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VOL. III NO. 57 REGD. NO. DA 781 FALGOON 29, 1399 BS, DHAKA SATURDAY MARCH 13, 1993 RAMADAN 18, 1413 HIJRI 12 PAGES: PRICE TAKA 4.00

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NEWS BRIEFS

PM takes iftar with police men

Prime Minister Begum Khaleda Zia yesterday attended an iftar party hosted by the Bangladesh Police at its Rajabagh headquarters. Speaker Shaikh Razaque Ali, ministers, MPs, Vice Chancellors of the universities, among others, attended the iftar. Inspector General of Police A S M Shohabuddin received the guests, reports BSS.

Pirate arrested with arms

KHULNA, Mar 12: Forest officials captured an alleged pirate and recovered two single barrel guns and a bullet from the Sundarbans at small hours today (Friday). Official sources said that Nurunnabi (22), the alleged pirate, was nabbed by a team of forest officials during a raid at Bhadrakrup forest in Sarankhola range of the Sundarbans. The team, led by two foresters, raided two country boats acting on a tip that an armed group was preparing to commit piracy, reports UNB.

Confectionery looted in city

By Staff Correspondent
 A group of extortionists stormed into a confectionery shop at Bangsal Road in the capital and reportedly looted Taka 20,000 in cash last night. On being refused tolls the extortionists brandishing arms barged into the Capital Confectionery at around 8.30 pm yesterday. They ransacked the shop and looted Taka 20,000 from the cash box - the day's sales proceeds, witnesses said.

104 arrested on various charges

Police rounded up 104 people on various charges, including two under the anti-terrorism law, from different parts of the city on Friday. A police press release said the arrested also include four wanted criminals, one under the explosives act, four charged with robbery, five accused of burglary and another nine of stealing, reports UNB.

Sehri, Iftar Timings

Ram	Mar	Sehri	Iftar
18	13	-	6.13 pm
19	14	4.49 am	6.13 pm

Over 1,100 injured: Hindu-Muslim rioting erupts: Blame on 'international conspiracy'

200 killed in Bombay blasts

BOMBAY, Mar 12: A synchronized chain of car bombs killed about 200 people and wounded 1,100 more in India's commercial nerve centre Friday, spreading renewed panic in a city that had been recovering from Hindu-Muslim riots, report AP, Reuter, PTI and AFP.
 Thunderous explosions shook skyscrapers, set fire to the nation's largest stock exchange, gutted the ground floor of India's international airline's headquarters, blew

apart a passenger bus and damaged three tourist hotels. No one immediately claimed responsibility for the dozen bombs that exploded from the southern financial district to the northern suburbs. A state of alert has been sounded all over the country and paramilitary forces are being rushed to Bombay following a series of "pre-planned" bomb blasts, the Minister of State for Internal Security, Rajesh Pilot announced in the Lok Sabha today.
 Pilot announced that the Home Minister S B Chavan was leaving for Bombay for an on international conspiracy." He mentioned no country by name but he has accused Pakistan often in the past of

