

Farmers block roads

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 tribution of fertilizer by the Adra UP chairman in sadar thana yesterday.
 Three of the injured were admitted to a local clinic.
 Meanwhile, police recovered two trucks of fertilizer from Kalibari Bazar near Kendua in Sadar thana in the afternoon which were taken away by agitating farmers at noon. The trucks were bound for Jamalpur from the Jamuna Fertilizer Factory.
 A 50-kg bag of fertilizer sold at Tk 400 despite the official rate of Tk 230.
 It was alleged that although the district administration had provided the Thana Nirbahi Officers 10 thousand tons of fertilizer for sale at fair price among the real farmers it was not being sold at fair price.
 The district administration so far has arrested four people for selling fertilizer at higher price.
 Hundreds of angry farmers, lulling to get fertilizer, blocked the Dhaka-Mymensingh highway at Trishal yesterday, cutting off roadlink between the capital and the Mymensingh region.
 Sources said the district administration Monday announced fertilizer at fair price would be supplied in Trishal yesterday morning but the consignment never reached the thana.
 The farmers who gathered to procure fertilizer for the current cropping season at one stage gheraoed the office of the thana Nirbahi Officer and blocked the highway from 12:30 pm.
 They, however, lifted the blockade at 5:30 pm after the administration reassured that fertilizer would be distributed today.

When contacted, the Trishal TNO, admitting the announcement, said fertilizer supplies from the district headquarters, supposed to arrive at the thana in the morning had reached in the evening, causing the problem.
 He said only 20 tons of fertilizer against a demand of more than 100 tons had been supplied.
 In Sherpur, several hundred farmers blocked the Sherpur-Dhaka highway at Nokra thana yesterday demanding adequate urea fertilizer at fair price.
 Witnesses said the farmers gathered at Nokra in the morning and put up barricades on the highway in front of the thana Health Complex and on a bridge near the thana headquarters.
 The agitating farmers removed the barricade following intervention by the local political leaders after seven hours at about 5 pm.
 But they called a 6-hour hartal for today in the thana demanding effective measures by the authorities to ensure adequate supply and distribution of fertilizer at fair price.
 District administration sources said they had so far received 340 tons of urea compared to a demand for 6,150 tons. The price ranges from Tk 400 to 450 against the government price of Tk 230 per bag.
 Earlier, on March 11 and 12, farmers of the district gheraoed the DC and TNO offices in the town to press home their demand.
 During the seven-hour blockade yesterday, vehicles plying on the Dhaka-Sherpur route used an alternative route through Jamalpur-Tangail, taking two hours more to reach their destinations.



Awami League chief Sheikh Hasina addressing a group of leaders and activists of different political parties of Sailakupa, Jhenidah who joined her party at Bangabandhu Avenue in the city yesterday. — Star photo

Hasina

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 Ashraf Alam and 200 workers of different organisations announced their joining of Awami League at a function at the Bangabandhu Avenue.
 Addressing the gathering the Awami League chief said prices of essentials including rice, pulses, oil, paper and fertilizer increased owing to "corruption, nepotism, inefficiency and politicisation move of the government."
 "We are in agitation for resignation of the government, dissolution of present Parliament and national elections under a neutral caretaker government," Hasina told the newcomers.
 At least three elections should be held under a caretaker government, she said.
 The opposition leader demanded job for the unemployed, and supply of agricultural input at fair price and also fair price of farm produce.
 The function was also addressed by Abdus Samad Azad, Zillur Rahman, Salauddin Yusuf, Abdul Jalil, Abdul Mannan and Mofazzal Hossain Chowdhury Maya.

