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NEWS BRIEFS

PM takes iftar with pressmen
Prime Minister Begum Khaleda Zia Friday hosted an iftar party for the members of the press. Held at the Prime Minister's Secretariat at the old Sangsad Bhaban, the iftar party was attended by Information Minister Barrister Nazmul Huda, editors of the national dailies and news agencies, senior journalists, representatives of foreign media and officials of the Information Ministry, reports BSS.

Satyajit Ray improving
CALCUTTA, Mar 13: The respiratory distress of film maker, Satyajit Ray, has eased considerably since early hours of today, according to a medical bulletin issued here tonight. But, Ray's unstable heart condition still remains the cause for concern and is requiring constant vigilance from the medical team, says Dr KB Bakshi, reports PTI.

Fire stops British parliament session
LONDON, Mar 13: A session of the British Parliament was suspended today when firefighters were called to put out a fire in the building's ventilation system, officials said. There were no immediate details about the extent of the fire in the House of Commons, reports Reuter.

Schri and Iftar timings

Ramadan	March	Schri	Iftar
8	14		6.14
9	15	4.48	6.14

We support democratic struggle of Myanmar people : PM Dhaka wants world community to pressurise Yangon

Prime Minister Begum Khaleda Zia said in Dhaka Friday that Bangladesh would continue to seek peaceful solution to the Rohingya issue, reports BSS.

"We will seek international support to pressurise the Myanmar authority for the early repatriation of the Rohingyas from Bangladesh," Begum Zia said while giving her reaction at her office to newsmen after visiting the refugee camps at Dandamia and Maricha in Teknaf.

She said the refugees by the indications are citizens of Myanmar and they had to flee their country to avert atrocities.

The Prime Minister said, "We expect that they can go back to their country at the earliest."

Begum Zia replied in the affirmative to a question whether the influx of thousands of refugees was creating any pressure on the country's economy.

The Prime Minister said the relief received from friendly countries so far was not adequate to meet the increasing demand since thousands of refugees were pouring in everyday into Bangladesh.

During her day's visit at Teknaf the Prime Minister witnessed the plight of the refugees and said it was pathetic to see that even the children were passing their days under the open sky.

Begum Zia said the Rohingyas were forced to leave their homes in the face of oppression and torture. She expressed her concern at the present rate of influx of the refugees to Bangladesh, saying it would be a very difficult task to cope with the situation.

Asked whether she would raise the Rohingya issue with US President George Bush during her coming visit to Washington, she answered in the affirmative.

Replying to a question regarding her government's attitude towards the struggle for democracy by the people in Myanmar led by Madame Aung San Suu Kyi, the Prime Minister said her party, the Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP), supports the democratic struggle of the people in Myanmar.

Asked whether her government was having any dialogue with Myanmar authorities relating to the Rohingya issue, Prime Minister Begum Zia replied in the affirmative and added that the Myanmar Foreign Minister was supposed to visit Dhaka, which had not yet taken place.

In this regard Begum Zia recalled the repatriation of

One more shot dead on DU campus

By DU Correspondent

A central leader of Bangladesh Chhatra Union (BCU) Moin Hossain Raju was shot dead yesterday evening in a fierce gunbattle between two rival student groups on the Dhaka University campus.

Raju (22), a central committee member of the pro-CPB BCU and a third-year student of Soil Science of Dhaka University, succumbed to his injury at the Dhaka Medical College Hospital at about 7 pm.

Raju received bullet in his head as unidentified gunmen opened fire on procession of Ganatantrik Chhatra Oikya (GCO) near the Teachers-Students Centre on the campus.

Two other persons were admitted to the DMCH with bullet wounds.

The fellow activists of Raju led the ruling party backed Jatityabadi Chhatra Dal responsible for the killing.

Following the clashes, that left scores other injured, panic gripped the campus. A large number of police personnel were seen posted on the campus last night. All entry points were also blocked.

Raju, second son of Moazzem Hossain, a retired government official, hails from Mehendiganj upazila in Barisal district.

During the battle a stray bullet entered the first floor residence of Professor Khodadad Khan of the University at Fuller Road Teachers Staff Quarters behind the Udayan School.

Mahfuz, the son of Prof Khan received injury in his hand from the bullet.

It all began immediately before the iftar, witnesses said, when two groups of armed activists clashed.

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BENSON & HEDGES
WORLD CUP 1992

Windies crush Sri Lanka

SYDNEY, Mar 13: The two-time champions West Indies crushed Sri Lanka by 91 runs Friday to keep alive their hopes of reaching the semifinals of the World Cup cricket tournament, reports AP.

