

Black Day observed Help to consolidate democracy urged

Abdus Salam Talukder, Minister for LGED and Cooperatives and Secretary General of Bangladesh Nationalist Party, Sunday sought cooperation of opposition parties in Parliament for consolidating democratic atmosphere in all spheres, reports BSS.

"We have to establish democracy in the country at any cost and that is why we expect full cooperation from the oppositions in this regard," the Minister said.

Abdus Salam Talukder was addressing a discussion meeting at the BNP's Banani office in Dhaka. It was organised by the party in observance of the "Black Day of March 24". Mirza Golam Hafiz, Senior Vice-President of BNP and Minister for Law and Justice, presided over the meeting.

The BNP Secretary General said that Ershad had killed democracy by ousting the elected BNP government at gun point this day 1982 and snatched all basic rights.

He also alleged that a certain quarter had supported such heinous actions of Ershad who also sowed the seeds of all bad practices in the administration making the country a den of corruption and open bribery.

The trial of Ershad and

Repression on women will end, hope Jamaat women

By Staff Correspondent

Women's wing of Jamaat-e-Islami, on Sunday congratulated BNP Chairperson Begum Khaleda Zia on her appointment as the country's first woman Prime Minister.

Hafeza Asma Khatun, secretary of the party's women front in a statement hoped that the new government under the leadership of Begum Zia would take revolutionary steps to stop all sorts of repression on women including murder and rape.

She also hoped the BNP government would be able to create a true democratic atmosphere in the country following transition to democracy.

Sajeda condemns arrest of AL, BCL workers for murder

By Staff Correspondent

Awami League General Secretary Begum Sajeda Choudhury Sunday condemned the arrest of the workers of AL and its front organisations following the murder of a businessman at Mirpur on Saturday.

Begum Sajeda Choudhury alleged that Aslam was killed following feuds over sharing of illegally-earned money between the activists of Zaker Party and BNP of the area. No worker of AL and its front organisations was involved, she claimed.

Sajeda Choudhury said

Abdus Salam of AL and Mattur Rahman of Chhatra League were arrested and warrants of arrest were issued against a number of Chhatra League workers as part of a conspiracy to involve them in the killing. She demanded immediate release of the arrested persons and withdrawal of warrants.

DU

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general secretaries of the hall student unions on Sunday with Vice Chancellor Prof Maniruzzaman Miah in the chair.

The leaders assured that no abusive slogans about organisations or leaders would be chanted during processions.

The meeting also discussed ways of improving the living conditions of the students and ways of providing them with more amenities.

Ganges waters

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Mirpur area and directed the law enforcing agencies to recover it. She categorically said nobody would be allowed to take law in his own hands.

The Prime Minister stressed on developing savings habit for the betterment of the national economy and asked the people not to misuse money.

She said national independence would be protected and democracy maintained and strengthened at any cost.

Begum Zia urged the electorate to vote for sheaf of paddy, BNP's election symbol, in the March 28 election.

She also asked the administration to maintain neutrality in the polling.

The meetings were also addressed by State Minister for Social Welfare and Women's Affairs Tariqul Islam, Fazlur Rahman Patal, MP, Farida Rahman, DUCSU Vice-President Amanullah Aman, MP, Azizul Huq, MP, Shamsul Arefin Khan, Prof Shahidul Islam, Syed Masud Rumi and BNP nominee for Kushtia-2 constituency Abdur Rouf Chowdhury.

Editor : S. M. Ali

Published by the Editor on behalf of Mediaworld Ltd., 52 Motijheel C/A, Dhaka-1000 and printed by him at Offset Printing Dialogue Publications Ltd., 19 Kazi Nazrul Islam Avenue, Dhaka-1215.

Editorial, News & Commercial offices: 28/1, Toynebe Circular Road, Dhaka-1000. Tel: Editorial & News: 863036. Commercial: 863035. PABX-246023-4. GPO Box No. 3257 GRAM: DAILY STAR, DHAKA.

other elements of this Black Day must be held", Talukder said adding this would set an example so that no autocrat would dare to snatch power.

He said the need of the hour was to free the administration from corruption and establish democracy to ensure development in fields and factories to ensure the nation a happy and better future.

In his presidential address Mirza Golam Hafiz said Ershad's trial would be held according to the law and he would never be able to escape punishment.

"We are all equal before the eyes of law which determines and awards punishments according to the gravity of the crime," Mirza Hafiz said adding that no special law would be needed for the trial of Ershad.

