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The Daily Star

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NEWS BRIEFS

President assents to two bills

President Abdur Rahman Biswas on Monday assented to two bills adopted by the Jatiya Sangsad in its just-concluded session. The bills are the Institute of Postgraduate Studies in Agriculture (IPSA) Bill 1994 and the Artha Rin Adalat (Amendment) Bill 1994, said a JS press release yesterday, reports UNB.

Hasina returns tomorrow

Leader of the Opposition and Awami League president Sheikh Hasina will return home tomorrow from Azmir Sharif in India. Hasina visited the mazar of Khwaja Mainuddin Chisty (R) and offered fatha there, reports UNB.

Three killed in road mishaps

By DMCH Correspondent
Three persons including a minor girl were killed in separate road accidents in the city during the last two days. An unknown person was killed when a running train knocked him down at Kamalapur rail crossing Tuesday afternoon. The victim died on the spot. In another road accident, a pedestrian was killed when a speeding vehicle ran over him at Mirpur Section 10 at about 5 pm yesterday. The victim who could not be identified died on the spot. A minor girl was crushed under the wheels of a speeding truck at Uttara Monday afternoon.

Sohri, Ifar timings				
Rmdn	Mar	Sehri	Ifar	
25	9	—	6:08 pm	
26	10	4:53 am	6:09 pm	
27	11	4:52 am	6:09 pm	

UNHRC may pass Pak-sponsored resolution today

Delhi vows to crush Kashmir rebellion

NEW DELHI, Mar 8: A combative Prime Minister, P V Narasimha Rao, vowed in Parliament today to keep Kashmir in India and crush a bloody Muslim separatist rebellion in the troubled Himalayan region, reports AFP.

Rao's pledge came at the end of a debate on Kashmir, as troops and riot police fanned out in the Kashmir summer capital Srinagar to thwart protests called by Muslim guerrillas during a trip there by a group of diplomats.

The 72-year-old premier said his government was determined to preserve India's territorial integrity and put down the rebellion, which he described as 'terrorism' exported by Pakistan.

"We will act with firmness to put down terrorism and to preserve and protect the territorial integrity of the country."

Nothing is going to come in the way of doing this," Rao said in the Lok Sabha, or lower house.

A unanimous parliamentary resolution last month had reaffirmed Indian sovereignty over Kashmir and warned Pakistan to cease its support for the four-year-old Muslim guerrilla war for an end to Indian rule.

"This is the undertaking of the government to the Parliament of India," Rao said, adding that Pakistan had no right to Kashmir.

Rao's statement coincided with a debate in the UN Human Rights Commission in Geneva on a Pakistan-sponsored resolution denouncing alleged human rights abuses in Kashmir.

The draft resolution, in which Pakistan denounces human rights violations in

Kashmir without explicitly naming the Indian authorities, could be passed on Wednesday or Thursday despite New Delhi's vigorous opposition to the vote, the members said.

Though Islamabad has in recent months accused the Indian army of exactions in Kashmir, the Geneva resolution simply cites 'gross and consistent violations of human rights' there and calls for a team to be sent to investigate and report to the UN General Assembly.

Western sources in Geneva said the United States was likely to abstain during the vote, and that the European countries would make up their minds only at the last minute, possibly also abstaining.

A relatively small proportion of the 53 member states may take part in the vote, par-

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Commentary

... And All this While the Nation was Waiting

by Mahfuz Anam

In an overplay of righteous indignation the Opposition, stayed out of the Parliament for five working days, and lost out from consolidating its initial gain in public sympathy, which it enjoyed when Nazmul Huda's comment shocked us all. Instead, by its continuous boycott of the Parliament, the Opposition today stands suspected of considering its 'ego' more important than the public interest.

If the events of the last week show the Treasury bench to be callous, bungling, and inept political novices, then the Opposition revealed itself to be arrogant, pompous and inflexible, bent on having its way, to the very last comma and full stop, regardless of the cost and consequence to the

parliamentary process, and to our nascent democratic experiment.

The Information Minister had no business to say what he did, against the Opposition. Agreed. And he had far less business to repeat that folly in two separate press interviews on later occasions. Agreed. The Opposition's religious belief was mocked at, and they rightly felt aggrieved, and had to show it by walking out. Agreed. But then how much are we, as voters, as taxpayers and as members of the civic society, to pay for it?

Was it worth turning the whole 13th session of the 5th Parliament into a total non-event? Is the Parliament, which symbolises our sovereign nation, to come to a halt because one minister

spoke terribly out of turn? Is five full days of boycott justified? Does the Opposition have no obligation to us for having voted to send them to the people's assembly — the Parliament?

If the government stands accused of trivialising the Parliament, then the Opposition must face the accusation of having immobilised it. And we the voters must say it loud and clear, that we fail to find merit in the actions of either.