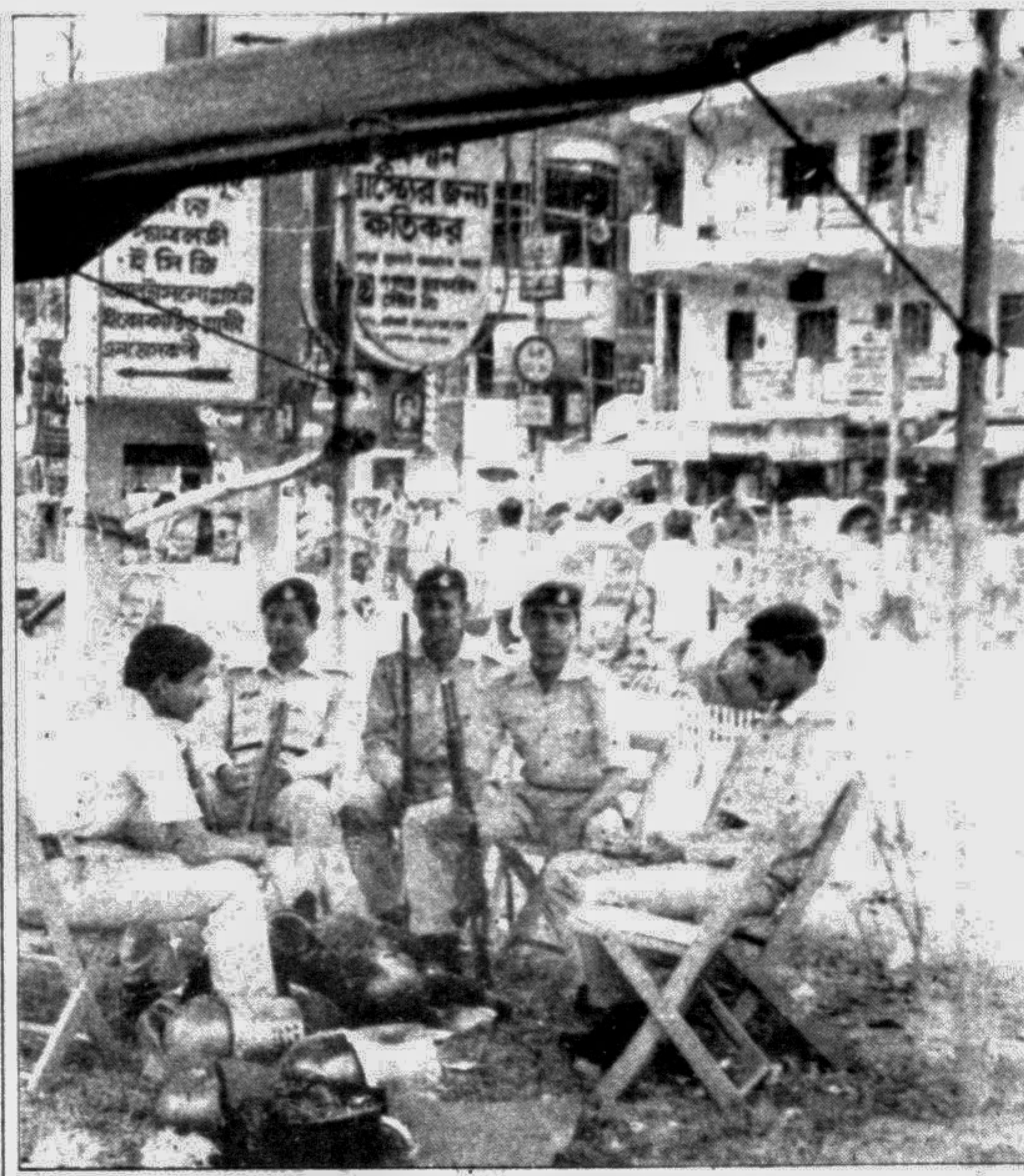
were in vehicles, but several were in unoccupied hotel rooms. A devastating blast went off in the parking lot beneath the Bombay Stock Exchange building, causing the roof of one floor to cave in. About 3,000 people were on the second-story trading floor. "We were all lifted above the ground by two feet. People fell on each other and ran out," said trader Dinesh Acharya. Some of the victims were crushed in the stampede to escape from the building. News agencies reported that some people were briefly trapped in smoke-filled upper levels when security officials turned off the elevators. Outside, burned bodies lay among the litter from shattered buildings. Many of the victims were poor vendors or wealthy private stock traders who conducted their business in the street. A second bomb detonated outside the Air India headquarter- See Page 12 Col 4

Govt-labour talks fail

The government-labour talks to avert the planned March 15-16 shutdown apparently failed to make any headway yesterday when the government sought more time for further discussions on the industrial workers' demands and for examining the Wages and Productivity Commission report. Rejecting the government appeal, the leaders of Sramik Karmachari Oikya Parishad (SKOP) and the jute mills unions stuck to their decision to go ahead with the 48-hour shutdown announced on March 2.

