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NEWS BRIEFS

Dr Morshed's body arrives today

The body of late Dr Morshed Talukder, editor of the weekly Jagoran, London, will be flown to Dhaka this morning. His namaz-e-janaza will be held at the Zia International Airport Mosque after arrival. His body will then be taken to his village home at Bhupur, Tangail for burial, reports BSS.

Massive publicity on development

The government has decided to launch massive publicity through various mass media regarding a huge development activities initiated by the present government throughout the country. This was decided at a meeting held yesterday at the Ministry of Information with Information Minister Nazmul Huda in the chair, reports BSS.

4 kg of cannabis hailed, 2 held

City mobile police hailed four kilograms of cannabis from two rickshaw passengers at Biswa Road near Maniknagar Friday morning. They also arrested the passengers Kamal and Abdul Ali. Meanwhile, four persons were arrested by the detective branch on Friday from Sayedabad for possessing 400 bottles of phensidiyl syrup.

Bank rate reduced

The Bangladesh Bank has reduced the bank rate to 5.5 per cent from the present rate of Taka six per cent per annum, according to a bank press release in Dhaka yesterday. The bank rate was made effective from March 3, reports BSS.

Sehri, Iftar timings

Rmdn	Mar	Sehri	Iftar
22	6	—	6:07 pm
23	7	4:56 am	6:07 pm
24	8	4:55 am	6:08 pm

JCD factions fight gunbattle at JN college

Police sergeant dies in crossfire

By Staff Correspondent

A police sergeant was killed in a fierce gunbattle between two factions of the Jatiyatabadi Chhatra Dal (JCD) at the Jagannath University College in the city yesterday.

The sergeant, Hasanul Farhad, in his thirties, was caught in a cross-fire near the college. He was hit in the chest by a bullet and died on way to hospital.

According to witnesses, over 200 shots were exchanged between the warring groups of students during the two-hour gunbattle that began at 11 in the morning. No other casualty was, however, re-

ported. Police arrested 32 students from the spot after the incident and recovered one rifle and 9 cocktails from the area.

According to college sources, the two factions of the BNP's student front, known as the 'Sagor' and 'Kajal' groups, clashed early last month following which the Kajal group was forced to leave the college campus. Yesterday's clash occurred when the Kajal group attempted to reassert its supremacy on the campus.

Stalwarts of the 'Kajal' group started pouring into the campus through several en-

trances at about 10:00 am and made a sudden attack on their rivals. Attacked from all sides, the Sagor group activists managed to make their way out through the main gate along with the panic-stricken general students and took shelter at the nearby Kabi Nazrul Islam College.

The two groups then exchanged gunfire for about two hours, turning the whole area into a veritable battlefield.

The heavily outnumbered police picket, deployed earlier near the college, failed to make any impact.

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Press Note : Probe ordered

A police sergeant on duty was killed in a cross-fire between two rival groups of students at Jagannath University College premises yesterday, Home Ministry Press Note said here last night, reports BSS.

The government has constituted a one member commission headed by the Dhaka Divisional Commissioner to inquire into the incident, the Press Note added.

It said a violent clash took place between two rival groups of students at the Jagannath College premises at 12:30 pm. Both sides used lethal weapons during the clash.

A contingent of Dhaka Metropolitan Police who were on duty succeeded in controlling massive expansion of the clash through taking bold and immediate measures to protect the lives of the general students. The police arrested 32 persons and seized two

See Page 12 Col 6

WB concerned at anti-reform talk

By Staff Correspondent

The visiting World Bank Director for South Asia, Ann O Hamilton, yesterday expressed 'real concern' at the attacks on the ongoing economic reform process and strongly urged a fast tracking of the reform programme to boost growth.

"I feel strongly that further reform is incredibly important since there is a window of opportunity for Bangladesh at the moment and there is no time to lose," she said.

The crest of the mountain is within sight and achieving significant growth and poverty alleviation is within the reach of Bangladesh because of the 'remarkable' macro-economic stability prevailing in the country, she added. Emphasising on the need to keep up the momentum she cautioned:

"When a car is going uphill, if you lose momentum, you will slide backward."

Speaking at a press briefing at the end of her nine-day visit here, Hamilton provided a broad outline about her discussions with government officials. She also commented on the debate about the economic reform policies and the need to improve public sector project implementation as well as the importance of gearing up the private sector.

During her stay here the World Bank Director met Finance Minister M Saifur Rahman and held meetings with senior officials of the Finance and Planning ministries. She also visited some Bank-aided projects in Tangail.

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40 DCC Ward commissioners declared elected

By Staff Correspondent

The Returning Officer of the Dhaka City Corporation (DCC) elections Syed Ehtesham Rasul started declaring the official results of the January 30 polls at his Segun Bagicha office in the city yesterday.