What began as a severe wrong doing on the part of the Treasury bench ended with an overkill by the Opposition. The question that the voters would like to pose is, WHAT DID THE NATION GAIN FROM IT ALL?

Continued on page 4

PM okays PSCs of two foreign oil companies

By Sharier Khan

Prime Minister Begum Khaleda Zia has approved the production sharing contracts (PSCs) of the Cairn Energy Plc of Scotland and Holland Sea Search of the Netherlands for oil and gas exploration in the Bay of Bengal, sources said.

The Cabinet Committee for Finance and Economic Affairs approved the PSCs at a meeting held on February 13, allowing the foreign companies to explore in the bay off the coast of the Cox's Bazar-Sandwip region, covering an area of 821 sq kilometres including a 242 sq km Kutubdia gas field.

The contracts have now been sent to the Ministry of Law and the National Board of Revenue (NBR) for vetting. After the vetting, Petrobangla will invite representatives of the foreign companies to sign the final agreements.

"Since he authorities got delayed in sending the files of the foreign companies to the Ministry of Law and the NBR, it is likely that the foreign companies will not be able to sign the final agreement before mid-April," one source said.

"If the signing of the agreements take place in April, the foreign companies would not be able to begin their exploration before November this year."

Due to the weather conditions in the bay exploration for gas and oil can be carried only between November and March.

Cairn and Sea Search had signed MOUs with the government on August 5 last.

"Since we do not have many experienced officials who can efficiently negotiate with foreign companies and since

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ALPP criticises govt for proroguing JS

The Awami League Parliamentary Party (ALPP) yesterday accused the government party of showing disrespect to parliamentary norms and practice in proroguing Parliament hurriedly, keeping the Opposition outside the House, reports UNB.

The ALPP in a meeting yesterday afternoon at the Sangsad Bhaban resented the role of the ruling party, said a press release issued by Opposition Chief Whip Mohammad Nasim.

It observed that the treasury bench thumped parliamentary norms and practice by not transacting day's business, including thanks giving on president's address as per order of the day.

The meeting condemned the Hebron massacre and called for taking action against the terrorists.

It observed one-minute silence.

Six killed as training jet crashes in Delhi

NEW DELHI, Mar 8: A Boeing jet on a training flight narrowly missed the main terminal building at New Delhi's international airport Tuesday and crashed into a parked Russian jetliner and both planes caught fire. At least six people were killed and 70 others injured, reports AP.

The Sahara India airliner was practising takeoffs and landings at the domestic airport. On its fourth takeoff, it swerved off the flight path and crashed at the international airport, about eight kilometers (five miles) away, said Aditya Arya, the police chief of the airports.

It slammed down into the Aeroflot Illyushin 86 as Russian engineers worked on it at the maintenance bay of the Indira Gandhi International Airport, about a kilometer (half a mile) from the runway, witnesses said.

The cause of the accident was not known, but some wit-

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A rally was brought out in the city yesterday to mark the International Women's day.

— Star photo

'Establish dignity, rights of women'

By Staff Correspondent

The International Women's Day was observed in the country as elsewhere in the world yesterday through an expression of firm resolve to establish the dignity and rights of women and prevent all sorts of discrimination and repression against them.

In Bangladesh, where scores of unnatural deaths of women are reported every year and an unspecified number remains unreported, the day was observed with calls to break the century-old shackles and taboos that deprived women of their legitimate rights.

Besides the government, several women's organisations, as well as social and cultural organisations held programmes to mark the day by fitting the theme: "Building the World Where Women Matter."

President Abdur Rahman Biswas, in a message, called for

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Women still don't have full freedom: PM

Prime Minister Begum Khaleda Zia yesterday stressed female education and women's participation in economic activities to check repression on women and establish their rights in the society, reports UNB.

"Only through participation in mainstream of the economy can the womenfolk establish their right of expression in family and society," she said.

The Prime Minister was addressing a function organised by the Department of Women's Affairs on the occasion of the 'International Women's Day '94' at the Osmani Memorial Hall in the morning.

The Women's Day was observed worldwide yesterday, with the theme 'Building a world where women matter'.

The Prime Minister lamented that due to lack of education women were lagging behind in our society.

"Although equal rights for men and women have been en-

shrined in our constitution, the women community still face discriminations. They are subjected to repression and torture in many ways and don't have full freedom of expression due to lack of awareness," she told the Women's Day function.

Ministers, MPs, representatives of international and local voluntary organisations, senior officials and a large number of women attended the function.

Dr Mahmuda Islam, Professor of Dhaka University's Social Science Department, presented a paper on the theme of this year's observance of the day.

Listing different government measures to expand women's education and create job opportunities, the Prime Minister said women's participation in production and development is a major development strategy of the present

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City corpsns will elect 38 female ward commissioners shortly

By Nazmul Ashraf

The election of female ward commissioners against 38 reserved seats in the four city corporations will be held shortly, according to sources in the LGRD and Cooperatives Ministry.

