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# The Daily Star

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VOL. III NO. 85 REGD. NO. DA 781 BAISHAKH 3, 1401 BS, DHAKA SATURDAY, APRIL 16, 1994 ZILQUAD 4, 1414 HIJRI 12 PAGES: PRICE TAKA 4.00

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## Over 100 countries represented at Marrakesh World trade pact signed

MARRAKESH, Morocco, Apr 15: Ministers from more than 100 countries signed here today an historic world trade agreement in a marathon four-hour ceremony in the Ornat Salle Royale of the Marrakesh Palais des Congres, reports AFP.

Morocco's Commerce Minister and host of the Uruguay Round closing conference, Mourad Cherif, was the first to step across the marble-tiled floor to the plain black table where copies of the final act accord were piled up, one for each signatory, neatly tied with blue ribbon.

After the Moroccan official, 108 ministers from participating countries signed in alphabetical order, beginning with Algeria and concluding with Zimbabwe.

Some 125 countries are signatories to the accord but not all were represented here.

Most of them also signed the accord setting up a new world trade organisation (WTO) replacing the Geneva-based General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT), which has operated on interim basis since 1947.

Ministers and delegates earlier rose from their seats and cheered as the conference chairman, Uruguay's Foreign Minister Sergio Abreu Bonilla, officially closed the meeting, and seven and a half years of often acrimonious talks, at 1025 GMT.

Nonetheless it was a tiring experience for GATT Director General Peter Sutherland, who was present throughout.

He started the ceremony standing behind the signers seat but had collapsed into a chair long before the end, and heaved a huge sigh of relief when the pen had been posed for the last time.

The signing ceremony was held in an indoor patio decorated with marble pillars, blue and white mosaics and carved wooden panels.

A stained-glass blue and yellow ceiling overlooked the central section where the signing was held.

After the ceremony delegates headed for the even more sumptuous royal palace for a formal closing ceremony hosted by King Hassan II.

Reuter adds: World trading nations committed themselves today to resist protectionism and avoid taking any measures that would undercut market-opening gains won at the Uruguay Round of GATT talks.

Ministers representing some 125 countries in the GATT talks made the pledge in a joint declaration as a four-day meeting to sign the GATT treaty neared its close.

Ministers expressed their determination to resist protectionist pressures of all kinds, of the statement said.

The three-page declaration said the World Trade Organisation (WTO), set to be the GATT's more powerful successor, "ushers in a new era of global economic cooperation."

It said, "Ministers undertake, with immediate effect and until the entry into force of the WTO, not to take any trade measures that would undermine or adversely affect the results of the Uruguay Round negotiations or their implementation."

The WTO still must be ratified by legislatures in most of the 125 countries that participated in the round before it can be formally established.

In their joint declaration, ministers committed themselves to doing all they can to permit the WTO to enter into

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## Strained AL-BNP ties worry minor parties

By Nurul Kabir

The smaller parties in Parliament have expressed their concern over the present political crisis arising out of the strained relations between the ruling Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP) and the largest opposition Awami League (AL).

They apprehend that hard-earned democracy may be jeopardised if the present "unhealthy relations" between the BNP and the AL continue.

Talking to The Daily Star, the leaders of the smaller parties said, the ruling party should come forward for a dialogue with the opposition for solving the problems.

"In a parliamentary democracy, the Leader of the House usually takes the initiative to resolve any crisis — be it in or outside parliament," they said.

Rashed Khan Menon, MP of the Workers' Party (WP), talking to The Daily Star, said the governing party seems to be totally indifferent towards the opposition demands on different political issues.

"Keeping aside the academic debates on the issues, most of the people feel that the hard-earned credibility of the Election Commission has been destroyed following the controversial Magura elections," Menon said. The government must take initiatives to restore the people's confidence in the Election Commission and in that case, the ruling party must listen to be opposition in a healthy atmosphere.

The primary responsibility for creating a congenial atmosphere for a dialogue with the opposition always lies with the government," Menon asserted.

About the AL's threat to abandon the present parliament, Menon said, the party has "over-reacted" to the Magura by-election issue vis-a-vis the BNP's "over-action" during the polls.

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## Merry-making, mishaps mark Pahela Baishakh

By Staff Correspondent

Merry-making as well as mishaps marked the advent of the Fifteenth Bengali century Thursday, *Pahela Baishakh* — the first day of the Bengali calendar year 1401 BS.

As crooners sang in chorus welcoming a new sunrise at the Ramna balmul in Dhaka, a river-craft collision in Narayanganj district only a few hours later left at least nine people dead.