On the first day, 40 commissioners of Ward numbers 1-40 were officially declared elected after compilation of the results. Before the compilation, invalid ballot papers, which were excluded from the count, were also examined.

The Returning Officer is scheduled to declare the official results of the remaining 50 wards today.

The official announcement of the election of Mohammad Hanif as the Mayor of Dhaka is also due to come today after the consolidation of results of

See Page 12 Col 6

Canadian official due today

Canada's Secretary of State for Asia-Pacific Raymond Chan arrives in Dhaka today to discuss matters relating to expansion of bilateral economic cooperation and trade, reports UNB.

Chan, who will fly into the city from Cambodia, on the second leg of his trip to the Asia-Pacific region, will lead a three-member delegation.

During his three-day stay in Dhaka, he will meet and confer with Foreign Minister A S M Mostafizur Rahman and other ministers and senior officials to devise ways of enhancing Canadian assistance to Bangladesh.

Export of Bangladeshi garments to the North American country is likely to figure prominently in discussions.

See page 12 Col 2

Prokrichi calls strike on Apr 5

By Staff Correspondent

Some 70 thousand professionals of the country will go on a strike April 5 to press for their 17-point charter of demands and in protest against a committee recently formed by the government to review their demands.

They also hinted at launching a non-cooperation agitation if their demands were not met by April 4.

The decisions were taken at a meeting of the Prokrichi-BSC

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Notice to free Ershad on parole

A notice was given yesterday to the Speaker and the authorities concerned demanding release of former President Ershad 'at least on parole' to enable him to attend Parliament, reports UNB.

Ershad, who is serving 20 years' prison terms in three of more than a dozen cases filed against him since his fall in late 1990, was elected to Parliament from Rangpur-1 (Gangachara and Rangpur thanas) constituency in 1991 and took oath as MP.

Advocate Helal Uddin Ahmed of the Supreme Court Bar issued the notice on behalf of his client Md Rafiqul Islam who voted Ershad in the last general election.

In the notice demanding justice, the petitioner said although Ershad took oath as MP like other Parliament

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Expansion of city phones uncertain

By Inam Ahmed

The Dhaka city's new telephone connection scheme hangs in limbo because of an unrealistic expansion plan of the Bangladesh Telegraph and Telephone Board (BTB), according to highly placed sources.

The BTB has embarked upon an exchange expansion programme from March without expanding its cable network making the whole programme a fruitless exercise, they pointed out.

"The exchanges are now capable of hooking up new telephone lines," a high BTB official said. "But we are unable to make new connections because there are no cable networks."

Although the networks are not there, the authorities are issuing demand notes and advice notes for new connections

creating frustrations among the clients.

Under the current expansion programme, the BTB will expand its capacity by 18500 lines. The distribution of new lines in limited numbers has already started. But against the new lines there had not been any primary or secondary cable allocations.

Sources said, the government had also created 5900 new lines for the six exchanges of the city in 1992 without allocating any new cables.

According to standard procedures, for every one thousand lines there should be 1500 primary cables and for every 1000 primary cables, there should be another 1500 secondary cables. Each line needs a pair of cables.

But since 1992, the BTB

has been working on a piecemeal basis with the exchanges interchanging their extra cables. But now, all cables have become exhausted.

With the crisis now becoming acute, the BTB in a desperate move has even started an unofficial 'rationing' programme. The exchanges are rationing the same cable for a number of telephone lines. When the cable is hooked to a line the other sets are kept off, sources said. This is the main reason why telephone sets of many subscribers remains dead for a long period, informed sources said.

All the exchanges have already sent their requisition of new cables to the authorities. But the problem is not likely to be solved soon as the authorities have decided to allocate

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Khaleda orders arrest of sergeant Farhad's killers

Prime Minister Begum Khaleda Zia yesterday directed the authorities concerned to immediately arrest and punish all the persons responsible for the death of police sergeant Mohammad Ahsanul Farhad, reports BSS.

The Prime Minister expressed her deep shock at Farhad's tragic death, who was killed yesterday while on duty during a clash between two rival student groups in front of the Jagannath College in the city.

Hearing the death news, Begum Zia personally enquired about the details of the sad incident and asked the authorities concerned to arrest immediately all the persons involved in it.

See Page 12 Col 3

JS impasse continues

By Staff Correspondent

The current stalemate in the Jatiya Sangsad (JS) continued with negotiations between the treasury and the Opposition benches yesterday failing to produce any results.

During an hour-long meeting in the afternoon, the leaders of the two sides did not budge from their previous positions.

The deadlock in Parliament started on Tuesday when the entire Opposition staged a walkout protesting a controversial remark by the Information Minister. Later, the Opposition members decided not to return to the House until the minister offered an unqualified apology for his comments.

