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NEWS BRIEFS

PM takes iftar with govt officials

Prime Minister Begum Khaleda Zia had her iftar with high government officials at her Sugandha office here yesterday. Vice Chancellors of universities, chiefs of three services, secretaries and heads of sector corporations were among others, who attended the iftar party, reports BSS.

Nirmul Body procession today

By Staff Correspondent

The city unit of Ghatk Dalal Nirmul Jatiya Samannoi Committee has decided to bring out a procession today from Bangabandhu Avenue demanding trial of all war criminals including Golam Azam and ban on communal politics. Jahanara Imam and other central leaders of the Samannoi Committee will lead the procession. Convener of the city unit Mofazzal Hossain Chowdhury Maya and Member Secretary Aminul Haq Montu in a joint statement yesterday called upon the leaders and supporters of all levels of the committee to participate in the procession.

Nor'wester may hit this month

By Staff Correspondent

Meteorological Department forecast rainfall and Nor'wester over the country during the current month. In a monthly bulletin it said Tuesday that three to five Nor'westers may hit north-eastern districts and Dhaka division, while one or two would hit other parts of the country during the month. Dhaka division may experience 40 to 50 mm of rain followed by Chittagong and Barisal 30 to 40 mm, Khulna 20 to 30 mm and Rajshahi division 15 to 25 mm.

Sehri, Iftar Timings

Ram	Mar	Sehri	Iftar
8	3	—	6.08 pm
9	4	4.57 am	6.09 pm

SKOP, jute workers announce 48-hour shutdown

By Staff Correspondent

Workers and employees of the public and private sector enterprises will go for a 48-hour shutdown throughout the country March 15-16 in a bid to force the government to announce the Wage Commission report and meet other demands.

Sramik Karmachari Otkya Parishad (SKOP) and four other organisations of jute-textile-cotton-sugar mills workers yesterday announced the identical programme separately.

Prior to announcing the programme in the afternoon, the central leaders of SKOP and those of its four components — Patkal Sramik

Karmachari Sangram Parishad, Suta-Bastrakal Sramik Karmachari Federation and Chinikal Sramik Federation met to reach a consensus on an identical programme.

Earlier, the jute-textile-cotton sector labour leaders differed with the SKOP-planned 48-hour work stoppage and contemplated enforcing a 72-hour rail-road barricade.

The differences were sunk at a joint meeting between the two sides yesterday morning. However, contradictions between the two groups on some issues including the strategy of movement were not removed, meeting sources said.

Mamunur Rashid Choud-

hury, General Secretary of Bangladesh Free Trade Union Congress announced the SKOP-called March 15-16 strike by the workers and employees of transports, industries and offices at a press conference held at the SKOP's Tophkana Road temporary office.

The SKOP chose the strike after it had several rounds of talks with the government and given it enough time to implement the accord on the five-point demand including announcement of minimum wages for the workers, Choudhury told journalists.

Earlier, he narrated the

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WB warns against wage hike

The World Bank has again cautioned the government against any wage hike in the face of mounting pressure from the country's industrial workers demanding a refixation of the national minimum wage at Tk 900, reports UNB.

It (government) should avoid awarding wage increases that are not linked to improved productivity, and which would therefore further erode the country's competitiveness, said a World Bank aide member, prepared to place before the Aid Consortium meeting next month.

Wages and Productivity Commission has recently recommended adoption of a national minimum wage at Tk 900 a month against the present minimum wage of Tk 600.

Meanwhile, the workers have planned a 48-hour countrywide blockade beginning

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7 killed in fierce gunbattle between outlawed parties

JHENIDAH, Mar 2: Two outlawed parties fought a fierce gunbattle from two sides of a river today, killing 7 people and injuring an unspecified number of others, reports UNB.

Police and witnesses said the gunmen of Purba Banglar Communist Party and Biplobi Communist Party traded several hundred shots across the river Kumar that flows between Shailakupa and Harinakundu thanas, 12 kilometres from the district headquarters.

Six people died on the spot — all said to be top leaders of the Purba Banglar Communist Party. Four of them were named Tipu, Arman, Haider and Moazzem.

The fighting started at 3.30 this (Tuesday) afternoon and

continued for hours, creating panic in the area.

Activists of the Purba Banglar Communist Party were in shelter at village Maheshgari in Shailakupa thana.