The labour leaders, commenting on the talks, said the government had backed out from its earlier position and accused it of deepening the crisis in the country's industrial sector. Leaders of the Sramik Karmachari Oikya Parishad and the jute mills unions during their meetings with the respective ministries and government officials in the capital categorically said that they were unable to call off the shutdown programme unless government announced the implementation of Wages Commission report and acceptance of other demands of the workers. The government earlier signed separate agreements with the SKOP leaders and jute-textile mills unionists over meeting their demands. Labour Minister Abdul Mannan Bhuiyan led the government side in its talks with

the SKOP leaders at the Manpower Employment and Training Bureau. The two-and-a-half-hour meeting discussed the Wages Commission report and fixing of minimum wages for the industrial workers. Addressing the meeting, the Labour Minister urged the SKOP representatives to abandon the shutdown programme and invited them to more discussions. Pressed for the announcement of Wages Commission report the minister said, "We are considering your demands and more time is needed to complete the process of examining the report." In reply, according to meeting sources, the workers' lead-



A makeshift police camp near the BATA crossing at Elephant Road in the city as Eid shopping gears up in the market. — Star photo

Meet demand or face strike: SKOP

By Staff Correspondent
 Sramik Karmachari Oikya Parishad (SKOP) Friday demanded implementation of the agreement signed between the workers and the government and warned that unless it was done, SKOP would go ahead with its 48-hour strike programme beginning March 15. SKOP also demanded announcement of minimum wages, implementation of Wages Commission report, specific steps for removal of crisis in industrial sector, and release of all arrested workers. See Page 12 Col 8

Deputies debate referendum today

MOSCOW, Mar 12: President Boris Yeltsin stormed out of Congress Friday after lawmakers refused to soften a resolution limiting his authority and canceling a referendum on power-sharing. But lawmakers agreed later to debate a referendum after all. The reversal came after Yeltsin aides said the president, if denied a referendum, would carry out a non-binding plebiscite anyway to end the power struggle that has paralyzed Russian reforms. The willingness for a compromise in the Congress of People's Deputies appeared toward the end of a day filled with sharp warnings and legislators' fears of a presidential crackdown. "We are on the verge of a revolution, on the verge of unpredictable events," Deputy Prime Minister Sergei Shakhrai told reporters. Yeltsin walked out of the chamber in disgust when it became clear the lawmakers would approve a resolution that sharply curbed his powers and canceled an April 11 referendum. This, the 1,033-member Congress did on a vote of 656-184 with 41 abstentions. The resolution also gives lawmakers the right to veto

North Korea pulls out of NPT

TOKYO, Mar 12: North Korea declared Friday that it was withdrawing from an international nuclear control accord that the West charges it has violated by attempting to develop nuclear weapons, reports AP. The announcement, carried in a dispatch of the official Korean Central News Agency, said that North Korea was withdrawing from the treaty to defend its own interests and sovereignty. The announcement comes as tensions on the Korean peninsula have surged in recent weeks, partly because of

Fahd, Sharif sign Afghan accord as guarantors

MECCA (Saudi Arabia), Mar 12: Saudi Arabia's King Fahd and Pakistan Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif early today signed as guarantors a peace accord aimed at ending an 11-month power struggle among Afghan guerrilla factions, reports Reuter. At a ceremony at King Fahd's palace in the holy city of Mecca, the two leaders signed the agreement as witnesses and guarantors in response to a request by Afghan President Burhanuddin Rabbani. AFP says: Rival Afghan leaders signed a peace deal at dawn here today aimed at firming up - their fragile ceasefire.

Gen Krishna Rao takes over in Kashmir

JAMMU, Mar 12: A new official took over strife-torn Jammu-Kashmir state Friday and said he would try to end the decade-old Muslim insurgency, reports AP. Retired chief of India's army, Gen K V Krishna Rao, replaced hard-liner Girish Chander Saxena who resigned Thursday. Rao will head the administration in the absence of an elected government. Rao held the same job in December 1989 when Muslims intensified their fight against the federal government, which they blame for the state's worsening economic and political situation.

Bosnia's first war crimes trial

SARAJEVO, Mar 12: Two Serb militiamen accused in massacres and rapes went on trial Friday in the first war crimes prosecution of the savage, 11-month Bosnian war, reports AP. The embattled Bosnian government is trying to prove that Bosnian Serb nationalists have systematically committed atrocities against civilians during fighting that broke out after the republic voted for independence from Serb-dominated Yugoslavia. The principal defendant, Borislav Herak, is charged with raping 12 women and murdering 32 prisoners and civilians, including a family of 10. He has confessed to 20 killings and says he expects and deserves the death penalty. But he has also asserted that the crimes were ordered by his superiors. Herak's colleague, Sretko Damjanovic, is charged with five killings and two rapes. Damjanovic has not confessed. See Page 12 Col 5

