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VOL. II NO. 66 REGD. NO. DA 784

CHAITRA 7, 1398 BS,

DHAKA SATURDAY MARCH 21, 1992

RAMADAN 15, 1412 HIJRI

12 PAGES: PRICE TAKA 4.00

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NEWS BRIEFS

Bharat Ratna conferred on Ray

NEW DELHI, Mar 20: Ailing movie maestro Satyajit Ray was conferred India's highest civilian award today in recognition of his distinguished contribution to cinema, a presidential spokesman said. The 71-year-old film maker, who has been under treatment in a Calcutta hospital for heart and kidney ailments since January, will be given the Bharat Ratna (Jewel of India) award at a date 'convenient to him' the spokesman said, reports AFP.

Housewife commits suicide in Jessore

JESSORE, Mar 20: A young housewife allegedly committed suicide under a running train at Chenguta on the Jessore-Khulna railway track Friday. Witnesses and police said Sakhina (25) was crushed under the wheels of Rupsha Express heading towards Rajshahi from here at around 3-30 this afternoon. Local people said Sakhina committed suicide following a quarrel with her husband Thursday night, reports UNB.

Sheri, Iftar timings

Ramzan March 15	Schri 21	Iftar 6.17 pm
16	22	4.41 am 6.18 pm

Bush pledges support to democracy and development during talks with Khaleda

US deplores Myanmar atrocities

WASHINGTON, Mar 20: President George Bush has assured Prime Minister Begum Khaleda Zia of Washington's strong commitment to strengthening democracy and promoting economic development in Bangladesh and continued economic and food aid, reports BSS.

The assurance came during an hour-long talks between the two leaders at the Oval Office of White House here yesterday. President Bush and Begum Zia met exclusively for 20 minutes and later were joined by their aides at the formal talks, lasting for more than 45 minutes.

The two leaders deplored the actions of the government of Myanmar that have led to the massive influx of Rohingya refugees to Bangladesh.

President Bush pledged Washington's support for the refugees in response to the appeal made by the United Nations High Commission for Refugees (UNHCR), a Foreign Office spokesman after the talks said.

During the formal talk the Prime Minister outlined the problems, being faced by Bangladesh following the influx of refugees from Myanmar which, she said, imposed an immense humanitarian burden on her country, briefing newsmen after the talks, a Bangladesh Foreign Office spokesman said.

She said Bangladesh was doing everything possible within its means to look after the refugees. "The number has gone to such a proportion that it was beyond its capacity to bear this burden alone," she told President Bush.

Begum Zia also outlined the reasons behind the exodus of the refugees and the steps taken by her government to find remedial solution. In this regard she called upon the United States government to help resolve the problem so that the condition could be created to allow the refugees to return home with honour and safety.

She referred to the signifi-

cant military buildup in Myanmar that had further complicated the problem. She outlined the political steps taken to activate the international community in helping to resolve the problem.

During the formal talks, President Bush was assisted by Secretary of State James Baker while Begum Zia was assisted by Foreign Minister ASM Mostafizur Rahman, Information Minister Nazmul Huda, Begum Selima Rahman, MP, Foreign Secretary Reaz Rahman, principal secretary to Prime Minister Hasan Ahmed, and Bangladesh ambassador in Washington Abul Ahsan.

It was Begum Zia's first visit to the United States since her election last year.

President Bush, in his opening comment, expressed his gratitude for Bangladesh's support in the Gulf War. In terms of bilateral ties, Bush said historically the relations between the two countries were good.

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Prime Minister Begum Khaleda Zia meets with US President George Bush in the Oval Office of the White House in Washington Thursday. — AFP photo

Gulf returnees yet to get UN compensation forms

By Farid Ahmed

Bangladeshis repatriated from Kuwait and Iraq in the wake of the Gulf crisis are yet to receive the 'claim form' sent by the United Nations Compensation Commission in December, 1991.

The Labour Ministry officials, however, say that distribution of forms will begin within seven days.

