



US Congressman Bill Richardson being received by Director General of the Foreign Ministry M Ashraf-ud-Dowla and US Ambassador David N Merrill at Zia International Airport yesterday. — PID photo

Trade bodies' leaders on polls

People's rights ignored, economy at stake

Star Report

The February 15 parliamentary polls have put the people on the sideline and the country's economy into great jeopardy, according to leaders of different trade bodies.

Talking to The Daily Star, they said that political uncertainty has gripped the country at a time when it is taking preparation for transfer of capital and technology from the developed countries.

Abdul Haque, President of the Bangladesh Reconditioned Vehicles Importers and Dealers Association said that the election failed to ensure people's participation in it.

It fulfilled only the constitutional obligation, but ignored people's right to franchise. Voters' turnout was poor. It was not only a failure of the government, but also of the opposition parties in a nascent democracy.

"I think there is still time for a consensus and a fresh election to elect a representative parliament. Our political leaders should consider how much loss an economy like ours can really bear with. Due to the long drawn political crisis, all the economic indicators are showing a downward trend."

The upper middle class, who form most of our clients, are not buying cars any more, because their vehicles become the first target in any political demonstration. In Chittagong Port, some 5,000 imported reconditioned cars are lying idle, he said.

Ziaul Huq, Chairman of Bangladesh Bus-Truck Owners Association, gave a bleak picture of the overall transport business and said letters were sent recently to Bangladesh Bank and all other commercial banks seeking waiver of interests. "The current situation has forced us to do that. Buses and trucks become the first target during a demonstration. All backward linkage industries related to the transport sector become idle during a strike."

The political leaders should now weigh which is more important — the constitution, the caretaker government or the economy, he said.

Rezaul Karim, Chairman of the Bangladesh Jute Association, said leaders of the ruling party and the Opposition should sit together to resolve the political crisis for the sake of the country's economy.

"I believe for the sake of constitutional continuity and greater national interest, we can sit together and find out a mutually acceptable solution," said Karim, who was elected uncontested in the election. He, however, claimed that turnout of voters was good despite boycott of the polls by the opposition.

Dr Momenul Haq, Secretary General, Bangladesh Association of Pharmaceutical Industries, said that the just concluded election would not be able to bring about any solution to the political crisis. It would, rather, lead the country to a great confrontation.

He said that the turnout of voters in the February 15 elections was poor.

The BNP, which had a good election record was discredited in the polls, he claimed. "Now it stands without a good mandate."

"I wonder how the government is going to make up for the overall loss in the financial sector over the last couple of months. Our fear is that the June budget is coming with lot of proposals for tax increase."

"Now, our only hope is that good sense would prevail in the political leadership."

Nizami urges Biswas to form caretaker govt

Jamaat-e-Islami leader Matur Rahman Nizami yesterday said the BNP government has lost its effectiveness in the face of the Opposition's non-cooperation movement, reports UNB.

Addressing a rally at the north gate of Baitul Mukarram mosque in the afternoon, he said the government had failed to bring the public servants to offices even after issuing "circulars of threats."

The Jamaat secretary general reiterated the demand for cancellation of the February 15 election and holding fresh polls under a neutral caretaker government within 90 days.

He urged the president to form a caretaker government and arrange fresh elections.

Hasina

From Page 1

Meanwhile, Jatiya Party has condemned the arrests of its leaders. Barrister Moudud Ahmed and Anwar Hossain Manju and leaders of other Opposition parties including Awami League's Mohammad Nasim and Begum Matia Chowdhury.

President Mowla and city President of JP Col (Retd) A Malek and JP General Secretary Abdus Salam in a joint statement yesterday demanding the release of the leaders said that arrests and repression of Opposition leaders would never be able to stop the on-going movement.

Lawyers abstain from attending Supreme Court

Country's Supreme Court did not function yesterday as lawyers of its both divisions abstained responding to the opposition call for non-cooperation with the government, reports UNB.

Supreme Court sources said lawyers of both the Appellate and High Court Divisions did not attend the courts, forcing them to close judicial functions for the day.