Gunmen of the Biplobi Communist Party (Haq group) stormed Maheshgari and chased their rivals to village Raghunathpur in Harinakundu thana across the river where a dogged battle took place.

Villagers said the activists took away their bullet-struck colleagues with them before leaving the scene.

Panic-stricken people of the area fled to nearby villages.

Police from Shailakupa and Harinakundu and Additional Police Super of Jhenidah rushed the spot.

In the morning, the Haq

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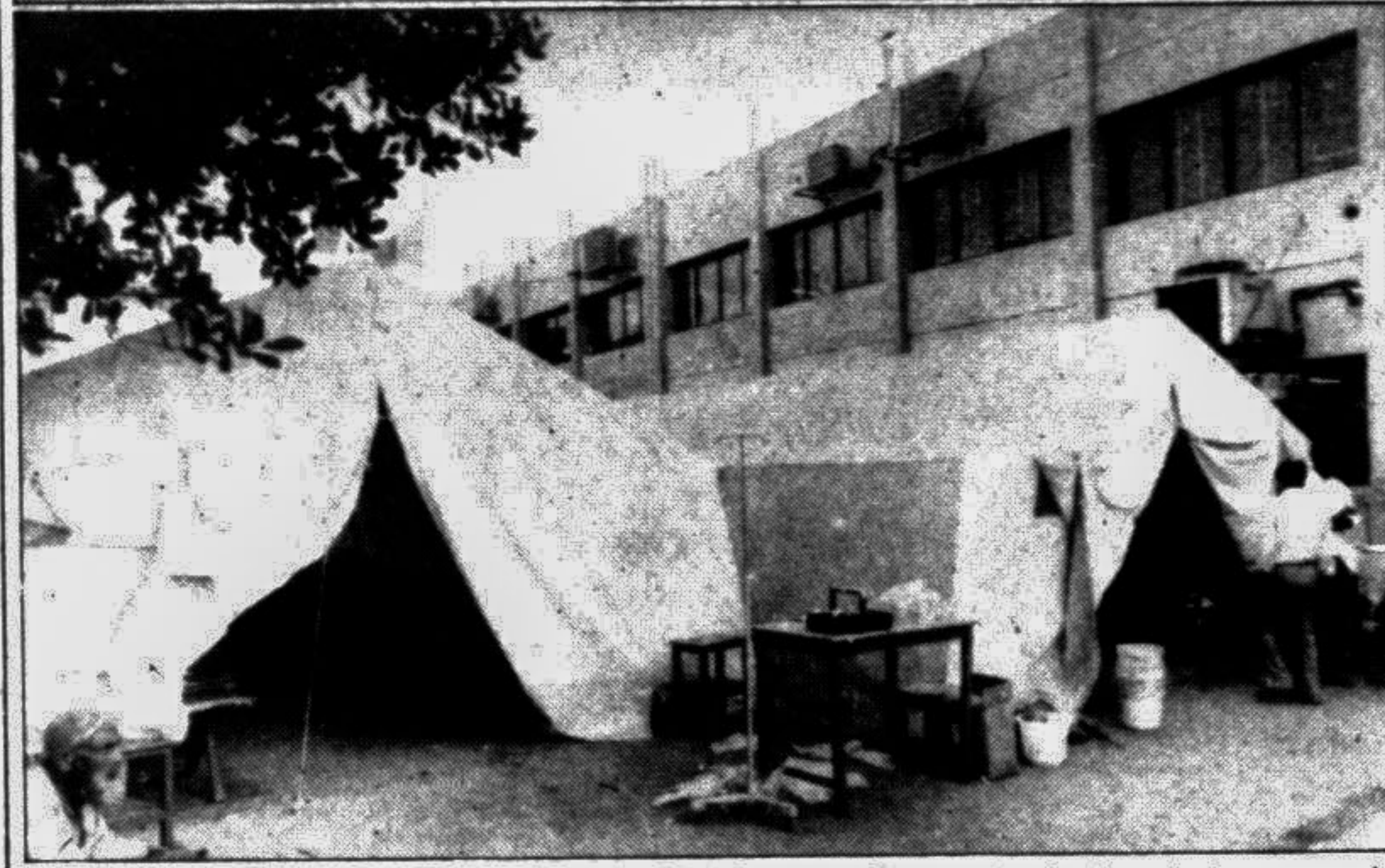
FM parries question on promotion of 'Mujib's killers' by this govt

By Staff Correspondent

Foreign Minister A S M Mustafizur Rahman informed parliament yesterday that Major (Retd) Shariful Haq Daim and three other diplomats, who were allegedly involved in killing of Sheikh Mujibur Rahman in 1975, were appointed ambassadors by the past government but parried the question of their promotion by the present government.

