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ANNOUNCEMENT

We are happy to announce the introduction of a new column "Another Voice" by Kazi Fazlur Rahman, former Advisor in the Interim Government of President Justice Shahabuddin Ahmed. Mr. Rahman is a retired civil servant. He is a well known commentator on national issues and is also the author of several novels and short stories in Bangla.

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NEWS BRIEFS

Road mishap kills medical student

SYLHET: Apr 10: Ali Akhlaque, a final year student of MAG Osmany Medical College was killed in a road accident today. The victim riding a motorbike was on his way to the college hostel when the accident occurred as he was trying to overtake a rickshaw. He succumbed to his injuries in Sylhet airport this afternoon while he was being sent to Dhaka.

US army Commander in Pakistan

ISLAMABAD: Apr 10: Lieutenant General Steven L. Arnold, Commander of the United States Army Central Command, arrived here today for an official visit to Pakistan. An official announcement said, He will stay in the country for four days, the Pakistani military's public relations department said, without indicating the purpose of the visit, reports AFP.

Lata honoured

LUCKNOW: Apr 10: Melody queen Lata Mangeshkar was honoured with 'Awadh Ratna' and 'Sahu Sur Samman' awards at a function here today. The Uttar Pradesh governor Motilal Vora presented the awards, reports PTI.



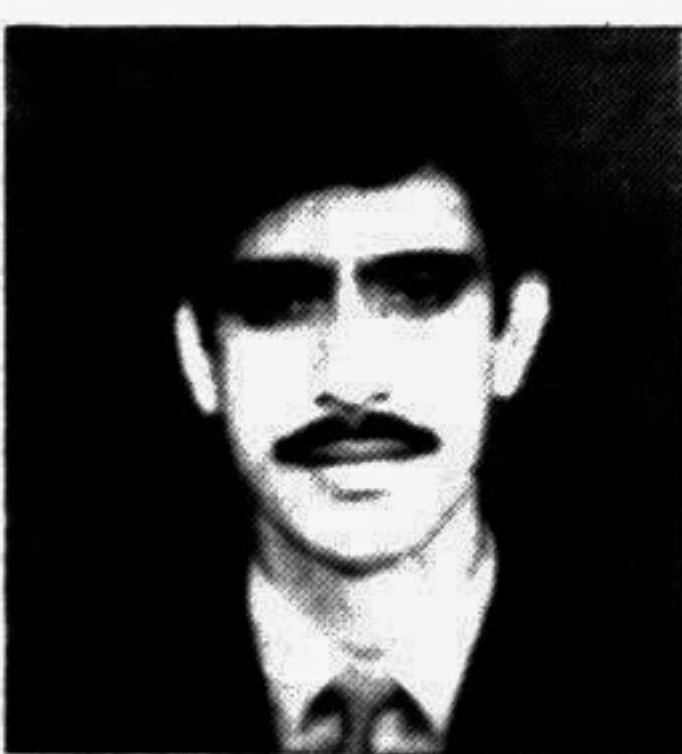
A family ruined by Saturday's tornado at village Paissa in Louhajang thana of Munshiganj district taking food after two days. Official relief was yet to reach the village yesterday. — Star photo

**Munshiganj death toll rises to 40
 Storm in Madaripur, Bhola kills 12, injures 125**

At least 12 people were killed and over 125 injured when a tornado struck three thanas in Madaripur district Saturday and north-western swept two villages in Bhola yesterday and Sunday. Meanwhile, the death toll from Saturday's tornado that lashed four thanas of Munshiganj district rose to 40 yesterday. BSS reports: at least 10 persons were killed and 100 others injured by a tornado which hit Kalkini, Shibchar and Sadar thanas of Madaripur on Saturday evening. The district administration of Madaripur when contacted over telephone last night said that the news of the natural calamity could not be communicated to the media earlier as