Another source, however, said a group of lawyers requested the judges of both divisions of the Supreme Court not to go to the courts and also asked the officials to shut the offices.

The Dhaka District Judge's and Session Court also did not function because of boycott by lawyers, sources said.

Hartal observed in Natore

From Our Correspondent

NATORE, Feb 25: A day-long hartal was observed in Natore town today to protest the killing of a transport workers' leader yesterday.

The Jatiya Samik League called the hartal protesting the killing of Matur Rahman Muksa, former president of Paribahan Samik Union of Natore district.

All modes of transport stayed off the roads and shops and business houses remained closed during hartal hours. The hartal coincided with the second day of the 3-day non-cooperation programme called by the main opposition political parties.

Matur Rahman was buried at Garikhana graveyard today after autopsy at Rajshahi Medical College Hospital.

Meanwhile, Natore Sadar police have arrested 6 persons for their alleged involvement in the killing of Matur.

DCCI's appeal to Biswas, Khaleda Hasina

The Dhaka Chamber of Commerce and Industry (DCCI) has appealed to the President, the Prime Minister and Awami League Chief Sheikh Hasina to resolve the crisis now facing the nation through their political sagacity and wisdom, reports BSS.

Ali Hossain, president of DCCI, in an appeal addressed to the three persons said the anarchy created in the country due to continued politico-economic instability is not only affecting the trade and business community, but creating far reaching impact on the national economy. If the present situation continued for long, a catastrophic situation will develop which would not be desirable to any quarter.

The gross domestic product (GDP) growth was already going down and that infection has also touched agriculture after affecting the industrial sector, the appeal said.

We would not even be worthy to seek pardon from the posterity if the situation continued, he opined.

2 Pirojpur JCD activists hurt in blasts, AL office ransacked

PIROJPUR, Feb 25: Two activists of the Jatiyatabadi Chhatra Dal (JCD) were critically injured in bomb explosions near the Town Hall today, reports UNB.

Witnesses said Kamruzzaman Shaheen, 25, and Rana, 24, were injured when several home-made bombs exploded in the area after the processions of JCD and pro-Awami League Chhatra League ended there at about 7:30 pm. They were admitted to sadar hospital.

Later, JCD activists ransacked the district AL office and damaged its furniture and window panes.

The JCD brought out the procession from Sadar Road protesting the opposition's non-cooperation programme while the BCL demonstrated in protest against the arrest of four opposition leaders in the capital.

Cricket

From Page 1

Holland, who lost their first two engagements against New Zealand and England, will bank on the experience of their 47-year-old hard-hitting batsmen Nolan Clarke for a respectable result.

Meanwhile, debutant Kenya, who created some sort of reputation of being a born fighter despite losing against favourites India and Australia, will take on Zimbabwe in a Group A fixture at Patna, India.

US Congressman

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meet Foreign Minister A S M Mostafizur Rahman.

Earlier in the morning, Bill Richardson is scheduled to visit the Grameen Bank Head Office and meet Dr Yunus to get a first hand appraisal of the bank's activities.

Last night, he met some political leaders, belonging to the government and the opposition, at a dinner at US Ambassador David N Merrill's residence.

Richardson is due to leave Dhaka for London at 11:39 tonight.



Police guarding the court building in the city on the second day of the opposition's non-cooperation programme yesterday. — Star photo

200 hurt: Non-cooperation

From Page 1

Police arrested 35 people from different places of the city for picketing. 25 from Motijheel, 10 from Demra.

Awami League Jatiya Party and Jamaat-e-Islami, which had boycotted the parliamentary polls, called the non-cooperation programme demanding dismissal of the 'illegal' government, cancellation of the 'farical' polls and holding of fresh elections within 90 days under a neutral caretaker government.

At Tongi, the rail-route gateway to Dhaka, hundreds of opposition activists fought pitched battles with police while damaging the automatic telecommunication signal system and trying to set slippers on fire.

At least 50 people including two policemen were injured in the clashes. Police fired rubber bullets and tear gas shells to disperse the mob. Police arrested 26 people from the spot.

