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Announcement

Introducing a new weekly column "Behind the Headlines" which, written by our staff writers, will deal with trends in various fields of our national life. Today Chapal Bashar writes on new polarisation in the country's politics
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NEWS BRIEFS

Khaleda takes iftar with partymen

Prime Minister Begum Khaleda Zia yesterday attended an iftar party hosted by the Dhaka City BNP at her Suganda office. Begum Zia talked to the leaders and workers of the city BNP and enquired about their wellbeing. BNP Secretary Barrister Abdus Salam Talukder, ministers, MPs and central leaders of the party also attended the iftar party. Mir Shawkat Ali MP and Salauddin Ahmed MP, President and General Secretary respectively of Dhaka City BNP received the Prime Minister at the iftar party, reports BSS.

Prof Faez new PSC Chairman

The government has appointed the dean of the Faculty of Biology and Professor of Soil Science Department of Dhaka University, Prof SMA Faez as Chairman of Bangladesh Public Service Commission, according to an official handout last night, reports BSS.

Sehri, Iftar Timings

Ram	Mar	Sehri	Iftar
10	5	—	6.10 pm
11	6	4.57 am	6.10 pm

Hardline deputies demand answers from Yeltsin

MOSCOW, Mar 4: Hard-line lawmakers demanded Thursday that President Boris Yeltsin answer their questions about Russia's constitutional crisis, but a presidential spokesman said Yeltsin had no plans to attend the session, reports AP.

Lawmakers also harshly criticized Yeltsin, who warned this week he might take "extreme steps" to save his reforms if hard-liners try to exert their influence in the Communist-dominated Congress of People's Deputies.

Some reformers have speculated that this could include imposing presidential rule, which would enable Yeltsin to bypass lawmakers.

The Supreme Soviet, Russia's smaller standing legislature, was to vote later in the day on whether to convene an emergency session of the Congress on March 10 to debate the power struggle between Yeltsin and the legislative branch.

The lawmakers voted 153-11, with 12 abstentions, to invite Yeltsin to appear before them Friday to answer their questions. But presidential spokesman Anatoly Krasikov told The Associated Press that Yeltsin had no plans to appear in the Supreme Soviet on Friday.

Lawmakers also demanded that Yeltsin provide minutes of his meeting Wednesday with

top military officials and other members of the president's Security Council.

At the meeting, the generals expressed concern over Russia's political crisis and demanded that Yeltsin take firm steps to end his power struggle with parliament, the daily newspaper Izvestia reported.

Khasbulatov complained Thursday that he had been shut out of the meeting.

"The chairman of the Supreme Soviet has been isolated from the Security Council activities," he said. "Our influence there is nil."

Yuri Skokov, head of the Security Council, appeared in the chambers and tried to

defuse lawmakers' anger over Wednesday's meeting. "It was a session of the Security Council planned long ago and I don't know the reason for such tension here," he said.

Moderate lawmaker Oleg Rummyantsev led the opposition to the request for the Security Council minutes, saying they held sensitive material that should not be distributed "all over the world."

Another hard-liner, Mikhail Chelnokov, blamed Yeltsin for "exacerbating tensions in the country" by making statements that Russia was suffering a constitutional crisis.

Yeltsin and Khasbulatov have been battling for months
See Page 12 Col 6

SKOP, jute workers ready to talk over shutdown

By Staff Correspondent

Leaders of the SKOP and the jute-textile-sugar mills workers have expressed their readiness to sit for dialogue with the government over their announced March 15-16 shutdown.

However, they said they had not had any formal or informal contact with government leaders in this regard until yesterday.

The labour leaders have already started holding public meetings at different industrial belts of the country to drum up support for the 48-hour countrywide shutdown. Moreover, they were also planning for talks with the ma-

for opposition political parties to seek their support for the programme, announced to force the government implement the separate agreements made earlier with the SKOP, and the jute and textile-cotton mills trade union leaders on various demands including announcement of minimum wages for the workers.