Phil Simmons, an explosive right-hander from Trinidad, scored 110 off 125 balls to lift the West Indies to a 4-3 record in the nine-nation tournament.

The West Indies made 268 for eight from their allocated 50 overs and they limited the Sri Lankans to 177 for nine.

The loss eliminated Sri Lanka from semifinal contention. Zimbabwe and India also have no hope of making the semifinals.

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Montu replies to showcause notice today

By Staff Correspondent

Mostafa Mohsin Montu, the suspended Awami League (AL) leader, is expected to reply to the show cause notice issued on him by the party high command today, sources said.

The Awami League Working Committee (ALWC) issued a show cause notice on him on March 4 as to why he would not be expelled from the party.

The ALWC also suspended the party membership of Montu, the chairman of the youth front of AL and general secretary of the Dhaka district unit of the party, on charges of anti-organisational activities and tarnishing the image of the party.

Following the party decision, the loyalists of Montu resorted to violence against those they believed were involved in influencing the party high command to go for taking punitive measures against Montu.

Meanwhile AJL has postponed its proposed rally to protest the ALWC decision to be held in front of the Jatitya Press Club today.

Yusuf Ali Chowdhury, the general secretary of the AJL, is expected to reply to the show cause notice today, sources said.

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Prime Minister Begum Khaleda Zia talking to the Rohingya refugees during her visit to the refugee camps at Teknaf in Cox's Bazar Friday. —PID photo

Non-MPs may not get job with ministerial rank any further

By Mahfuz Ullah

Constitutional obligations are going to restrict further appointments of people, other than members of parliament, to serve the government with the rank and status of a minister, minister of state or deputy minister.

The issue was brought to the notice of the top notches of the government only recently when the Speaker failed to give decision on a privilege notice.

The privilege notice was moved during the last session of parliament which says that empowering someone, other than what has been laid down in the Constitution, with the rank and status of a minister was affecting the privilege of an MP.

The Speaker kept his decision on the notice in abeyance on the plea that it involved legal interpretation.

Parliament Secretariat sources say, the matter was later referred to the Cabinet Division and the Ministry of Law and Parliamentary Affairs. In both cases, no satisfactory explanation was available.

Article 56 of the Constitution, after the introduction of the parliamentary form of government, says that "the appointments of Prime Minister and other ministers and of the ministers of state and deputy ministers, shall be made by the President, provided that not less than nine-tenths of their number shall be appointed from among members of parliament and not more than one-tenth of their number may be chosen from among persons qualified for election as members of parliament."

Constitutional experts say there could be no other interpretation of this article nor can anyone, other than what has been defined, be given the status of a minister.

Parliament Secretariat sources further say, the Speaker, by all possibility, will give a decision on the matter.

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This year's commitment may come to \$1.9b WB links aid to 'tough' political decision

By Toufique Imrose Khalidi

Bangladesh will need 7.3 to 7.7 billion US dollars as aid over the next four years, according to recent assessments of the World Bank.

However, the availability of this level of assistance, the World Bank insists, will depend upon the Government's willingness to take tough political decisions.

The World Bank, in a draft report published February 20, says: "The prospects for attaining this level of disbursements would be determined by the intensity of the Government's reform process."

The report, entitled "Selected Issues in External Competitiveness and Economic Efficiency", has defined the need to "overcome the difficulties of administrative transition so as to provide the impetus for accelerated growth" as the prime concern of the Government.

Amid persistent allegations from donors about poor aid utilization, project implementation and failure to implement policy reforms, Bangladesh stands to receive a lower aid commitment for the next fiscal year at the Aid Consortium meeting scheduled for April 21 and 22.

The World Bank, which presides over the Aid Club meeting, has already made it known to the Bangladesh authorities.

According to the draft report, the "aggregate aid recommendations" would be about 1.8 to 1.9 billion US dollars. Last year, donors committed 2.3 billion US dollars in aid.

The recommended aid amount for 1992-93 is made up of \$1.00 to 1.2 billion as project aid, \$450-500 million as commodity aid and \$200-250 million as food aid.

The World Bank officials who had recently been in Dhaka to see and settle things prior to the Paris meet have been told by officials of ERD that it is the figure that counts, not how much of it gets through the pipeline in the end.

As an ERD man admits: "We have told the World Bank teams that it is a prestige issue for the party in power and the figure must be two billion plus for political reasons". The official requests he not be named.

The ERD (Economic Relations Division) is the lead agency for aid matters.

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EC plans to cut food assistance

By Inam Ahmed

The European Community (EC) in its co-operation strategy, 1991-95 wants to make its assistance towards Bangladesh more target oriented.

Sources said the intention was in view of the slow implementation of the projects assisted by the EC.

