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Inside Today

Article

The narrow world
 of a British gen-
 eral election
 Page 4

International



Yeltsin says Russia
 needs presiden-
 tial system
 Page 5

Business

Taiwan considering
 recruitment of
 manpower from
 Bangladesh
 Page 7

Feature

Environment

How real is the threat
 of greenhouse effect
 Page 8

Metropolitan

Dhaka Day by Day



Posters, 'Engleesh' and
 mother tongue
 Page 3

NEWS BRIEFS

Gen Suchinda new Thai PM

BANGKOK, Apr 7: Thai-
 land's military strongman has
 been appointed the country's
 new Prime Minister. It was
 officially announced today,
 reports AFP.

Opposition parties earlier
 warned that the appointment
 of General Suchinda Kraprayoon,
 58, who did not stand in the
 March 22 election here, could
 spark street demonstrations.

BNP PP meets April 11

A meeting of the Bangla-
 desh Nationalist Party Parliamen-
 tary Party (BNP PP) will be
 held on April 11 at 5 pm at the
 Jatiya Sangsad Bhaban, a party
 press release said Tuesday. The
 Leader of the House and Prime
 Minister, Begum Khaleda Zia,
 will preside over the meeting,
 reports BSS.

AL PP meets April 11

A meeting of the Awami
 League Parliamentary Party (AL
 PP) will be held on April 11 at
 4 pm at the committee room
 of the Jatiya Sangsad. Party
 chief and Leader of the Opposi-
 tion Sheikh Hasina will
 preside over the meeting. The
 Awami League chief, who is
 now in Singapore, to attend her
 ailing brother-in-law Dr
 Shafiqul Siddiqui, will return
 home on April 10, reports
 BSS.

Health Day programme

Elaborate programmes have
 been chalked out to observe
 the World Health Day through-
 out the country on Thursday.
 Health and Family Welfare
 Minister Chowdhury Kamal
 Hossain will inaugurate the
 programmes at a function to be
 held at Osmani Memorial Hall
 in the capital at 10 am on the
 day. The World Health Organi-
 sation (WHO) has selected
 "Heart Beat—the Rhythm of
 Life" as the theme for
 observance of the Day this
 year, reports UNB.

Yangon agrees to talk exodus of Rohingyas

Eliasson sees 'first important step toward solution'

Myanmar FM comes this month

By Farid Hossain

Facing a mounting interna-
 tional pressure Myanmar (Bur-
 ma) has agreed to send its
 Foreign Minister to Bangladesh
 to discuss the problem of
 Rohingya refugees who have
 fled a military crackdown.
 Ohn Gyaw will travel to
 Bangladesh later this month,
 an official at Myanmar Embassy
 in Dhaka said on Tuesday. No
 firm date has been set for
 Gyaw's visit, which was sched-
 uled for last February at the in-
 vitation of Bangladesh Foreign
 Minister A S M Mustafizur
 Rahman.

See Page 12 Col 7

BANGKOK, Apr 7: A top UN
 official said here Monday after
 leaving Yangon that "the first
 important step" had been
 taken to solve the exodus of
 Myanmar Muslims into
 Bangladesh, with both gov-
 ernments agreeing to meet
 soon to discuss the matter.

Undersecretary General Jan
 Eliasson told AFP he met ear-
 lier Monday with Major
 General Khin Nyunt, who is
 widely considered as the
 strongman of Myanmar ruling
 junta.

On Saturday he toured the
 border area where some
 200,000 Muslims have fled to
 Bangladesh, reportedly to
 escape atrocities in their
 homeland. Last week Eliasson
 toured the camps where the
 Muslims are being housed in
 Bangladesh.

The official quoted Khin
 Nyunt as saying Myanmar had

agreed to high level talks on
 the matter.

"I am very hopeful that the
 first important step toward the
 solution of these problems has
 been taken by the position of
 the Myanmar government to
 accept the invitation of the
 Bangladesh government for
 their Foreign Minister to visit
 Bangladesh," he said.

"As I have been given to un-
 derstand, the Foreign Minister
 of Myanmar will meet his col-
 league from Bangladesh at a
 mutually convenient date later
 this month, he said, "and I am
 certain that this visit ... will
 take place very soon."

Asked to assess the situa-
 tion Eliasson said life in the
 refugee camps "is very difficult."
 The risk of deteriorating
 weather conditions with the
 coming monsoon makes it
 even more urgent to find a so-
 lution.

Eliasson said he had
 stressed to the Myanmar "the
 need to have a voluntary and
 safe repatriation of the
 refugees."

"And we have received cer-
 tain assurances from Myanmar
 that it is prepared to accept
 the return to their homes of
 the population living in the
 refugee camps in Bangladesh,"
 he said.

