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NEWS BRIEFS

PM takes Iftar with navymen

Prime Minister Begum Khaleda Zia Saturday had her Iftar with the officers and sailors of the Bangladesh navy at BNS Haji Hossain at cantonment in Dhaka. Speaker Shaikh Razzaque Ali, Deputy leader of the House Prof Badruddoza Chowdhury, Ministers, Members of Parliament, Principal Secretary to the Prime Minister Syed Hasan Ahmed, Defence Secretary Anisur Rahman, chiefs of the army and airforce, high civil and military officials attended the Iftar, reports BSS.

Strike observed in Sirajganj

SIRAJGANJ, Mar 14: A 12-hour strike was observed at Shalanga in Raiganj upazila of the district today in protest against the government decision to shift the sub-register office from Shalanga to the upazila headquarters, reports UNB.

World Consumers' Right Day today

World Consumers' Right Day will be observed in Bangladesh as elsewhere in the world today, reports BSS.

Shri and Iftar timings

| | | | |
|--------|-------|--------|--------|
| Ramzan | March | Shri | Iftar |
| 9 | 15 | | 6:14pm |
| 10 | 16 | 4:47am | 6:14pm |

Victims of nine-year autocracy JS body decides to withdraw all cases

By Nurul Kabir

The Parliamentary Standing Committee on Home Affairs has decided to withdraw all the charges brought against political activists by the police during the Ershad regime.

The decision was taken at a meeting of the nine-member committee on March 12 with its chairman Home Minister Abdul Matin Chowdhury in the chair.

It was decided that political workers specially those of the three major political alliances and the Jamaat-e-Islami will come under the purview of the decision.

According to a resolution adopted at the meeting, all the charges brought against the political workers by the authorities during the period between Ershad's taking over of state power on March 24, 1982 and his downfall on December 6, 1991 will be withdrawn within 45 days from March 12, the day the Standing Committee decision was taken.

Rahmat Ali MP, a member of the committee, said the total number of political workers against whom different cases were filed during the Ershad regime will not be less than six thousand.

All these political workers, according to the Standing Committee decision, have to appeal separately to the Home Minister and two copies of the original application have to be sent to the Standing Committee and the local

District Commissioner (DC) respectively. According to sources, the meeting formed a three-member sub-committee comprising Mahbubul Alam Tara MP, and Khalilur Rahman MP, of the ruling Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP) and Rahamat Ali MP, of Awami League to scrutinise the applications from the political workers seeking withdrawal of the charges brought against them during the Ershad regime.

The Standing Committee members who were present at the meeting on March 12 include, among others, Mahbubul Alam Tara, Rahamat Ali, Khalilur Rahman, Abdur Rauf, Abul Hasnat and Wing Commander (ret'd) Hamidullah.

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PM leaves for US today Rohingyas threat to stability, Khaleda to tell Bush

Star Report

The influx of thousand of Myanmar refugees and aid from the United States will dominate talks between President George Bush and Bangladesh Prime Minister Begum Khaleda Zia during her visit to America, officials said.

"Myanmar will figure prominently in about an hour-long talk between the two leaders and Begum Zia will explain the difficulties faced by impoverished Bangladesh in tackling the influx," a Bangladesh Foreign Ministry official said.

Begum Zia is to tell President Bush during the talks scheduled for March 19 that Myanmar's acts against ethnic Rohingyas are a threat to Bangladesh's security and regional stability, the official

said adding that she would also seek American support in solving the issue.

The Bangladesh Prime Minister leaves Dhaka for Washington today (Sunday) for the five day visit to the United States that begins Tuesday.

The visit will be the first by Begum Zia to the US since her becoming the first woman Prime Minister of Bangladesh last year.

Dhaka-Washington ties are now at their best with a democratic government in Bangladesh and the refugee issue's being linked to the human rights question, the Foreign Office official added.

The talks between two leaders will also cover important matters, including bilateral

US aircraft carrier enters Gulf

WASHINGTON, Mar 14: The US aircraft carrier America has moved into the Gulf to send a "clear signal" to Iraq that it must comply with UN orders to destroy weapons of mass destruction, administration officials said on Friday, reports Reuter.

The officials refused to discuss a Cable News Network report that the Defence Department had drawn up a list of Iraqi nuclear, biological and ballistic missile targets for possible air and cruise missile attacks if Baghdad did not comply.

The aircraft carrier USS America has entered the Gulf as part of the "normal post-war deployment" of US forces in the region, a senior Defense Department official said Friday, reports AP.

The official, who spoke on condition of anonymity, denied that the movement of the vessel was intended as a threatening gesture towards any nation in the region, including Iraq.

Hundreds killed in Turkish quake

ERZINCAN (Turkey), Mar 14: Turkey declared a state of emergency in an eastern province today after a strong earthquake toppled tall buildings and buried hundreds of people, reports Reuter.