According to sources, the SKOP has decided to organise public meetings at four divisional headquarters while the jute-textile-sugar mills workers organisations will hold similar meetings mainly in the industrial areas.
See Page 12 Col 1

I know nothing about MOU with SKOP, says Saifur

By Staff Correspondent

Finance Minister Saifur Rahman yesterday expressed his total opposition to any recommendation of any quarter that would increase expenditure of the public sector of the country.

The Minister made this statement while exchanging views on issues of national interest with a large number of editors and senior journalists last evening.

When he was reminded of the Wage Commission recommendations which were, according to the Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) signed between the government and the SKOP (Sramik
See Page 12 Col 7



Ruins of Naz Cinema gutted by fire yesterday. —Star photo



Prime Minister Begum Khaleda Zia talking to the Islambagh fire victims yesterday. —PID photo

Fire destroys Naz cinema

By Staff Correspondent

Naz cinema on the top floor of the Gulistan building in the capital has almost been destroyed in another big fire.

The main auditorium, projection room and the stage of the hall were gutted by the fire originated from electric short circuit at around 3 am Thursday.

Fire Service and Civil Defence officials said that their teams rushed to the spot immediately and brought the fire under control at around 4:30 am.

Machines besides two projectors and few others were also damaged, witnesses said.

Another portion of the Gulistan building was also damaged in the fire.
See Page 12 Col 2

4 bodies recovered from ruins at Islambagh

By Staff Correspondent

Four bodies of children were recovered Thursday from the ruins at Islambagh, Lalbagh, on the bank of the river Buriganga in the city.

A big fire engulfed the area Wednesday afternoon and gutted over 1000 houses.

Thousands of homeless people were living in the open sky in the ruins of what was their belongings and houses Thursday.

Prime Minister Begum Khaleda Zia and some other government officials visited the fire-devastated area at Islambagh yesterday.

Some youths who were working in the area enlisting the names of the affected people said yesterday that over

8000 people of some 1500 families were affected in the Wednesday's big fire.

Nearly 2000 houses, most of them thatched and a number of plastic, polythene and rubber factories and godowns were gutted in the area, they said.

All the four victims aged between three and four could not be identified except one Sheull.

One body recovered late Wednesday night and three others recovered from a three-storied burnt building Thursday were sent to the Dhaka Medical College Hospital (DMCH) morgue.

Meanwhile, some voluntary
See Page 12 Col 6

PM grants Tk 5 lakh, assures all help

Prime Minister Begum Khaleda Zia yesterday morning visited the Islambagh slum area in the city to see the devastation caused by a fire on Wednesday, reports BSS.

She went round different parts of the area and freely talked to the affected families. Some of the slum dwellers including men and women narrated their woes to the Prime Minister.

Later, addressing a brief spontaneous gathering of the affected and other local people, Begum Zia expressed her deep sympathy to the members of the families who have been rendered homeless by the fire incident. She assured all possible help and coopera-

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Aid Club meet to focus on disbursement, utilization

Star Report

The upcoming Bangladesh Aid Consortium meeting in Paris would focus on disbursement and utilization rather than on the pledged amount of foreign aid, said Ann Hamilton, the visiting World Bank Regional Director, on Thursday.

The net flow of foreign assistance is measured by disbursement and utilisation as pledges hold little meaning and are often not committed, while even the committed amount is kept in foreign banks, she pointed out.

However, when asked, she did not mention what the aid pledge would be for the next fiscal year.

This is why, Hamilton said, the World Bank did not make any recommendation on a pledge amount in the country economic memorandum, which would be placed at the Aid Club meeting in April.

Noting that the project aid disbursement is 25 per cent higher during the current fiscal year compared to the same period last year, she said that Bangladesh would likely meet the disbursement target of 1.2 billion US dollars.

In charge of the Bank's operations in Bangladesh, Nepal

and Bhutan, Hamilton was here on a week-long "familiarisation" visit and to hold meetings with government officials to review the draft Country Economic Memorandum (CEM).

She held a wrap-up review meeting on the CEM with government officials on Wednesday and a final meeting with Finance Minister M Saifur Rahman yesterday and left for Washington the same evening.

The tone of the CEM is very positive, it asserts that Bangladesh is capable of much higher growth, higher even than the growth rate included in the Fourth Five Year Plan," she noted.