Ministers' special relief duties

The government has allocated responsibilities among the ministers, state ministers, whips and deputy ministers to preside over various district level test relief affair meetings, a PID handout said last night.
 The allocation of responsibilities are as follows: Minister of State for Planning Dr Abdul Momen Khan — Dhaka district, Home Minister Abdul Matin Chowdhury — Narayanganj district, Commerce Minister M Shamsul Islam — Munshiganj district, Chief Whip Khandakar Delwar Hossain — Manikganj district, Food Minister Abdul Mannan Bhuiyan — Narsingdi district, Minister of State for Science and Technology Prof M A Mannan — Gazipur district, Jute Minister Brig. (Retd) Hannan Shah — Mymensingh district, Whip M A Karim — Netrokona district, Deputy Minister for Shipping A B M Zahidul Haq — Kishoreganj district, Deputy Minister for Health and Family Welfare Serajul Islam — Sherpur district, LGRD Minister Abdus Salam Talukder — Jamalpur district, State Minister for Industries Lutfor Rahman Khan — Tangail district, Health and Family Welfare Minister Ghodury Kamal Jome Yusuf — Faridpur and Gopalganj districts, State Minister for Cultural Affairs Prof Jahannara Begum — Rajbari district and State Minister for Forest and Environment Gayeshwar Chandra Roy — Madaripur and Shariatpur districts.
 Finance Minister M Saifur Rahman — Sylhet, Sunamganj, Habiganj and Maulvibazar districts, Housing and Public Works Minister Rafiqul Islam Miah — Comilla district, State Minister for Disaster Management and Relief Harun-ur-Rashid — Brahmanbaria district, Shipping Minister M K Anwar — Chandpur district, State Minister for Civil Aviation and Tourism Abdul Mannan — Noakhali and Laximpur districts, Whip Mahubul Alam — Feni district, Industries Minister A M Zahiruddin Khan — Chittagong district, Fisheries and Livestock Minister Abdullah Al-Noman — Cox's Bazar district and Communication Minister Oli Ahmed — Rangamati, Khagrachhari and Bandarban districts.
 Education Minister Jamiruddin Sircar — Dinajpur district, Forest and Environment Minister Akbar Hossain — Thakurgaon district, Law, Justice and Parliamentary Affairs Minister Mirza Golam Hafiz — Panchagarh district, Labour and Manpower Minister Mir Shawkat Ali — Nilphamari, Rangpur, Kurigram and Lalmonirhat districts, State Minister for Finance Mojibur Rahman — Bogra district, Deputy Minister for LGRD Abdul Hai — Joypur-

Steady rise in prices of essentials

By Staff Correspondent
 Prices of many essentials in the city's markets have shown a steady rise over the last few days.
 Prices of meat, fish and onion have gone up markedly. Vegetable prices have shown a slight rise following the opposition-called two-day hartal.
 Beef was sold at different markets yesterday between Tk 70 and Tk 80 per kg and mutton between Tk 130 and 140 per kg.
 Before the Eid, beef was sold at Tk 50 to Tk 60 per kg and mutton at Tk 90 to Tk 110 per kg.
 Traders at the New Market said supply of different items has fallen sharply over the last few days. Butchers at Mohamadpur said the city's cattle market at Gabtali was running short of supply, consequently affecting meat markets.
 A trader at the New Market said that after the Eid and the hartal, price of onion has risen by at least 10 per cent and fish prices have gone up substantially.
 Traders in different city markets took advantage of the country-wide hartal and increased prices, it is alleged.

SKOP

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 leading trade union organisations, include implementation of the 1992 government-labour bodies accords, fixation of workers' minimum wage at Taka 1600, a halt to the government's privatisation move and release of arrested worker and withdrawal of cases filed against them under the Anti-terrorism Act.
 The SKOP meeting yesterday was attended by, among others, Abdus Salam Khan, Protobuddin Ahmed, Nazrul Islam Khan, Nurul Islam, Dr Wajedul Islam Khan, Shafiqur Rahman Majumder, Abdullah Sarker, Iqbal Majumder, Lutfar Rahman and Shahidullah Chowdhury.

Patel, Joshi

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 "We are confident we will be able to push it through," Navalkar said. The Sena also plans to replace English with Marathi as the state's official language and ban the term "Bollywood" which describes Bombay's film industry.
 The Sena-BJP alliance inflicted a crushing defeat to Prime Minister PV Narasimha Rao's Congress (I) Party in last month's polls in the western coastal state, India's most industrialised zone.
 A majority of multi-national companies operating in India as well as leading Indian business houses have headquarters in Bombay, which also serves as the nerve-centre of the country's securities transactions.
 The source confirmed that

AL activists demonstrate in London

By Staff Correspondent
 Awami League activists in London staged a demonstration in front of the Commonwealth Secretariat when Prime Minister Begum Khaleda Zia went there to attend the Commonwealth Day reception on Monday evening.
 Quoting a faxed message, AL sources said the demonstrators chanted slogans demanding resignation of the BNP government and general elections under a caretaker administration.
 The AL workers also waved black flags while the PM was returning from the secretariat. The UK unit of the AL organised the demonstration.
 Earlier, similar demonstration was staged in front of the Hilton Hotel at Park Lane where Begum Zia is lodged.