The newly-elected mayors and commissioners would elect the women representatives for their respective corporations. Previously, the female commissioners were nominated by the government.

For every five wards there would be one woman commissioner. The procedure of election would be similar to the one followed to elect the female members of Parliament from the reserved quota.

The Dhaka City Corporation with 90 wards would have 18 women commissioners, the Chittagong City Corporation

with 41 wards eight commissioners, and the Khulna City Corporation consisting of 31 wards and the Rajshahi City Corporation 30 wards would have six commissioners each.

Constitutionally, the local government bodies are supposed to be non-partisan but the January 30 city corporation polls took on a political colour with all the major parties filing nominations.

The election of the women commissioners is likely to be influenced by the political affiliations of the elected mayors in the four cities and those of the majority ward commissioners, observers said.

Awami League nominees have been elected mayor and commissioners in 42 wards of the DCC. Of the remaining 48 DCC commissioners, 33 belong

to the BNP while 15 were independent candidates.

In the CCC, the AL candidates won the post of mayor and 21 commissioner posts. BNP candidates became commissioners in 12 wards while the Jatiya Party candidates won in 3 wards. The rest five were independent.

BNP nominees were elected mayor with eight commissioner posts in the KCC where 16 commissioners were elected independently. The Jamaat-e-Islami bagged only one seat of commissioner. The remaining six commissioners were elected on the AL ticket.

The mayor and two commissioners, belonging to the BNP, were elected in the RCC. Among the other commissioners, three were from the AL, six from the JP and 19 independent.

JMB foundation stone to be laid Apr 10

The foundation stone of the Jamuna Multipurpose Bridge (JMB) will be laid on April 10 instead of March 20, reports UNB.

The date has been rescheduled for completion of some administrative issues, said a government handout yesterday.

This was decided at the 39th meeting of the Jamuna Multipurpose Bridge Authority (JMB) held in Dhaka yesterday morning with Communications Minister Oli Ahmed in the chair.

The meeting discussed development of various issues and works related to the bridge project.

Communications Minister advised the JMB to take necessary measures, so that the construction work of the bridge could be started soon.

The meeting was attended by secretaries of different ministries, members of expert committee and senior officials of JMB along with the Executive Director.

Mayors take oath tomorrow

The newly-elected mayors of the country's four city corporations will be sworn in tomorrow morning at the International Conference Centre in the city, reports UNB.

Prime Minister Begum Khaleda Zia is expected to administer the oaths of office to Mohammad Hanif of Dhaka, A B M Mohiuddin Chowdhury of Chittagong, Sheikh Tayebur Rahman of Khulna and Mizanur Rahman Minu of Rajshahi.

A gazette notification published on Monday officially announced the election of Mohammad Hanif as mayor of the Dhaka City Corporation. The three other mayors were earlier declared elected.

Residents of the four cities voted directly for the first time on January 30 to elect the mayors.

The oaths of the ward commissioners will be administered separately by the Deputy Minister for LGRD and Cooperatives Abdul Hye at the Agargaon National Institute of Local Government.

Clinton's Eid greetings

WASHINGTON, Mar 8: President Bill Clinton offered his greetings today to the world Muslim community on the occasion of Eid-ul Fitr, celebrating the end of the holy month of Ramadan, says a USIS press release.

This year's Eid-ul Fitr, which most of the Islamic world will celebrate between March 12 and 15 (depending on the sighting of the moon), reminds us of our shared responsibility to work for peace and for a better future for all the world's people — especially in the wake of the Hebron massacre," Clinton said.

"In the United States, this is an occasion for us to reflect with pride on the achievements of Muslim Americans and to take satisfaction in the historic and constructive relations which we have had with the Muslim countries around the world," the president added.

Information cadre unhappy at transfer of 4 senior men

By Staff Correspondent

In a surprise move, the government yesterday transferred four senior information cadre officers, sparking resentment among the officials.

Mokbul Ahmed, Additional PIO of the Press Information Department (PID), has been transferred to the Department of Film Archives as DG, while Harun-ur Rashid, Deputy PIO has been posted to the Election Commission. They have been replaced by Amjad Hussain and Habibur Rahman respectively.

The BCS (Information) Association has convened an emergency meeting today to review the situation and to finalise their next course of action.

Earlier, on March 5, a group of 70 information officers met the Information Minister and requested him to appoint one of the senior-most cadre officials as the Principal Information Officer (PIO).

The Information Minister reportedly assured them that one from among the four senior-most information cadre

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Officials inspecting a crashed jetliner of the private Indian Sahara airlines yesterday at the Indira Gandhi International Airport near New Delhi.

— AFP photo