Following the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait in August 1990, the United Nations announced that migrant workers and their families who were forced to flee Kuwait would be compensated. Later it was also offered for those who left Iraq.

About 63,000 Bangladeshis were repatriated from Kuwait and Iraq after the August 2 '90 annexation of the former by the later around 52,000 were alone from Kuwait.

The United Nations announced that every migrant labourer who could prove that he or she fled Kuwait or Iraq between the invasion on August 2, 1990 and the day of liberation on March 2, 1991, would be entitled to receive the compensatory money divided

into four categories — US \$2500, US \$ 4000, US \$ 5000 and US \$ 8000.

When some Bangladeshis repatriated from Kuwait contacted the Geneva office of the United Nations, the United Nations Compensation Commission in a letter issued on February 24, 1992 said that the 'claim forms covering the types of claims have been in the possession of the Government of Bangladesh since the last day of December 1991.'

The letter also added, "Even if the Commission does not yet possess the necessary funds with which to pay awards it will nevertheless start considering claims received from July 1, 1992 onward in order to expedite the process."

A senior official at the Ministry for Labour, when contacted, confirmed that they had the claim forms with them but had not yet distributed among the claimants.

Talking to The Daily Star, some claimants expressed their concern since they had

to send the forms to the Commission through Bangladesh Government by first of the July this year.

The President of the Association for the Kuwait-Repatriated Bangladeshis, M Ali Ashraf Khan, told The Daily Star Friday that since the UN Compensation Commission would expedite the process of giving compensatory money from July 1, this year, they expected that the Bangladesh Government would prompt its process so that they could receive the money.

"We called on the concerned Minister and Secretary several times during last one-and-a-half months and the authorities each time assured that they would distribute the forms within 'one week', but they did not," said the president of the association.

When contacted, Abdul Mannan Bhuiyan, Minister for Labour and Manpower told The Daily Star Thursday that the forms would be distributed 'within seven days'.

Explaining the situation the

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\$3m US aid for refugees

WASHINGTON, Mar 20: President George Bush on Thursday pledged to give Bangladesh three million dollars to help it resettle a huge wave of Muslim refugees fleeing alleged Myanmar army persecution, reports Reuter.

Bush made the pledge during a one-hour meeting at the White House with Bangladesh Prime Minister Begum Khaleda Zia.

Dhaka unhappy with US textile quotas

WASHINGTON, Mar 20: Prime Minister Begum Khaleda Zia said here yesterday that unless her country can obtain the now essential cooperation to build a strong economy, there is no guarantee that the government will survive, reports USA.

"After a long and hard struggle, we have been able to establish democracy in Bangladesh, but we can endure only if this government succeeds in bringing about a ma-

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Myanmar's 'yes' to UN official's visit

Myanmar has agreed to a visit by United Nations Under Secretary General Jan Eliasson to ascertain for himself the exodus of Muslims from western Myanmar to Bangladesh, reports BSS.

Eliasson, who is also the Disaster Relief Coordinator, is now expected to visit Myanmar shortly, diplomatic sources said here yesterday.

Myanmar Foreign Minister U Ohn Gyaaw expressed his country's willingness to accept the UN Under Secretary General during a meeting with members of the diplomatic corps on the Myanmar refugee issue in Yangon Saturday.

He gave his country's account of the refugee problem and said "exaggerated and biased reports by the foreign media had led some Western and certain other countries of the region to misunderstand Myanmar's good intentions to solve an essentially bilateral immigration problem."

He referred to the invitation extended to him by the Bangladeshi Foreign Minister to visit Dhaka to discuss the refugee problem and said, "The visit could materialise should there be a need to take

further action."

"We see no need for the visit at present as the existing mechanism is functioning well", Gyaaw said.

Present at the meeting were Bangladeshi Ambassador Mostafa Faruque Mohammad, Charge D'Affaires of the United States and ambassadors of Germany, Australia, the Philippines, the United Kingdom, Italy and Indonesia.