"The process of return
 would be effected on the basis
 of some evidence of prior re-
 sidence in Myanmar. And I have
 urged flexibility of this crite-
 rion, Eliasson said.

He said both sides had in-
 dicated they want some kind of
 continued UN involvement.

He declined to elaborate or
 give a timetable for repatriation,
 saying he wanted first to
 brief UN Secretary General
 Boutros Boutros-Ghali of the
 UN.

See Page 12 Col 8



Inside the Secretariat yesterday.

— Star photo

48 killed as Myanmar troops fire on Eid congregation

From Our Correspondent

COX'S BAZAR, Apr 7: At
 least 48 people were killed
 and hundreds injured when
 Myanmar troops opened fire
 on an Eid congregation Sunday
 at Sikdarpara Bhatia Markaz
 Mosque at Mongdu township
 in Rakhaine (formerly Arakan)
 province of Myanmar.

Survivors said that the
 troops sprayed bullets by au-
 tomatic weapons when thou-
 sands of devotees tried to
 force open the entrance of the
 mosque, which was put under
 lock and key by the local au-
 thorities for the last seven
 months.

Nazir Ahmed, one of the
 survivors, said that a contin-
 gent of about 200 Myanmar
 soldiers encircled the mosque
 before the time of the Eid
 prayers and opened fire fail-
 ing to obstruct the devotees from
 attending the congregation.

When contacted, the secre-

tary of the Rohingya Solidarity
 Organisation Muhammad
 Zakaria confirmed the incident
 and said that the local Muslims
 of Mongdu wrote an applica-
 tion to the local authorities
 urging them to open the
 mosque one day before the Eid
 prayers but the authorities
 brushed aside the request.

Nazir Ahmed said that after
 the shootout, the troops col-
 lected the bodies of victims
 and took them to an unknown
 place.

Of the total 48 victims, nine
 were identified as Abdul Jalil
 (40), Sharafat Ali (35), Kabir
 Ahmed (25), Amir Hamza (20),
 Rafiq Ahmed (14), Salimullah
 (37), Omar Hamza (23), Abul
 Basher (33) and Abul Kashem
 (26).

Meanwhile, reports trickling
 in from across the border
 said that Myanmar authorities
 have resorted to repression on

those who had described the
 atrocities of the Myanmar
 State Law and Order
 Restoration Committee
 (SLORC) to the Special Envoy
 of the United Nations Jan K
 Eliasson who visited the
 Rakhaine province on Friday.

It said that the Myanmar's
 local administration had cut off
 one arm and tongue of Ali
 Ahmed (30) of Tongbazar at
 Mongdu for his description of
 the persecution to the visiting
 UN envoy.

The local member of parli-
 ament from Buchidong and
 other local elites were taken to
 the custody by the Myanmar
 authorities on the eve of the
 visit of the UN Under
 Secretary for the Humanitarian
 Affairs. They were released
 from the Tongbazar military
 station after the tour of the UN
 envoy was over.

Holiday mood persists

By Staff Correspondent

Holiday mood prevailed in
 Dhaka Tuesday even two days
 after holy Eid-ul-Fitr Sunday.

Busy streets were almost
 deserted. Traffic was thinner
 than usual. Most people who
 went home to celebrate Eid
 were yet to return. Attendance
 in government and au-
 tonomous offices was poor as a
 large number of officials and
 employees were on optional
 leave. The five-day Eid holiday
 began on April 2.

In the Secretariat, various
 ministries looked desolate
 while a handful of officials who
 attended office were seen busy
 hugging colleagues and ex-
 changing Eid greetings.

An official of the
 Information Ministry said that
 more than 75 per cent of the
 Secretariat officials and em-
 ployees did not attend office
 Tuesday.

"Most of them are on op-
 tional leave ... maybe they are
 on the way to Dhaka from
 See Page 12 Col 7

Donors' response favourable, says Saifur

By S Y Bakht

A number of priority pro-
 jects of the government re-
 ceived a favourable response
 from the donor agencies.
 Finance Minister M Saifur
 Rahman said Monday on his
 return from a week-long visit
 to Washington.

However, the donor agen-
 cies singled out the power, gas
 and just sectors as causing the
 "main difficulties" for the
 economy and identified them
 as the "crux of the problem,"
 the Finance Minister pointed
 out while talking to The Daily
 Star soon after arrival at the
 Zia International Airport.

In Washington, the minister
 held consultative meetings
 with top executives of the
 World Bank (WB), Interna-
 tional Monetary Fund (IMF),
 International Finance Corpo-
 ration (IFC) and the Multi-
 lateral Guarantee Agency
 (MIGA) ahead of the Paris

Consortium meeting later this
 month.

Rahman identified female
 education, non-formal educa-
 tion, public sector resource
 management and the industrial
 reform projects as the priority
 programmes of the govern-
 ment for which support of the
 donor agencies are being
 sought.

