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Meeting marking anniversary of Feb 27 polls

Mandate, not mercy, is source of our power: Khaleda

By Staff Correspondent

Prime Minister Khaleda Zia has accused those defeated in last February's polls of acting in a desperate manner, trying to create disturbances.

Dismissing opposition claims that their support has been helping her government sustain in power, the BNP chairperson said: "People voted BNP to power, we did not require anybody's mercy, and we will remain in power with the people's support."

She was addressing a large gathering in Ganatantra Square in the city yesterday marking the first anniversary of the February 27 general elections which her party won.

In an oblique reference to Awami League Begum Zia, the

chairperson of the ruling party, said that a party had supported the ousted autocratic regime when it captured power and helped it cling to power for nine years through participating polls under the regime.

"It is BNP which relentlessly fought against the autocratic rulers along with the people who voted it (BNP) to power. We are not afraid of any quarters threat since the people are still with us", she said.

BNP's youth wing Jatiyatabadi Jubo Dal organised the meeting.

Jubo Dal President and Mayor of the Dhaka City Corporation Mirza Abbas, MP

chaired the meeting. Among others, BNP Secretary General and LORD and Cooperatives Minister Abdus Salam Talukder, Vice-President and Social Welfare and Women Affairs Minister Tariqul Islam, Joint Secretary General and Works Minister Rafiqul Islam, Jubo Dal Secretary and State Minister for Forest and Environment Goyeshwar Roy, Farida Hassan MP, Barqatullah Bhui, MP, Salahuddin Ahmed MP, DUCSU General Secretary Khairul Kabir Khokon. A number of Jubo Dal leaders also addressed the meeting.

The Prime Minister warned those trying to create disturbances in the way of consolidation in the way of consolidation.

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Opposition ignores anniversary

The first anniversary of transition to democracy was observed Thursday with the nation renewing its pledge to consolidate democracy, reports BSS.

On this day one year ago, the people of this country gave their verdict in favour of Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP) headed by Begum Khaleda Zia through fair and free elections held under the caretaker government of Acting President Justice Shahabuddin Ahmed.

The general elections held on February 27, 1991 marked the emergence of democracy after the fall of the autocratic regime spanning about nine years. Bangladesh Nationalist Party which obtained single majority in the elections formed the government in March last year headed by Begum Khaleda Zia who had steered her party through uncompromising and relentless nine-year struggle against the autocratic regime of Ershad.

Our staff correspondent adds: There was, however, no report of any opposition programme to mark the day.



AL, BNP to talk on Indemnity Repeal Bill soon

Star Report

Awami League (AL) and Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP) will soon start behind the scene parley in a bid to reach an understanding on the Indemnity (Repeal) Bill.

According to reliable sources, some members from the parties represented in the special parliamentary committee on the bill are expected to sit for informal discussions shortly. The sources close to both the parties told The Daily Star that they would try to resolve the issue before the next session of parliament.

They indicated that the leadership of AL and BNP were now keen to narrow the differences on the issue.

The bill, submitted by AL's Mohammed Nasim in Jatiya Sangsad on August 8 last year, seeks to repeal the constitu-

tional bar on the trial of the killers of Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman by any court of law.

The draft of the bill was sent for scrutiny to a 15-member special committee headed by Law Minister Mirza Golam Hafez.

Since its formation, the committee met ten times, but failed to make any progress. During its last meeting on 5 February, the committee sought two more months for finalising its recommendations. Parliament in the latest session granted the time which helped ease the tension that arose between AL and BNP on the bill.

The AL threatened to go for street agitation when words spread that BNP was unwilling to cooperate with AL for passage of the bill.



Mirza Abbas and Goyeshwar Roy, the President and General Secretary of Jubo Dal, presenting a commemorative poster to Prime Minister Khaleda Zia at the public meeting yesterday.

UNHCR readies relief plan

By Farid Hossain

Foreign Office briefs Muslim envoys

The government Thursday briefed the heads of Mission of the Islamic countries here on the deteriorating problem of the Myanmar Muslims, reports BSS.

Envoys of 14 Muslim embassies were given a graphic account of the continuing influx of the "Rohingya" refugees into the Bangladesh territory, Foreign Office sources said.

The beginning of the Rohingya problem, Dhaka's ceaseless efforts to tackle the issue through bilateral contacts and the latest situation of the exodus of the refugees causing great pressure on the country were explained by Additional Foreign Secretary A H Mahmood Ali to the diplomats.

Thursday's briefing was the second in a series after the government initiated the process.