He said BNP was always respectful to the rule of law and "our party would establish it in the country to prove that we would not be vindictive to those who had let loose atrocities on us during the autocratic rule of Ershad. We will establish rule of law as it is the prerequisite of democracy," the Law Minister said adding that there was no rule of law during Ershad's tenure.

He also called for repealing all anti-people laws enacted during Ershad's time and said all misdeeds of his nine-year regime should be unveiled.

Bangladesh Federal Union of Journalists (BFUJ) President Reazuddin Ahmed warned that another conspiracy was being hatched to foil the forward march of democracy in the country and urged all to remain vigilant against such a move.

He said democracy was killed twice in this country, first on January 25, 1975 and again on March 24, 1982.

The people have ousted the killer of democracy through a mass upsurge in 1990 and rejected another group through ballot in February 27, he said.

The meeting was also addressed by State Minister for Jute Abdul Mannan Bhuiyan, State Minister for Labour and Manpower Rafiqul Islam Mian, BNP's Joint Secretary General Abdul Matin Choudhury MP, Dhaka city BNP President Mir Shawkat Ali MP, City BNP Secretary Salahuddin Ahmed MP, BNP's Mahila Dal General Secretary Sarwari Rahman

Food production satisfactory

The overall food situation in the country and the progress of implementation of food development projects were reviewed at a meeting of the Project Review and Implementation Committee in Dhaka on Sunday with State Minister for Food, Barrister Nazmul Huda in the chair, reports BSS.

French PM

UNB adds: Prime Minister of France Michel Rocard has congratulated Begum Khaleda Zia on her assumption of the office of Prime Minister of Bangladesh.

"I wish you full success in the accomplishment of your mission and express my best wishes for the reinforcement of democracy and for the economic and social development in your country," said Rocard in a message to Begum Zia.

The French Premier, on behalf of his government, assured of doing "everything possible to intensify the cooperation and to strengthen the privileged friendly ties" existing between France and Bangladesh.

US President also hoped to work with the new government not only in the very important development that they had long shared, but as a fellow democracy searching for ways to strengthen

US base on Arab soil

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officially asked by any government for us to maintain a permanent military ground presence over here and we had no intention of doing that," Schwarzkopf said.

"We've said we will come when asked... and will leave when asked."

Asked when he expected a permanent cease-fire, Schwarzkopf said, "I hope the cease-fire will be signed last week."

The signing of the cease-fire has been complicated by fighting in Iraqi cities between Saddam's troops and rebel forces.

Iraqi President Saddam Hussein, fighting a string of uprisings since his Gulf war defeat, sent his new Prime Minister on a tour of southern hotspots, seeking to demonstrate that revolt there had been crushed.

Shi'ite rebels said hit-and-run attacks continued in the south and in the capital, Baghdad, Kurdish insurgents reported heavy fighting around

Mosul, which, they say, is the only major centre in Kurdistan province still in government hands.

Baghdad Radio said crowds turned out to greet Saadoun Hammadi when he toured Najaf and Qadisiyah. Najaf, a Shi'ite holy city, was reported by refugees and Shi'ites in exile to have been a major centre of unrest.

Hammadi, himself a Shi'ite in a cabinet dominated by Sunnis, stressed the need to rebuild what was destroyed by the cliques and saboteurs who came from outside the country's borders," the radio said.

Other top posts in the new government remained in the hands of known Saddam loyalists and Iraqi exiles scorned the changes.

Ezuldeen Berwari of the Kurdish Democratic Party said, "What is the use of any change if Saddam is not changed? He is the man who should be reshuffled."

"But there's been nothing



Iraqi children from the village of Safwan wait their turn to be examined by US army doctors based on the Iraqi-Kuwaiti border on Saturday. The army handed out food and medicine to local residents. —AFP photo

Increased flow of FDI

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late eighties while Pakistan, Sri Lanka and China attracted 62 million dollars, 29 million dollars and 1669 million dollars respectively around the same time.

The Task Force noted that the measures like Foreign Investment Promotion and Protection Act of 1980, new industrial policy of 1982, setting up of Export Processing Zone and Board of Investment and privatisation were positive and welcome moves taken in the eighties. But most critical constraints lingered on in areas of administrative bottlenecks in implementation of existing policies, it observed. Such bottlenecks have "fostered the growth of unfair trade and business operations, jeopardising the interests of established industries and approved units, by exposing them to "uneven competition", it said.

