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NEWS BRIEFS

Pourashava polls next month likely

Pourashava election throughout the country is likely to be held next month. The schedule is expected to be announced soon. Official sources said yesterday that the Ministry concerned has already given clearance to the Election Commission to hold polling in 85 of the total 104 Pourashavas in the country, reports UNB.

Fire damage jute

A fire on a private barge damaged 1000 bale of jute. Fire Service sources said. They said that M V Mahfuz of Dhaka Jute Mills caught fire at 2:44 pm Thursday near the Bangladesh-China Friendship Bridge on the river Buriganga.

30 injured in Sirajgang

SIRAJGANJ, Mar 12: At least 30 people were injured today when a passenger bus tumbled into a roadside ditch at Chowdhuripara Betgari in Ullapara upazila, 20 miles from here. Witnesses said the bus skidded off the Dhaka-Bogra highway and plunged into the ditch when a truck was trying to overtake it, reports UNB.

Schri and Iftar timings

Ramzan March	Schri	Iftar
7	13	6.13 pm
8	14	4.49 am 6.14 pm



WRONG VICTIM: Parents wailing over the body of their seven-day-old baby who succumbed to suffocation that was police tear gas during a clash with DCC employees yesterday. —Star photo

Police, DCC employees clash Tear gas kills 7-day-old baby

By Staff Correspondent

A seven-day old child died of suffocation when police lobbed teargas shells on the striking City Corporation employees who tried to barricade the bypass road at Sayedabad near the Sweeper's Colony on Thursday.

At least 50 people, including four police personnel, were also injured in a clash between the employees, mostly sweepers, and police at around 11 am.

The employees' leaders claimed at a press conference in the afternoon that two more children and two women were killed and 100 others arrested from the scene.

Police lobbed nearly 100 teargas shells which caused the death of three minors and two women, they claimed.

But police said that they had arrested only 12 people from the scene and lobbed 38 teargas shells to bring the unruly sweepers under control.

Some 120,000 employees of the country's four city corporations and 104 pourashavas went on an indefinite strike from Monday, demanding implementation of the national pay scale for them.

Demra police said they were attacked by the sweepers when they tried to remove the barricade.

The sweepers also damaged several vehicles there, eyewitnesses said.

Police resorted to lathicharge and lobbed teargas shells to disperse the mob.

The employees alleged that the police, along with some youths of that area entered No. 14 Outfall of the colony near Sayedabad and beat the women and children during the two-hour operation. The police, however, denied the allegation.

Soon after the incident, several hundred sweepers, both men and women, marched with the body of the infant girl and held a rally in front of the National Press

New BHP move to stall Tinbigha transfer

CALCUTTA, Mar 12: BHP has formed a coordination committee with representatives from various places of North Bengal to actively monitor the Tinbigha situation since "efforts were again underway to transfer the corridor to Bangladesh," reports PTI.

Addressing a press conference, the party General Secretary Paras Dutta, who recently visited Tinbigha, said that if necessary the people of Kuchibari, cutting across all political lines, would take up arms and physically resist any move to transfer the corridor.

Stating that although the BJP delegation led by L K Advani, during its meeting with the External Affairs and Union Home Minister last month suggested alternatives to the transfer of Tinbigha, Dutta said, "we are sorry that the centre was taking steps to transfer the land."

Dutta also said that BJP will not allow any survey of South Berubari, which had been ordered following a sudden demand from Bangladesh to hand over the corridor.

Meanwhile, the West Bengal Chief Minister, Jyoti Basu, See Page 12 Col 8

Israel supplying Patriots to China, suspects Washington

WASHINGTON, Mar 12: The Bush administration is investigating intelligence reports that Israel may have secretly supplied a US Patriot missile or its technology to China, it was reported Thursday, says AP.

The Washington Times said a senior administration official confirmed the investigation and said inquiries have been made to Israel about it. The official, speaking on condition of anonymity, said the United States has not seen the missile in China or determined absolutely that the missile or components of it are there, the Times said.

There have been earlier reports that Israel contributed to China's missile programme. Military analysts say Israel in recent years has sold China tanks, aircraft technology and electronics.

China's defense industry is considered to be among the world's best at reverse engineering, or acquiring technology by studying a finished product, US officials fear that China will develop countermeasures that will render the Patriot ineffective against Chinese ballistic missiles.

The Times said senior Department officials are considering whether to send a team of US inspectors to Israel to count the US Patriots deployed there.

