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VOL. III NO. 50 REGD. NO. DA 781

FALGOON 22, 1399 BS.

DHAKA SATURDAY MARCH 6, 1993

RAMADAN 11, 1413 HIJRI

12 PAGES: PRICE TAKA 4.00

Inside Today

Article

**If You Do Not Use
It, You Lose It**
Column: Window on
Asia by Shahed Latif
Page 4

International



**Rao rejects dissidents'
demand to retain
Pawar in Delhi**
Page 5

Business

**Interview with
ARTEP director**
Page 7

Rising Stars

**Parks without Sparks,
Beasts in Masks, Are
Girls Dangerous, Uni-
dentified Flying Objects
and Star Profile**
Page 8

Metropolitan

Dhaka Day by Day



**A Promising display of
Haute Couture**
Page 3

NEWS BRIEFS

PM visits B Chowdhury

Prime Minister Begum Khaleda Zia yesterday visited the Deputy Leader of the House Prof A Q M Badruddoza Chowdhury at his residence who returned home recently from abroad after having cardiac by-pass operation, reports BSS.

Sehri, Iftar Timings

Ram	Mar	Sehri	Iftar
11	6		6.10 pm
12	7	4.56 am	6.11 pm



A MEETING WITH MANY MEANINGS: Prime Minister Begum Khaleda Zia and Leader of the Opposition in Parliament Sheikh Hasina flanked by Speaker Shaikh Razzak Ali (right) and Deputy Leader of the Opposition Abdus Samad Azad (left) at an iftar party hosted by the Leader of the Opposition at her Minto Road official residence yesterday. — Star photo

Deputies fix Mar 10 for showdown with Yeltsin

MOSCOW, Mar 5: Lawmakers voted Friday to convene an emergency session of Congress March 10, setting up a showdown with President Boris Yeltsin over which branch of government should hold supreme power in Russia, reports AP.

Legislators voted 138-31, with seven abstentions, to convene the Communist-dominated Congress of People's Deputies on Wednesday.

Just one day earlier, they refused to call the extraordinary session. Friday, Yeltsin's rival, parliament speaker Ruslan Khasbulatov, said lawmakers backtracked because they didn't have the constitutional right to obstruct an

emergency session demanded by regional officials across Russia.

It was not immediately clear why this point was not raised Thursday.

Yeltsin for months has been engaged in a bitter power struggle with Ruslan Khasbulatov, with the president accusing lawmakers of blocking his political and economic reforms.

Yeltsin wanted the Congress to meet by Wednesday to consider a proposed power-sharing deal with Khasbulatov.

If Congress rejects the deal, Yeltsin would apparently go forward with an April 11 referendum on who should rule Russia, the president or the

parliament. By law, referendum questions must be drawn up 30 days before the balloting.

The Congress might vote to cancel the referendum.

Recent polls indicate that if the referendum is held, Russians would vote for the president by a 2-to-1 margin, rejecting a congress dominated by representatives elected before the Soviet Union's collapse.

But high inflation, crime and unemployment are eroding Yeltsin's support among the public.

Yeltsin proposed the referendum in December, when the Congress forced him to replace his reformist prime minister. — Star photo

Khaleda at iftar hosted by Hasina

By Staff Correspondent

In a rare display of social courtesy Prime Minister Begum Khaleda Zia and the Awami League chief Sheikh Hasina had their iftar together on Friday renewing hopes that the country's two most powerful women would extend the goodwill to politics.

Hasina played a smiling hostess as her guest drove to 29, Minto Road, the official residence of the Leader of the Opposition in Parliament, about 10 minutes before 6:10 pm the iftar time.

The two leaders — Hasina in a off-white silk sari and Begum Zia in a bright white silk sari —

WB aide memoire praises govt Dhaka will be less dependent on aid next fiscal year

By Toufique Imrose Khalidi and Inam Ahmed

Praising the success in macroeconomic management and stabilising the economy through difficult times, the World Bank has said that Bangladesh will be less dependent on aid during next fiscal year.

In line with this view, the Bank (WB) is expected to recommend a reduction in project and commodity aid.

But the food aid should remain at least at the level of last year's, according to the Bank's memorandum for the annual Aid Club meet slated for April 28-29 in Paris.

However, Bangladesh is

pleading with the Bretton Woods institution to raise the suggested aid figures which are lower than last year's, sources at the Economic Relations Division (ERD) said.

The ERD sources would not give World Bank-recommended figures.

Annual aid pledges from donors at the World Bank-coordinated consortium fall under these three broad categories.

However, the World Bank has told Bangladesh officials that the country will have capacity to consume more aid

See Page 12 Col 7

WB recommends liberalisation of bank rates

The World Bank has recommended total liberalization of bank deposit rates in the country to raise private investment which has stagnated at a poor 5-6 per cent of GDP, reports UNB.

The Bank, in its aide memoire prepared for next month's Aid Consortium meeting, recommended immediate removal of the floor rates imposed by the Bangladesh Bank, allowing downward movement of all interest rates.

A reduction in real interest rates would help raise private investment, the World Bank document said.