Listing the difficulties which have badly impaired the image of the country abroad, it pointed out underdeveloped infrastructure, frequent natural disasters as well as recurring political turmoil and labour unrest as the most unfavourable factors.

The Task Force analysed the recent trends in FDI flows to Bangladesh and noted that investments were slightly up in the 1980s and this was facilitated by investments out of retained earnings by FDI

units rather than any net growth in FDI flows. The primary of agriculture declined while industry and trade witnessed some diversification. It mentioned about ready-made garments, and food processing units as well as collaboration and licensing agreements with foreign investors, particularly those from Hong Kong and Republic of Korea in this connection.

It observed that the facilities and incentives for FDI, available in Bangladesh, were comparable with those in other countries in South Asia.

The Task Force identified non-availability of infrastructure facilities such as gas, electricity, telephone, and land in the industrial areas and "restrictionist" policies about use of new products and technology through balancing, modernisation, replacement (BMR) and BMR & expansion programmes as the constraints to investment including FDI. There are even restrictions on import of used machinery, it said. It further noted that manifold problems were faced by investors in obtaining release letters from the customs authorities.

It called for removal of problems in appointment of foreign nationals and repatriation of profits and other earnings to help smoothed FDI flows. It said excise duty load in Bangladesh was heavier than

Govt by, for the people

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he added. "Americans will share in the pride of every Bangladeshi on April 5 when you present your government before the popularly elected parliament," the US President said adding that in that special place the future of the country would be debated.

A strong, democratic parliamentary opposition would contribute to ensuring that decisions were made for the common good, he asserted.

Admiring the creativity, fortitude and resilience of the people of Bangladesh, Bush hoped that those would be enhanced by strong democratic institutions.

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"But there's been nothing

BMDC withdraws new curriculum

By DMCH Correspondent

Bangladesh Medical and Dental Council (BMDC) Sunday withdrew its announcement regarding the cancellation of a new medical curriculum.

The BMDC verbally announced the cancellation on March 18 amidst strong protests by the students of eight medical and three dental colleges. But it did not issue any official notification to this effect.

A BMDC notification released Sunday said that it was forced to make the verbal announcement when its members were seized by the protesters at the BMDC office at Bijoynagar in the city.

The notification said that the Medicine Faculties of the universities are only entrusted with cancelling the curriculum. The BMDC can only approve proposals on such issue, it added.

Add Secretary blames BNP for bomb attack

By Staff Correspondent

Bombs were thrown on Sunday at the Banani, residence of Mahtuddin Khan Alamgir, Additional Secretary, External Resources Division.

A guard at the residence was quoted by police as saying that the attacks were carried out by two youngmen at around seven in the evening. The attackers who fled could not be identified.

The bombs exploded on contact with the walls of the residence but no one was injured.

Mohtuddin Khan Alamgir alleged that the attack was carried out by the supporters of a BNP candidate who had been defeated in the Feb 27 election by his brother Sirajuddin Khan, an Awami League candidate of Kachua in Chandpur.

A case has been recorded at Gulshan thana.

Promotions

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was a complicated matter and even the President or the Prime Minister was not authorised to create a new post without observing due formalities. In this case no formalities were observed in promoting officials beyond the sanctioned posts, he added.

When the necessity of creating a new post is felt under any ministry, another senior official said, the proposal is sent to the organisation and management wing (O and M) under the Establishment Ministry. The O and M works out a detailed scheme justifying the creation of that new post and send it to the Finance Ministry for approval. If the Finance Ministry agrees to it only then the new post is sanctioned and Gazette notification follows.

Ershad's prayer

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Meanwhile, a bail petition filed on behalf of Begum Raushan Ershad, wife of deceased president H. M. Ershad, was admitted by the Sessions Judge of Dhaka for hearing on March 30. But the court rejected a prayer for an ad interim bail.

Begum Raushan Ershad faces a charge involving misappropriation of money in the construction of multi-storied "Tower House" of Janata Publishers Limited. Her bail petition was earlier rejected by the Chief Metropolitan Magistrate.

Barrister Kazi Shahadat Hossain appeared before the Sessions Judge's court on behalf of the accused. He was assisted by Advocate Sheikh Rezaul Karim. The state was represented by S. Barua, Assistant Commissioner (Prosecution).

Independence

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Khaleda Zia will attend as the chief guest a rally of school and college students and juvenile organisations at the National Stadium at 8 am.