Opposition activists also damaged the signal board at Hashampur station on Dhaka-Chittagong rail route.

As pickets raised barricades on rail tracks at different points, trains could not reach destinations. At some places, security personnel guarded rail tracks, according to railway sources.

Our Staff Correspondent from Chittagong reports: At least 50 people were injured in a gunfight between Opposition and ruling party activists and bomb blasts in the port city yesterday. Nur Nabi, a rickshawpuller, received bullet injury in a crossfire in front of the Port's jetty gate No. 3 at 11 am. He was admitted to Chittagong Medical Hospital along with seven others.

Witnesses and police said the gunfight broke out when supporters of ruling BNP reportedly tried to take control of the Port.

Police rounded up five Awami League activists from the spot.

State Minister for Shipping Shahjahan Siraj, who stayed in the port city overnight, supervised handling of goods at the port for about two hours amid tight security.

Armed clashes and bomb explosion also took place at various points of the city, including Dewanhat, GPO Crossing and in front of Chittagong Medical College Hospital, leaving about a dozen people injured.

Opposition leaders at a press conference later blamed the ruling party activists for letting loose a reign of terror in the city.

Awami League leader and city mayor ABM Mohiuddin Ahmed, JP leader Mahmudul Islam Chowdhury, Jamaat leader Abu Taher and Inundandan Datta of JSD spoke at the press conference.

Opposition activists hurled a bomb at the convoy of minister Abdullah Al Noman at Salt-gola crossing at 4 pm. But none was injured.

Our Rajshahi correspondent reports: Powerful bombs were hurled at the premises of Rajshahi Judge Court and at the office of a local daily, Dainik Sonali Sangbad at noon.

UNB reported that Opposition activists blasted a crude bomb outside the residence of the district judge in Jhalakathi at 11 am but none was injured. They also attacked the Judge Court and the DO Office with brick-bats.

In Comilla, local office of House Building Finance Corporation at Kandipur was ransacked.

Opposition activists clashed with police and attacked some government offices and banks in Faridpur town leaving 12 people including the OC of Kotwali thana injured.

Our Brahmanbaria Correspondent reported that at least

7 persons were injured during separate clashes between police and activists of opposition political parties at Kosba and Bancharampur.

Police arrested 22 persons during the clashes.

UNB adds from Shrirangaj: Ten people, including two policemen, were injured as the activists of Awami League attacked the TNO and BNP offices in Kaziur thana yesterday.

Police said they brought out a procession in the thana protesting the arrest of its central leader Mohammad Nasim.

At one stage, the angry activists attacked Kaziur police station and the residence of TNO, and set fire to valuables inside. Later they stormed the local BNP office and ransacked its furniture.

Of the injured, three were admitted to Kaziur Thana Health Complex.

Meanwhile, opposition parties brought out separate processions and held rallies in all the nine thanas of the district protesting the arrest of their central leaders.

Witnesses said several hundred opposition activists gheraoed the Dhunot Thana Parishad confronting the BNP supporters and set fire to government offices inside its complex at around 7 pm.

Police fired about 50 rounds of blank shots to disperse the clashing groups.

Awami League, Jatiya Party and Jamaat-e-Islami later brought out a joint procession protesting the police firing.

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The Midnight File

Russia to withdraw troops from Ingushetia

MOSCOW, Feb 25: Russia agreed today to withdraw its forces surrounding two villages in Ingushetia on the border with Chechnya after bombarding them for four days, Ingush President Russian Ayushev told Interfax. Russian General Genady Trochev agreed to withdraw the troops during official talks with Ingush authorities, Ayushev said, reports AFP.

Cuba downs 2 US planes of anti-Castro group

HAVANA, Feb 25: Cuba today confirmed that its air force had shot down two US planes belonging to an anti-Castro exile group in its air space today, reports AFP.

The Foreign Ministry said in an official dispatch quoted today by the Prensa Latina Agency that the two planes were shot down between 3:21 and 3:28 pm (GMT) and 2028 GMT Saturday at five and eight nautical miles off the seaside town of Baracoa, west of the capital.

