

Indian Defence Ministry report Pakistan still a threat to security interests

NEW DELHI, Mar 23: India must continue with its defence programme to counter possible aggression by Pakistan, with which it has fought three wars, a Defence Ministry report said here today, reports AFP.

"Pakistan remains a source of threat to our security interest. The political leadership (is) openly committed to extending moral, material, political and diplomatic support to fundamentalism and terrorism," it warned.

The disputed state of Kashmir is a major irritant between the two neighbours with Pakistan alleging rights abuses in the Himalayan province and India charging Islamabad of fomenting secessionism there.

Two of the three Indo-Pakistani wars have been fought over Kashmir. The annual report for 1993-94 said Islamabad's increased defence budget ruled out cuts by New Delhi since national security could be endangered.

"Although India will strive to seek peace, friendship and cooperation, at the same time it will be completed to adopt prudent measures to ensure its own security through a sufficiently strong defence capability."

It said Pakistan's defence budget had been increasing "much beyond its legitimate needs"— nine-fold between 1978 and 1993.

In GDP terms Islamabad spent 7.14 per cent on defence as opposed to New Delhi's 2.5 per cent, the report said.

Obliquely referring to state-of-the-art weaponry purchased by Pakistan including a proposed deal for buying F-16 fighter jets, the report said: "the level of arms acquired went far above its legitimate needs."

However, relations with Beijing, with which New Delhi had fought a brief but bloody war in 1962, had "perceptibly improved" despite China's "ambitious programme to modernise its forces," it said.

It said that although China signed the nuclear non-proliferation treaty, it had broken the unofficial moratorium, on testing as part of the attempt to further upgrade its capability.

The report spoke of tension in the Indian Ocean in view of the Tamil separatist movement in northern Sri Lanka and said this was "a matter of concern."

3 die in separate incidents

By DMCH Correspondent
Three persons died and another received injuries in separate incidents in the city Wednesday.

A tempo driver was killed when a speeding minibus knocked his vehicle at the Natun Bazar crossing, Gulshan, at about 4:30 pm yesterday. The victim, Mohammed Zilani, 32, was seriously injured and rushed to the Dhaka Medical College Hospital (DMCH) where the doctors declared him dead.

Police recovered the body of a thirty-year-old person from the fifth floor of a building at Zibatola yesterday. The victim identified as Mohammed Iqbal Hossain was sent to the DMCH morgue for autopsy.

Police recovered another body from Sadar Ghat at about 1 am Wednesday. The victim could not be immediately identified. He was about 50.

Police sent the body to the Sir Salmullah Medical College Hospital (SSMCH) morgue for autopsy.

An unnatural death (UD) case was filed with the Kotwali police station.

In another incident, a minor girl was injured when a bomb exploded at the rail gate slum at Moghbazar at about 3 pm yesterday.

The victim, Shamsed, 9, was admitted to the DMCH.

One killed, 21 hurt in Patuakhali road accident

From Our Correspondent
PATUAKHALI, Mar 23: At least one person was killed and another 21 were injured when a speeding minibus skidded off the road at village Birpassa under Bauphal police station today.

The victim Delwara Begum, 40, died on the spot while the injured persons were admitted to the local hospitals.

Among the injured, eight were referred to the Sher-e-Bangla Medical College Hospital, Barisal.

Navy to be turned

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Minister A S M Hannan Shah, Prime Minister's Special Envoy M Morshed Khan, Begum Shamsunahar Ahsanullah, MP, chief of Army Staff Lieutenant General Muhammad Noor Uddin Khan, chief of Air Staff Air Vice Marshal Altaf Hossain Chowdhury witnessed the exercise.

Congratulating the officers and sailors of the Bangladesh Navy the Prime Minister said she was impressed to witness the exercise.

The country's vast maritime boundary is linked with the existence of its national economy, she said reminding the naval officers and sailors of their prime responsibilities of maintaining control over vast maritime area, ensuring the protection of huge sea resources and safety of its extraction.