They took the floor and expressed their respective views on the issue which rebutted the account given by the Myanmar Foreign Minister.

In his prepared statement, Gyaaw mentioned "unnecessary activities on the part of Bangladesh, disseminating unbalanced and unsubstantiated reports to the diplomatic community in Dhaka and elsewhere".

Gyaaw said the Myanmar Foreign Ministry had received a list of refugees from Bangladesh which was now being processed by the concerned authorities.

He said arrangements would be made for the diplomatic corps and services attached to visit the border area.

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ALTERNATIVE SUPPLY: Inhabitants of Narinda in the city crowd a WASA water van. — Star photo

WASA water supply falls by one crore gallons

By Asiuzzaman

The water supply of Dhaka Water and Sewerage Authority (WASA) recently fell by one crore gallon, creating acute water scarcity in the capital, official sources said Thursday.

"The water level receded considerably with the advent of summer and the consumption increased during Ramzan so the scarcity hit some of the areas of the city," a senior WASA official said.

The worst affected areas are the densely populated old parts and Khilgaon, Shajahanpur, Motijheel and Modhubag areas of the city, he added.

The WASA normally supplies 13 crore and 40 lakh gallons of water daily, which is almost half of the total consumption of water for six million city resi-

dents, according to the WASA estimate.

Currently, 151 deep tubewells and the water treatment plant at Chandni Ghat are the sources of drinking water he said adding that another 22 deep tubewells sunken earlier, would come into operation by June this year.

These 22 tubewells would pump out additional two crore gallons of water but the total consumption is more than 24 crore gallons, the official said.

The source said that under the "expanded third project" 10 more tubewells would be sunk in the capital which would meet the demand of water of the city residents. The Taka 130 crore original project was completed in 1991, the source added.

"But all out efforts will be futile if we cannot check system loss which is over 40 per cent," he said adding that "the crisis in old city and other populated areas will never be solved."

"We can't sink tubewells according to our wish, there should be at least 2,000 feet distance between two tubewells so the problem of the people of densely populated areas would always be there, the official added.

He said "We seldom received complaints from the posh areas and other thinly populated areas of the city."

An aggrieved resident of Motijheel area said that his house remained without direct supply of water for the last

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Myanmar troops launch two-prong attack on Karen hqs

MAE SOT (Thailand), Mar 20: Myanmar troops are moving in on the Karen headquarters of Manerplaw from the north and south in a two-prong attack designed to drive the Christian ethnic rebels across the river Moel and into Thailand.

Five hundred Myanmar soldiers have moved north from the area around Golden Mountain, 75 km (50 miles) south of Manerplaw, to attack the headquarters, a Karen leader based in Thailand told Reuters today.

They were attacking Norta, 20 km (12 miles) south of the Karen's main base, he said.

"Manerplaw is rather in danger," he added.

The Myanmar soldiers continued to shell Manerplaw from the north, from the heights of Sleeping Dog Hill, which they captured last week, Karen and Thai military sources said.

But they appeared to have given up attempts to circle around the Karen through Thai territory, they added.

For more than a week, forays by hundreds of Myanmar troops to Thailand at several points to attack the Karen from the area were driven back by heavy fire from the Thais.

The Myanmar soldiers have accused the Thais of helping the Karen.

A Thai officer in the border town of Mae Sot, 150 km (90 miles) south of Manerplaw, said a commander of Myanmar troops at the garrison town on Myawadi, who had earlier warned Thai soldiers to pull back from the border, sent a letter to Thai commanders officially accusing them of helping the Karen.

The letter responding to our warning that said there would be heavy reinforcement by Thai troops near the border can only be interpreted that those (reinforcements) are be-

ing sent to the areas to help the Karen rebels," the Myanmar commander wrote.

The Karen have been seeking autonomy from Yangon for 40 years. They have allied themselves with Myanmar dissidents who fled into the jungle starting in 1988 when the military violently suppressed a democracy movement.