Saying that the female and
 non-formal education projects
 are both "frontline active pro-
 jects and which are top priority
 projects of the BNP govern-
 ment", the Finance Minister
 said that funding is being
 sought so that the projects can
 get started during the coming
 financial year.

He hoped that adequate
 funding can be arranged as the
 donor agencies showed keen
 interest in these two projects.

"We are seeking funding so
 See Page 12 Col 1

Compulsory primary education fails to reach target

By Mahfuz Ullah and Masud Arif

Compulsory Primary Educa-
 tion (CPE), introduced on a
 limited scale since January
 this year, has so far failed to
 achieve its prime objective of
 enrolling 100 per cent
 students of a locality con-
 cerned.

Investigations by The Daily
 Star reveal that on an average
 70 per cent of school-aged
 children have been enrolled in
 Class I. The government has
 also faltered in its responsibility
 to arouse public interest in
 implementing the programme.

CPE was introduced in 68
 areas including 64 district
 headquarters and in Savar
 Upazila of Dhaka district,
 Paliya Upazila of Chittagong
 district, Puthia Upazila of
 Rajshahi district and Fultala

Upazila of Khulna district by a
 notification of the government
 made on December 10 last.
 Thereafter, four upazilas,
 Dohar, Chagalnaya, Godagari
 and Paikgacha, were added to
 the list bringing the total
 number of areas to 68.

The initiative for CPE was
 taken in 1990 and the then
 parliament passed a law pro-
 viding for introducing the pro-
 gramme either on a national
 scale or covering any area of
 the country. It was earlier
 stipulated that the programme
 would be launched from
 January 1991 but it was de-
 layed because of the prevailing
 situation in the country.

The law on CPE provides
 that every guardian be obliged

Eid-ul-Fitr celebrated

Eid-ul-Fitr, the greatest re-
 ligious festival of the Muslims,
 was celebrated all over the
 country Sunday seeking divine
 blessings for peace, progress
 and prosperity of the country
 and the Muslim Ummah, re-
 port UNB and BSS.

Special prayer was offered
 for the welfare of the Rohingyas
 Muslims who fled to Bang-
 ladesh in their thousands
 being evicted from their
 homes and hearths in the
 Arakan province of Myanmar.

President Abdur Rahman
 Biswas in a message on the
 occasion called for building a
 sound democratic society to
 bring about total emancipation
 of the people being imbued
 with the teachings of Eid-ul-
 Fitr.

Prime Minister Begum
 Khaleda Zia in her message
 urged the people to work to-
 gether to build a bright and
 prosperous future, imbued
 with the spirit of Eid-ul-Fitr.

In another message, Awami
 League President and Leader of
 the Opposition in Parliament,
 Sheikh Hasina greeted the
 people and prayed for peace
 See Page 12 Col 6

Four killed as Shantibahini, security forces clash

From Staff Correspondent

CHITTAGONG, Apr 7: Two
 tribal insurgents and two tribal
 women were killed in an hour-
 long gunbattle with security
 forces Monday morning at
 Kawkhali upazila of Rangamati
 hill district.

Officials said that the gun-
 battle took place when a con-
 tingent of security forces
 stormed a temporary hideout
 at Mantala village in Kawkhali
 upazila of the district in which
 Pulin Chakma and Bijoy
 Chakma were killed.

The two women, who were
 killed in cross fire, were
 reportedly staying at the hideout
 during the fight.

Security forces also cap-
 tured another injured Shanti-
 bahini gunman who was
 later flown to the Chittagong
 Combined Military Hospital.

The security forces recov-
 ered one automatic carbine,
 some ammunition and more
 than three thousand Tk from
 the hideout.

3 activists of 2 outlawed parties killed

Our Correspondent

JHENIDAH, Apr 7: Three
 members of two outlawed po-
 litical parties were killed by
 activists of rival political
 parties over the last week in dif-
 ferent parts of the district.

Of the victims, Azzul alias
 Zulhaj (27), an activist of
 Bangladesh Biplobi Commu-
 nist Party (Haque), was
 slaughtered on Saturday night.
 His body was found in a paddy
 field at Dora in Kotchandpur
 upazila.

According to police and vil-
 lagers, he was allegedly killed
 by the armed men of Purbas
 Bangla Communist Party.

Azizur Rahman alias Azibar
 (35), another activist of
 Bangladesh Biplobi Commu-
 nist Party (Haque), was al-
 legedly gunned down by armed
 activists of Shabbarah Party at
 Bopipur in Shalakkupa upazila
 on Friday night.

The armed assailants at-
 tacked the victim at about 7
 pm while he was taking tea at
 a teastall in Bopipur Bazar and
 shot him dead.