Begum Zia lauded the role of the Navy in stopping illegal fishing in the Bay, curbing smuggling in sea routes and cracking down on pirates and ensuring the safety in the movement of commercial ships.

Shaheed President Ziaur Rahman, she said, had taken up initiatives of building a stronger Navy with the aim of protecting our huge maritime boundaries.

It is the duty of the members of the Navy to make the

World Meteorology Day observed

The World Meteorology Day was observed throughout the country yesterday as elsewhere in the world, reports BSS.

The Bangladesh Meteorological Department has taken up an elaborate programme in observance of the day through discussions, seminars and meteorological exhibitions. This year's theme of the day is "Observing the weather and climate".

Speaking at the inaugural function of the day at the Met head office at Agargaon in city, Defence Secretary M Hasinur Rahman said in spite of limited resources the government was making continuous efforts to equip the Met department with modern observatory, radar and communication system.

AL won't renew

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manned just share of the Gages water and 24-hour movement through the "Tin Bigha" corridor.

At present, the inhabitants of Dahagram and Angorpota enclaves are allowed only six hours movement daily through the corridor.

Our Staff Correspondent adds: In view of the serious implications of Hasina's reported statement on such a key policy issue for the Awami League, The Daily Star tried to confirm the statement by talking to the AL chief herself. Despite efforts she was not available for comments till late last night.

Talking to The Daily Star, S A M S Kibria, an advisor to the Awami League president, said he did not have any knowledge regarding such a policy decision, nor had he been consulted by the party chief on the subject.

Abul Hasan Chowdhury, MP and International Affairs Secretary of the Awami League, said he was not briefed about the stand on the treaty.

A source close to the AL chief, on condition of anonymity, would only say that the Awami League chief had met some Indian journalists yesterday morning.

Country's domination inevitable

over its huge maritime boundaries, Begum Zia said asking them to go ahead with patriotism, honesty, obedience and principles in all spheres of their professional life.

Underlining the need for containing exercise to increase professional efficiency, the Prime Minister told the officers and sailors that their hard work would help ensure happiness, prosperity and safety of the future generation.

Begum Zia also emphasised the necessity of properly maintaining the ships and war equipment, applying the knowledge of modern warfare and engineering of the members of the Navy.

The Prime Minister appreciated the role of the members of the Navy in tackling the natural disasters in the past side by side with the army and the air force.

She said the nation expects that every member of the Navy would go ahead towards success by setting up examples of honesty, sincerity and patriotism and safeguarding the national independence and sovereignty.

After the speech, the Chief of the Naval Staff presented a missile craft model to the Prime Minister.



Awami League chief and Leader of the Opposition in Parliament Sheikh Hasina addressing a post-hartal public meeting at the Bangabandhu Avenue in the city yesterday. — Star photo

DU provosts condemn attack on VC's office

By Staff Correspondent

A meeting of the Provosts' Committee of Dhaka University was held yesterday with Dr Begum Jahanara in the chair.

The provosts condemned the attack of a student body on the office of the VC. They observed that it was a violation of democratic norms to make representations in such manner.

The Provosts Committee observed that a congenial atmosphere existed in the halls of the University and there was no cause for apprehension regarding peaceful holding of the forthcoming DUCSU polls. They also mentioned that in many halls, student representatives and authorities have already initiated discussion for a peaceful polling.

The committee later in a signed statement called upon all concerned to extend cooperation for the proper holding of the DUCSU polls scheduled for April 12.

Meanwhile, the Dhaka University Teachers' Association (DUTA) in a statement yesterday expressed their grave concern over Tuesday's incident at the administrative building.

Issued by DUTA president Prof Md Shahadat Ali and general secretary A M S Arefin Siddiq, the statement said any developments that might threaten the curriculum of the university are unwanted.

Following Tuesday's incident, the Dhaka University campus remained tense as different political bodies brought out rallies and counter rallies.

