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The Daily Star

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The time has arrived to give women a chance by Nasrin Sobhan

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Business

Task Force report said Taka 1800 crore would be needed to alleviate poverty. Page 8

NEWS BRIEFS

US to forgive Poland's debt

WASHINGTON, Mar 20: President George Bush welcomed Polish President Lech Walesa to America Wednesday and said the United States will forgive 70 per cent of Poland's debt to the United States, reports AP.

Attempt on Punjab Governor

NEW DELHI, Mar 20: The Governor of India's Punjab State O.P. Malhotra narrowly escaped assassination today as Sikh guerillas stepped up their campaign for independence, reports Reuter.

Iraq claims hardware

UNITED NATIONS, Mar 20: Iraq on Wednesday claimed a right to recover the tanks, vehicles, artillery and ammunition it abandoned in Kuwait during its disorderly retreat.

69 killed in Hunan hailstorms

HONG KONG, Mar 20: Hailstorms killed 69 people and injured 1,061 people in central China's Hunan province, a semi-official Chinese news agency reported today, says AFP.

Sehri and Iftar timings

Month	Day	Last time for Sehri	Iftar
04	Wednesday	4.42 am	6.17 pm
05	Friday	4.41 am	6.17 pm



Begum Khaleda Zia being administered the oath of office of Prime Minister by Acting President Justice Shahabuddin Ahmed at Bangabhaban on Wednesday. (Picture of swearing-in of other Cabinet Ministers and State Ministers on back page.) — Star photo

Eight-party, Jamaat leaders absent from ceremony

Khaleda sworn in as PM

11 Cabinet Ministers, 21 State Ministers

Portfolios

The Acting President Justice Shahabuddin Ahmed on Wednesday allocated the portfolios to the newly appointed Prime Minister, cabinet ministers and the state ministers, reports BSS.

The portfolios are as follows: Prime Minister Begum Khaleda Zia: Establishment, Information, Energy and Mineral Resources, Mirza Gohar Hafiz; Law and Justice, Dr. Badruddouza Chowdhury; Education, Maj Gen (Retd) Majeedul Haque; Agriculture, Irrigation, Flood Control and Water Resources, ASM Mustafizur Rahman, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Saifur Rahman; Finance and Planning, Barrister Abdus Salam Talukder; LGRD and Cooperatives, Col (Retd) Oll Ahmed; Communication (Railway, Roads and Highways), M Keramat Ali; Commerce, MK See Page 10 Col 5

By Staff Correspondent

BNP chief Begum Khaleda Zia was sworn in as Prime Minister at Bangabhaban by Acting President Justice Shahabuddin Ahmed on Wednesday. Eleven cabinet ministers and 21 ministers of state were also sworn in.

The simple ceremony, held at the Darbar Hall of Bangabhaban, was attended by Members of Parliament, political leaders, diplomats, high civil and military officials.

Begum Zia is the first woman Prime Minister of Bangladesh, and the second woman Prime Minister of the modern Muslim world. She is the eighth Prime Minister of Bangladesh.

She came into focus following the assassination of her husband President Ziaur Rahman on May 30, 1981 and joined politics following the overthrow of the BNP government of President Justice Abdus Sattar in a military coup on March 24, 1982.

"I was not in politics when power was snatched from BNP on March 24, 1982, but when I joined the people on the streets I promised to organise resistance against injustice", she told newsmen after the swearing-in.

Begum Zia looked elegant as she entered the Darbar Hall at 3-07 pm. Then bugles were played to announce the arrival of the Acting President in the hall, a mute witness of many ups and downs of history.

Besides the ministers and the state ministers designate, BNP members of parliament, Rashid Khan Menon, MP of Workers Party and other Five-Party Alliance leaders — Khailezzaman Bhuiyan,

Hasanul Haq Inu, A.F.M. Mahbubul Haq, Moinuddin Khan Badal and Kazi Kader of Muslim League were present at the function.

Members of parliament belonging to Awami League and other components of the 8-Party Alliance abstained from the function. MPs belonging to Jamaat-e-Islami which has given total support to BNP in parliament did not attend the function.

Only Mizanur Rahman Manu, and Awami League MP, was present. He was possibly unaware of the party decision. Also present in the audience was Awami League chief Sheikh Hasina's husband Dr. See Page 10 Col 1

First task is to rebuild economy, restore law and order: Khaleda

By Staff Correspondent

Prime Minister Begum Khaleda Zia said on Wednesday the first task of her government would be to rebuild the shattered economy and restore law and order so that the people have two square meals a day and can live in peace.

Talking to newsmen immediately after taking oath as Prime Minister at Bangabhaban she called upon all to work hard in hand for restoration of democracy.