The day's programme includes holding of sports competitions, illumination of public buildings, photo and art exhibitions on the Liberation War, holding of seminars and symposia on the attainment of self-reliance in every spheres of national life.

The Acting President will also host a reception at Bangabhaban.

Various socio-cultural and political organisations have already chalked out their programmes to mark the day.

The Midnight File

Afghan troops using Scud, napalm

PESHAWAR, Mar 24: Afghan guerrillas battled their way to the edge of the city of Khost today but government troops were fighting back with Scud missiles, bombs and napalm, rebel sources said. "There is a fairly large battle underway and heavy bombing by the government," a western diplomat in Islamabad said, reports Reuter.

Japan to strengthen military

TOKYO, Mar 24: Premier Toshiki Kaifu said Japan should continue to build-up its military forces because of leftover uncertainties in the post-cold war world. "Japan should continue to make efforts on its policy of an efficient and modest defence build-up," Kaifu said in an address to graduates of the National Defence Academy, reports Reuter.

Poem causes stir in China

BEIJING, Mar 24: An apparently non-political poem published in the official People's Daily is causing a stir as readers discover a hidden message: "Li Peng step down." Li China's Premier, is widely disliked because he declared martial law in Beijing during the popular 1989 democracy movement. "Li Peng step down" was a frequent chant during the movement, reports AP.

Israeli troops kill three Arabs

JERUSALEM, Mar 24: Israeli soldiers, shot and killed three heavily-armed Arab guerrillas in Lebanon Sunday just north of the Israeli border, the military command said, it said the troops encountered the gunmen while on "operational duty." Sunday afternoon about a mile (2 kilometers) north of the border in the southwestern corner of Israel's so-called "security zone" in Lebanon, reports AP.

148 killed in Mali crackdown

ABIDJAN, Mar 24: Soldiers fired Sunday on pro-democracy protesters in Mali's capital and cordoned off hospitals to prevent the injured from receiving help, witnesses said. Troops loyal to President Moussa Traore have killed at least 148 civilians in the three days of demonstrations against his rule, pro-democracy groups said. There was no way to independently verify the count, reports AP.

March 25 today

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and declared in Lahore on December 20, 1970 that no constitution could be framed nor could any government at the centre be run without his party's cooperation.

He also mentioned that the People's Party was not prepared to occupy opposition benches in the National Assembly.

But Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, the then chief of the Awami League expressed his determination to frame a constitution on the basis of the six-point programme and urged the early convening of the National Assembly as well as the transfer of power to the majority party.

The first session of the National Assembly was convened on March 3, 1971 in Dhaka by General Yahya Khan, who was then ruling Pakistan as President and Chief Martial Law Administrator. While the whole nation waited eagerly for the first session of the assembly, General Yahya declared the indefinite postponement of the session on March 1.

Yahya's declaration infuriated the people they came out on the streets agitating against the conspiracy to deprive them of their rights.

In this situation Bangabandhu delivered his historic speech on March 7, at a mammoth gathering at the Race Course Maidan (now Suhrawardy Uddyan) in which he declared all-out non-cooperation with the Pakistani rulers.

In his speech, Bangabandhu asked the people to prepare for a greater movement and hinted at the struggle for an independent Bangladesh. From that day the movement entered a new phase and the civil administration virtually collapsed.

General Yahya came to Dhaka on March 14 and started discussions with Bangabandhu and other Awami League leaders. Bhutto also joined the dialogue on March 20, but there was little progress and the non-cooperation movement continued.

The last meeting between Bangabandhu and Yahya Khan took place on March 23, the Pakistan day.

On that day a new Bangladesh flag inscribed with

Hasina

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75 governments, including those of Zia and Ershad, the Awami League leader alleged that the BNP and the Jatiya Party governments had plundered foreign aid worth Tk. 50,000 crore without spending the money in productive sector.

Recalling the achievements of Awami League government in post-independence Bangladesh, Hasina said Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujib initiated pragmatic and people-oriented programmes to make the country self-reliant.

She also condemned the killing of JSD (Rab) leader and a candidate of parliament election Marfat Ali, and demanded punishment of the killers.

Hasina went to the residence of Marfat Ali at Sadarpur village and consoled his mother, his widow Arjumand Banu and only daughter Urme.

Workers and supporters of Marfat Ali today announced their decision to work for AL candidate in the Mar 28 election following assurance from Hasina that she would press the government to take legal action against the killers.

Earlier Hasina addressed four public meetings and as many as 30 wayside gatherings in Bheramara and Mirpur upazila.