Currently, China is developing new surface-to-air missiles, China has sold missiles to several of Israel's Arab neighbours, including Saudi Arabia, Iran and Iraq, and has discussed a sale with Syria, Israel has been expected to agree to increase its military technology transfers to China on the condition the technology not be passed on to the Arabs.

AFP adds: The US House of Representative overwhelmed-

ly voted Wednesday to override a presidential veto of a bill that would the renewal of China's Most-Favoured-Nation (MFN) trading status to progress on human rights, arms control and trade.

The House voted 357 to 61 to override the presidential veto. The measure now goes to the senate, where a veto override bid is not expected to muster the required two-thirds majority.

President George Bush earlier vetoed the bill that would have renewed of China's MFN status to progress in its human rights record, restric-

Rohingyas are Myanmar citizens Yangon distorting facts : Dhaka

Bangladesh has brushed aside reports emanating from Yangon saying that Myanmar refugees coming into Bangladesh since the middle of last year are 'illegal immigrants' in that country, reports BSS.

A Foreign Office press release also discounted reports from Yangon that 'historically there has never been any Rohingya race' and said such reports about the Myanmar refugees are simply devoid of truth.

The press release gave a detailed background of the situation and said the Government of Bangladesh is constrained to put the whole scenario in perspective and place the historical facts before international community.

Referring to the influx of the Myanmar refugees, the press release pointed out that Rohingya Muslims were also forced to leave their hearths and homes once before in 1978 when three lakhs of them took shelter in Bangladesh.

Seventy per cent of these people had the first category Myanmar citizenship and more than two lakhs of these people were ultimately taken back by the Myanmar government.

This time also, the press said, in spite of the fact that the citizenship certificates and documents of many refugees were forcefully taken away by the Myanmar security forces, a large number of them have been able to bring these documents which are available for inspection by anybody.

The press release referred to reports from Yangon that

the 'very name Rohingya is a creation of a group of insurgents in the Rakhine state and since the first Anglo-Myanmar war in 1824, people of Muslim faith from the adjacent country illegally entered Myanmar Naing-Ngan, particularly Rakhine state' and said such information is aimed at creating misgivings about the status of Myanmar refugees.

The press release pointed out that the Arakan province (which has been renamed by Myanmar government as Rakhine province) came under the influence of Indian Sub-continent in the 9th century and Arakan was made a part of unified Myanmar in 11th century and later in the 15th century Arakan became an independent kingdom under the

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PM goes to US Mar 17

Refugees to figure in Bush-Khaleda talks

Prime Minister Begum Khaleda Zia will pay a five-day visit to the United States from March 17 at the invitation of President George Bush, it was officially announced here yesterday, reports UNB.

This will be the first bilateral visit by the head of the government of Bangladesh to the US.

A Foreign Office spokesman said today Begum Zia will have a wide-ranging talks with President Bush on bilateral matters, regional and international issues of common concern.

The Myanmar refugee issue will figure prominently at the discussion between the two leaders to be held at the White House on March 19.

The refugee problem that poses a threat to the stability of the region have two alarm-

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Myanmar under growing pressure

Indonesia, Pakistan express concern

UNDATED, Mar 12: Pressure on Myanmar over the exodus of its Muslim minority to Bangladesh grew today with Indonesia stating publicly its concern over the refugees' plight, reports AFP.

Indonesia, the world's most populous Muslim nation, joined Malaysia, Singapore and Thailand in appealing to Myanmar to resolve the problem, leaving only Brunei and the Philippines to make public their stand on the issue.

Foreign Minister Ali Alatas, quoted in the Jakarta Post newspaper, asked Yangon to deal with the fundamental questions that have led to the flow of refugees into neighbouring countries.

Problems inside Myanmar were essentially its internal affairs, Alatas said.

But the recent developments show that the situation inside Myanmar has carried over into some international dimensions and tends to have an adverse effect on the peace and stability in Southeast Asia, Alatas said.

ASEAN members usually do not criticise their neighbours' domestic politics, but are speaking out against Myanmar as they see Yangon's alleged persecution of Muslims as destabilising for the region.

Reuters says senior Myanmar officials made a rare foray from their military-controlled country on Thursday amid growing trouble with once friendly neighbouring states over Yangon's expulsion of thousands of its Muslims.

Foreign Minister Ohn Gyaw and Interior Minister Phone Mynt arrived in Bangkok to meet Thai and Laos officials to discuss the drug problem.