Referring to the existing real interest rates of around 8-10 per cent on term loans, the World Bank observed that despite excess liquidity and weak demand, these rates are high and not conducive to higher private investment.

The memorandum was critical. — Star photo

ALWC to meet every Friday

By Nurul Kabir

The Awami League Working Committee (ALWC) will meet, from now on, every Friday morning with a view to evaluating the party activities across the country on a regular basis.

It was decided by the ALWC in the concluding session of its three day meeting yesterday.

The presence of the party's WC members residing out side the city at the Friday meetings, however, according to the decision, is not mandatory.

According to an AL president member, the ALWC members unanimously felt the need for holding weekly meetings of its policymakers following dejection of a significant number of its district level leaders and workers in the recent months.

Sources in the ALWC said, a

See Page 12 Col 1

14 out of 96 survive Macedonian aircrash

SKOPJE, Mar 5: A Macedonian jetliner crashed Friday just after take-off from this capital, and 14 of the 96 passengers and crew were known to have survived, authorities and local television reported, says AP.

The Fokker-100, headed for Zurich, Switzerland, crashed less than 1 kilometre (half a mile) from the end of the runway in heavy snow, airport officials said.

The survivors were taken to a nearby military hospital with severe injuries, said Blagoje Filipovski, director of Skopje airport. He said there was no word on the fate of others.

Skopje TV said many were feared dead.

The crash occurred at

12.05 pm (1105 GMT), Filipovski said.

The airport was closed until further notice as helicopters and UN soldiers stationed in the former Yugoslav republic rushed to the scene for rescue operations, Skopje TV said.

Filipovski said the nationalities of the passengers were not known.

Dutch TV reported in Amsterdam that there were four children among the 91 passengers. It said there were two pilots and three flight attendants.

Fokker spokesman Bart van Veen said the plane was leased to Pal Air, the domestic carrier. The Fokker-100 is a 100-seat twin-engine jet designed for short-and-medium-length flights.

Fighting delays Afghan accord

ISLAMABAD, Mar 5: Afghan peace talks here were adjourned without agreement today, amid reports of renewed fighting between Mujahideen factions in Kabul, reports AFP.

Sources said that Afghan leaders here were unable to resolve the question of allocating key ministries to the main parties, although most leaders have agreed to a proposal that President Burhanuddin Rabbani retain power for 18 months, with his main rival Gulbuddin Hekmatyar as Prime Minister.

Hekmatyar left for north-west Peshawar today, the Muslim holy day, sources in the Hezb-i-Islami Party said.

At least one person died and five were injured in the renewed hostilities in Kabul which ended a brief lull in fighting, Mujahideen commanders at the front said.

Rocket and artillery fire began Thursday evening and ended early Friday around key areas of Kabul — the southern Chelaitoon area, around the vacated Russian embassy in the west, and eastern Pul-i-Charkh.

Commander Mirza, Head of government forces in the South was shot in the leg and hospitalised.

Government forces and Hezb-i-Islami, a Hekmatyar's rebel faction, both denied responsibility for the renewal of hostilities following a day for calm Thursday.

Sources in Islamabad said several delegation members had gone to Peshawar to spend time with their families in camps set up for some 3.5 million people displaced during Afghanistan's 14-year anti-Communist War.

Both Afghan and Pakistani sources said the leaders were

expected to return late Friday to continue the Pakistan and Saudi Arabia-brokered peace discussions.

Pakistani sources said the leaders would discuss a revised draft which includes allocating government portfolios on the basis of each party's military strength.

Rabbani's Jamiat-i-Islami Party opposed the original scheme, to allot one ministry to each group, as major portfolios are currently under its control.

The powerful defence ministry is also under the Jamiat Commander Ahmed Shah Masood.

Hekmatyar, opposed to allocating the presidency and defence ministry to the same party, told reporters here that "There is nothing which can be called an agreement, but we are hopeful."

BCS Promotion Exam Rules '86 revived

By Sharier Khan

A number of Bangladesh Civil Service (BCS) officials waiting for promotion could not appear at the BCS promotion examination held recently due to revival of BCS (Promotion Exam) Rules, 1986.

According to sources, promotion exam rules which was relaxed for three years in 1989 bars a regular official from appearing at the test for another two years when he/she completes nine years in service.

The rule also bars a person from undertaking the examination more than three times within nine years.

The Ministry of Establishment meantime has sent a letter to the Public Service

See Page 12 Col 6

9 killed, 35 injured in road accidents

By Staff Correspondent

At least nine people were killed and 35 others injured, 22 of them seriously, in separate road accidents in Dhaka, Gazipur, Chittagong and Chandpur yesterday.

Our DMCH Correspondent says, a student of Eden Women University College, Tohmina Akhter Purobi, was killed in a road accident at Mirpur in the city Friday.

When Purobi, 23, was returning to her residence at Mirpur Section-2 from Mirpur Section-10 by a rickshaw a speeding minibus ran over her near the German Technical Centre at Mirpur at around 1 pm yesterday.

She was immediately rushed to the Dhaka Medical

College Hospital (DMCH) where doctors on duty declared her dead.