Briefing newsmen at the World Bank mission, Hamilton also discussed the ongoing economic reform programme undertaken by the government, possible areas of improvement, constraints on project implementation and possible effects on Bangladesh of the declining aid climate.

To tap the growth potential, she said, the structural reforms have to be continued and other obstacles removed. "The potential is so enormous that I hope that the political,
See Page 12 Col 1

Provision of MPs' pension revoked

By Staff Correspondent

Parliament yesterday unanimously passed a bill revoking the provision of pension of its members.

The bill, Members of Parliament (remuneration and allowances) (amendment) Bill, was moved in the House by the Treasury Bench MP Farida Rahman while a total of 25 MPs belonging to the Opposition bench supported the proposed law.

All the members participating in the discussion on the proposed legislation observed that people did not accept the pension system for MPs in a good faith.

The MPs unanimously felt

that granting pension for the MPs in a poor country like Bangladesh was not a correct step.

Incidentally, the House passed the Members of Parliament (remuneration and allowances) bill during the winter session last year that provided for Taka 1000 pension per month for MPs on their retirement.

Farida Rahman of the BNP while moving the bill that wanted repeal of the provision said that the concept of pension was irrelevant for an MP when he or she was no longer a people's representative.
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Serbs agree to allow UN workers into Bosnia

SARAJEVO, Mar 4: Bosnian Serbs agreed in principle today to allow UN humanitarian workers into the embattled Muslim enclave of Cerska in eastern Bosnia-Herzegovina, a UN spokesman said, reports AFP.

The Serb military leader Ratko Mladic gave his permission to general Philippe Morillon, commander of the UN Protection Force in Yugoslavia.

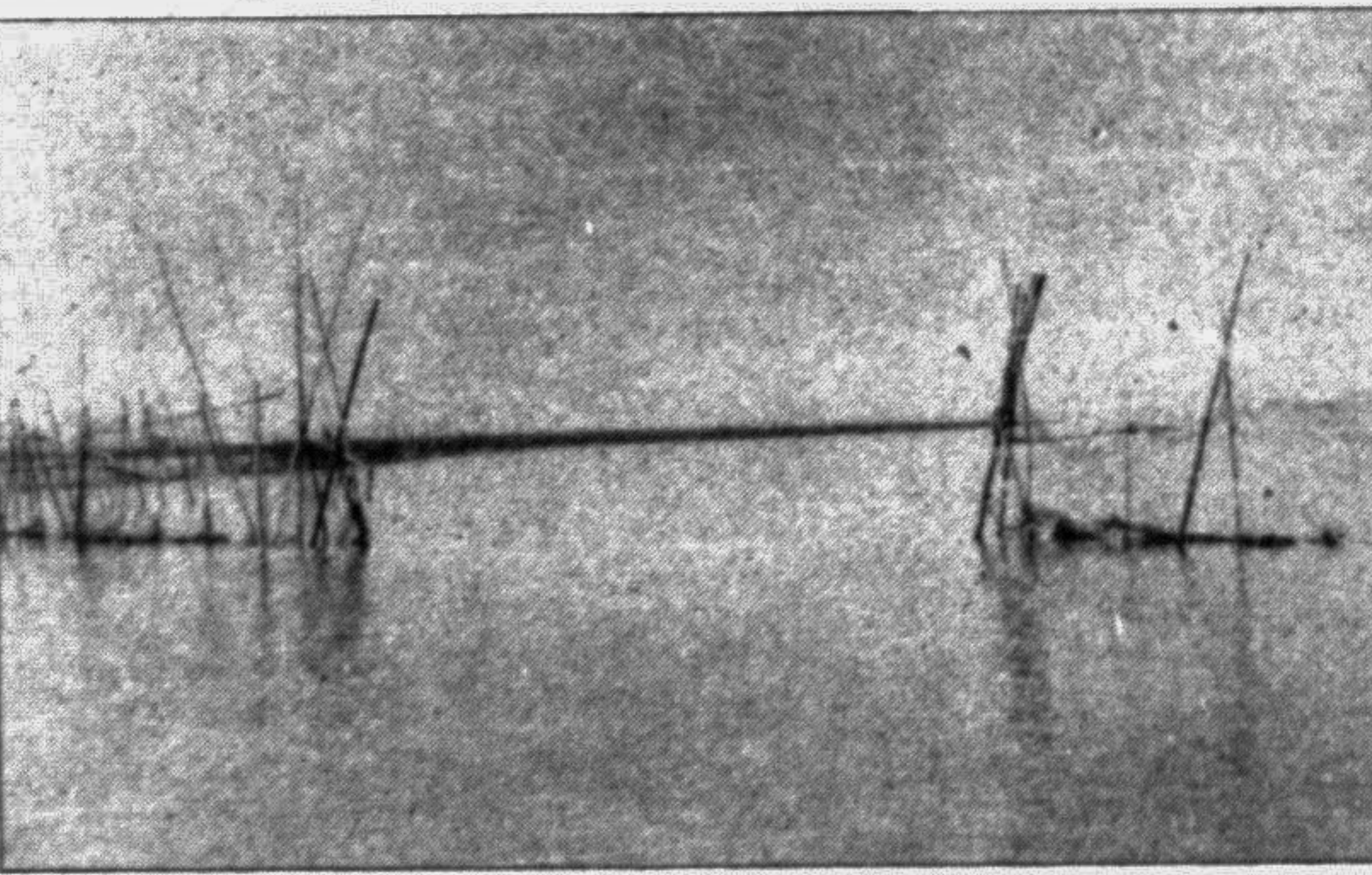
Mladic also proposed opening up a humanitarian corridor to facilitate the operation.