the telecommunications between Madaripur and the rest of the country were disrupted by the tornado. The telecommunications were restored between Dhaka and Madaripur yesterday. Of the injured, at least eight were admitted to sadar hospital while several others were given first aid in local hospitals. The source said that seven union parishads of Kalkini were badly hit by the tornado which damaged several thousand houses in different thanas. The district administration source put the figure of damaged dwelling houses as seven thousand. Meanwhile, the government has sanctioned Taka two lakh in cash and other relief

materials for the affected people. The source said that there was an urgent need for increased cash relief and CTS sheets for rehabilitation of the tornado victims. Two persons were killed when north-western struck two villages in the Borhanuddin and Tajumuddin thanas of Bhola district late Sunday night and early Monday morning. Our Staff Correspondent from Barisal reports: One Ameer Hossain, 12, was trapped under a collapsed house at Begi Union of Bashanuddin in Sunday night while Kabir Hossain, 12, was killed by a falling tree at Shambhupur union of Tajumuddin thana. See Page 12 Col 6



AL candidate elected

By Staff Correspondent
 Mohammad Azmat Ullah Khan, a pro-Awami League candidate, was elected chairman of the Tongi Pourashava in a model election held peacefully yesterday, according to unofficial results. Khan bagged 20,863 votes, beating his nearest rival Mohammad Nurul Islam Sarker of the Jatiya Party, who got 20,467 votes. The ruling BNP-supported candidate Dr Nazim Uddin See Page 12 Col 7

Peaceful voting, larger turnout at Tongi

By Krishna P Roy
 Despite some minor flaws in the preparation of identity (ID) cards and management of the electoral process, the model polls held in the Tongi municipality yesterday could set an instance for free and fair elections in the country given full participation of the local people. The entire elections for a chairman and 21 commissioners for seven wards were conducted mainly by the local youths, particularly students and murabhis (local elders) while every centre was closely monitored by the Election Commission through the district election commissioners. The EC had successfully held such model polls in Dapunia union under Myensingh district on April 30 last year. Tongi was the EC's second pilot project. During a visit, this correspondent found peaceful electropolling at almost all the 72 centres and the turnout of voters was much larger than seen in any other election. No untoward incident was reported either. Barring a few exceptions, the young volunteers were smart in their job of helping the voters cast their ballots. The elders kept watch so that none created any trouble. There was a polling centre for every 1000 voters. An apparently satisfied Chief Election Commissioner Justice Mohammad Abu Rauf told newsmen just after the polling ended at 2 pm that this election again proves that people's participation is a must for free, fair and peaceful polls. "But, I agree that there are some lapses as regards the ID cards. ... We cannot overcome all problems overnight, the system would grow day by day," he said. The flaws in preparation See Page 12 Col 1



Women voters queuing up at a polling centre in Tongi yesterday show their identity cards. — Star photo

PM reviews fertiliser crisis with senior aides

By Staff Correspondent
 Prime Minister Begum Khaleda Zia held a meeting with some of her senior cabinet colleagues to review the latest food and fertiliser situation in the country. The meeting discussed possible ways to avert recurrence of such a fertiliser crisis. A senior minister who attended the meeting, "Precautionary measures would be taken before the next food procurement season," he said. "These are purely routine government functions," he said. A judicial committee to probe the fertiliser crisis would be announced shortly, the minister added. "Politics and parliamentary affairs were not on the agenda. The meeting, held in the See Page 12 Col 2

SKOP strike begins today

By Staff Correspondent
 Sramik Karmachari Oikya Parishad (SKOP) and transport workers plan to enforce a 48-hour nationwide strike and road-rail barricade programmes beginning this morning to press home their respective demands. The garments workers will also observe strike extending support to the SKOP. Besides the Left Democratic Front, a combine of eight left-leaning political parties, has called a dawn-to-dusk hartal today demanding election under a caretaker government and in support of the demands of the SKOP. The industrial strike and road-rail barricade programmes follow hartals enforced by three major opposition parties on Sunday and Monday. The SKOP, an umbrella body of 18 labour organisations, and an alliance of five trade unions in the jute-textile yarn sector, called the two-day strike demanding im- See Page 12 Col 7