The strategy also reiterates the EC stance to contribute to the social sector.

The EC has expressed that more supports would be provided in the field of poverty eradication, population control, agricultural production, women development and food security.

According to the strategy plan, non-government organisations (NGOs) would have greater role in the development process of the country. The strategy would be finalised in the Bangladesh-EC Joint Commission meet to be held this year.

Bangladesh government has supported the EC strategy.

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5000 striking DCC employees lose jobs

By Asiuzzaman

Some 5,000 striking employees of Dhaka City Corporation (DCC) have lost their jobs as they failed to resume their duties by Wednesday last, the deadline set by the authorities, a senior DCC official said Friday.

The authorities directed its master-roll workers, mostly scavengers and sweepers, to resume work by Wednesday falling which they would be considered terminated.

The employees ignored the authorities' caution and expressed their determination to continue the strike until their one-point demand was realised.

Some 10,000 employees of the corporation began an indefinite strike Monday demanding implementation of the national pay scale for them.

The Poura Karmachari Federation which called the strike claimed that more than 120,000 employees of the country's four city corporations and 104 pourasavas are observing the strike.

The termination order was deferred till Thursday as the employees' leaders sat for discussion with the authorities on Wednesday night. The talks ended in a deadlock.

Because of Thursday's untoward incident which claimed the life of a seven-day-old baby and left 50 others injured, the scheduled second round of talks was not held on Thursday.

The source confirmed that the termination order would be effective from today (Saturday) and the authorities would start recruiting new employees.

Job-seeking cleaners and sweepers have been asked to be present at the corporation's nine zonal offices by 3 pm Saturday for interview, the source added.

The authorities have also advertised to recruit some 10,000 employees.

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Sack army chief for 'exceeding limits', Indian MPs demand

NEW DELHI, Mar 13: Opposition MPs today demanded the dismissal of India's army chief over an interview, in which he discounted a threat from Pakistan as 'peripheral' and likened three other countries to huge rats, reports AFP.

Angry members told parliament General SF Rodrigues, who assumed office in July 1990, should be sacked for calling the United States, Russia and China 'bandicoots' — an Indian breed of rat — in an interview to The Pioneer newspaper published Thursday.

External Affairs Minister Madhavsinh Solanki said Defence Minister Sharad Pawar would make a statement Monday, after opposition MPs cutting across party lines kept raising the issue in the Lower House.

Rodrigues, now visiting Nepal, told The Pioneer he considered threats from Pakistan to be 'peripheral' and Islamabad to be an 'irritant', but... an 'irritant I could do without.'

The army chief added he thought the United States could be trying to pressurise India into signing the Nuclear Non-proliferation Treaty (NPT).

He also dismissed proposals for summit of five countries — India, Pakistan, the United States, Russia and China — on a nuclear-free South Asia.

"When you have a regional grouping (of India and Pakistan), what is the role of these three bandicoots (United States, Russia and China)," he said.

He has two protagonists and three supervisors. Are they guarantors or are they part of this whole arrangement. What is this?" the chief of the million-plus army asked.

Centrist MP George Fernandes said Rodrigues had "exceeded his limits" in expressing his views on matters having a bearing on India's relations with neighbouring countries.

Ram Vilas Paswan, a vocal MP, called the General's interview 'uncalled for,' while one rightist and one communist politician said he should not have expressed his views on matters which did not fall within his domain.

Another report says, the Indian army has initiated disciplinary action against soldiers accused of violating human rights in Kashmir, a junior minister told parliament here today.

Minister of State for Defence S Krishna Kumar said 11 complaints of the army's "alleged excesses against the civilian population" in Kashmir were being investigated.

But there "have been no allegations regarding violation of human rights or abuse of power against the Navy and Air Force," he informed an opposition MP in the Lower House.

Meanwhile, security forces today chased and shot dead six Sikh separatists in a sugarcane field in the Indian state of Punjab after the militants gunned down four men in an overnight attack, police said.

The six were killed in a fierce gun battle that erupted when the fleeing guerrillas ran into the field in Ropar district and fired at the several police and paramilitary personnel pursuing them, a police spokesman said here.

The battle, which began before dawn, lasted more than five hours.

Members of the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC) unanimously adopted Friday the draft of a constitution for the group's proposed Chamber of Commerce and Industry, reports AFP.

The body is aimed at boosting cooperation among SAARC member nations in the field of commerce and industry, state radio reported.

The meeting, called by the federation of Nepalese Chambers of Commerce and Industry (FNCCI), was attended by representatives from Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, Nepal, Pakistan and Sri Lanka.

Draft for SAARC chamber adopted