The Foreign Minister's statement came in the House yesterday following Awami League leader Abdus Samad Azad made an allegation the day before that the present BNP government had appointed the 'killers of Bangabandhu' the country's ambassadors in foreign missions.

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Rush of diarrhoea patients has made ICDDR, B to pitch tents in the hospital compound (above) and patients under a tent (top). — Star photo

Diarrhoea: 6000 hospitalised in city

Star Report

The overall diarrhoea situation remained unchanged in southern districts, while the Dhaka Water Supply Authorities have doubled the dose of chlorine to combat the disease in the seriously affected parts of the capital, official sources said Tuesday.

The death toll rose to 884 with 13 fresh deaths reported Tuesday from five of the eight affected districts and the WASA's initiative came following health expert's suggestion for hyperchlorination of the water supply.

There was no death in the capital but more than 6,000 residents of Sabujbag, Sutrapur, Kotwali and Lalbagh areas were admitted to four city hospitals in past 15 days, one official of the Health Control room said, adding that infusion of excessive chlorine may improve the situation.

Narayanganj town which is under WASA supply has also been affected since mid-February where some 1000 people were taken ill with one death reported.

Thirteen deaths were reported from Barisal and Jhalokathi where four each died in the past 24 hours, and also two each from Patuakhali and Bhola and one from Pirojpur.

Some 48,000 people including 814 in past 24 hours, fell sick with the disease since the disease turned serious in January in eight districts which included Barguna, Bagerhat and Khulna.

Dhaka International Centre for Diarrhoeal Disease Research, Bangladesh (ICDDR,B) failed to accommodate the

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Utilization of ADP funds poor :IMED

by Toufique Imrose Khaidi and Inam Ahmed

Despite improvement in Annual Development Programme (ADP) money disbursements in the first half of the current fiscal compared to the corresponding period of last year's, the Planning Commission has said that the scenario still looks dismal against targets set in the beginning of the year.

The Implementation, Monitoring and Evaluation Division (IMED) of the Planning Commission in a review has attributed the poor performance to slow pace in project implementation, lack of initiative, excessive projects and inclusion of new ones in the original ADP, suspension of

credit agreement and absolute non-utilization of funds by the autonomous bodies and agencies.

According to the IMED, rates of achievement in financial and physical terms stand at only 27 per cent and 22 per cent respectively, which have been deemed very low despite the fact that ADP utilization goes slow in the early periods of the year.

The IMED says that a total of 40 high priority projects under 13 ministries and divisions have lagged behind, thus failing to vindicate the priorities of the government.

The Planning Commission

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Garments worker murdered in city

By DMCH Correspondent

A garments factory employee Omar Faruq, 22, was murdered near the Coffee House at New Elephant Road in the capital Tuesday.

While Faruq, along with one of his colleagues, was walking to Boston Garments, his office at 74 New Elephant Road, a group of armed men riding on two auto-rickshaws surrounded him and severely beat up before stabbing him on the road.

Mokhtar Hossain who was accompanying Faruq said that it was then 8:40 in the morning when the armed men led a storm-attack on Faruq. None of the armed men could be identified immediately, he added.

Within a short time the armed men who were about

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Hearing in Azam's case Principles of natural justice violated : DC

By Staff Correspondent

Principles of natural justice has been violated in not issuing a show cause notice to Golam Azam before the notification disqualifying him for a citizenship was served, said Barrister A R Yusuf.

He was acting on behalf of the petitioner yesterday at the hearing of the Writ petition challenging the cancellation of the citizenship of Jamaat leader Golam Azam at the single-bench of the High Court Division comprising Justice Anwarul Haq Choudhury.

The principles of natural

justice was created by the creator himself; that one must have a hearing before he is condemned," observed Barrister Yusuf, adding "even God himself did not pass a judgement on Adam" before giving him a hearing.

At the sixth day's hearing, which began at 2:10pm, the counsel for the petitioner completed placing the judgement delivered by Justice Ismailuddin Sarkar during the earlier hearing of the petition last year.