Manzur murder Latif, Shams may seek to withdraw statements

By Staff Correspondent
 The lawyers defending Maj Gen (ret'd) Abdul Latif and Lt Col (ret'd) Shamsur Rahman are likely to submit separate petitions in the court of chief metropolitan magistrate (CMM) Chittagong, today seeking to withdraw the statements their clients had made before a magistrate in Dhaka last month. Sources close to the families of the detained army officials said they had also instructed their lawyers to move bail petitions and also ask for copies of the confessional statements they had made under Section 164 of the Criminal Procedure Code (CrPC). See Page 12 Col 4

Sena hunts for Bengali-speaking Muslim immigrants in Bombay

BOMBAY: Apr 10: Hindu vigilante groups have stepped up a hunt for Muslim immigrants to expel them from Bombay following an order from a hawkish Hindu leader, reports AFP. Residents said the search for Muslim immigrants in the fear-stricken city is being conducted by the extremist Hindu Shiv Sena and its ally, the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP). "There is fear everywhere," said a Muslim resident in Bombay's Worli district of the roving bands of Hindu vigilantes. Bal Thackeray, chief of the Shiv Sena which stormed to power last month in western Maharashtra state of which Bombay is capital, ordered supporters on March 28 to boot out Muslim immigrants within 15 days. "Shiv Sena and BJP workers have prepared lists of alleged foreign Muslims here," said Mrinal Saha, a journalist with the newspaper Aajkaal. Saha said the Sena vigilantes were targeting Bengali-speaking Muslims in Hindu-dominated districts, adding, lists of suspects are being supplied to the city police. Bengali

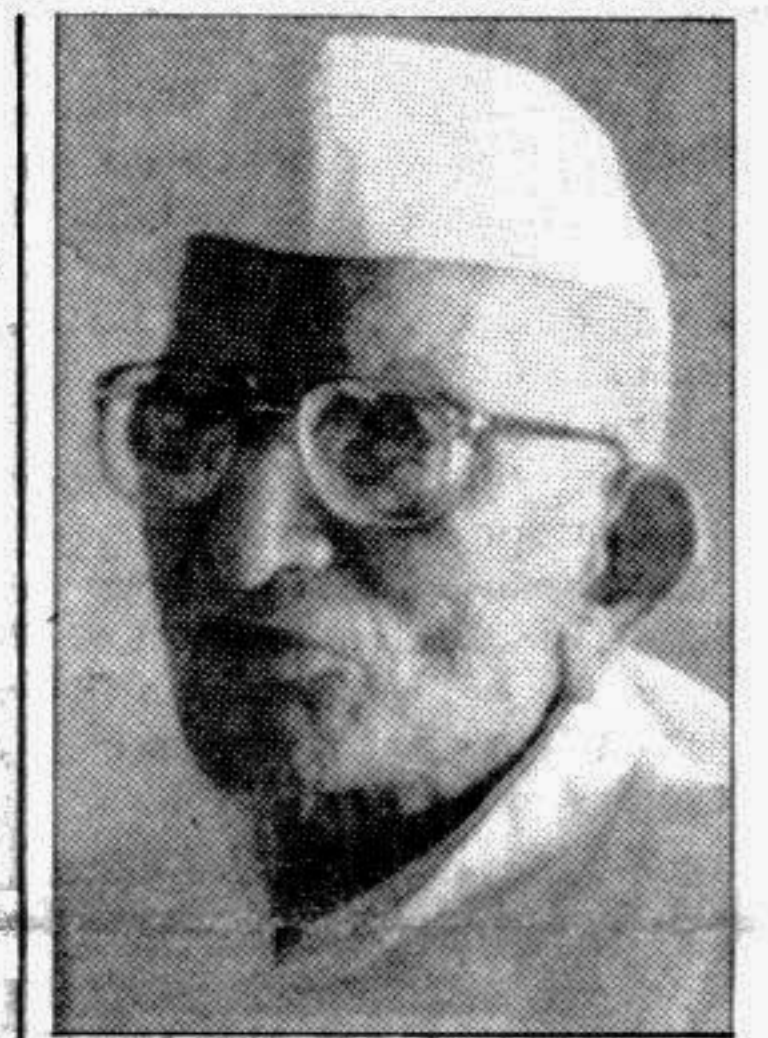
is spoken both in Bangladesh and its adjoining Indian state of West Bengal, and it is almost impossible to distinguish a Bangladeshi from an Indian Bengali. "For each police station in the city, the Sena has a parallel one keeping tabs on people living in the area," the journalist said. "It is terrifying people live in fear. What they are doing is a kind of pogrom. Today, it is alleged Bangladeshi Muslims, tomorrow to could be me," said Saha, an Indian Bengali. Some 10 per cent of the city's 13 million residents are Muslims. Hamid Mistry, a Bombay legislator from the Muslim League Party, said Sena activists were also blackmailing Indian Muslims, threatening to turn them in as immigrants if they refused to pay up. "I have received alarming complaints. Now they are mainly targeting the Bengali Muslims (and) large numbers have already fled Bombay. How long can they live in fear?" she said. Seventy-year-old Abdul Gani said his nephew was evicted from his home in a Bombay