A Thai military-intelligence source told Reuters that a thousand fresh Myanmar troops had been sent to reinforce the attack against Kaw Moo Ra, the number 2 Karen base, directly across the Moel from Mae Sot.

This would put 2,000 Myanmar soldiers against 800 weary men and boys who have been defending Kaw Moo Ra amid heavy shelling and ground assaults for more than a month.

The intelligence source said 11 Myanmar troops bodies have been found in recent days on the Thai side of the border near Kaw Moo Ra, apparent victims of the artillery barrages laid down by the Thais to maintain the integrity of their border.

He said 1,000 Thai troops newly deployed along the border near Mae Sot with five 105 mm cannons will stay to keep

the Myanmar soldiers out.

A battalion may be stationed across from Manerplaw, which is dug into a mountain side on the banks of the Moel, to prevent Myanmar soldiers' incursions, he said.

A field commander in Mae Hong Son to the north said his 1,500 men had taken control of areas where Myanmar troops dug-in on Thai soil last week before being driven out in heavy fighting on Wednesday. At least 35 Myanmar soldiers were killed, he said.

The Thais still expect a counter attack there, he said.

BENSON & HEDGES
WORLD CUP 1992
Pak-NZ
semifinal
today

SYDNEY, Mar 20: New Zealand went into the World Cup cricket tournament as a rank outsider. After winning seven of its eight first round games, the tournament co-hosts are now a legitimate contender, reports AP.

New Zealand face Pakistan in the first semifinal at Eden Park on Saturday aiming to become the first host nation to win the tournament.

Co-hosts and defending champions Australia already have been eliminated.

The winner of the New Zealand-Pakistan match will face either England or South

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AL, Five-party, PDF joint meet talk 'public trial'

By Staff Correspondent

A tripartite meeting of the leaders of Awami League (AL), Five-party combine and Patriotic Democratic Front (PDF) has called upon the people to make the 'public trial' of Golaam Azam on March 26 a success.

The joint meeting held yesterday, however, did not decide any concrete role for them to be played on this issue, sources said.

"The National Coordination Committee for Annihilation of Killers and Collaborators of 1971," earlier, announced its programme for trying Golaam Azam at a public court on March 26 on charge of his active collaboration with the Pakistani occupation forces during the country's War of Independence in 1971.

Golaam Azam who has been staying illegally in the country with a Pakistani passport was elected chief of a political party — the Jamaat-e-Islami, Bangladesh.

Headed by Jahanara Imam, mother of freedom fighter Rumi who sacrificed his life for

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Move for 'Islamic public trial' of Azam if Mar 26 bid fails

By Staff Correspondent

Bangladesh Islamic Revolutionary Movement Leader Maolana Shamsul Huq Jehadi in a statement yesterday announced that his organisation would hold an 'Islamic public trial' on December 16 at the National Parade Square for Golaam Azam if the March 26 trial was foiled or ignored.

Speakers at a grand conference of the Ulemas at the north gate of Baitul Mukarram mosque urged all concerned to refrain from any activities that could destabilise the national unity.

The conference was addressed, among others, by Maolana Atzilul Huq, Editor of Monthly Medina, Maolana Mahiuddin Khan, Khatib of Nawab Bari Jame mosque, Maolana Rezaul Karim Islamabadi, Joint Secretary, General of Bangladesh Jamiat-e-Hijbullah party, Maolana Ruhul Amin Khan, Principal of Lalbagh Jamiah-e-Qurania, Fazul Huq Amini and Khatib of Chaok Bazar Shahi mosque Maolana Quari Obaidullah.

UNB from Chittagong adds: Jahanara Imam, the convenor of a national coordination committee for the trial, told a huge rally here yesterday afternoon that if the government tries to resist the trial hundreds of such courts will emerge across the country to try the "war criminal."

The Chittagong unit of the National Coordination Committee for Implementation of the Spirit of Independence War and Trial of the Killers and Collaborators of 1971 organised the rally at the local Shaheed Minar.

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