The United Nations on Thursday proposed a 24-hour truce to try to help residents in Cerska and evacuate the wounded.

The spokesman here said the UN representatives would be allowed into the enclave at the weekend at the latest in order to observe the situation on the ground.

However, Morillon replied that he wanted the mission to go ahead on Friday, and Unprofor was still awaiting
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Life, property of fisherfolk always in danger



A section of the Bengla-Charabaddha Jalmoahal — off limit to the local fishermen. — Star photo

Focus on Bajitpur: Part-II

By Masud Hasan Khan
BAJITPUR (Kishoreganj): Aquatic life has made the fisherfolk in the 'bhati' area strong but unusually simple.

The dark, half-clad fishermen who sail out in their fast moving boats burn in the blazing sun or get drenched in the rains as they 'kheo' or haul from the rich fishing ground. The catch depends on luck.

Life and property are always at risk. The hours are thriving
See Page 12 Col 4

Hearing of Azam's case 'Conduct has nothing to do with citizenship'

The defence lawyer yesterday asserted before the court that Golam Azam is a citizen of Bangladesh as per law as he fulfilled the requisite conditions of the Citizenship Act, no matter whether he was a collaborator, murderer or a rapist, reports UNB.

"Conduct of Golam Azam cannot be raised here because it has nothing to do with his citizenship," argued Barrister AR Yusuf before a one-judge bench of the High Court Division hearing the writ petition that challenged the cancellation of citizenship of the Jamaat leader.

Justice Anwarul Haq Chowdhury, hearing both Barrister Yusuf and Attorney General Aminul Haq, announced that the argument would start after vacation on

March 29.

The High Court will go on vacation from March 12.

Barrister Yusuf yesterday placed books of the authorities on origin of domicile, origin of choice and intention.

Golam Azam went to Pakistan not with an intention to stay there and lakhs of Bengalees who were also stranded in Pakistan were allowed to return to Bangladesh with a liberal attitude, he said.

Submitting arguments while placing different authorities' definition on domicile of origin, Barrister Yusuf said domicile of origin is never lost. Whenever a person abandons his domicile of choice, his domicile of origin will revive.
By Birth Golam Azam is a citizen of Bangladesh, he ful-
See Page 12 Col 1

Sugar price reduced

The government has reduced the ex-mill price of sugar from Taka 25,000 per ton to Taka 22,500, reports BSS.

Bangladesh Sugar and Food Industries Corporation in a press release issued yesterday said the new price will come into effect immediately.

BSFIC sources said sugar price at Taka 25,000 per ton was fixed in April 1991. The price on sugar was, however, raised at a later stage only to be brought back to the 1991 level.