White House spokesman Michael McCurry had said the US-registered Cessna 337 skymasters had fled flight plans for the Bahamas, not far from Cuba, but were apparently shot down in international waters near Cuba.

AP adds: The US Coast Guard and Navy were searching international waters for the four people aboard the Brothers to the Rescue planes. Coast Guard Lt Cmdr. Mark Woodring said. A third plane in the group was not hit and returned safely to Miami.

President Clinton dispatched F-15 fighters to protect search and rescue operations. He demanded an immediate explanation from the Cuban government.

"I condemn this action in the strongest possible terms."

Nari Samaj demands removal of CEC

By Staff Correspondent

The Bangladesh Nari Samaj has said rigging and terrorism during the voterless elections for the Sixth Jatiya Sangsad was a shame for the whole nation.

The Nari Samaj demanded removal and trial of the Chief Election Commissioner (CEC) on charge of misuse of power and fabricating election results.

A statement issued by Nari Samaj leader Rokeya Kabir yesterday said the decision of the ruling BNP to hold such a costly election without the opposition parties was undemocratic.

The farcical election has plunged the country in to a deeper crisis as the fictitious election results declared by the Election Commission were not acceptable to the people, it said.

N'ganj clash

From Page 1

front of Chhoti Talia Mosque, to settle a dispute among the Suman and the Renu group of local Jaba Dal.

Sumon, the leader of Suman group, was admitted to Pongu hospital after having been seriously beaten up by the Renu group on February 22.

Police fired around 15 round tear gas shells and shot guns to bring the situation under control.

Additional police forces have been deployed in the area.

Piecemeal gazette

From Page 1

he added.

Elections to all the seats have to be completed before the first session of the 6th JS, Sheikh Razzak Ali opined.

"This appears to me a reasonable interpretation of Article 65 of the Constitution," said the Speaker.

According to him, the first session of the JS has to be summoned within 30 days of the gazette notification. In case of piecemeal notifications, the 30 days should be counted from the day — the last gazette is published, he said.

Asked whether the JS could be summoned after the first gazette notification when it is done on piecemeal basis he said, "In my opinion, it will not be right."

He, however, added that it was the constitutional obligation of the President to summon the JS and that it depended upon his interpretation of Article 65 and 72 of the Constitution.

As per provisions of the Constitution regarding election

of MPs, constitution of Parliament, administering of oath as well as summoning of Parliament, the above interpretations sound reasonable, added the Speaker.

There is no time bar for administering oath to the MPs prior to the first session of the parliament but, all the MPs shall have to take oath before it, Razzak Ali said.

In case an MP fails to take oath within 90 days of the first session, his seat will be declared vacant. But if an MP applies to the Speaker for extension of the time limit, the Speaker may extend it.

The 90 days' bar in holding elections after the dissolution of the JS is not applicable in case of repolling, interpreted Ali.

Replying to another question on seeking reference from the Supreme Court on piecemeal gazette notification, the Speaker said, only the President can seek such a reference under Article 106 of the Constitution. This, however, does not arise in this case, he added.

British bilateral aid: LDCs to get priority

British bilateral aid, changing the priorities, would in future be more heavily concentrated on the world's poorest countries, said British Minister for Overseas Development Baroness Chalker, reports UNB.

The world — especially the developing world — has undergone huge change in recent years and the means of providing aid must change too if it is to remain effective, she told the Royal Institute of International Affairs at Chatham House, London, last week.

Bangladesh is one of the major recipients of the British ODA. The ODA budget for 1996-97 is 2,154 million pounds. It operates in over 160 countries.

Lady Chalker announced that the British government had accepted the main recommendations of the 'Fundamental Expenditure Review of the Overseas Development Administration (ODA), which manages the British aid programme.

One of the recommendations was to focus bilateral aid even further on those countries with the worst poverty, according to a message received in Dhaka yesterday.

Mannan Bhuiyan

From Page 1

a section of the press that the incumbent Secretary General Barrister Abdus Salam Talukdar would be relieved of his current responsibility and replaced by Abdul Mannan Bhuiyan, the senior most Joint Secretary General of the Party.