suburb along with 200 other Muslim families following threats from Sena activists. "We are from West Bengal, but they do not believe us. They gave us an ultimatum to leave by April 18. Otherwise, they said, all women would be raped," he said. "They came in at two in the morning in several buses. They kicked the doors open and dragged out sleeping men, women and babies, hurling abuse," said Jamila Bibi, describing a police raid in a shanty town on Friday. "Anyone protesting was kicked and beaten up. People were crammed into the buses and taken away. We have no news of those arrested," the Muslim women sobbed. "We are not Bangladeshi, but Indians. They do not believe our documents. Why should they pick on us just because we are Muslims," she said. Bibi said similar raids had been conducted in the past but added that the police have become "more ferocious," after the Sena-BJP alliance took power in Maharashtra. Maulvi Abdu Kashmiri. See Page 12 Col 7

Countrywide hartal disrupts normal life

By Staff Correspondent
 A dawn-to-dusk hartal enforced by the mainstream opposition parties yesterday disrupted normal life throughout the country. Barring some stray incidents in some places, the strike passed off peacefully in the capital Dhaka and elsewhere in the country. At separate post-hartal rallies in the city, Awami League, the Jatiya Party and the Jamaat claimed that their programmes were observed successfully. They vowed to gear up their agitation to topple, what they said, the neo-autocrat Khaleda government. The three opposition parties, whose MPs resigned en masse from Parliament on December 28 last year, gave the hartal call to press their demands for dissolution of the Jatiya Sangsad, fresh elections

under a neutral caretaker government and supply of essentials, including rice and fertilizer, at fair price. Due to the strike, the road-link between the capital and other parts of the country remained disrupted for 12 hours. In the capital all modes of transport, except rickshaws, rickshaw-vans and autorickshaws went off the roads. Attendance in government offices was thin. Private offices, financial establishments and shops were closed. Mohammadpur police picked up two youths, Shameem and Shagar, at noon from Asad Gate area. A pistol loaded with five rounds of bullet was recovered from them. They reportedly opened fire on a pro-hartal procession. Police said, the youths See Page 12 Col 4



Morarji Desai passes away

BOMBAY: Apr 10: Morarji Desai, a veteran of Indian politics who became India's oldest prime minister, died today aged 99, doctors said, reports Reuter. "He died of natural causes, of old age," said a doctor at Bombay's Jaslok Hospital, where Desai had been admitted on March 20 with low blood pressure and a chest infection. He was operated upon for a clot in his brain three days later and had been in a semi-coma state since. Desai's body will be flown by an Indian airforce plane to Ahmedabad city in the western state of Gujarat and will be cremated with full state honours on the banks of the Sabarmati river tomorrow. The government declared See Page 12 Col 1