The body of Shawkat
 Hossain Mona (25), an activist
 of outlawed Shabbarah Party,
 was also recovered from a
 cornfield near his village at
 See Page 12 Col 2

25 injured as storm lashes Narayanganj

NARAYANGANJ, Apr 7: At
 least 25 people were wounded
 when a storm lashed over sev-
 eral villages in two unions of
 Rugganji upazila Sunday last,
 reports UNB.

The storm which lasted for
 about 30 minutes, also dam-
 aged more than one hundred
 houses.

Villages of Daudpur, Kha-
 las, Tengra, Chartalia, Pash-
 khai and Aplanpur under
 Daudpur and Bhoiabo unions
 were worst affected.

20 shot dead, claims Nepali CP Fresh curfew in Kathmandu

KATHMANDU, Apr 7: Nepalese
 authorities today reimposed
 an overnight curfew on the
 capital and neighbouring
 Patan town as clashes took
 place between police and
 mourners of a man shot during
 earlier protests, reports AFP.

State radio announced that
 district authorities had im-
 posed a new curfew from 7:00
 pm (1315 GMT) today to 5:00
 am (2315 GMT) tomorrow as
 thousands gathered near the
 Bir Hospital in Kathmandu to
 join a funeral procession.

Police and demonstrators
 clashed again today during the
 procession for a victim of
 protests Monday during which
 police shot dead seven people
 and injured 32, according to
 official figures.

An opposition Nepal
 Communist Party (unity cen-

tre) source said up to 20 peo-
 ple had been killed and more
 than 60 people, including a
 German national, had received
 bullet wounds.

Earlier, Reuter said, Nepali
 police arrested more than 150
 people after a day of street
 battles between left-wing
 demonstrators and security
 forces which left at least six
 people dead and 37 injured,
 officials said today.

The clashes broke out in
 Kathmandu and neighbouring
 Patan town on Monday as left-
 wing groups organised anti-
 government demonstrations to
 mark the second anniversary
 of bloody protests that brought
 democracy to the Himalayan
 country.

Police used tear gas and
 then opened fire in both areas
 after mob hurled stones at

traffic and set government ve-
 hicles on fire, witnesses and
 police said.

At least three bodies were
 brought to Kathmandu's main
 hospital on Monday, hospital
 sources said. Three more
 people died in the hospital
 overnight, police said. Another
 37 were still receiving treat-
 ment, they added.

At least five of the victims
 were killed in Kathmandu, po-
 lice said. One person was
 killed in Patan, the second of
 the three towns that make up
 the Kathmandu city region and
 a communist stronghold.

At least 150 people, who
 were involved in the demon-
 strations, were taken into
 custody, police said.

The government imposed
 overnight curfews in Kath-

mandu and Patan, but called off
 the restrictions this morning,
 state-run radio said. Traffic
 was nearly back to normal,
 witnesses said. Offices were
 open, but many shops that
 closed during Monday's trouble
 did not reopen immediately.

The protests were called by
 fringe leftist groups which op-
 pose the government's econ-
 omic policies. Nepal has
 closely followed India's radical
 opening up of the economy to
 foreign investment, a sore
 point with the left that sees
 the landlocked kingdom's
 southern neighbour as a giant
 economic threat.

The Communist Front, the
 main opposition group in
 Nepal, originally announced
 support for Monday's protests
 but later issued a statement
 condemning the violence.

Yeltsin takes over Black Sea Fleet

MOSCOW, Apr 7: Russian
 President Boris Yeltsin signed
 a decree today placing the dis-
 puted Black Sea Fleet under
 Russian control, a CIS naval
 spokesman said, reports AFP.

Valery Novikov, head of the
 Commonwealth of Independent
 States (CIS) naval press office,
 said he had learned of the decision
 from "informed sources" who
 said Yeltsin had signed the de-
 creet only minutes earlier.

AP said Yeltsin expressed
 concern Tuesday over
 Ukraine's assertion of control
 over part of the Black Sea fleet
 and said a Russian Army and
 Navy would be formed "in the
 near future."

Russian lawmakers meeting
 in the Kremlin voiced anger at
 Ukraine, and demanded a re-

port from Marshal Yevgeny
 Shaposhnikov, military com-
 mander of the CIS.

The tug of war between
 Russia and Ukraine over the
 fleet, and Ukraine's decision to
 suspend transfer of tactical
 nuclear weapons to Russia for
 dismantling, have heightened
 tensions in the common-
 wealth.

The gap between Russia and
 Ukraine widened Tuesday as
 Yeltsin told parliament he was
 appointing Col Gen Dmitri
 Volkogonov to head a commis-
 sion to oversee creation of a
 separate Russian armed forces.

The agreements under
 which the commonwealth was
 formed last December speci-
 fied that strategic and other
 nuclear weapons would remain
 under joint control of the
 former Soviet republics.