Papers missing

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 thorough searches through heaps of old documents had failed to reveal the missing papers. Besides, the case regarding Zia's killing was tactfully suppressed and not mentioned in the routine monthly reports submitted to the higher authorities regarding cases pending with the thana.
 Meanwhile, the CMM's court has fixed April 11 for hearing a report on the Zia murder case. Police sources said efforts were still on to recover the case dossier.
 The case regarding Zia's killing was filed with Kotwali thana on June 1, 1981 by the then AC of the Detective Branch in the CMP, Mokarram Hossain.
 When asked whether there would be any action against the police for the delay in furnishing the investigation report to the court, the Chief Metropolitan Magistrate, Matur Rahman, said: "Everything will be done as per law."
 Replying to a question, the CMM said: "There is no pressure on the court about the Zia case from the government side at all."
 On the other hand, a senior official of Chittagong district police told this correspondent that the records and GD about Manzur's arrest were not available with Hathazari police either. He said that GDs are normally destroyed after three years.

One beaten to death in city

By DMCH Correspondent
 A fruit trader in the Mauchak Market in the city succumbed to his injuries early yesterday.
 Sources said that five unidentified persons seriously beat up Alauddin, 45, behind the Padma Cinema on Malibagh-Rampura road in the city Monday night.
 Alauddin was admitted to the Dhaka Medical College Hospital in critical condition.
 The miscreants also snatched Tk 3200 from Alauddin, sources said. He was resident of Meradia in Khilgaon area.

Heavy fighting

KABUL, Mar 14: Forces loyal to Afghan President Burhanuddin Rabbani traded heavy artillery fire with the Taliban student militia on the front lines of southern Kabul today, halting civilian traffic, reports AFP.
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Political uncertainties

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 meeting said that the government is not planning to privatise BSRs at the moment, the sources said.
 Officials also pointed out that permission has already been granted to open seven new private sector banks while changes have been brought about in the loan classification system of the commercial banks.
 The assertion in the draft CEM that only six per cent of the targeted public sector units have so far been privatised, was also contended by the Privatisation Board officials present at the meeting, saying that the figures was much larger, the sources said.
 The government side at the meeting also sought a change in the literacy rate shown in the draft CEM and some other statistical data. The draft records the literacy rate at 35 per cent and the total population at 120 million.
 The officials pointed out that the quoted population figure represents that of last year while the literacy rate is that of 1993 and suggested

Communications ministry denies allegations

By Staff Correspondent
 The Communications Ministry yesterday refuted allegations made by Awami League chief Sheikh Hasina Monday regarding the awarding of Jamuna Bridge contracts by saying that the contracts for four components of the multi-purpose project were given out through competitive international tenders.
 In a clarification signed by Joint Secretary (Admin) M Makkul Hossain, the ministry said all the bids were rated by the consultants, donor agencies and the evaluation committee of the JMB authority.
 At a press conference on Monday Hasina alleged wrongdoing regarding the selection of contractors for the construction of the country's biggest civil engineering project.
 The ministry's clarification said the JMB's recommendations in this regard were duly approved by the Council Committee on Government Purchase.
 It said contracts were given to the lowest bidders including Hyundai, and that there was no scope to award the contracts to higher bidders.
 Specific guidelines and procedures were strictly followed during the selection of contractors through international competitive tenders, it said.
 There was no scope for either the Communications minister or the Finance minister or, for that matter, any other person to influence the selection process and derive any monetary advantage, the clarification said.
 While levelling her accusations against various government departments and cabinet members at a press conference Monday Hasina, however, did not adduce any documentary evidence in support of her allegations.

Bangabandhu's birthday celebration body meets

By Staff Correspondent
 Awami League chief Sheikh Hasina yesterday called upon the people to celebrate the 75th birth anniversary of 'Father of the Nation' Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman on March 17.
 Hasina was addressing a meeting of the birthday celebration committee at the Dhanmondi office of the Awami League. She is also the chief patron of the committee.
 The committee at the meeting discussed the programme to celebrate the day.
 Presided by committee chairman and AL presidium member Principal M Qamruzzaman, the meeting was also attended by Abdus Samad Azad, Abdur Razzak, Syed Shamsul Haq, Dr Mazharul Islam, Matia Chowdhury, Mahadev Saha, Rafiq Azad, Abul Hasan Chowdhury, Alamgir Kumkum, Nurul Islam Nahid, Shafiqur Rahman, Badal Rahman, Nurul Fazal Bulbul and Dilip Kumar Gomasia.
 The Bangabandhu Parishad has taken up elaborate programmes to observe the 75th birth anniversary of Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman on March 17.
 The programmes include exhibition of drawings by children, rally of the children and discussion on the Liberation War.
 The discussion presided over by poet Sufia Kamal will also be addressed by Prof. Mamtazuddin Ahmed, Golam Akbar Chowdhury, poet Mahadev Saha and Nima Rahman.
 The programmes will be followed by a cultural function.

