it to be interned. See Page 10 Col 4

Awami League, CPB MPs take oath

By Staff Correspondent

Eighty-five MPs-elect of Bangladesh Awami League, led by their party chief Sheikh Hasina took oath of office on Tuesday.

Two other MPs-elect of the Awami League were indisposed and could not take oath.

Earlier, five MPs-elect of the Communist Party of Bangladesh (CPB), led by Shamsuddoha took oath of office.

Most of the AL MPs were clad in pyjama and 'Mujib coat' while Sheikh Hasina, Begum Sajeda Chowdhury and Maliya Chowdhury wore silk saris.

Chief Election Commissioner Justice M. A. Rouf administered the oath at a simple ten-minute ceremony.

Sheikh Hasina appeared ill at ease during the swearing-in ceremony and later expressed her feelings.

She said that victory had been snatched from the AL by what she termed "a very calculated unfair practice in a scamming by free and fair election."

It was Sheikh Hasina's second time in parliament. She was first elected an MP in the May 7, 1986 elections, boycotted by Seven-party and Five-party alliances, and became the leader of the opposition in Parliament.

Sheikh Hasina and 77 other MPs of the Third Parliament joined the opposition movement against the Ershad regime on July 12, 1987 in protest against the passage of the District Council Bill which had provided for representation of the armed forces. The Act was later amended.

AL had boycotted the 1988 elections and was unrepresented in the Fourth Parliament. Sheikh Hasina is also destined to be the leader of the opposition in the fifth

parliament. Bangladesh Awami League had occupied 282 out of 300 seats in the first parliamentary elections held on March 7, 1973. It bagged a total of 39 seats in the Second Parliamentary elections held on February 18, 1979.

Its share of seats in parliament is increasing gradually. In 1986 AL bagged 78 seats. This time it has already occupied 87 seats. By-elections in ten constituencies are still awaited.

Tofayel Ahmed, Organising Secretary of AL who won from two Bhola constituencies looked jubilant.

He said he would retain the Bhola-1 seat and vacate Bhola-2.

Rashed Mosharraf also appeared very happy to be among the AL leaders.

He was busy exchanging wishes, shaking hands and embracing fellow MPs, journalists and parliament secretariat officials.

After the oath taking Sheikh Hasina and other AL MPs signed the oath, and the book containing list of MPs in the room of the Parliament Secretary Abdul Awal.

Before going to the Parliament building the AL MPs-elect had assembled at Bangabandhu Bhaban and placed garlands at the portrait of Bangabandhu.

Later, Abdul Mannan of BNP and Shahjahan Chowdhury of Jamaat, who failed to take oath on Sunday, were also sworn in.

With the oath-taking of AL and CPB MPs-elect on Tuesday the total number of MPs sworn-in totalled 256. Two MPs-elect of Awami League and 31 MPs-elect of Jatiya Party are yet to be sworn-in.

Drastic steps against AL dissidents

By Staff Correspondent

Awami League is likely to take drastic action against some of its leaders for anti-party role in the February 27 parliamentary polls. The party will soon serve show cause notices upon the leaders who contested the polls violating party decision and were engaged in activities contrary to party interests, AL sources said.

Moves were also under way to find out the causes of its defeat in the polls.

The fourth session of the AL executive committee extended meeting Tuesday chaired by party chief Sheikh Hasina expelled Asadul Huq Khasru, a central leader, for contesting the February polls against an AL-nominated candidate from See Page 10 Col 8

Moudud, Hasan refuse to take oath as MPs

By Staff Correspondent

Former vice president Barrister Moudud Ahmed and former home minister Maj Gen (Retd.) Mahmudul Hasan on Tuesday refused to take oath in the absence of other MPs-elect of Jatiya Party.

They were produced at the Sangsad Bhaban for oath taking in the afternoon by the Ministry of Home Affairs as they were in detention.

Clarifying the matter Parliament Secretary Abdul Awal told waiting newsmen the Parliament Secretariat had made all preparations on getting a letter from the Home Ministry that the two MPs— See Page 10 Col 6



Sheikh Hasina signing the register after taking oath along with other Awami League MPs (picture on Page-10) to sit in parliament as opposition leader for the second time. — Star photo

Hasina on formation of Council of Ministers

Constitutionally alright, politically wrong

By Staff Correspondent

Awami League chief Sheikh Hasina said on Tuesday, constitutionally there was nothing wrong in forming the Council of Ministers, but politically it would be a betrayal with the people's movement.

Talking to newsmen she repeated her views that forma-

tion of the Council of Ministers at this juncture would only affect the neutrality of the Acting President who owes his power to the November 19 Joint Declaration of the three major political alliances.

Sheikh Hasina said the Act was later amended.

AL had boycotted the 1988 elections and was unrepresented in the Fourth Parliament. Sheikh Hasina is also destined to be the leader of the opposition in the fifth

Israel refuses to swap Golan Heights for peace

JERUSALEM, Mar 19: Prime Minister Yitzhak Shamir, under domestic pressure to reject territorial concessions, said on Monday Israel would not return the Golan Heights to Syria in exchange for peace, report Reuter.

Shamir's comment after a stormy session of a parliamentary committee followed right-wing charges that Health Minister Ehud Olmert had suggested in a US speech that

Israel was prepared to negotiate the future of the strategic plateau.

The Prime Minister who has rejected US calls to trade land for peace said Olmert's view that the Jewish state could meet Syria in talks without preconditions did not mean any acceptance of its position.

They could say to US we want the Golan Heights and we'll say 'we won't give it to you', Shamir told reporters,

so here are your negotiations." Shamir said he could discuss peace and economic cooperation with Syria but no country would negotiate on territories that belong to one of them.

To underscore his determination to hold the plateau that overlooks the Syrian plain to the north and the Sea of Galilee to the west Shamir's office issued a formal statement saying there is no consideration of changing or can-

celling the 1981 law that annexed the region.

Housing Minister Ariel Sharon, a hard-liner, was reported to have called on Sunday for Israel to effectively annex large parts of the occupied West Bank and Gaza Strip.

Israeli newspapers said Sharon said in a cabinet meeting that Israeli law should be formally extended to all Jewish settlements set up in the occupied territories. He said it would prevent formation of a

Palestinian state.

Israel's annexation of the Golan Heights and Arab east Jerusalem which drew international condemnation consisted of extending Israeli law into the occupied areas.

US Secretary of State James Baker who was in Jerusalem last week to test chances for Israeli Arab peace, condemned Israeli settlement policy in a television interview on Sunday.

That's de facto annexation, Baker said in Washington.

"That is changing the facts and circumstances on the ground in the absence of negotiation."

Since 1967 Israel has settled some 150,000 Jews in east Jerusalem to ensure permanent control. Another 100,000 Jews have moved into the West Bank and Gaza Strip and about 10,000 into the Golan Heights.

Earlier Israel's Army Chief Dan Shomron has suggested the country could swap land

See Page 10 Col 2

Revolt in Khulna Jail

By Staff Correspondent

KHULNA, Mar 19: Prisoners in Khulna Jail revolted Tuesday afternoon demanding increased facilities and speeding up the trial of prisoners.

"Several hundred prisoners, both convicted and under trial, revolted and refused to return to their lock-ups this afternoon", a Jail official told the Daily Star.

"They (prisoners) are demanding more facilities and speedy trial of under-trial

See Page 10 Col 1