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The UNHCR mission dispatched to assess the needs of Rohingya refugees in Bangladesh has almost completed its plan of operation, sources close to the team said on Thursday.

Head of the 10-member relief mission Patrick de Souza held a meeting with the heads of diplomatic missions and the UN agencies to explain the highlights of the draft plan.

Souza will leave for Geneva today (Friday) to discuss the plan with United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees Sadako Ogata for finalising it. The final report will form the basis of an international appeal for helping more than 112,000 refugees who have fled Myanmar's military crackdown.

The sources told The Daily Star that the plan covered comprehensive needs of the refugees, including shelter, food, sanitation and medicines. The High Commissioner has already granted 1.1 million US dollars in emergency aid.

According to a UNHCR official about 8 lakh taka has already been made available with

the district administrations at Cox's Bazar and Bandarban mainly to arrange transportation for the refugees. A plan is being drawn up for construction of camps for the refugees in consultation with the local government officials.

Meanwhile, S Wijeratne, Officer-in-Charge of the mission, left for his home base Manila on Thursday after attending the meeting with the donors.

He is expected to come back soon. Another top UNHCR official Jamshed Anwar will arrive first week of next month to help the mission in implementing its relief programmes.

The sources, however, refused to say how much money it had recommended for the relief work.

"We don't consider it proper at this moment to mention any figure. But the draft plan is based on the needs of the refugees," said one UNHCR official adding funds will not be a problem.

He said the needs of the

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Heroin girl's accomplice nabbed

By Staff Correspondent

Jessore Police on Thursday arrested a South African national from Benapole border in connection with the teen-aged American drug trafficker arrested on Tuesday.

Sarsha Police from Jessore said Robert Blankson was about to leave the country through Benapole border. Sarsha Police on a secret information checked the passports of the outgoing travellers and nabbed Blankson. The Narcotics Department interrogated the man but failed to recover any substantial information.

Blankson said although he is a South African national, he is settled in Nigeria. A detective police team has left for Jessore to escort Blankson to Dhaka.

Earlier, the American teen-aged girl, Eliadha McCord was arrested at Zia International Airport on Tuesday with 3.3 kg of heroin. She confessed that Tony and Blankson were the accomplices.

Meeting with KAFCO shareholders today

By Toufique Imrose Khalidi

The Bangladesh officials and the foreign shareholders of the Karnaphuli Fertilizer Company sit today in Dhaka in a bid to find a solution to the crisis that the country's largest foreign-invested project is in.

Top officials of the shareholder firms including Dr Haldor Topsoe arrived Dhaka yesterday to join the meeting. Dr Topsoe is highly respected and revered by the project's foreign shareholders.

The issue of gas price figured prominently in the meeting held late Wednesday night at the Prime Minister's residence.

The pricing of gas has been one of the sore points that have led to the impasse. The foreign promoters are learnt to have proposed to raise the gas price to one dollar per thousand cft from \$0.75 in the contract signed in 1990.

When the project was conceived in 1981, the rate was proposed at \$1.50. In 1990, the then Chairman

of BCIC, which represents Bangladesh Government in the KAFCO Board, in a letter to the Industries Secretary categorically stated that with the existing gas price (\$0.75), the BCIC would be burdened with an additional loss of Taka 24 crore each year. For, the Corporation would have to pay the Bakhhrabad Gas Systems Ltd (BGSL), the gas suppliers, according to the government rate which is much higher.

Otherwise, the state-owned BGSL would have to subsidize the project which is illogical. Even the public sector fertilizer plants are not subsidized.

The economic price of gas was estimated at \$1.30 per thousand cubic feet by the World Bank early this month.

Meanwhile, the 10th annual general meeting of the Company (KAFCO), scheduled to begin yesterday, has been deferred to March 7.

Saffur Rahman, the Finance

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England emerge as favourites

MELBOURNE, Feb 27: England trounced the West Indies by six wickets at the Melbourne Cricket Ground on Thursday night, moving to the head of the World Cup standings and confirming its status as tournament favourite, reports AP.

Captain Graham Gooch scored 65 and Graeme Hick made 54 as England joined New Zealand at the top of the standings in the nine-nation tournament. Both teams have 2-0 records.

England bowled superbly to restrict the West Indies to 157 and then stormed to 160 for four. In response, the target was reached with a mammoth 10.1 overs to spare.