Manhole cover stealing costs Tk 1m a year

By Staff Correspondent
 About 1,000 manhole covers of the sewerage lines in the city are stolen every year causing an estimated loss of Tk one million to the Dhaka Water and Sewerage Authority (WASA), official sources said.
 Motijheel and Mohammadpur (Zones one and three of Dhaka WASA) are the areas where most of the covers are stolen turning the manholes into 'death traps'.
 Several people, including two children, reportedly died falling into the WASA manholes in the last couple of months.
 The sources stressed the need for creating public awareness to prevent the theft of manhole covers as the huge number of manholes cannot be guarded round the clock.
 Besides Dhaka WASA, Dhaka City Corporation (DCC) has a considerable number of manholes for surface drains running along the roads and lanes.
 VDP and Ansars usually maintain the vigil at night on the city's roads, lanes and bylanes. "But you cannot guard the manholes all the time," said a DCC official.
 Sources said the stolen manhole covers are usually sold to unscrupulous foundry owners at much cheaper price than their original cost.

Gen Manzur murder case

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 this correspondent yesterday that Emdad was once grilled by a government intelligence agency in 1992 on his return from diplomatic assignment in Senegal as a first secretary. The statement he had made at the time was also officially recorded.
 The major was relieved from military service on January 15, 1987 and his services were placed under the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.
 A source dealing with the more than a decade-old case said, according to the statement, Emdad made before top officials of that agency on June 22, 1992, he had said that Gen Manzur was killed near the firing range of the Chittagong Cantonment when a Subedar (Sergeant major) shot the general once in the back of his head.
 He recalled that the Subedar was possibly named Abdul Malek.
 The 15-page statement was written and initialed on every page in his own hand. A copy of that statement was shown to this correspondent.
 The source confirmed that Emdad made a confessional statement before a metropolitan magistrate last week in which he repeated the truth as he knew it. However, the statements made by him in 1992 and 1995 differ substantially from the one he made in 1981 before a military investigation court headed by Maj Gen Mozammel, Brigadier Ashraf and Col Mohsin were the two other members of that investigation team.
 Emdad claims the 1981 statement was not made by him. He says Col Shamsur Rahman had prepared it and he was ordered by Gen Mozammel to just sign it.
 Meanwhile, Nazneen Haq, the wife of Maj Emdadul Haq, yesterday met him at the Dhaka Central Jail after a court ordered the authorities concerned to allow her to visit her husband.
 Mrs Huq and her ten-year-old daughter Tanha went to the jail gate at around 2 pm. They showed the court order to the jail authorities who allowed them in for 30 minutes of conversation with the accused.
 She handed over some food and clothes to her husband.
 "He was very upset and started weeping on seeing his daughter," Nazneen Haq told The Daily Star by phone.
 "He has not been given any division (special class) in jail and treated as an ordinary prisoner," she said.
 She said Emdad's lawyers would submit a prayer for granting him division.
 Mrs Huq said a prayer for his bail would also be made before the Chief Metropolitan Magistrate, Chittagong soon.
 The wife of Col Shamsur Rahman told this correspondent last night that no one was allowed to see him at the CID headquarters in Malibagh where he and Gen Latif are being kept for interrogation.
 However, she, admitted having spoken to her husband once yesterday over telephone.
 UNB adds: The Chief Metropolitan Magistrate's court of Chittagong yesterday received relevant documents of the Gen Manzur murder case from the court of the CMM, Dhaka.
 The Chittagong court has fixed April 2 for hearing of the case.

The Midnight File

Gunmen fire on Kazi Zafar's residence in city

Unidentified gunmen fired at random on the Banani residence of former prime minister and Jatiya Party leader Kazi Zafar Ahmed last night. None was hurt. Kazi Zafar was at home when the firing took place, his family sources said. The JP leader's pajero jeep was slightly damaged. The sources said the miscreants came in a car and opened fire at the house at 10:30 pm. When contacted, Gulshan police said the Officer-in-Charge was on the spot but could not give details of the incident, reports UNB.

Clinton to order ban on US oil deal with Iran

WASHINGTON, Mar 14: President Bill Clinton will shortly issue an executive order banning all US oil companies from entering into contracts to develop oilfields with Iran, the White House said on Tuesday, reports Reuter.