In keeping with tradition, *Pahela Baishakh* celebrations were orchestrated across the country through cultural functions, colourful processions, *Baishakhi mela* (country fairs) and 'halkhata', or opening of new accounts by the shopkeepers.

Thursday was a public holiday.

In Dhaka, the *Pahela Baishakh* festivity started at a minute past midnight with

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## 9 killed, 20 missing in launch capsizes

From Our Correspondent

NARAYANGANJ, Apr 15: At least nine persons, including five children and two women, were drowned when a Chandpur-bound passenger launch capsized at the confluence of the Shitalakkhya and Dhaleshwari rivers Thursday morning.

Survivors claimed another 20 of nearly 150 passengers of the launch were still missing.

BIWTA sources said the launch 'ML Shakhawat' sailed from the Narayanganj BIWTA terminal for Matlab of Chandpur district at 9 am and collided head-on with a sand-loaded mechanised boat near the Gopchar buoy at 9:45 am. The engine-boat broke into pieces and sank immediately.

The *sareng* (launch pilot) tried to run the unstable launch aground at the nearby Char Kishoreganj, survivors said, but it sank before reaching the sandbank.

At this stage, they said, most of the passengers swam ashore while the rest were either trapped in the hull of the sunken vessel or drowned in the river.

Divers recovered eight bodies from the sunken launch while another was found floating.

Among the nine dead, eight were identified as Sultana (9), daughter of one Sultan Mia of Shahidnagar, Narayanganj; Marjina (13), daughter of Abul Hossain of Charsapur, Daudkandi under Comilla district; Shahnaz Begum (45) and her daughter Poly (6) of Masakhali, Chandpur; Parul (8), daughter

of Abdul Khaleque of Bakshaganj, Nababganj, Dhaka; Roshni Begum (40), and her son Aminul Haque (10) of Hapania, Matlab under Chandpur district and Shafiqullah (8), son of Abdul Majid of Golapirchar, Daudkandi, Comilla. Another victim, a male aged about 60, could not be identified.

Oluliah and Ali Dewan survived while their wives, Shahnaz Begum and Roshni Begum respectively, drowned along with their children.

BIWTA officials said the rescue operation began at 11 am Thursday with the local people and passengers of another

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ESHO HE BAISHAKH: Artists of the Chhayanaut rendering songs at a function welcoming the *Pahela Baishakh* at the Ramna Park in the city Thursday.

## ALWC meet resumes today No alternative to demand for care-taker govt

By Staff Correspondent

The Awami League Central Working Committee (ALWC) yesterday began reviewing the present political situation of the country.

The ALWC, during its more than seven-hour meeting beginning at 3 pm, also discussed ways of resolving inter-necine conflicts in a few district units of the party.

Four leaders of the party's 65-member policy-making body discussed the political situation and presented their views regarding the AL's next course of action. A leader attending the meeting said around 40 members were present at yesterday's meeting.

The four who spoke on the political situation included Dr Alauddin Ahmed, Dr Mizanul Haq, MP, A K M Jahangir, MP and Mahmudur Rahman Manna.

AL chief Sheikh Hasina, however, gave an introductory speech on the whole situation and asked the members present to come up with their own views.

All four leaders who spoke yesterday felt that the AL had been left with no option but to stick to its demand for the holding of the next general elections under a caretaker government.

They also observed that an all-out agitation against the government could alone compel the ruling Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP) to accept the demand for a care-

taker government.

The speakers also maintained that the AL should not take part in the forthcoming by-elections in Parliament's Bogra-2 constituency.

On the question of attending the next session of Parliament, the speakers felt that the AL should discuss the issue with other opposition parties in the Jatiya Sangsad.

They told the meeting that the decision for boycotting the last few sittings of Parliament had come unanimously from other parties and groups in

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## Li Peng likely to visit Dhaka by year-end

The Chinese Premier Li Peng Thursday said that he would like to visit Bangladesh in the latter half of this year while meeting the Foreign Minister A S M Mustafizur Rahman in Beijing, reports BSS.

The Chinese Premier was responding to a letter of invitation from Prime Minister Begum Khaleda Zia that was handed over to him by the Bangladesh Foreign Minister, according to a message received in Dhaka.

The dates for the visit would be worked out through normal diplomatic channel, the message added.

The Chinese Premier said

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## Govt considering to set up divn in Sylhet: Saifur

MOULVIBAZAR, Apr 15: Finance Minister M Saifur Rahman said the government is actively considering to set up an administrative division in Sylhet, reports UNB.

The minister also added that a decision to this effect and regarding such other demands would be taken soon.

He was addressing a gathering organised in observance of the Bengali New Year day here on Thursday.