The Bangladesh Chhatra League (M-I) reiterated its decision of boycotting the DUCSU polls under 'a bias and partisan' Vice Chancellor who, they alleged, was involved in sheltering terrorists.

The BCL (M-I) rally at the Aparajeo Bangla was addressed by Mainuddin Islam, Lizu, Pankaj Nath and others.

The Jatiyatabadi Chhatra Dal brought out another rally chanting slogans against the BCL.

The last day of submitting nomination papers for the DUCSU polls is April 7.

Nirmul has war crimes evidences of 8 persons

Ghatak Dalal Nirmul Samannay Committee chief Jahanara Imam yesterday said they had gathered enough evidences about the war crimes of 8 people who will be named at a grand rally at the Suhrawardy Udyan at 3 pm on March 26, reports UNB.

"We'll publish the names of more criminals who had involvement at village level in anti-liberation activities and involved themselves in staging genocide during the Liberation War in 1971," Jahanara Imam added.

She was speaking at a meeting with the journalists of leading national dailies and news agencies arranged by the Nirmul Committee in the afternoon at Paribagh to exchange views with them.

Boycott of the Killers and Collaborators of 1971 at social and family levels figured prominently at the discussion.

The Nirmul Committee leaders said they would make public on March 26 the findings of its 'Gana Tadanta (Public Inquiry) Commission' against those accused of anti-liberation role in 1971.

The commission, headed by Begum Sufia Kamal, was constituted by the committee last year for investigation and trial of the anti-liberation elements as 'war criminals'.

Other members of the commission are Shafigh Ahmed, Member-Secretary, Prof Khan Sarwar Murshid, KM Sobhan, Debesh Chandra Bhattacharya, Salah Uddin Ahmed MP, Prof MA Khaleque, Prof Anupam Sen, Shawkat Osman, Shamsur Rahman and Air Vice Marshal Saduruddin.

Gas cylinder blast

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a bath. The two young boys who died, however, had been lured by the bright colours of the balloons!