3 killed, 13 injured in road accidents

By DMCH Correspondent
 Three persons including a minor girl were killed and at least 13 others injured in separate road accidents in the city and in Comilla yesterday.
 One Khokon, 20, died in front of the Adamjee Cantonment College in the city when an Army truck knocked him down at 7:30 am yesterday.
 A three-year old girl child was killed at Darus Salam near Mirpur in the city yesterday noon.
 Witnesses said that speeding truck hit a rickshaw in which Sufia Khatun, 3, was travelling with her father Ismail Hossain. Hossain and the rickshawpuller aged about 30 were also injured.
 Later, the local people clashed with policemen when they were prevented from setting fire to the killer truck. In the clash three including a policeman were also injured.
 The injured were identified as policeman Delwar Hossain, 32, Kohnoor, 20, and Ahmed, 30.
 One person was killed when a Dhaka-bound inter city bus from Chittagong collided head on with a truck coming from the opposite direction at Chandina in Gauripur under Comilla district at 2:30 am yesterday.
 The victim identified as Jahangir, 35, died after he was taken to the Dhaka Medical College Hospital (DMCH) with serious injuries.
 The other eight persons injured in the accident were identified as Swapan, 35, Shimul, 28, Khorshed, 37, Sentu, 25, Rubul, 20, Abdul Aziz, 35, Nurul Anwar 24 and Abdul Haq, 40.
 All the injured were admitted to the DMCH, medical sources said.

Indian team in CHT inspects rehabilitation

KHAGRACHHARI, Mar 14: A 17-member Indian delegation led by Tripura State Relief Commissioner B K Teyagi arrived here today to see the rehabilitation programmes for tribal refugees in the Chittagong Hill Tracts (CHT), reports BSS.
 The delegation was received at the Ramgarh border by Kalpa Ranjan Chakma MP, Dr Fazlul Hasan Yusuf, secretary, special affairs division and director MA Wadud, Chittagong Divisional Commissioner Shafiqul Islam and deputy commissioner Khagrachhari hill district Muhammad Ismail.
 The members of the Indian delegation including Upendra Lal Chakma, leader of the Tribal Refugees' Welfare Association visited Jalapara under Panchari and saw rehabilitation arrangements for tribal refugees. They were also present at a meeting of tribals held at Panchari thana auditorium.
 Tripura relief commissioner said at the meeting that rehabilitation programmes made by Bangladesh government were favourable for resuming repatriation of tribal refugees.
 Upendra Lal Chakma said that all tribal refugees in Tripura were Bangladeshis and that they were eager to return to Bangladesh. He said we are to sort out the differences to quicken return of tribal refugees.
 The members of the Indian delegation also talked to some tribals after the meeting.
 The delegation will visit Dighinala tomorrow and leave for Tripura in the afternoon.

Consumer Rights

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 lines for consumer protection.
 The Guidelines, the single most important document aimed at protecting consumers' rights throughout the world, addresses key aspects of consumer protection such as health and safety, access to goods and services and measures for redress.
 In observance of the day, the Consumers Association of Bangladesh (CAB) will hold a seminar on "Consumer Rights and Awareness" at the VIP lounge of the Jatiya Press Club at 3 pm.
 Deputy Speaker Humayun Khan Panni will attend the seminar as chief guest, while Food Minister Abdul Mannan Bhuiyan, Awami League presidium member Abdus Samad Azad, Commerce Secretary Mofazzal Karim and Director General of NGO Bureau Abdul Mannan will be present as special guests.
 Besides, president of the Press Club and Chief Editor of the Financial Express Reza-uddin Ahmed, Editor of The Daily Star Mahiuz Anam, Dr Qamruzzaman MP, Farida Rahman MP and Matia Chowdhury will take part in the discussion.
 Dr Anwar Hossain, Professor of Business Administration, Dhaka University will present special article at the seminar.

Rice arrives

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 view meeting on food situation of the country held yesterday with Finance Minister M Saifur Rahman in the chair.
 According to an official handout, the meeting held at the Finance Ministry was attended by LGRD, Rural Development and Cooperatives Minister Abdus Salam Talukder, Agriculture and Irrigation Minister M Majid-ul-Huq, Communications Minister Oli Ahmed and Food Minister Abdul Mannan Bhuiyan.
 The meeting was told that quantity of rice and atta on OMS system has been increased and decision was taken to increase allocation of wheat according to requirement.
 Besides, decision was also taken to reduce the price of wheat from Taka 7.50 to Taka seven per kg, the handout added.

Private banks

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 ties in case of lapses or irregularities with regard to loan disbursement, he pointed out.
 The Finance Minister further directed the Bangladesh Bank to take measures so that credit committees of the banks should always place reports regarding disbursement of loans before the board meeting.
 Saifur Rahman said, in the context of our society there should be community responsibility and we should find out ways as to how best we could strengthen the banking institutions and preserve people's confidence.