State minister Erman Sahin said rescuers had found 276 bodies since the 30-second tremor ripped through the city of Erzincan and surrounding towns and villages on Friday evening.

He told reporters in Erzincan the death toll could double when all the victims had been pulled from the rubble.

"It was like Hiroshima. A dust cloud rose above the whole city," said journalist Mustafa Atasm who was outside Erzincan when the quake

struck. The road lurched under my car and I saw a bus and a taxi plunge into the Euphrates river.

President Turgut Ozal and Prime Minister Suleyman Demirel flew separately to the stricken city, where more than 2,500 troops and 600 medical staff joined rescue efforts.

In Ankara, the government declared a state of emergency to speed relief and reconstruction. We have taken this decision to heal the wounds in Erzincan, said cabinet spokesman Akin Gonen.

The Turkish Red Crescent sent cargo planes with 3,000 tents, 17,000 blankets, a 200-bed mobile hospital, four field kitchens, six generators, 29 tonnes of food and 1,400 units of blood.

AFP adds: The death toll from Friday's earthquake in eastern Turkey could reach 4,000, the International Federation of the Red Cross and the Red Crescent said Saturday, citing reports from a representative at the scene and Turkish Red Crescent.

Local officials have so far reported only 300 confirmed dead while rescue workers said Saturday, nearly 24 hours after the quake, that initial estimates of 1,000 killed represented a maximum figure.

AP adds: Cries from people trapped in the rubble were heard Saturday as rescuers searched for survivors caught in buildings that collapsed in an earthquake that killed at least 570 people in eastern Turkey. See Page 12 Col 8

Economy in crisis, Hasina tells chamber leaders

Awami League Chief Sheikh Hasina yesterday (Saturday) said her party wants to attain self-sufficiency in economy to meet people's basic needs by removing poverty and creating employment opportunity, reports UNB.

The aim of our economic policy is to ensure wellbeing of the vast majority of people," she told a meeting of representatives of the country's leading industrial and business houses at her Minto Road official residence in the afternoon.

The meeting was organised to exchange opinion with the industrial and trading community on the eve of updating Awami League's economic policy to suit the socio-economic condition of the people and the changed global economic

scenario.

"The nation is facing a serious economic crisis," Hasina said, adding that Awami League as a responsible mass organisation is committed to play an appropriate role in improving the economic condition of the people.

She said Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman had taken pragmatic initiatives so that the private sector could play an important role in economic activities along side nationalisation of the heavy industrial units.

Bangabandhu was killed when overall growth of development and the GDP were increasing, Hasina said adding that his killing destabilised the political situation and impeded the development process. See Page 12 Col 1

"Economic progress is not possible without political stability," said Hasina, the leader of Opposition in Parliament. Being in the opposition we could establish the parliamentary democracy to ensure political stability.

Awami League sources said the party is poised to switch over to market economy by liberalising its economic policy.

A party press release said representatives of Federation of Bangladesh Chambers of Commerce and Industry (FBCCI), Bangladesh Chamber of Industries, Dhaka Chamber of Commerce and Industry, Metropolitan Chamber of Commerce and Industry, Foreign Investors Chamber and

Police swoop on halls Arms recovered, 2 JCD activists arrested

By DU Correspondent

Police in a per-dawn swoop on four Dhaka University residential halls Saturday recovered weapons and ammunition and arrested two student leaders.

DUCSU member Shahan Shah Khandaker Sohel and Parvez reportedly an activist of the BNP backed Jatiyatabadi Chhatra Dal (JCD), were arrested from the Suryasen and Mohsin halls respectively during the raid. Zahurul Haq Hall and Jagannath Hall were also raided.

According to police sources, one sawed off rifle, three pistols, three toy pistols, a pair of binoculars and 110 rounds of ammunition were recovered.

Two cases were filed with the Ramna police station against the arrested activists in this connection.

DU campus tense Gunshots follow Raju's janaza

By DU Correspondent

Tension flared further on the Dhaka University campus Saturday when unidentified gunmen fired several shots following the gaebana janaza of a student leader shot dead Friday.

Moin Hossain Raju was killed in a shootout between rival BCL (S-A) and JCD activists near the Teacher Student Centre of the Dhaka University. He was a student of the Soil Science Department and a central leader of the Bangladesh Chhatra Union (BCU).

Raju was buried at the Mirpur Martyred Intellectuals Graveyard yesterday.

The Ganatantrik Chhatra Oikya (GCO), a left-leaning eight party student alliance, held the Jatiyatabadi Chhatra

Dal (JCD) responsible for Friday's killing and also for Saturday's firing.

Meanwhile, several vehicles were damaged by agitated BCU workers in Baitul Mukarram area after a BCU rally held in front of the National Press Club at about 11.30 am Saturday.