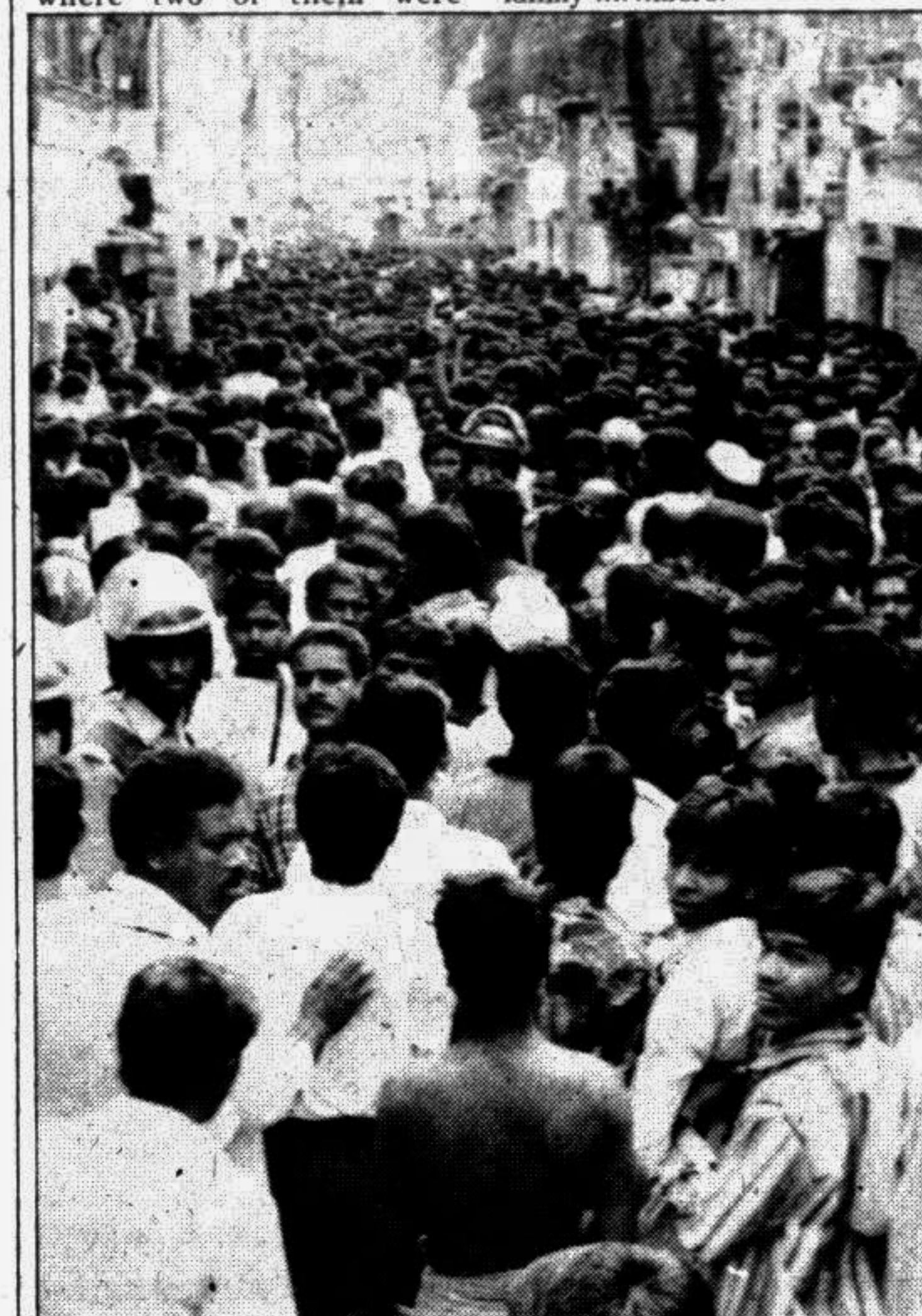
The badly dismembered bodies were retrieved by the police and rescue workers and sent to the Dhaka Medical College Hospital on a truck.

According to eye-witnesses, the explosion occurred when the balloon vendor was pouring water into the cylinder. However, Sutrapur police said the cylinder had caught fire as the vendor was filling a balloon with gas.

Chemical experts later explained to The Daily Star that perhaps, given the absence of a proper meter, the poor balloon vendor could not accurately gauge the actual pressure inside the cylinder, thereby causing the accident.

Seven of the dead were identified as Majeda, 28, Sufia, 30, Moniruzzaman, 11, Babul, 16, Khoka, 13, and two others — three-year-old Manik Babu and eight-year-old Abu Sayeed.

All the wounded were rushed to the Dhaka Medical College Hospital (DMCH) from where two of them were



Hundreds of curious people crowded Sarat Gupta Road in Narinda as the news of the tragic explosion of a gas balloon cylinder spread in the city yesterday. — Star photo

Rao urges Benazir to resume peace talks

NEW DELHI, Mar 23: Indian Prime Minister P V Narasimha Rao greeted Pakistan on its National Day on Wednesday and urged Prime Minister Benazir Bhutto to resume peace talks, reports Reuters.

In a message addressed to Bhutto and delivered through India's embassy in Islamabad, Rao said talks over the disputed Kashmir region would have to be held under a bilateral Shimla Agreement the two countries signed in 1972, a year after Pakistan suffered humiliating defeat in a third war with India.

"The government and the people of India remain committed to the establishment of good neighbourly and harmonious relations with Pakistan within the framework of (the Shimla Agreement)," Rao said in his message to Bhutto.

Talks between the two arch foes have frequently stalled over Pakistan's insistence that their dispute over Kashmir ... cause of two wars between them since independence from Britain in 1947 — was an international issue, fit to be decided by the United Nations.

Gas cylinder blast

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shifted to Mohakhali's Chest Diseases Hospital.