Kuwait may write off outstanding loans

The Kuwaiti Crown Prince and Prime Minister, who arrives here tomorrow, is expected to write off the loans Bangladesh has so far received from the Sheikdom, reports UNB. Officials who appeared optimistic about the write-off said Kuwait had so far provided Bangladesh with soft-term loans amounting over 200 million US dollars. The credits supported power supply for irrigation schemes, Monu river project, East-West Electrical Interconnector Project and Rural Electrification. Sheikh Saad Al-Abdullah Al-Salem Al-Sabah is also expected to assure Bangladesh of all possible assistance in implementing various development projects. Al-Sabah, leading an eighty-member delegation consisting of several ministers and senior officials, will land here from Bangkok for a four-day official visit to Bangladesh. Warm reception will be ac-

corded to the Crown Prince and Prime Minister of Kuwait on his arrival. Foreign Minister ASM Mostafizur Rahman will receive the Kuwaiti Prime Minister at the airport on his arrival for his first-ever visit to Bangladesh. He will be ceremonially received at the Karotoa state guest house by Prime Minister Begum Khaleda Zia. He will hold official talks with his Bangladesh counterpart Prime Minister Begum Khaleda Zia, covering bilateral matters as well as regional and international issues of common concern. Expansion of trade and economic cooperation as well as investment in joint ventures in Bangladesh will figure prominently in the meetings between the two Prime Ministers. The forthcoming visit of the Crown Prince of the oil-rich country is seen as "significant" See Page 12 Col 8

Indian security umbrella should go: Adhikari

NEW DELHI: Apr 10: Nepal Prime Minister Man Mohan Adhikari today described his country's defence ties with India as outdated and said Kathmandu wants New Delhi to remove its security umbrella from the Himalayan kingdom, reports Reuter. "The concept of security umbrella is an old one dating back the 18th century," Adhikari told a meeting of Indian intellectuals at the start of his first official visit to India. "So my request to our Indian friends is to kindly remove the security umbrella from our country," he said. Western diplomats said Adhikari's communist government was seeking changes in the 45-year-old India-Nepal treaty of peace and friendship

under Chinese pressure. Adhikari is due to visit Beijing on April 17. The pact requires Nepal to consult India for any arms imports. A Nepali move to import Chinese arms triggered a standoff in 1988 between New Delhi and Kathmandu, souring political and trade ties. Relations were normalised when a pro-India government was elected in Kathmandu in 1990, reviving trade with the landlocked country. Earlier Adhikari and his Indian host Prime Minister P V Narasimha Rao told Reuters they wanted to bring the Himalayan neighbours closer still despite the difficulties. "We had been having the best of relations all these See Page 12 Col 3

Cabinet okays draft of Sugarcane Instt Act '95

The Cabinet has approved, in principle, the draft of the "Bangladesh Sugarcane Research Institute Act-1995" to establish Bangladesh Sugarcane Institute, reports BSS. The approval was given in the regular weekly meeting of the Cabinet held last night at Bangabhaban with Prime Minister Begum Khaleda Zia in the chair. Ministers, state ministers in-charge of different ministries and divisions, cabinet secretary, principal secretary to the Prime Minister and secretaries concerned were present.

Youths ransack Fine Arts Instt bldg

By Staff Correspondent
 An MA final year student of the Dhaka University was seriously assaulted by a gang of youths at the Fine Arts Institute yesterday. The gang of about 20 youths also ransacked the Institute building and damaged valuable art works and other items, which were being prepared for the festival of Pabala Batskhali, the Bangla new year, on April 14. Witnesses said that at about 11 am, six youths entered the Fine Arts Institute and tried to take away some coconuts from the trees inside the premises. When some students of the Institute protested, the out- See Page 12 Col 3