Chases and counter-chases took place between police and GCO workers. Police arrested three BCU activists from the area. Police fired teargas shells in the Kala Bhaban (Arts Building) area as GCO workers moved towards the Aparajeo Bangla of the University in a procession after the janaza held at the university central mosque. Later the GCO brought out a mourning procession

See Page 12 Col 4



An unidentified passer-by fell victim when police dispersed a procession, brought out by Ganatantrik Chhatra Oikya protesting the killing of student leader Raju, at the Purana Paltan intersection Saturday noon. —Star photo

3 killed in city road mishap

By Staff Correspondent

Three persons were killed in three separate road accidents in the city Saturday.

Abul Kalam Azad (20), a minibus helper, died on the spot at Khilkhet after he had been run over by the minibus for which he worked.

Cantonment police said, the victim slipped off from the running minibus and was run over at about 2:30 pm. Police seized the minibus and arrested the driver.

AKM Salam (38), was smashed when two minibuses pressed him at Fulbaria Bus terminal at about 9 am. He was rushed to the Dhaka Medical College Hospital (DMCH) where he succumbed to his injuries within an hour of his admission.

In another incident, a pedestrian, Rupal Sani (65), died as a running truck ran over him at Demra Saturday

Talks to break strike continue Municipal employees may resume duties tomorrow

By Staff Correspondent

The striking employees of the country's city corporations and pourasavas may resume their duties Monday as minister-level negotiations Saturday ended fruitfully, a ministry source said.

"The second round of talks will be held Sunday and we are expecting that the crisis will be resolved," State Minister for Forests and Environment Gayeshwar Roy, present at Saturday's meeting told The Daily Star.

Minister for Labour and Manpower Abdul Mannan Bhuiyan, Pura Karmachari Federation convenor Amanullah, member secretary Mohammad Asalat and the leaders of four city corporation employees' unions were present at the

four-hour meeting held in the office of the Labour Minister.

"We asked them to postpone the strike considering the problems of millions of city and town dwellers in the month of Ramzan," Gayeshwar Roy said adding "The employees' leaders are insisting on a pay scale."

"We almost reached a consensus, expected to be finalised Sunday," the State Minister said.

Meanwhile, the Dhaka City Corporation authorities received more than 200 applications for the post of drivers and 500 applications for cleaners on Saturday to replace the striking employees. Applications would also be received. See Page 12 Col 2



Aussies beat Zimbabwe

SYDNEY, Mar 14: Defending champion Australia powered to a 128-run victory over Zimbabwe in Hobart on Saturday to keep alive their faint hopes of qualifying for the semifinals of the World Cup cricket tournament, reports AP.

Australia made 105 for six in 46 overs after a brief rain delay and then dismissed Zimbabwe for 137.

The win lifted Australia to six points from seven matches. They still can advance to the semis if a number of other results fall their way and they

See Page 12 Col 3

Shantibahini kills BDR jawan

CHITTAGONG, Mar 14: A BDR jawan was killed and three were injured when the outlawed Shantibahini backed by Indian Border Security Force attacked a border outpost in Rangamati hill district today, reports UNB.

Ismail Hossain died on the spot as the miscreants fired at the Bangladesh Rifles (BDR) camp at Tripuraghat, one kilometre from the border, in Barkal upazila this morning, officials said.

Sepoy Sirajul Islam and Md Ilyas were rushed to the Combined Military Hospital here in a critical condition. Witnesses said the tribal insurgents made the sudden attack and sneaked across the border. They also took away one SMG and some ammunition from the dead BDR jawan.

'Home Ministry's letter not consistent with democratic norms'

By Staff Correspondent

The language of the letter of invitation sent from the Home Ministry on March 12 to some persons and a number of organisations was inconsistent with democratic norms.

This was observed at an emergency meeting of the Muktiyuddher Chetona Bastabayan O Ekattorer Ghat-tak-Dalal Nirmul Jatiya Samannoy Parishad (the national coordinating committee for implementation of the spirit of the Liberation War and annihilation of the collaborators) Saturday.

Twenty-three members of the Coordinating Committee were invited to a meeting with the Home Minister on March 13. However, only four members of the committee attended the meeting.

The meeting, chaired by committee Convener Jahanara Imam, was attended by Member-Secretary Abdul Mannan Chowdhury, Abdur Razzak MP, Kazi Arif Ahmed, Shahrir Kabir, Ahad Chowdhury, other members of the committee and representatives.

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Heroin case Eliadah, Blankson given one-month detention each

By Staff Correspondent

Two foreign nations arrested in connection with trafficking heroin through Bangladesh were given one month preventive detention each.

The District Magistrate, Dhaka, Moazzem Hossain, issued the detention order on Wednesday last under the special power act, 1974.

Eliadah McCord an American girl and Robert Blankson, a South African national were arrested on February 25 and 27 respectively and sent to the Dhaka Central Jail.

Eliadah received the detention order at the jail on Thursday but Blankson declined to receive the order without any advice from his lawyers, a source said.

Following the refusal, Blankson was produced before the magistrate's court Saturday.