However, it was learnt that Abdul Mannan Bhuiyan had been asked by the Prime Minister to discharge the responsibilities of acting Secretary General as the incumbent is suffering from illness.



A policeman examining the wreckage of the bombed bus in Jerusalem yesterday. —AFP/UNB photo

বি,জি,এম,ই,এ ফোরাম

সম্মানিত পোশাক শিল্পের মালিকবৃন্দ
আম্বালাম আলহিকুম,

আসন্ন বিজিএমইএ নির্বাচনে ফোরাম মনোনীত
প্রার্থীদের এক পরিচিতি সভা আগামী ২৭শে ফেব্রুয়ারী
'৯৬ রোজ মঙ্গলবার সন্ধ্যা ৬-০০টায় ঢাকা
শেরাটন হোটেল উইকার পার্কে অনুষ্ঠিত হবে।

উক্ত প্রার্থী পরিচিতি সভায় আপনার মূল্যবান উপস্থিতি
একান্তভাবে কাম্য।

সভাশেষে লেখকসভাজে আমন্ত্রণ রইল।

ধন্যবাদান্তে

ফোরামের পক্ষে

ক্যাটেন (অবঃ) আনিসুর রহমান সিনহা আশরাফ ইউ আহমেদ

সভাপতি, ফোরাম প্রধান নির্বাচন সমন্বয়কারী, ফোরাম

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চেয়ারম্যান, ওপেন গ্রুপ চেয়ারম্যান, আশরাফ গ্রুপ

৮৮৮৬০-৬৪ ফোন: ৮০৪৬০৮

বি জি এম ই এ নির্বাচন' ৯৬

সম্মিলিত পরিষদ এর উদ্যোগে জনাব রেদোয়ান আহমেদ এর নেতৃত্বাধীন প্যানেল
পরিচিতি সভা আগামী ২৭-০২-৯৬ইং রোজ মঙ্গলবার বিকল ৪-৩০ ঘটিকায়
হোটেল সেনারগাঁও বলরুমে অনুষ্ঠিত হবে। উক্ত পরিচিতি সভায় পোশাক শিল্পের
সম্মিলিত মালিকবৃন্দকে উপস্থিত থাকার জন্য সবিনয় অনুরোধ জানাচ্ছি।

সম্মিলিত পরিষদ
মনোনীত প্যানেল

নং	প্রার্থী	ভোটার নং	প্রতিদান
১০	জনাব কে, এম, জামান (রোসেল)	১০৮	আশা পার্বেদিস লি:
১১	জনাব মোঃ নূরুজ্জহান	৬০৪	নুজ পার্বেদিস লি:
১২	জনাব এস,এম, রেজাউল হক	৬৫২	মাসকট পার্বেদিস লি:
১৩	জনাব আশরাফউদ্দিন আহমেদ	৬৬৬	আফক নিউ ওয়ার
১৪	জনাব শফিকুল ইসলাম	৭৭৬	তাসা এপারেল লি:
১৫	জনাব মোঃ নূরুল হক সিকদার	৮০৬	পলমদ পার্বেদিস লি:

চট্টগ্রাম অঞ্চল

১৬	জনাব মোঃ এমদাদুল হক জৌদী	১১০০	ম্যা সারী এপারেল ইন্টারন্যাশনাল (প্রঃ) লি:
১৭	জনাব জাকার উয়াহ খান	১১০১	ম্যা নিউ এপারেল (প্রঃ) লি:
১৮	জনাব মাহবুব আলী	১১০২	আলিগেই পার্বেদিস লি:

কুতুবউদ্দিন আহমেদ মোস্তফা গোলাম কুতুব মোঃ মাসিরউদ্দিন

এন ডায় গ্রুপ চুং হিং গ্রুপ এন জেড এন গ্রুপ

সমন্বয়কারী ঢাকা প্রধান সমন্বয়কারী ঢাকা সমন্বয়কারী চট্টগ্রাম