The Opposition, besides calling for the Information Minister's apology, also de-

manded a general discussion on the Hebron massacre in order to adopt a resolution condemning the mosque killings in occupied West Bank on February 25.

Treasury bench leaders readily accepted the demands, for a general debate and adoption of a resolution. But they are not accepting the demand for an 'apology' from the minister on the ground that in parliamentary practice, it was enough for a minister to say sorry for any unpleasant remark or statement made in the House.

At yesterday's meeting, the government representatives informed the Opposition leaders that the ruling party was ready to make the Information Minister say sorry in the House

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I won't bow to party pressure : Hanif

By M Anwarul Haq and Nazmul Ashraf



Mohammad Hanif

Dhaka's first elected mayor Mohammad Hanif reiterated that he would adopt a non-partisan approach, seek the support of all and strive to serve the civic needs of the capital's seven million dwellers.

"I am not a mayor of the Awami League, nor will I allow party pressures to influence the discharge of my official responsibilities."

The mayor-elect who will take oath of office shortly spoke to The Daily Star in an exclusive interview at his Nazirabazar residence, where he narrated his plans for the future and also gave his views on a number of issues.

Hanif said his primary objective would be to fulfil his election commitments which included formation of all-party ward committees to eliminate terrorism, making a concerted effort to eradicate the mosquito menace, not to bur-

den the city dwellers by increasing taxes for the next five years and making the Dhaka City Corporation non-partisan to cater to the needs of citizens.

"I have already fulfilled one of my election pledges by

meeting the former mayor Mirza Abbas at his residence," Hanif stated.

The new mayor would not like to make any wishful pledges for the citizens. "I will not promise that I will make Dhaka a wonder city or make major cosmetic changes. My only pledge is that my every effort would be to make city life more habitable by extending civic facilities."

Hanif said that he would involve the town planners and other experts to reduce the traffic congestion, provide, as well as restrict, the hawkers to particular spots and increase the city's civic amenities.

He said he will register the hawkers and make arrangements for their operation in exclusive zones on particular days and at specific times.

Identifying the holding of public meetings at different spots as a problem for city dwellers, Hanif assured that he

would take measures to demarcate specific venues for holding rallies.

Hanif viewed that traffic congestion was a serious problem for the city dwellers and assured that he would take all measures to restore as much road discipline as was possible. He said that more overbridges and a number of flyovers could be built to ease the traffic congestion.

While admitting that there were too many rickshaws, the new mayor felt that the three-wheelers needed to be brought under more control than being withdrawn altogether. "The human aspect of the problem is simply too great to be ignored," Hanif said. He added:

"The reality is that we have to live with the rickshaws till we reach a higher level of development when we can introduce mechanical modes of transport."

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BSC plans to double its tonnage

From Nurul Alam

CHITTAGONG, Mar 5: The Bangladesh Shipping Corporation (BSC) plans to double its tonnage capacity by raising the number of its fleet shortly.

The BSC is to procure six more vessels, including a mother tanker of 1,20,000 DWT, a bulk carrier and four feeder vessels, for raising its tonnage capacity to 5 lakh DWT from the existing 2,67,000 DWT, an official source said.

With the procurement of these vessels BSC, which now owns 18 ships, will have a fleet of 24 vessels.

BSC ships are now operating in four routes of the globe and these are Bangladesh (BD)-UK continental Service, BD-Far East-Japan Service, BD-Pakistan-West Asia-Gulf lines Services and BD-Singapore Feeder Service.

The feeder services in the BD-Singapore route however resumed from January 28, 1993, after a suspension of 3 years since 1990. The feeder services were introduced in March 1986.

Meanwhile, the Bangladesh Shipping Corporation has taken a move to restore its services in the Bangladesh-USA route.

Services in the BD-USA route remained suspended since 1990 as the operation was found economically non-viable.

A feasibility study in this regard is now underway to determine as to whether the service will be economically viable in the light of the present global perspective of shipping business.

The study report is expected to be placed for decision shortly.

Thais keen to invest in DEPZ

The out-going Thai Ambassador Vichai Vannasin yesterday described Bangladesh-Thailand ties as excellent and highly acclaimed the leadership of Prime Minister Begum Khaleda Zia in restoration and institutionalisation of democracy in the country, reports BSS.

Vannasin was paying his farewell call on Prime Minister Begum Khaleda Zia yesterday afternoon at her office.

Referring to the strengthened Bangla-Thai diplomatic, trade economic and business relationship, the Thai ambassador informed the Prime Minister that the Thai investors had now been showing keen interest in Bangladesh by investing in the Chittagong Export Processing Zone (CEPZ), were now planning to invest in the Dhaka Export Processing Zone (DEPZ) and would like to go all the way to

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