The infamous 'Golden Triangle' straddling their joint

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Poverty alleviation to begin from villages : Khaleda

Prime Minister Begum Khaleda Zia yesterday inaugurated a two-day national workshop on rural poverty with a call for waging struggle against poverty to consolidate the hard-earned democracy and give it a permanent shape, reports BSS.

"Economic democracy is the key to political democracy," she said adding "that is why we are talking about establishment of economic democracy side by side political democracy."

Held under the aegis of Bangladesh Institute of Development Studies (BIDS), the inaugural session was chaired by Planning Minister A M Zahiruddin Khan. The function was also addressed by acting Director General of BIDS Dr M R Khan and study and workshop coordinator Dr Hossain Zillur Rahman.

Dr Mahbub Hossain, former Director General of BIDS, presented a paper on 'Rural Economy and Poverty Alleviation'.

Begum Zia said poverty alleviation "is our political commitment" and added "our commitment will only be fulfilled when we shall be able to prevent wastage of human efficiency, experience, skill and power". She said: "If we want to break the circle of poverty we have to start from the village. The villages and people living there will be our focal point of development."

The Prime Minister said that poverty was impeding the process of our desired development. She said poverty was an obstacle to social peace, discipline and harmony. She said if a vast segment of the people in the society remained poor and rootless the impact of it was bound to affect other sections. "This in turn will spoil the image of the whole nation," she added.

Begum Zia said the government had given top priority to the alleviation of poverty in the current five-year plan period. She said the formula to attain this objective was development of human resources through generating employment. She said poverty could not be removed without employment.

She said her government had taken the initiative to spread education to create awareness among the people. She said primary education had been made compulsory while mass education programme had been geared up. She said rural primary health care and family planning programme had been identified as high priority sector. "These two sectors have universally been accepted as indispensable parts of poverty alleviation," she added.

The Prime Minister said that the government had adopted a new strategy for development in the Fourth Five Year Plan period where development would take place through partnership.

Begum Zia said the objective of the canal digging programme was to involve the rural poor with the development activities. She said canal digging have multi-purpose utilities for poverty alleviation. She said it would not only facilitate increase of production through expansion of irrigation but

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NZ, England keep winning

SYDNEY, Mar 12: New Zealand scored a four-wicket win over India Wednesday to maintain their perfect record in the World Cup cricket tournament while England edged South Africa to clinch a semi-final spot, reports AP.

England scored a dramatic three-wicket win at the Melbourne Cricket Ground off the penultimate ball of a rain-reduced match.

South Africa scored 236 for four from their 50 overs and the rain reduction left unbeaten England requiring 226 from just 41 overs.

Alec Stewart, pushed up to open the innings in the absence of Ian Botham, led the ab-

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Govt wants to widen gap between JS sessions

Star Report

The government feels that the constitutional provision of convening the Jatiya Sangad (parliament) after every two months should be revised so that the ministers can devote more time to administration, a highly placed source said Thursday.

The proposed revision will require an amendment to the Constitution which can be done only when two-thirds of the 330 parliament members vote in favour.

The source, speaking on condition of anonymity, said that the government would hold talks with the Opposition on the planned amendment.

The government plans to propose that parliament meets every three months.

The existing provision of parliament's sitting every two months came under the 12th Amendment to the

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Hasina urged to withdraw Montu's suspension

By Staff Correspondent

A three-member delegation of Dhaka district unit of the Awami League yesterday met with AL chief Sheikh Hasina and requested her to withdraw the suspension order of Mostafa Mohsin Montu.

The Montu-led faction of the unit held a meeting Wednesday afternoon at the party central office and decided to send the delegation to the party chief to convey the request on behalf of the Dhaka district unit.

Hasina gave a patient hearing to the delegation and assured them of conveying the request to the AL's Central Working Committee for decision, sources said.

UNB adds: The delegation members were also learnt to have apologized to Hasina on behalf of Montu and requested

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No new sanction for canal digging

Government has ordered its district level administration to withhold issuing sanction for digging canals in some special cases under the canal digging programme, during the current season, reports UNB.

The order takes effect from Thursday.

When contacted officials at Prime Minister's Secretariat said the deadline for completing works under the canal digging programme during the current season expire with the Bengali calendar month of Chaitra.

The order is applicable only to those cases where digging operation has not even started yet.

All Deputy Commissioners have been asked to stop supplying wheat against sanctioned projects where digging not yet started.