Restoration of democracy is not the responsibility of the government alone, she said adding: The people have reposed responsibility on others also by voting for them.

The Prime Minister said her government would try to fulfil the commitments made to the people during the election.

Elaborating she said, the economy and all institutions were destroyed during the last

nine years. Her immediate task would be to salvage the economy and rebuild the institutions.

Replying to a question she said her party was committed to establish a corruption-free government.

Begum Zia told another questioner that the people through their movement restored democracy which had been snatched away in 1982.

She said she was not directly connected with politics in March, 1982. But when I joined the people on the streets I vowed to organise resistance against injustice, she said.

She said, I was confident that the people of the country would build resistance against injustice, as they had done in the past. The people were with us and with their cooperation we have achieved today's victory, she said. See Page 10 Col 6

He was not a public servant: Defence Counsel

He surely was, says Attorney General

Ershad charged for amassing wealth

By Staff Correspondent

Deposed President Ershad was formally charged in the Special Judge Court on Wednesday for acquiring property beyond his known sources of income.

The charges also included non-deposit of gift items to the government Toshakhana (Treasury).

On hearing the charges against him Ershad pleaded not guilty as he had done the previous day (Tuesday) during the arms case trial which was chaired by the same Judge.

Ershad said, "I am not guilty and I want a fair trial."

The hearing was adjourned till April 21.

The Special Judge Court is housed in the same compound where the Special Tribunal has been set up.

Earlier the District and Sessions Judge Mohammad Habibullah who is chairing the Special Judge Court set up to try Ershad rejected two petitions of the Defence Counsel Shahadat Hossain, who prayed for quashing the case.

Before the formal charges were made Ershad's Defence Counsel in his petitions said that the ex-President was not a public servant and as such the case could not be continued under Prevention of Corruption Act 1947.

Secondly, he said that the enquiry commission set up by the government to investigate alleged corruption by Ershad had not yet submitted its report.

Thirdly, the money which See Page 10 Col 4

Securitymen obstruct Attorney General

By Staff Correspondent

Security forces at the Special Judge Court premises on Wednesday obstructed entry of Attorney General Aminul Haque into the premises delaying the start of Ershad's trial by about two hours.

The high handedness of the security officials seemed to undermine the importance of the trial for a while as the occurrence of such an incident was almost unthinkable.

On being obstructed the Attorney General, who was accompanied by two deputies and two junior lawyers blasted the securitymen calling them inefficient officers.

"You have taken Ershad's money and that is why you are obstructing us," the Attorney General screamed at the Assistant Superintendent of Police (ASP) who had ordered securitymen to let no transport other than that of the Judge to enter the Court premises.

The ASP later said that he

too was under orders.

At one stage in the arguments, the Judge of the Special Court came out of his chamber and told the securitymen that the Attorney General and the Defence Counsel were part of the Court and any attempt to stop them would be treated as a contempt of Court. His words fell on deaf ears.

The securitymen later allowed the Attorney General's transport to enter the Court premises after being ordered to do so by their higher ups.

Aminul Haque refused to attend the Court and insisted that the matter be settled at once by higher security officials.

The Attorney General, furious at the misbehaviour of the securitymen who laughed at him while he was being obstructed entry said "you, damn policemen, you thrive on bribes and harass people for See Page 10 Col 5



Enraged Attorney General lashing out at the security men, who blocked his way to the Special Judge Court, trying to depose President Ershad on Wednesday. The incident delayed the start of the trial by about two hours. —Star photo

Y'slav army warns feuding republics of stern action

BELGRADE, Mar 20: The Yugoslav army issued a stern warning to the country's feuding republics on Tuesday that it will not tolerate inter-ethnic conflicts or permit civil war, reports Reuter.

The statement broke the army's silence since tanks rolled into Belgrade in a brief show of force last week following bloody clashes between anti-communist demonstrators and police in which two people were killed.

Western diplomats have expressed concern the army might try to impose order after its proposals were rejected last week for emer-

gency measures to counter months of rising tension in the country's worst crisis since World War Two.

The Yugoslav army will under no circumstances permit armed inter ethnic conflicts or civil war in Yugoslavia, the army statement said.

The army stepped forward after the collective presidency, the highest state authority and commander-in-chief of the army, collapsed on Monday when a fourth member was recalled from the eight man body and it was stripped to a quorum.

Yugoslavia's six republics and two provinces, a patch-

work of rival ethnic groups and religions have edged towards disintegration since the one all-powerful Communist Party fell into disarray last year.

In the first free elections since the communist took power after World War Two, four of Yugoslavia's six republics voted out the communists all returned strongly nationalist governments exacerbating ethnic tensions.