Twenty of the wounded were identified as Khabir, Rafiqul, Anwar, Mainuddin, Rezaul, Lal Mia, Sureen Kumar, Swapan Chandra, Sanaullah, Nasim, Kabir, Razzaq, Biraj, Mofiz, Mojibor, Anupal Pal, Masum, Afzal, Abed Ali and Abdul Momen.

Swapan and another unidentified man were shifted to the Chest Diseases Hospital in serious condition, hospital sources said.

Doctors at DMCH carried out emergency surgery and even amputation.

Home Minister Abdul Matin Chowdhury and State Minister for Youth and Sports Sadeque Hossain visited the DMCH to see the injured and the bodies of the blast victims.

The ministers stayed with the groaning injured for sometime and enquired about their treatment, an official handout said.

Later, the ministers visited the spot of the accident and went to the homes of the deceased as well as the injured to convey their sympathies to the family members.

Rly to computerise seat reservation, ticket issuing system

CHITTAGONG, Mar 23: Bangladesh Railway and Messrs Technohaven Company, a local business firm, signed an agreement here today to computerise seat reservation and ticket issuing system in 33 stations of eastern zone of Bangladesh Railway, reports BSS.

MA Alim, chief commercial manager, Bangladesh Railway east zone and Habibulla N Karim, president, Technohaven Company, signed the agreement on behalf of the parties concerned at railway building.

MA Matin, general manager, Bangladesh Railway, east zone and other heads of departments were present on the occasion.

In the first phase, eleven stations of Dhaka-Chittagong section will be brought under computerised ticketing system. Under this system advance reservation, return reservation and forward reservation from any station to any destination can be booked for 30 days in advance.

In the second phase 22 more stations on Sylhet, Kishoreganj, Mymensingh, Bahadurabad, Jamalpur and Jagannathganj routes will be brought under the computerised system.

Clashes leave 71 dead in Natal

DURBAN, South Africa, Mar 23: At least 71 people have been killed in five days of bitter fighting in Natal province, peace monitors and the domestic news agency Sapa reported today.

Injunction issued on Krishibid council session

By Staff Correspondent

The Second Court of Assistant Judge of Dhaka yesterday issued a temporary injunction order on holding of the planned council session of the Krishibid Institution scheduled for today.

The court also issued a show cause notice on the institution on a petition filed by Krishibid Dr. Mirza A. Jaill against Krishibid Javed Iqbal and others, says a press release.

The plaintiff was represented by Advocate Shahabuddin Ahmed.

The court order asked the defendants to show cause within 48 hours as to why they shall not be restrained by an order of temporary injunction as prayed for by the plaintiff.

BNP MPs

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Opposition's 'false and undesirable' comments about other Parliament members although she herself was an elected MP.

The MPs said, "The honourable Leader of the Opposition occupies an important position in parliamentary democracy. She is used to speaking about protection of the privileges of elected members of Parliament both in the House and also outside. But at Tuesday's press conference the 'libelous, unrealistic and vulgar' allegations she made were totally inconsistent with her position or dignity."

"Being surprised at her falsehood, we strongly protest it and demand the immediate withdrawal of the allegations (made) by her," they demanded.

They said, "Before the election we ceaselessly conducted house-to-house campaign for the victory of our candidate. We united and inspired the people in the constituency and with their support and vote our candidate won. Just when the people of Magura, Mohamadpur, and Shalikhya were celebrating the victory of our candidate, the leaders of the defeated party sitting in Dhaka, joining hands with the party of the fallen autocrat, were busy conspiring to put the democratic system into difficulty and to confuse the people."

The MPs said: "We expect that in future, while making any statement about other elected MPs like herself, the honourable Leader of the Opposition will be more restrained and will accept electoral verdicts, showing respect to public opinion."