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ALWC meeting begins

The central working committee meeting of Bangladesh Awami League began yesterday at its central office with party Chief Sheikh Hasina in the chair, reports BSS.

Country's prevailing political, economic and social conditions and law and order situation were discussed till the meeting was adjourned for today at 10 am.

The meeting decided to observe historic March 7 and 73rd birth anniversary of Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman on March 17 in a befitting manner.

In observance of historic March 7, the party will hoist national and party flags atop party central office and Bangabandhu Bhaban in the morning.

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12 killed, 42 hurt in road mishaps

By Staff Correspondent

At least 12 people were killed and 42 others injured four of them seriously in three separate road accidents in Bogra, Pabna and Natore yesterday.

Our Correspondent from Bogra says: At least eight persons were killed and 30 others injured in two separate road mishaps here.

In the first incident, five persons were killed when two buses both carrying bridal parties collided head on on the Bogra-Rangpur Highway near the town.

Thirty persons including the bride Minati were injured. Minati is in a critical condition.

The dead are: Bipasha, 18, Gopal Chandra Shaha, 32, Basana Rani, 18, driver

Nazmul, 40, and Sabindra Nath, 35.

In the second incident, three members of a family—husband, wife and son, died when their private car was hit by a bus on the Bogra-Nagarbari Highway at Ullapara.

The husband, Advocate Rezaul Karim Dulal, his wife Dr Nurunnahar and their child Anur were coming to Dhaka from Bogra.

UNB adds: At least two people were killed and 12 injured when a Pabna-bound bus from Chatmohar tumbled into a roadside ditch from the Pabna-Ishwardi highway (Tuesday).

Passenger Raisuddin, 20, and helper of the bus Hiru Mian, 17, died on the spot.

Among the injured, Sirajul

Islam, 25, Akmal Hossain, 32, and Abdul Berek, 35, were admitted to Pabna General Hospital in critical condition.

Police and witnesses said the accident occurred near Gaspara about 5.30 pm as the driver of the overloaded bus lost control while giving side to a rickshaw coming from the opposite direction.

A case was registered in this connection. The driver of the bus managed to flee the scene.

Two cycle riders died on the spot near Natore at 11 am when a Natore-bound minibus from Rajshahi knocked them down.

The identities of the dead were not known. Police seized the bus.

Malaysia eases visa rules

KUALA LUMPUR, Mar 2: Malaysia has announced amendments to the visa regulations for Indian, Bangladeshi, Pakistani and Sri Lankan nationals, effective immediately, which include abolishing the RM 750 (about US dollar 290) deposit required from sponsors, reports PTI.

The public relations officer of the Immigration Department, Mohamed Aris Chonin, said yesterday the amendments involved visas with reference for citizens from these countries imposed by the government from January one to overcome various problems.

Under the amendments, the visa with reference would only apply to those wanting a social pass to tour or visit relatives and friends in the country.

For social visits to relatives and friends the visa with reference for multiple entries will be considered on condition the guarantor or sponsor furnishes a personal bond with RM 10 stamps fee.

A Malaysian citizen or permanent resident or employment pass holder who is to be visited can serve as sponsor.

For business visits, visas without reference for multiple entries will be considered for periods not exceeding 90 days.

100 Sikh militants surrender

NEW DELHI, Mar 2: Some 100 Sikh militants, including the younger brother of a rebel leader killed two days ago surrendered to the police in the northern Indian state of Punjab on Tuesday, reports AFP.

The Sikh separatists laid down an impressive array of weaponry before Punjab's Director General of Police Kanwar Pla Singh Gill at a ceremony in Batala town, the Press Trust of India (PTI) re-

ported.

The surrendered arms included two machine guns, eight AK-47 rifles, three self-loading rifles, one rocket launcher, five revolvers and pistols and explosives, the news agency said.

A police spokesman said 80 of the rebels belonged to the Babbar Khalsa International, the Khalistan Commando Force and the Bhindrawale Tigers Force of Khalistan (BTFK).

three of the main Sikh separatist groups in Punjab.

Those who surrendered included Narinder Singh, brother of BTFK leader Gurbachan Singh Manochahal, the most wanted Sikh militant who was shot dead by the Punjab police on Sunday.

India security forces have taken the upper hand in recent months in their campaign to crush the bloody Sikh mili-

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