The army also had a warning for politicians leading the rival republics, violence will not be tolerated for any quarter in dealing with inter ethnic inter republic or inter party dispute it said.

Trying to remain above the rancorous quarrel over the country's future the army said it had no intention of taking part in the political fray.

But while the army preached non-violence, the fiery communist President of Serbia, the largest republic said he might arm Serbs living in the neighbouring republic of Croatia.

If militias in Croatia failed to disarm, we shall arm the Serbs. As we don't want to leave defenceless people at the mercy of armed bands, Serbian leader Slobodan Milosevic said.

Two bombs exploded in the

predominantly ethnic Serb region of Croatia Kninska Krajina, on Monday, causing damage but no injuries, about 200,000 of Croatia's 600,000 ethnic Serbs live in Krajina.

Milosevic's comments at Belgrade University were certain to intensify the crisis, he said Croatia was free to quit the country but cannot take the Serbs living in Croatia with it.

Serbia plunged Yugoslavia further into crisis on Monday by stripping the ruling collective presidency which groups the republics and provinces of all decision making power.

Increasing the stakes in the political crisis, Serbia removed

the representative of its Kosovo province from the presidency denying it a quorum for taking decisions.

The country is ungoverned, one Western diplomat said.

Political leaders were trying to organise a crisis, meeting on Thursday grouping the members of the state presidency and the heads of the republics and provinces.

Giving the politicians a breathing space, the national leader of Serbia's opposition Yur Draskovic, cancelled a mass demonstration for today to coincide with a session of the Serbian parliament to discuss last week's protests.

A breach of pledge given to nation: Awami League

Bangladesh Awami League Wednesday said the formation of the Council of Ministers by the Acting President was a breach of pledge given to the nation through the Joint Declaration of the three alliances, reports BSS.

It also amounted to ignoring the national demand by a particular party, a press release of Awami League said.

Central executive committee of the party at its adjourned meeting held in Dhaka Wednesday with party chief See Page 10 Col 2

Chiefs of three services greet Khaleda

The chiefs of three services made a courtesy call on Prime Minister Begum Khaleda Zia at her residence Wednesday evening, reports BSS.

Chief of Army Staff Lt. Gen. Muhammad Noor Uddin Khan, Chief of Air Staff Air Vice Marshal Mumtazuddin Ahmed and Chief of Naval Staff Rear Admiral Amir Ahmed Mustafa, stayed with Begum Zia for some time and felicitated her on assuming the office of the Prime Minister.

Ershad hopes to run for presidency

By Staff Correspondent

Deposed President Ershad still hopes to contest the presidential election.

"Yes, I'll contest... It is my fundamental right and I have already announced I will stand for another term," he told the reporters when the Special Tribunal went into recess on Wednesday.

Ershad, who appeared before the Tribunal for the second day, pleaded his innocence of charges of possessing over 1.9 cr taka which was recovered from his house and of converting gifts worth taka over 11 lakh to personal use instead of depositing them to the Toshakhana.

Asked about his reaction on the charges brought against him the ousted President refused to make any comment.

Replying to another query he said the Acting Chairman of the Jatiya Party would decide about his taking oath as a member of the parliament.

He also refrained from mak- See Page 10 Col 2

Raushan's release ordered

A division bench of the High Court Division of the Supreme Court Wednesday ordered release of Begum Raushan Ershad from detention if she is not required in detention in any other case, reports BSS.

The bench comprising Justice Mohammad Abdul Jaill and Justice Kazi Shafiquddin delivered the judgement on a writ petition against her detention under the Special Power Act, 1974.

The court found the order of detention illegal, mala fide and without lawful authority as the ground of detention was deemed irrelevant.

Barrister Rafiqul Haque with Barrister Kazi Shahadat Hossain and Advocate Sheikh Rezaul Karim appeared for Begum Raushan Ershad while Mr Aminul Haque, Attorney General with Mr Syed Moddasser Hossain, Deputy Attorney General and Mr. Obaidur Rahman, Assistant Attorney General appeared for the state.

Shekhar, Major greet Khaleda

NEW DELHI, Mar 20: Indian Prime Minister Chandra Shekhar today congratulated Begum Khaleda Zia after she was sworn in as the first woman Prime Minister of Bangladesh, reports AFP.

In a message to Begum Zia, Mr Shekhar said he hoped relations between the two neighbouring countries would improve under her leadership.

Mr Shekhar said he was confident the two countries would be able to work together for mutual benefit of their people.

UNB adds: British Prime Minister John Major has warmly congratulated Begum Khaleda Zia on her appointment as Prime Minister.