Purobi was a student of English Department of the college and a daughter of Motahar Islam Chowdhury, Principal of Narsingdi Government College.

UNB reports from Gazipur: At least six people were killed and 14 others injured when a speeding truck rammed another truck at Joydebazar in Sreepur thana yesterday.

Police sources said a Dhaka-bound fish-laden truck hit another stationary truck at about 8 am leaving 6 people dead on the spot. Twenty fish traders were travelling in the truck.

Three of the dead were

See Page 12 Col 8

Fear of abduction for ransom forces many to leave northern Chittagong

From Staff Correspondent

CHITTAGONG, Mar 5: Spruce of abductions for ransom, illegal toll collection and rising trend of other crimes including murder and dacoity, have forced many people to leave their homesteads in the northern part of Chittagong, sources said.

A good number of them have taken shelter in the rented houses in different parts of the town here, sources added.

Several groups of organised youngsters equipped with sophisticated weapons procured from the Shantibahini channel, have been terrorising the whole of northern Chittagong, particularly Hathazari, Raazar and Fatikchhari thanas border.

See Page 12 Col 3

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Mahajans stall growth of fishermen's cooperatives

BAJITPUR, (Kishoreganj): There are about 10,000 waterbodies (jalmohals) of different sizes in the country.

The fisheries sector employ some one crore and 30 lakh people directly or indirectly.

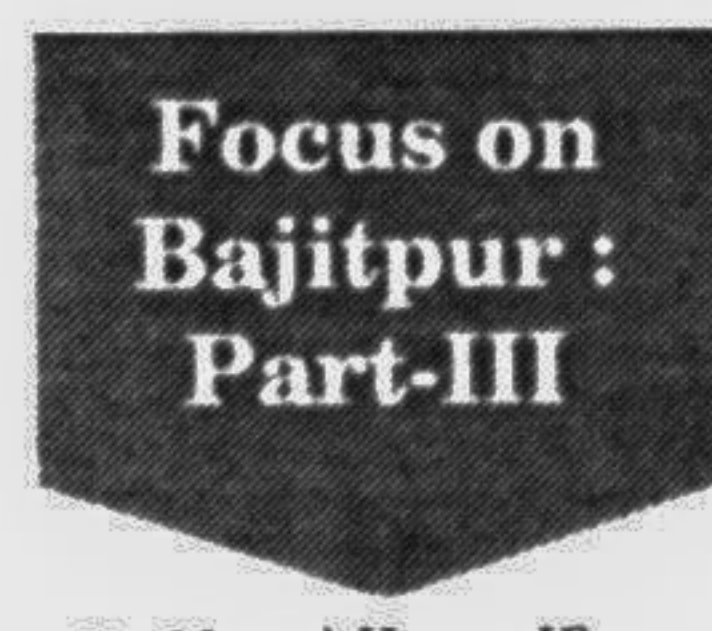
Of the total fishing population, 12 lakh are full-time fishermen who are employed in the 2.83 million hectre of perennial waters in the country.

These people contribute to three per cent of the total GDP and supply 80 per cent of the total animal protein intake.

The jalmohals came under state control during the martial law regime of Ayub Khan. Before then, these waterbodies belonged to the local zamindars and other big land owners who used to allow fishermen in their waters for taxes.

During the late 1960s, the fisherfolk united themselves under the banner of the 'Jele Sangram Parishad' (Fishermen's Action Committee) to fight for their rights in the waterbodies.

After the independence, the new government abolished the earlier auction system and offered access of the genuine fishermen to waterbodies through the cooperatives. But the policy failed because the



By Masud Hasan Khan

(fishing community could not financially organise themselves while the mahajans took over the waterbodies.

During the Ershad regime, the 'jahl jar jala taar' (who owns the net owns the waterbodies) policy was framed. But the access of the genuine fishermen to the waterbodies could not be established.

The new waterbody management policy for the open water fisheries was introduced in 1986. In 1988, the East Bengal Tank Improvement Act was amended placing all waterbodies except about 300, having area above three acres, under the Ministry of Land.

The policy aims at abolishing the leasing system gradually by open auctioning and replace with licensing system. The idea behind the policy

is to free the fishermen from the oppressive exploitation of the middlemen leaseholders by bringing the open-water inland fisheries under state control.

Fishing community leaders, interviewed by The Daily Star at Bajitpur, said that the scope of the policy was limited because the problems of identifying the genuine fishermen still remained.

Under the present bureaucratic system, there was no way that the purview of the fishermen's cooperatives could be broadened ending the middlemen's involvement, they pointed out.

The fishermen said that the system would not work well as long as the fishermen had no marketing facilities, now controlled by the mahajans.

"Besides, how can a thana-level official oversee who is catching fish above the approved size?" asked one fisherman of Bajitpur.

"The cooperatives laws are not in favour of the poor," commented Shalishwar Das, advocate of Bajitpur court.

He pointed out that under the Section 133 of the Cooperative Society Act, the fishermen could not go to the

See Page 12 Col 8

FELICITATION

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