Finance Minister said the long standing hopes and aspirations of the people of the North Eastern region would be fulfilled by establishing a new administrative division at Sylhet.

Saifur also distributed a cheque worth Tk 11 lakh among various educational institutions of the district.

Syeddi fails to hold rally in Kushtia town

From Our Correspondent

KHUSHTIA, Apr 15: The district administration imposed Section 144 of the BPC from 7 am till midnight tonight in the entire municipal area here in apprehension of trouble.

Section 144 was imposed by the district administration to avert possible political clashes following plans by a front organisation of the Jamaat-e-Islami to hold a rally to be addressed by Delwar Hussain Syeddi.

However, a meeting by the rally organisers was held three miles off the district town at Bartul near the power station, which was addressed by Delwar Hussain Syeddi.

No untoward incident was reported.

## Heat, load-shedding and water crisis make city life miserable

Star Report

Unbearable heat, frequent power failures and shortage of water supplies have made the city life miserable for the last few days.

While the mercury has been hovering over 36 degrees Celsius for the last one week, power failures have become as frequent as half a dozen times in the areas of Zigatola, Satmasjid Road, Dhanmondi, Mohammadpur, Mirpur, Khilgaon, Shahjahanpur, Motijheel, Jatrahari, Jurain, and even the posh areas of Gulshan-Banani due to load shedding.

In addition, the WASA's water supply had been reduced by approximately 30 to 50 per cent in the areas of Mirpur, Sobhanbagh, Shantinagar, Maghbazar, Motijheel, Mohammadpur as well as many other parts of the city.

Regarding the power crisis, Power Development Board officials said that the 210MW Raizan Power Plant in Chittagong had tripped due to a technical problem last Tuesday.

The present amount of load-shedding is about 280MW across the country.

The demand for power has suddenly increased. Even if the Raizan plant starts supplying 210MW to the national power grid, the amount of load-shedding would be 70MW, a PDB official said.

The Dhaka Electric Supply Authority (DESA) told The Daily Star last night that the situation had worsened in the city because a 132 KV transformer went out of order four days ago.

As a Result, five DESA substations in Mirpur, Satmasjid Road and Zigatola had been compelled to continue load-shedding in these areas for the last few days.

"In Zigatola and Satmasjid Road, the amount of daily load-shedding is no less than 8 MW," a DESA official said.

Presently over 1000 transformers under the DESA remain overloaded, the DESA official informed this correspondent. Maintenance of the equipment had almost stopped for the last two years due to absence of funds.

The World Bank and other donors had completely suspended assistance for the power sector of the country because of system loss. Because of this there is now an acute fund crisis.

Regarding the water crisis, WASA sources informed that

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## 26 killed as US jets mistakenly down 2 choppers over Iraq

WASHINGTON, Apr 15: US military officials ordered pilots to take a less aggressive stance in northern Iraq after two American fighter jets shot down two US Army helicopters, killing all 26 people on board, reports AP.

Defence Secretary William Perry, in an interview with Associated Press Network News, said Thursday he's taken several steps to ensure the incident isn't repeated. The jet pilots mistook the choppers for Iraqi aircraft violating the no-fly zone, he said.

The secretary said he could not describe the exact steps taken for security reasons, but presumably guidelines under which pilots attack targets have been made more strict or the authority for firing must come from higher-level officers.

Twenty-one of the dead were military officers from the United States, Britain, France, and Turkey supporting the UN humanitarian relief operation for the Kurdish minority in northern Iraq. Five Kurd passengers were also killed.

The two UH-60 Black Hawk helicopters were shot down by two F-15C fighters enforcing the 'no-fly zone' set up to protect the Kurdish minority from attacks by Iraqi President Saddam Hussein.

President Clinton expressed 'terrible sorrow' and pledged a thorough investigation. He ordered US flags on public buildings throughout the nation to be flown at half-staff through sunset Monday "as a mark of respect for those who died as a result of the tragic incident."

Questioned how such a tragedy could occur, Perry replied, "There were errors. There were human errors, probably, and there might be process or system errors as well."

The secretary said he has postponed a trip to Japan and South Korea to make sure two separate investigations of the incident had begun.

At an earlier Pentagon briefing, Perry said the fighter pilots mistook the UH-60 Black Hawk choppers for Iraqi 'Hind' helicopters.


Both jets apparently had the helicopters in sight during the daylight mission and both fired missiles, Perry said. An AWACS reconnaissance plane was overseeing the helicopters' flight.

The pilots of the F-15s felt they had positively identified

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**WIN**

See Page 11 for details



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