Chris Lewis and Phillip de

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Bahrain may take more Bangladeshi manpower

BAHRAIN, Feb 27: Foreign Minister A S M Mostafizur Rahman yesterday called on the Prime Minister of Bahrain, Shaikh Khalifa Bin Sulman Al Khalifa and apprised him of the overall political development and economic condition prevailing in Bangladesh, reports BSS.

The foreign Minister sought Bahrain's co-operation in resolving some of the concerned issues stressing the need for Bahrain's participation in the utilization of the vast human resources of Bangladesh.

The Prime Minister expressed his satisfaction at the quality of Bangladeshis working in Bahrain. He indicated that Bahrain would like to take more manpower from Bangladesh.

Earlier, the Foreign Minister met Bahrain's Foreign Minister Shaikh Muhammad Bin Mubarak Al Khalifa.

During the discussions they covered the whole gamut of bilateral relations and international issues of mutual concern.

The Bangladesh Foreign Minister apprised his counterpart of the future plans and

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Biman-BAPA talks fail

By Staff Correspondent

The meeting between the Biman management and the Bangladesh Airlines Pilots' Association (BAPA) on Thursday ended without any tangible outcome, a BAPA source said.

"The authorities' offer is not acceptable to us; so the meeting failed. But we will hold another round of talks on March 3," Captain Monwar, president of BAPA told The Daily Star.

The Biman management offered a raise of only 15 per cent of the basic pay and a slight raise in out-station allowances. But the BAPA demanded an average 30 per cent raise of pay and allowances.

"If we accept the proposal of the authorities the salary of our first officer will be lower than the Biman employees," the BAPA president added.

Last month, some 5,500 Biman employees were given about 67 per cent pay raise over their new pay scale.

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Dhaka sets up diplomatic ties with Kiev

Bangladesh has established diplomatic relations with Ukraine, the second largest Republic of the former Soviet Union, reports UNB.

The diplomatic relations were established recently through exchange of letters between two governments in the Ukrainian capital Kiev.

Bangladesh State Minister for Textile Major (Retd) Abdul Mannan, who was in Kiev recently at the head of a 22-member delegation, exchanged the related papers with Deputy Foreign Minister of Ukraine Valentin M Lipatov.

Satellite TV threatens viability of Asian stations

KUALA LUMPUR, Feb 27: Governments fearful they will lose control over what people watch on television seem powerless to stop a deluge of foreign programmes as satellites compete for Asia's billions of potential viewers, reports Reuters.

Satellite television, with footprints from Tehran to Tokyo, threatens traditional censorship restrictions and the viability of Asian stations whose programmes may be unable to compete with the likes of Rambo, analysts say.

It is increasingly difficult to insulate the domestic market from foreign broadcasts, Singapore's Minister of Information and the Arts George Yeo said recently.

As satellite dishes get smaller with higher power processing, it will become impossible to stop television signals from being received.

The industry is most advanced in Japan, where two satellite television stations charge a subscriber audience of more than four million

households between 11 and 16 dollars a month.

Japan Satellite Broadcasting Inc and the publicly funded Japan Broadcasting Corp air a range of sports programmes, news and movies. But the market is largely confined to Japan.

Many governments are most wary of international stations that are cycling the lucrative Asia-Pacific market and working hard to penetrate millions of Asian homes.

Leading the charge is Hong Kong's Star-TV, launched last

August in a blaze of publicity. It beams serial dramas, news, films and rock videos and earned six million dollars in advertising revenue last year.

With twin footprints of the Asiasat-4 satellite covering most of Asia and parts of the Middle East and the Pacific, it now has an audience of about 1.8 million households and sees a potential audience of 2.7 billion people.

The free-to-air service that broadcasts five channels appears to be having difficulty defining its target audience,

thereby deterring potential advertisers, analysts say.

"If you look at the types of programmes that they've actually signed up, it's difficult to match the supply of programmes with the audience they initially talked about," said John Ure, telecommunications analyst at Hong Kong University.

Besides Star-TV, the British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC) last year launched its world service television, six new satellite channels are being planned in

Japan this year.

America's Cable News Network (CNN), which has beamed round-the-clock international news and business reports in Asia since 1982, says it will meet BBC's challenge by boosting regional coverage.

Asian governments and national broadcasters are braced for an explosion in the industry, but for now many refuse to open up their skies.

They fear foreign programmes could threaten na-

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Russia to lift all price controls

MOSCOW, Feb 27: The Russian government of President Boris Yeltsin is to lift almost all remaining price controls by the end of March, first Deputy Prime Minister Yegor Gaidar said today.