Yeltsin storms out of Congress

Yeltsin's decrees and returns to the cabinet the right to introduce legislation, further diminishing the president's authority. Yeltsin maintains he needs strong powers to push through free-market reforms. After leaving the Congress Hall, Yeltsin held closed-door meetings, then repeated his request for an April 11 referendum that would ask voters whether they want a "presidential republic," in which the executive would be stronger than the legislative branch. Yeltsin also said he wanted

Years of misery and deprivation forced the landless to unite

By Inam Ahmed back from Sandwip
 Years of misery and deprivation have forced the landless of Sandwip to become united. With the help of some local NGOs, they have formed different co-operative societies and are trying to win their rights. In this regard, the most active among the NGOs are Nijera Kart, BRAC and Samaj Unnayan Sangstha. One such organisation is Dirghapar Landless Peasants' Cooperative Society. With 53 members, it has a capital of Taka 39,000. Though the Dirghapar area does not exist anymore due to the erosion, the landless of that area operate the society from Akbarhat. "We invest in purchasing groceries and sell them through different shops," the secretary of the society, Md Ulum (53) said. "The shopowners are also members of the society. The society and

Life in Sandwip: Part-III

Ferdous (45), the secretary of Jagratala Landless Peasants' Society in Gachua union said, "The fund is created by collecting monthly tolls from the members. The toll amount is fixed on the paying capacity of the poorest of the members." Not only do the cooperatives indulge in economic activities, but also protest any in-

Dhaka, UNHCR may sign MOU on Rohingyas soon

Star Report
 Bangladesh and the UNHCR will soon finalise a memorandum of understanding (MOU) spelling out a comprehensive cooperation on nearly quarter of a million Rohingya refugees who have fled Myanmar to escape a military crackdown. The draft of the MOU was worked out during UNHCR's Asia Bureau Director Werner Blatter's visit to Dhaka in February. The draft covers all aspects of cooperation on the refugees including their relief, protection and safe repatriation, official sources said Friday. "We are optimistic about signing the MOU," an official source said, speaking on condition of anonymity. He said relevant ministries in Bangladesh and officials of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees in Geneva are examining the details of the draft MOU. The MOU will be signed

Clashes leave 50 injured in Magura

MAGURA, Mar 12: Fifty people, including two women, have been injured in a series of clashes between supporters of former and present chairmen of Goshpur Union Parishad at a village in Sreepur thana since Thursday, police said, reports UNB. Supporters of ex-chairman Majid Mollah, armed with lethal weapons, attacked the houses of the supporters of present chairman Nekbar Ali at village Shabinagar this afternoon leaving 20 people injured. Today's attack was the sequel to an incident on Thursday in which Ali's men had launched an attack on the houses of their rivals, injured 30 people including two women and looted valuables worth about Tk two lakh. Police arrested six people today following the clashes which, they said, were caused by past enmity between the two chairmen. The arrested are: Nekbar Ali, Kashem See Page 12 Col 8

Dhaka Summit

Apr 10-11: SAARC Sectt

KATHIMANDU, Mar 12: The two-day seventh SAARC summit will be held at Dhaka from April ten next, it was officially announced today, reports PTI. The SAARC Secretariat here said Sri Lankan President Ranasinghe Premadasa, the current Chairman, held consultations with Bangladeshi Premier Begum Khaleda Zia and other heads of state or government for finalising the date of the summit. All of them have agreed to convene the summit from April ten to eleven, it said. The summit will be preceded by a two-day meeting of senior officials and a one-day meeting of foreign ministers.

MMC closed sine die as JCD, BCL clash

From Our Correspondent
 MYMENSINGH, Mar 12: Mymensingh Medical College was closed sine die this morning following a clash between the activists of Bangladesh Chhatra League (BCL) and Jatnyatabadi Chhatra Dal (JCD) on the campus. The clash erupted Thursday night as a sequel to teasing of a fifth year female student of the college allegedly by a BCL activist. Four activists of JCD were also beaten up in the clash. The Academic Council of the college declared the closure. See Page 12 Col 7

Anti-terrorism Act being abused: ALWC

A meeting of the Awami League central working committee yesterday said businessmen, contractors and owners of industries are facing insecurity due to unchecked acts of extortionists and musclemen, reports UNB. The central committee at its weekly meeting held at the party's central office with Sheikh Hasina in the chair strongly criticised the government for failure to maintain law and order in the capital and elsewhere in the country. These anti-social elements See Page 12 Col 7