The signatories to the statement included Ashraf Hossain MP, Alamgir Kabir MP, Abdus Salam Mintu MP, Mashur Rahman MP, Mohammad Shahjahan MP, Zainul Abedin Faruque MP, Shahiduzzaman Beltu MP, Lutifuzzaman Babar MP, Barkatullah Bhulu MP, Major (Retd) Hafiz Uddin MP, Abdul Wahab MP, Ansar Ali Siddiqui MP, Ziaul Haque MP, Anwar Hossain Khan Chowdhury MP, Major (Retd) Akhtaruzzaman MP, and Nurul Huda MP.

Malaysia's home ministry officials said the autonomous censorship board had cited several reasons for the ban.

The Midnight File

Artillery kills 8 in Kabul

KABUL, Mar 23: At least eight people died and 90 were injured in the Afghan capital today as artillery bombardments rocked the city and police and soldiers clashed, military sources and witnesses said, reports AFP.

Khmers predict 'doomsday' for govt forces

BATTAMBANG, Cambodia, Mar 23: The Khmer Rouge says the battle for its headquarters at Pailin is far from over and predicts 'doomsday' for government forces. The government said it has been securing areas around Pailin, in northwestern Cambodia near the Thai border, after having seized the base last Saturday. Because of the tension, an 8 pm to dawn curfew has been imposed in this provincial capital, about 100 kilometers (62 miles) from Pailin. Military police patrolled the city streets as the curfew began Tuesday, reports AP.

300 militants held in Egypt

CAIRO, Mar 23: Police in Cairo have arrested 300 suspected Muslim militants in a two-day security clampdown on eastern districts of the capital, security sources said today. They said police were continuing the clampdown, on the east Cairo districts of Matariya, Ain Shams and Zaton, for a third day today. The Interior Ministry said it was checking the report, reports Reuters.

Russian plane crash

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Irkutsk in Siberia, and there were no reports of casualties, it said.

Emergency officials said there was no indication of why the Airbus crashed. Air traffic controllers saw the plane disappear from radar screens shortly after a routine radio check with the plane in which the pilots reported no problems.

Debris from the plane was scattered over more than 2 kilometers (1.25 miles), officials said.

Local residents said they saw the plane falling from the sky, followed by an explosion when it hit the ground, said Alexander Khutorov, head of the Mezhdurechensk Civil Defense Department.

Efforts to reach the plane were hampered for several hours as rescue workers had to force their way through snow banks up to three meters (three yards) deep, officials said. Rescue workers eventually had to build a temporary road to allow sleds to get to the plane.

New US envoy

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Merrill said he is delighted to be in Bangladesh and added that he has keenly looked forward to this assignment for a long time.

The new United States Ambassador-designate made the statement in Bengali much to the delight and pleasant surprise of the newsmen and others.

He read out in Bengali the prepared statement beginning of which was "salam alaikum" and the conclusion was "Dhanyabad" and "Khoda Hafiz".

Merrill, a career Foreign Service officer, who spent much of his service time in Asia and more particularly in South East Asia, speaks Thai and Indonesian in addition to French.

He appeared to be not fumbling in uttering the Bengali words as he read out the statement. He said he liked to make the statement in Bengali and the words were clearly understandable.

Merrill said Bangladesh's development is progressing and he believed that American interest, policies and programmes may be helpful here as has been the case in many other Asian nations.

The Charge d'Affaires of the United States here James P. Nach and his wife Mrs. Nach received Merrill and his family members at the airport. Also present were Foreign Office officials and United States Embassy officials.

Ambassador Merrill had many key assignments at home and abroad. He received USAID distinguished Honour Award in 1987, the President's Award and eight performance award.

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Editor: Mahfuz Anam
 Printed & Published by A. S. Mahmud, Managing Director, on behalf of Mediaworld Ltd, 52, Motijheel CA, Dhaka-1000, from City Publishing House Ltd, 90, Kakrai, Dhaka-1000. Editorial, News & Commercial Offices: House No: 11, Road No: 3, Dhanmandi B/A, Dhaka-1206. FAX: 600092-4, Commercial: 600091 (Direct), Fax No: 88-02-869035, GPO Box No: 3257, Cable: DAILYSTAR, DHAKA.